

# Encyclopedia of Tribes in Odisha

VOLUME  
III



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

**Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research  
and Training Institute**  
ST & SC Development Department,  
Government of Odisha

Supported by  
**Ministry of Tribal Affairs**  
Government of India

**Encyclopedia  
of  
Tribes in Odisha**

**Volume III**



# **Encyclopedia of Tribes in Odisha**

## **Volume III**

**Editors**

**A. B. Ota**

**S. C. Mohanty**

**Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes  
Research and Training Institute (SCSTRI),  
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India, 751003**

***Supported by*  
Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India**

**2021**



# **Encyclopedia of Tribes in Odisha**

## **Volume III**

**2021**

©: Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute  
(SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar

### **Published by:**

Director  
Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute  
(SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar

**ISBN: 978-93-80705-84-2**

**Price :**

### **Printed at:**


Capital Business Service & Consultancy  
B-51, Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar

## FOREWORD

Odisha holds an important position as the home of the largest number (62) of notified Scheduled Tribes, including many Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups. Naturally, the spectrum of tribal culture, livelihood and development in the State is very wide. It is essential for the country to preserve this heritage of tribal culture and knowledge, so as to facilitate further analysis for formulating more effective policies and programmes for socio-economic development and cultural preservation of the tribal communities.

The Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) of Odisha has been doing exemplary work in the field of ethnographic research and documentation of various aspects of tribal life and culture. This vast work of compiling relevant details in 'Encyclopedia of Tribes of Odisha' will be a treasure of knowledge for researchers and policy-makers.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India deeply appreciates the dedicated work done by Prof. (Dr.) A.B. Ota, Director, Sri S.C. Mohanty, Consultant and the team of SCSTRTI, Odisha for compiling, editing and presenting hundreds of meaningful articles in these five volumes. It is expected that this will inspire a new generation of students and researchers, and will also motivate those working in the fields of public policy.



**Anil Kumar Jha**

Secretary  
Ministry of Tribal Affairs  
Government of India



## **PREFACE**

The motley crowd of tribal communities living in the hills and plains of Odisha has enriched the cultural heritage of the state by their ethno-cultural diversities. Officially they have been enlisted as Scheduled Tribes (STs) numbering 62 including 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). As per the 2011 census, they number 95, 90, 756 persons accounting for 22.85 percent of the total population of the State. In terms both Scheduled Tribe communities and PVTGs, Odisha has the highest number amongst all the States, in the entire Country.

Each tribe possesses its distinct identity in terms of social organization, culture, and language. They pursue their own distinctive life styles different from each other which help them to preserve their cultural identity that is defined and redefined from time to time. They represent a type of society in the scheme of social evolution. As a structural as well as cultural concept, tribe encompasses features of simple societies. The major and smaller tribal groups have separate ethnic identities including historical and cultural heritage.

By and large, tribal communities are relatively encysted, deprived, economically backward, but their heritage, tradition and culture make their society tenacious to survive amidst upheavals and downfalls. In a nutshell, tribal communities are closed societies with open mind. In spite of certain socio-cultural changes taking place in their age old way of life under the present pressing circumstances of planned change and intervention, many of them have still kept their distinct ethnic identity intact. In this context, the inadequacy of in depth anthropological research and documentation on the colourful life style of the tribals has to be taken in to due consideration.

In this regard many works have been done by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) of Odisha - the premier and oldest tribal research institute (TRI) of the country established since 1952. The main objective of setting up of the Institute was to conduct studies on the society, culture and development problems of the tribal communities of Odisha and to serve as a centre for providing data and advisory services to Government. Publication of books, reports and research journal is

one of the important activities of the Institute for dissemination of information on various aspects of STs. So far it has published 126 books comprising monographs and popular literature, photo hand books, development handbooks, action plans and information brochures etc. on SCs and STs. These publications are based on research works undertaken by the Institute.

In addition to that the Institute publishes bi-annual News Letters on the activities of the Institute and a half-yearly research journal, ADIVASI published in June and December containing articles on various aspects of STs and SCs. Published since 1955, ADIVASI has earned the distinction of being the oldest anthropological research journal of Odisha. The journal aims to publish original unpublished research papers on tribal centric issues to highlight those aspects hitherto unexplored. The corpus of the journal though is largely anthropological in nature; its scope is broadened to make it multidisciplinary to cope with the changing times. It endeavours to provide a forum to eminent scholars as well as young researchers to exchange innovative ideas and speculations.

Marching with the time the ADIVASI journal has gloriously entered into its 61st year of publication. Within the treasure of its published articles there are many precious articles including many old ones of the fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties and nineties as well as the recent ones of the 21st Century depicting various aspects of the life and culture of the Tribal Groups of Odisha. Considering the rapidly changing scenario of the present times in which many ethnic groups are undergoing transformation towards modernity the institute felt it necessary to compile, re-edit and republish the articles on the 62 Tribes of Odisha published in its Adivasi journal and some more brought from its other published and unpublished documents to bring out their past and present in to limelight in order to show their "then" and "now". This compilation containing 418 articles is organized into five edited volumes. It is a huge task deserving commendation.

I must acknowledge the contributions of all the eminent scholars whose articles have found place in these volumes. Many of them who were active in the past century have taken great pains and faced immense hardships to go to the remote tribal areas, collect empirical data and prepare these articles. The phenomenon of time coupled with fate and destiny has taken its toll and many of these great souls are no more with us. But they will live with us through their works. Publication of these volumes is a tribute to them.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge the painstaking efforts of Prof. A. B. Ota, Director and Editor and Shri S. C. Mohanty, Associate Editor of Adivasi and Consultant, SCSTRTI for their relentless effort, dedication and

engrossing involvement to conceptualize the project, collect, select, compile and re-edit such large number of articles and to accomplish all other tasks required to produce these huge volumes. Both of them deserve my heartiest thanks.

It is hoped that these five volumes will serve as a reference literature on the Tribes of Odisha which will be of immense help to the researchers, development practitioners, academicians and general readers interested in conducting research and acquiring knowledge in tribal society, culture as well as their development.



**Ranjana Chopra, IAS**

Principal Secretary  
ST & SC Development Department  
Govt. of Odisha



## EDITOR'S NOTE

In the aftermath of independence and adoption of Indian Constitution incorporating special provisions for the protection, welfare and development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the Tribal Research Institute (TRI) of Odisha took its birth in Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha way back in 1952 christened as Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), in pursuance of the constitutional goals and objectives. Now rechristened as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), this institute not only has the distinction of being the premier and oldest Tribal Research Institute (TRI) of the Country, but it is also credited with the publication of a nationally reputed as well as the oldest Anthropological Research Journal of Odisha titled "Adivasi" incorporating the research articles of reputed anthropologists, sociologists, development practitioners and researchers who have worked and gained knowledge and experience in the field of tribal and non-tribal societies and cultures. Being published since 1955, almost uninterruptedly, this veteran research journal of Odisha which is nearly 61 years old, has come up with its 61st volume in the year 2021.

Over these years, the journal has endeavored to publish valuable research articles on various aspects of the society, culture and problems of Odishan tribes and castes and marching with the time it has gloriously entered into its 66th year of publication. Within the treasure of its published articles there are many precious articles including many old ones of the fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties and nineties as well as the recent ones of the 21st Century depicting various aspects of the life and culture of the colourful tribes including 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), previously called as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) of Odisha - a distinct and fascinating ethnic category among the tribes many of whom are known the world over for their pristine culture. Considering the rapidly changing scenario of the present times in which these ethnic groups are undergoing transformation towards modernity it was felt necessary to compile the selected articles on the Tribes of the State published in our Adivasi journal as well as our other research reports and publications to bring their past and present in to limelight in order to show their "then" and "now".



Prior to this, our institute also published 13 colourful Photo Hand Books on the 13 PVTGs of Odisha which has gained popularity among the Indian and foreign readers. Consequently, some of these have to be reprinted as they became out of stock. Considering the popular demand for the publications relating to PVTGs, it was decided to compile the selected articles published in our Adivasi journal from the nineteen fifties to the present and publish it in three volumes in the name of "PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS OF ODISHA". In these three volumes one hundred and fifty five articles find place classified as related to (1) Ethnography (vol. 1), (2) Change & Development (vol. 2) and (3) Anthropology of Health and Medicine (vol. 3). These three volumes have been published during 2015.

While putting our priorities on bringing out publications on our PVTGs, we have never forgotten other tribes given the fact that the State of Odisha is the homeland of 62 Scheduled Tribes. Indeed, by the end of the last century we have published 10 monographs on 06 tribes of Odisha namely, 1. BHUNJIA, 2. BONDHO (2), 3. JUANG (2), 4. KANDHA (2), 5. KOYA (2), and 6. SAORA. Besides a book containing ethnographic articles on 43 important tribes have been published in the name of "TRIBES OF ORISSA". For their popular demand the stocks of books on BONDHO, KANDHA, SAORA, JUANG and the TRIBES OF ORISSA have been exhausted and revised editions of books on KANDHA, KOYA and TRIBES OF ORISSA have been brought out in the mean time.

In addition to that we have published colourful Photo Hand Books on total 62 Scheduled Tribes of the State. These books have also become popular for which some of it have to be reprinted to meet the demand. We also have made several publications covering different socio-cultural and development aspects of different tribes of Odisha.

The present task of collection and compilation of research articles on Tribes of Odisha from our Adivasi journal and other sources is not an easy task. Most of the articles and especially those of the past century were prepared and printed when computer was either not in our dreams or in our distant dreams. Hence, those have to be computer typed again, corrected, edited, if so required, and formatted to make these ready for reprinting. To accomplish the task, we did not have the luxury of time. This has to be done in a short span of time within a busy and hectic schedule of many other pressing engagements.

This is our 3rd Volume containing 118 articles on 14 tribes. In this compilation, the names of the tribes on which articles have been presented

have been arranged in ascending alphabetical order as notified in the list of Scheduled Tribes of the State under the alphabet 'K' i.e., from KANDHA GAUDA to KULIS.

The picture of the past life style of the tribes that the illustrious anthropologists of past century have presented in their articles may not be found in these days except in the memory of the still living old guards. To the present generation of the tribes it may appear strange and outdated. But as a matter of fact, change is inevitable. Due to the powerful impact of planned change and modernization many of the old life ways of the tribes have become obsolete and lost in antiquity while some others are on the verge of decline. But one has to march with time but with reference to his past that gives him his cultural identity. Moreover, everything that one need to know about the Tribes of Odisha may not be found in this book but it can certainly help open a window to the picturesque tribal world of Odisha and guide the readers to deepen their understanding of these distinguished and colourful ethnic groups who exhibit our diverse tribal cultural panorama.

Commitment of errors and omissions have become part our lives. This work is no exception. In spite of our sincere efforts, these lapses may be there. We apologize for that and request our kind and learned readers to bring those to our notice along with their constructive suggestions for improvement in order to enable us not only to correct our mistakes but also to learn from our mistakes.

We owe a deep debt of gratitude to all the eminent scholars whose articles have found place in this volume. Many of them belonged to us and few still belong to this Institute. Many of them who were active in the past century have taken great pains and faced immense hardships to go to the remote and Dark Continent of the tribes, collect empirical data and prepare these articles. The phenomenon of time coupled with fate and destiny has taken its toll and many of these great souls are no more with us. But they will live with us through their works. Publication of this volume is a tribute to them.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge the help and cooperation of all who have typed, read, compared and corrected the typed articles as well as the printer without whom this book would not have seen the light of the day. Of all, my special thanks are due to my co-editor, Shri S.C. Mohanty, the former Joint Director of SCSTRTI and now working with us Consultant (Research & Publications) for his singular relentless effort, dedication and engrossing

involvement to conceptualize the project, collect, select, compile, edit and format the articles and to accomplish all other tasks to produce the book in spite of his multifarious pressing engagements. This work would have remained in our dreams without him.

This book is unique of its kind as in it a humble attempt has been made to amass and streamline the fragmented data about the Tribes of Odisha of the past and present times. I hope this book would be of enormous help as a ready reference for the tribal lovers and researchers alike and all those who are interested in the subject matter of Odishan tribes.

20th August, 2021  
Bhubaneswar



**Prof. (Dr.) A.B. Ota, IAS**  
Advisor-cum-Director  
& Special Secretary  
SCSTRTI

# CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>		V
<i>Preface</i>		VII
<i>Editor's Note</i>		XI
<b>Tribes of Odisha</b>		
<b>(27) KANDHA GAUDA</b>		
1. A.B. Ota, S. C. Mohanty & S. Sangita Mohanty	Kandha Gauda	1
<b>(28) KAWAR</b>		
2. S. Ray	Kawar	8
3. A.B. Ota, S.C. Mohanty & A.K. Gamango	Kawar	12
<b>(29) KHARIA</b>		
4. U. C, Mohanty	Kharia	21
5. T. Sahoo	Kharia	26
6. A. B. Ota, S.C. Mohanty & K. Patnaik	Kharia	31
7. Nityananda Das	The Hill Kharia of Simlipal Hills : A study of an isolated food gathering community	40
8. Jagannath Dash	The Society and Economy of the Hill Kharia in development perspective	46
9. S. C. Mohanty	Hill Kharia: Socio-Cultural life	65
10. A. B. Ota & T. Sahoo	Hill-Kharia	74

11.	<i>S. C. Mohanty</i>	Property and inheritance among the Hill Kharias of Similipal, Odisha: A study of Customs and Traditions	85
12.	<i>S. C. Mohanty</i>	Tradition & Change in Hill Kharia society	100
13.	<i>G. K. Pedi, N.C. Dash &amp; J. Dash</i>	Reproductive Health Status of the Hill Kharias of Odisha, India	106
<b>(30) KHARWAR</b>			
14.	<i>A.B.Ota, S.C. Mohanty &amp; Pollishree Samantray</i>	Kharwar	120
<b>(31) KANDHA</b>			
<b>A. Kandha</b>			
15.	<i>S. C. Mohanty</i>	Kandha	127
16.	<i>Kiranbala Debi</i>	Kondh	129
17.	<i>Malaya. K. Misra</i>	Kandha Tribe of Orissa: An ecological perspective	138
18.	<i>P. S. Das Patnaik</i>	Kandha	154
19.	<i>A. B. Ota, S.C. Mohanty &amp; N. Kanhar</i>	Kandha	162
20.	<i>S. C. Mohanty</i>	The Kandha of Kandhamals during British Raj	171
21.	<i>U. N. Pattanaik</i>	Religious ceremonies, ordeals and a legend about Oriya infiltration in Kondh Hills	181
22.	<i>U. N. Pattanaik</i>	Reminiscences of an Administrative officer in the Kandha Hills	189
23.	<i>U. N. Pattanaik</i>	Kui Kondhs : Observations of an Administrative officer in the Kondh Hills in the early forties	199

24.	<i>Anuja Mohan Pradhan</i>	In Search of a forgotten community: The Benniah Kandhas of Orissa	233
25.	<i>Anuja Mohan Pradhan</i>	Myth and Migration: A Revisit to Historiography of Kuidina	241
26.	<i>Bharati Devi</i>	How and what the Kuvi Kondhs adorn	252
27.	<i>U. N. Pattanaik</i>	Caste composition in a Kondh area	258
28.	<i>U. N. Pattanaik</i>	Position of Women in Kondh society	261
29.	<i>Saraswati Swain</i>	Tradition and Customs associated with pregnancy and child birth among Kondhs of Phulbani	263
30.	<i>Manoranjan Acharya</i>	Rituals associated with child-birth among Kondhs	271
31.	<i>R. P. Mohanty</i>	Differential Growth Pattern between Parental and Filial Generation in a tribal population	275
32.	<i>D. K. Samantaray</i>	The Kandhs of Nayagarh	281
33.	<i>Sipra Routray</i>	Physionometric and Nutritional Survey of Kondhs of Phiringia Grampanchayat of Phulbani District	286
34.	<i>J. Swain</i>	The Kondh Pantheon and their Social Significance	293
35.	<i>B. B. Moharana</i>	A Tribal Dassarah in Orissa	300
36.	<i>T. Sahoo</i>	Tribal Dussera in Kandhamal	305

37.	<i>P. Samantray, S. S. Mohanty, P. Patel &amp; M. K. Jena</i>	Indigenous Knowledge of Shifting Cultivation: Observations on three Primitive Tribal communities in Odisha	313
38.	<i>S. P. Rout</i>	Dom Exploitation in the Kondh villages of Koraput District	327
39.	<i>N. K. Behura &amp; B. N. Sahu</i>	Mutha; The Traditional Political Organization of the Kondh (with specific reference to Pusungia Mutha in the Phulbani District of Orissa)	335
40.	<i>N. R. Patnaik</i>	Oath and Ordeal in Khond society of Nineteenth Century Orissa	344
41.	<i>M. Acharya &amp; R. P. Mohanty</i>	Games vis-a-vis Socialization : A Case Study among Kondh children	350
42.	<i>Kalpana Patra, D. Panda &amp; S. K. Palita</i>	Ethno-Medicinal Practices of the Kondh of Eastern Ghats	355
43.	<i>Srisha Patel</i>	ABO Blood Group of the Kondhs of Daringibadi (Phulbani, Orissa)	362
44.	<i>Bhagyashree Acharya</i>	Art and Crafts by Kondh Women in contemporary context	365
45.	<i>R. C. Sahoo</i>	Educational Problems of the Kondhs of Kashipur Block of Orissa	376
46.	<i>Nihar Ranjan Patnaik</i>	Growth of Education among the Kandha tribe in the 19th Century	383

**B. Dongria Kandha**

47.	<i>S. C. Mohanty</i>	DongriaKondh	394
48.	<i>A. C. Sahoo</i>	Life and Culture of the Dongria Kondhs	396
49.	<i>A.B.Ot a &amp; S.C.Mohanty</i>	Dongria Kandha	411
50.	<i>A. C. Sahoo</i>	The Traditions and Customs of the Dongria Kandha of Orissa	426
51.	<i>S. Panda</i>	Demography of Kondh village	434
52.	<i>T.Patnaik, B.B. Mohanty &amp; P. K. Nayak</i>	The Dongria Kondh Youth Dormitory: An agent of development	442
53.	<i>S. Routray</i>	The Status of Women among the Dongria Kondh	467
54.	<i>Florencia Bara</i>	Child Rearing Practices and Socialization Process among the Dongria Kondh	476
55.	<i>P. S. Das Patnaik</i>	Bejunis; Their initiation into Shamanhood	489
56.	<i>A.K. Gomango &amp; S. C. Mohanty</i>	Festivals, Rituals and Shamans among the Dongria Kandha	497
57.	<i>A.K. Gomango</i>	Ethnic Healers among the Dongria Kondh of Orissa	518
58.	<i>N. Patnaik, F. Bara &amp; A. Mall</i>	Herbal Medicines of Dongria Kondhs	532
59.	<i>J. P. Rout &amp; K. Patnaik</i>	Chaiti Parab in Maa Majhi Ghariani Temple	539
60.	<i>P. S. Das Patnaik</i>	Duna : Its Implications in the Dongria Kondh Culture	544
61.	<i>P. S. Das Patnaik</i>	Concept of Debt among the Dongria Kondhs	549
62.	<i>A. Mall &amp; T. Sahoo</i>	A Comparative Study of indebtedness among the Dongria Kondh and the Juang	556



63.	<i>P. S. Das Patnaik</i>	Liquor among the Dongria Kondh of Orissa	587
64.	<i>T. Sahoo &amp; P. K. Nayak</i>	Dongria Kondh Labour Cooperatives: Their relevance in the development process	594
65.	<i>P. S. Das Patnaik</i>	Ownership Pattern, Land Survey and Settlement and its impact on the Dongria Kondhs of Orissa	614
66.	<i>A. C. Sahoo</i>	Shifting Cultivation to Horticulture: A Case Study of the Dongria Kondh Development Agency (Kurli), Chatikona	628
67.	<i>P. S. Das Patnaik &amp; B. B. Mohanty</i>	Dongria Kondhs of Orissa : Then and Now	637
68.	<i>B.K. Mangaraj &amp; Upali Aparajita</i>	Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of development programmes in a MicroProject	658
<b>C.</b>	<b>Kutia Kandha</b>		
69.	<i>S. C. Mohanty</i>	Kutia Kandha : A Socio-Cultural Profile	676
70.	<i>A. B. Ota, &amp; A. C. Sahoo</i>	Kutia Kandha	691
71.	<i>D. K. Joshi, S. Mund &amp; M. P. Mishra</i>	Habit, Habitat & Geographical aspect of Kutia Kandha	709
72.	<i>K. Mohapatra</i>	Kedu: A big festival of the Kutia Kondh	715
73.	<i>S. C. Mohanty</i>	Social Position and Property Rights of Kutia Kondh Women	718
74.	<i>Almas Ali</i>	Health and Genetic Problem of Kutia Kondhs of Burlubaru village in Phulbani District (Orissa)	726

75.	<i>M. K. Jena, K. Seeland &amp; Kamala Ku. Patnaik</i>	Ethnic Aspects of Indian Sago Palm (Caryota Urens-L) : An Ethno-Botanical Study among Kutia Kandha	736
76.	<i>Gitanjali Nayak</i>	A Study of Kutia Khond Foot	743
77.	<i>Gitanjali Nayak</i>	A Study of Bettman's Figure among The Kutia Khond of Orissa	750
78.	<i>N. K. Behura &amp; N. Panigrahi</i>	Impact of Special Micro Project on The livelihood of Kutia Kandhas	753
79.	<i>Kalpna Patnaik</i>	Kutia Kondh Development Agency (KKDA) Lanjigarh: A Development Profile	763
80.	<i>Smruti Ranjan Patra</i>	Kutia Kondh Development through the years: Issues and Concerns	777
81.	<i>S. C. Mohanty</i>	Stability and Change in the customary way of life of the Kutia Kandha	789
<b>(32) KISAN</b>			
82.	<i>S. C. Mohanty</i>	Kisan	795
83.	<i>U. C. Mohanty</i>	Kisan	797
84.	<i>B. Chowdhury</i>	Kisan	800
85.	<i>Nityananda Patnaik</i>	The Kisan - A Little Known tribe inhabiting the district of Sundargarh	806
86.	<i>A. B. Ota, &amp; T. Sahoo</i>	Kisan	810
87.	<i>U. C. Mohanty</i>	Kisan Caste Assembly in Sundargarh	817
88.	<i>U. C. Mohanty</i>	Traditional Officials in the Kisan society	823
89.	<i>U. C. Mohanty</i>	Change in the Leadership Pattern in Kisan society	827

**(34) KOLAH LOHARAS, KOL LOHARAS**

- |     |                                  |             |     |
|-----|----------------------------------|-------------|-----|
| 90. | <i>S. C. Mohanty</i>             | Kol Lohara  | 834 |
| 91. | <i>A.B.Ota &amp; S.C.Mohanty</i> | Kol Loharas | 836 |

**(36) KOLI, MALHAR**

- |     |  |                                      |     |
|-----|--|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 92. | <i>M. Behera</i>                                 | Koli, Malhar                         | 842 |
| 93. | <i>THRTI</i>                                     | Social Status of the Kolis of Orissa | 846 |
| 94. | <i>THRTI</i>                                     | Ethnic Status of Malhar              | 849 |
| 95. | <i>A.B.Ota, S.C. Mohanty &amp; B.K. Paikaray</i> | Malhar                               | 853 |

**(37) KONDA DORA**

- |     |   |            |     |
|-----|---|------------|-----|
| 96. | <i>S.C. Mohanty</i>                               | Konda Dora | 863 |
| 97. | <i>Manmohan Mohapatra</i>                         | Konda-Dora | 865 |
| 98. | <i>Sarat Das</i>                                  | Konda-Dora | 869 |
| 99. | <i>A.B. Ota, S.C. Mohanty &amp; B.K. Paikaray</i> | Konda Dora | 872 |

**(38) KORA**

- |      |   |      |     |
|------|---|------|-----|
| 100. | <i>S. C. Mohanty</i>                              | Kora | 882 |
| 101. | <i>G. N. Satpathy</i>                             | Kora | 884 |
| 102. | <i>G. B. Sahoo</i>                                | Kora | 888 |
| 103. | <i>A.B. Ota, S.C. Mohanty &amp; S.C. Pattnaik</i> | Kora | 891 |

**(39) KORUA**

- |      |  |       |     |
|------|--|-------|-----|
| 104. | <i>A.B.Ota, S.C. Mohanty &amp; B.K. Paikaray</i> | Korua | 899 |
|------|--|-------|-----|

**(40) KOTIA**

- |      |  |       |     |
|------|--|-------|-----|
| 105. | <i>F. Bara</i>                                 | Kotia | 908 |
| 106. | <i>A.B.Ota, S.C. Mohanty &amp; H. B. Barad</i> | Kotia | 913 |

**(41) KOYA**

107.	<i>S.C. Mohanty</i>	Koya	921
108.	<i>P. K. Mohapatra</i>	Koya	924
109.	<i>P. K. Mohapatra</i>	Koya	937
110.	<i>P. K. Mohapatra</i>	Handbook on Koya	948
111.	<i>A. B. Ota &amp; T. Sahoo</i>	Koya	1010
112.	<i>P. K. Mohapatra</i>	A short note on the shifting cultivation of the Koyas	1022
113.	<i>Padmini Pathi</i>	Biodiversity in crops and Heritage Agriculture systems of Koya	1028
114.	<i>Manoranjan Acharya</i>	System of Exchange among Koyas	1037
115.	<i>Madhumita Ray</i>	Property Rights for Women: A Case from the Koya community in Orissa	1047

**(42) KULIS**

116.	<i>B. B. Mohanty</i>	Kuli	1072
117.	<i>P. Das Pattanaik</i>	Kuli	1077
118.	<i>T. R. B.</i>	Status of the Kuli caste in the district of Bolangir and Sambalpur	1080



# KANDHA GAUDA \*

*A. B. Ota* <sup>1</sup>

*S. C. Mohanty* <sup>2</sup>

*Sushree Sangita Mohanty* <sup>3</sup>

## IDENTITY

The Kandha Gauda, a Scheduled Tribe of Odisha is numerically a small tribe and mostly found in Kandhamal, Bolangir, Nawrangpur and Sundergarh districts. They are also known as Tanla Gauda. However they are thinly scattered in many parts of Odisha. As per 2011 census, the total population of the tribe in the state is 26,403 out of which 13,318 are males and 13,085 are females. The sex ratio is 983 females per 1000 males and overall literacy rate is 56.49% out of which male and female literacy rates are 67.74% and 45.11% respectively. They speak a Dravidian language, Kui – the mother tongue of the Kandha tribe of Kandhamal at intra community level and use Odia language for conversation with others.

Kandha Gauda is believed to be a subset of Kandha tribe. The name 'Kandha Gauda' is an inter-mixture of the term Kandha and the Gauda (cowherd) that comes from the community's traditional occupation of herding the cattle of the Kandha tribe. In exchange of this traditional service, their Kandha masters provided them food twice a day and made annual payment (*bartan*) in shape of paddy per cow per annum.

## Dress and Ornaments

The traditional dress of the Kandha Gauda male is *dhoti*, *gamchcha* and *lungi*. Presently they are wearing shirts, banions and pants while going outside. On special occasions, a headgear is worn. Traditionally, females wear coarse handloom sarees with or without a blouse. Kandha Gauda women are very fond

---

\*Published in the Photo Handbook on Kandha Gauda, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2018

<sup>1</sup> Director & Special Secretary, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI

<sup>3</sup> Former Research Scholar, ATLC, Bhubaneswar

of ornaments. They beautify themselves with hair-pins, earrings, nose-rings and necklaces, silver ornaments and glass beads.

### SETTLEMENT & HOUSING PATTERN

The settlement pattern of the Kandha Gauda village is of linear type like those of their Kandha masters. Two rows of houses running on either side of the central street with the thatch of the adjacent houses merging in such a way that it gives an impression of a long roof stretching from one end of the village to the other. At the centre of the village street, there is an altar dedicated to the Earth Goddess called Jakhri. In some villages, among the primitive sections, they had in the past well organized dormitories called Dhanger Iddu for both unmarried boys and girls like those of the Kandhas. The permission of their traditional headman is obtained before one constructs a house in their settlement.

#### House:

Traditionally, they live in low wooden houses rectangular in shape like those of the Kandhas. The walls are made of wooden planks or bamboos plastered with mud. A Kandha Gauda house generally consists of front and rear verandas, a bedroom in the centre and a small kitchen. The floor is raised slightly above the ground level. Each house has a low ceiling which provides a garret (*attu*) for storing grains and household articles. Then construction of the double sloped roof begins by fixing wooden planks. In the Kandha Gauda houses, there are very simple household articles such as, gourd containers, wooden, bamboo and stone articles, baskets, earthen and aluminium pots and iron implements.

### SOCIAL LIFE

The community is divided into several exogamous lineages like Pradhan, Behera, Nayak and Bhoi which are used as surnames. The lineage of a person is known by his surname. The lineage does not have any hierarchy and each are of equal status. The main function of this lineage is to indicate their descent, by which they can avoid marriages within the lineage, as they consider lineage members as brothers and sisters. Among them change of surname is not allowed.

The family is the smallest unit in Kandha Gauda social organization. The nature of the family is patrilineal and patrilocal. The most common type of family is nuclear for it consists of husband, wife and their unmarried children. They share a common kitchen and work for the maintenance of the family. The nuclear family is converted to vertically extended family when the married sons bring in their wives. The sons get separated from their natal family after dividing the property into equal shares among themselves following the rule of equigeniture. Daughters are maintained in their paternal family up to their marriage; after that they have no claim to their father's property. Succession to the traditional office of father, if any, is by the eldest son. Joint and extended families are very rare. The father is the

head of the family and he exercises his authority in every sphere, which is passed on to the eldest son after his death. Children are socialized within the family.

## Life-Cycle Rituals

### Pregnancy and Child birth

Pregnancy and child birth are welcome events in a Kandha Gauda family. Though they do not observe pre-delivery rituals, an expectant mother is required to observe certain restrictions in respect of her food, movements and activities for the safety of her and the baby in her womb.

The delivery is attended by an old and experienced lady who acts as the midwife. The delivery takes place in a secluded room or on the rear veranda. The umbilical cord is severed by the midwife with the help of a sharp-edged arrow and then buried in a deep hole in the backyard of the house. The new born baby is then cleaned thoroughly in lukewarm water mixed with turmeric paste. Post-delivery pollution is observed for ten days during which both mother and baby lay in the secluded room attended by the midwife.

The naming ceremony is performed at a suitable time after the period of pollution is over. The baby is named by the priest only after he has worshipped the Kandha-Gauda goddess, *Badrabali*. After that there is a small celebration with relatives and a small feast is hosted. The *Mundan* (head shaving) ceremony, circumcision, first feeding of cereals, thread wearing ceremony or puberty rites are not observed by the Kandha-Gauda.

### Marriage

They strictly follow the rules of community endogamy and lineage exogamy. Generally, adult marriage and monogamy is commonly practised. Polygyny is allowed in exceptional cases of barrenness or incurable sickness of the first wife of course with her consent. Consanguineous marriage is taboo and is therefore not permitted. Junior sororate and junior levirate marriage is permissible if the persons are found to be suitable. Socially permissible marriage types are by negotiation, by service, by capture and by elopement.

Marriage rituals are performed at the bride-groom's residence. The bride and her relatives come to the groom's house where the marriage ceremony is performed by the community priest. Feasts are given by both the sides with buffalo meat and barrels of liquor. After that the bride and groom enter the groom's house and stand facing each other on a yoke placed on the floor at the main entrance of the house. The groom's relatives perform rituals like, touching the cheeks of the groom with a *pithy* (cake) made of rice paste and then with rice and turmeric. They also perform the *bandana* rite. Then the bride and groom enter the house of the groom where the *chauthi* (nuptial ceremony) is performed.



Married women wear a necklace made of *kaincha* (a kind of bead) as the symbol of marriage. *kanyamula* or *kanyasuna* (bride price) as well as *jautuka* (dowry) are presently practised by them which was not being practised earlier. Both bride price and dowry are given in cash as well and in kind. Due to the influence of the caste Hindus, the dowry system is also now prevalent.

Residence after marriage is generally patrilocal. Divorce is permissible with social approval. The reasons for divorce are adultery, maladjustment, cruelty, practice of witchcraft and sorcery. Both the parties can divorce but generally a divorce occurs when the wife returns the bangles to the husband as a sign of divorce. Thereafter, they approach the village council and ask for approval and once approved they return each other's dowry as well as brideprice, the list of which is kept during marriage. Divorce compensation is given to the wife's parents, but if the divorce occurs for the wife's fault then compensation is given to the husband. Children stay with their father after divorce. Remarriage of widow, widower, male and female divorcees, sororate and levirate are permissible.

### **Death**

The Kandha Gauda, practice cremation for deceased adult members and burial is undertaken for dead children and victims of infectious diseases. Death in a family is consoled by all community members of the village and they come to console the bereaved family, crying loudly and extolling the dead one's virtues.

After death, the corpse is taken outside the house after an hour to give the body a thorough wash. Female affines do this. The hair of the corpse is shaved and the body is covered with a new cloth, after smearing it with castor oil. The corpse and other necessary items are taken to the cremation ground (*masani*). Men and women follow the bier. The corpse is kept on the pyre and one of the consanguine inserts a bunch of grass and lights it by means of burnt firewood. They all leave the pyre still alight. On the way back they bathe in the stream and return home.

The death pollution is observed for eleven days. Every day during the first ten days there are some rituals like worshipping and offering of food and drinks to the spirit of the dead. The final offering to the departed soul is performed on the eleventh day with the sacrifice of a chicken or a goat for the peace and well-being of the departed soul. The ancestor spirits (*dumba*) are worshiped by the Shamans (Bejuni). The earth Goddess is also worshipped by the village priest or Jani. The mortuary rite comes to an end when the Jani sprinkles water on the feet of each person present there to absolve the house finally from death pollution. In the evening the family of the deceased hosts a grand feast which is attended by the members of the patri-lineage, as well as affines and villagers.

### **LIVELIHOOD**

The main economic resources of the Kandha Gauda are land and forest. A majority of them are landless and a very few have their own marginal land

holdings for cultivation. They develop quality of their agricultural land by using manures and fertilizers. They produce short duration paddy, wheat etc. besides long duration paddy. The distribution of land among them is lineage based.

Their traditional as well as present occupation is cow-herding. Some of them work as skilled and non-skilled labourers in government or other services and are also engaged in subsidiary occupations like shifting cultivation, wage earning, collection of minor forest products, fishing, petty trade, industrial labour, working in mines and quarries to supplement the income.

They have direct links with the local market. The local market is held once a week, locally known as *hata*. They exchange commodities by both, barter and cash systems. Previously some of the Kandha-Gaudas worked as bonded-labourers under some *Sahukars* (money-lenders) but now bonded labourers are few and there is a rise in daily wage casual labourers, agricultural and industrial labourers among the Kandha-Gauda.

### Food Habits

They are non-vegetarians and take foods like meat, fish, chicken and eggs. Rice is their staple food but they also consume maize and wheat to a considerable amount. They eat pulses like *kulthi*, *urad*, *moong* and *masur*. They use groundnut, mustard and *mahua* oil as their main cooking mediums. They consume several types of edible roots and tubers such as potato, *kandamula* (sweet potato), *mula* (raddish), *saru* and vegetables like brinjal, ladies finger, tomato, cabbage, cauliflower and others moderately. They drink tea and milk and consume milk products.

Men and women dine together. The old people and children are served first. *Peja*, a gruel prepared from a kind of millet (*ragi*), serves as morning tiffin, which is usually eaten at early morning. The same is also taken during lunch in the fields or swiddens or in the forest. The thirst is relieved by drinking sago-palm juice (*salap*). The evening meal is considered to be the best meal, as rice and a leafy vegetable curry add charm to the supper. Sometimes they also eat rice. They are fond of fish, crabs and snails. Dry fish is enjoyed with the greatest satisfaction.

Occasionally, men take alcoholic drinks which they purchase from the *Sundhi* (distiller caste). They use both distilled and fermented liquor for socio-religious purposes. They have local varieties in liquors like, *mohuli*, sago-palm juice (*salap*) and date-palm juice (*tadi*). Local herbs and roots are added to the juice to increase its alcoholic content. Mahua flowers are collected and liquor is prepared to meet the requirements of special occasions. Liquor is regarded as a food and at the same time a ritualistic food to satisfy deities and spirits. It is considered a social necessity and therefore consumed irrespective of sex and age.

They smoke *bidi*, *pika* (indigenous cheroot made of *sal* leaves) and sometimes cigarettes. They chew tobacco, betel leaf and use *gurakhu* (a widely used tobacco tooth paste) and snuff.

### MAGICO-RELIGIOUS BELIEFS & PRACTICES

The Kandha Gauda profess Hinduism. Like the Kandhas, “Dharani Penu” (Earth Goddess) is their Supreme deity. They worship a community deity known as *Bodrabali*. Village and regional deities like *Gramadevati*, *Thakurani*, *Gramaseni*, *Baraldevi*, *Siva*, *Vishnu*, *Trinatha*, *Laxmi*, *Parvati* etc., are also worshipped by them. They worship *Baraldevi* once a year in the month of *Pausha* (December-January). They worship two sticks, one made from *Kendu* plant and another from the *Patuli* plant. They consider the *Kendu* stick to be male and *patuli* stick as female. These two sticks have been deified by them, and they believe that these sticks grow in length every year due to supernatural powers and their worship.

They have sacred specialist known as *Dehuri* belonging to their own community for the worship of *Bodrabali* and the deified sticks. The head of the house can also perform this worship if the priest is absent. For other religious ceremonies they have sacred specialists like the *pujari* from the Brahman community and *Dehuri*, *Jhakar*, *Jani* from the Kandha community. These sacred specialists perform life cycle rituals and also worship the deities. The Dishari is the medicine man-cum-astrologer. The Kalisis are the shamans.

They observe festivals like *Dasahara*, *Nuakhai*, *Dola-Purnima*, *Lakhmipuja*, *Gamha Purnima*, etc., which are of socio-religious as well as of socio-economic significance. They visit the Hindu religious shrines and also participate in traditional Hindu festivals like *Rathayatra*, *Dasahara*, *Holi*, but they do not have any specific role in these festivals.

The Kandha Gauda has the cult of ancestor worship. The ancestor spirits appear in dreams when they desire to receive periodic worship. Apart from these spirits, they also believe in the existence of ghost, which are controlled by the shamans. They have faith in black and white magic.

### SOCIAL CONTROL

The Kandha-Gauda has their traditional councils or panchayats at the village and regional levels. At the village level they obey the decisions of the traditional council of the village composed of the representatives of all the communities residing in the village. Their regional council constituted of the headmen of each constituent Kandha Gauda village is known as *Samaj*. The council sits at least once a year to discuss matters pertaining to the customary matters of the community. It acts as the guardian of customary norms and rules of the community and decides the cases of adultery, rape, elopement, theft and violation of customary rules. Punishments are awarded to the offenders to pay in cash and kind and in serious offences the culprit is ex-communicated or ostracized. They still have faith on their traditional councils

## CHANGING SCENARIO

Since development and change are inevitable, the Kandha Gauda are no exception to it. They are now in a state of transition as the results of decades of special endeavor of the Central and State Governments. Development agencies are trying to uplift them and develop awareness for new ways of life. They have accepted the new statutory Panchayatraj System. The socio-economic development has brought immense changes in their lifestyle and cultural ethics. The State Government is focusing on their overall development to raise their standard of living through multifarious development programmes relating to education, health & sanitation, economy, environment, infrastructure development etc. and it has transformed their outlook to some extent.

In the present times, the Kandha-Gauda favour education for their boys but have a biased attitude towards education for girls, because they are of the opinion that girls are only supposed to do household chores. Most of the Kandha-Gauda are either illiterate or have studied to the primary level only. A few boys study up to college level and a few girls up to the secondary level.

The main cause of dropping out of school among them is their poverty. Instead of spending time in school many of their children are required to earn and supplement the family income. Many of the Kandha-Gauda girls drop out because their parents consider it a taboo, i.e., mixing with boys in co-education schools and due to this some of them are not even sent to any school.

Coming under the influence of neighbouring communities and being educated now-a-days they contact doctors and receive modern health care services though they still have faith in their traditional magico-religious remedies which they resort to in the first instance and when it fails they go to the medical facilities. They favour family planning methods and couples prefer to have two to three children. Once their children are a little grown-up they become additional economic strengths of the family. They avail of the ICDS programmes like mother-infant-care and immunization.

One can notice visible changes in their way of life due to acculturation and modernisation. But on the other side there are loosening of the strong social ties even among the villagers, clansmen and lineage and family members. The old custom of reciprocal help is dying very fast. Time will show to what extent they will conserve their cultural identity as a distinct community in the process of their integration with the mainstream society.

## K A W A R \*

*S. Ray*<sup>1</sup>

The Kavar, Kanwar or Kour are one of the primitive tribes of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar. The Kavar trace their origin from the Kauravas of the Mahabharata, who were defeated by the Pandavas at the great battle of Hastinapur. The Kavar have lost their own language, if they ever had one, and now speak a corrupt form of Chhattisgarhi dialect of Hindi. They belong to the Dravidian group.

In Orissa the Kavar are found in all districts but concentrated in large numbers in Sundargarh, Sambalpur and Kalahandi. The Kavar population in the 1981 Census was 8549, which increased to 9582 by 1991. The growth rate of population during the decade 1981-91 was 12.08 percent. The literacy percentages in 1981 and 1991 were 13.7 and 26.8 respectively. This shows that there was a growth in the literacy rate during 1991. According to the 1991 census there were 1030 females per 1000 males among the Kavar. The Kavar greatly resemble the Gonds in appearance and manners. Dalton describes them as 'A dark, coarse featured, broad-nosed, wide-mouthed and thick-lipped race, decidedly ugly, but taller and better set up than most of the other tribes.'

The Kavar have eight endogamous divisions, Tanwar, Kamalbansi, Paikara, Dudh-Kavar, Rathia, Chanti, Cherwa and Rautia. The Tanwar group, also known as Umara, to which the Zamindars belong, is considered to be of the highest social ranking as compared to others. They now claim to be Tamara Rajputs and wear the sacred thread. The Kamalbansi or 'stock of the lotus' may be so called because they are the oldest sub-division and are considered to rank next after the Tanwar or zamindar group. The Paikara are the most numerous sub-tribe, deriving their name from the Paiks or fort soldiers, and they formerly followed this occupation by being employed in the armies. They still worship the two-edged

---

\* Published in *Tribes of Orissa* (revised edition), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2004, pp. 166-169

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

sword, known as the Jhagna Khanda or Sword of strife, on the day of Dasahara. Colonel Dalton states that the name 'Dudh' or 'Milk' Kawar has the meaning of 'cream of the Kawar', and he considered this sub-caste to be the highest in social order of ranking. The Rathia are a territorial group, being immigrants from Rath, a wild tract of the Raigarh Ex-State. The Rautia are probably the descendants of Kawar fathers and mothers of the Rawat (herdsman) caste. The Kawar and Rawat are accustomed to intermarry. The Cherwa are probably another hybrid group descended from Kawar fathers and Chero mothers, the latter being a tribe of Chotanagpur. The Chanti, who derive their name from a word for ant, are considered to be the lowest in social ranking.

None of the sub-castes eat together. As reported by Russell and Hiralal, the tribe has a large number of exogamous clans, which are generally totemic and named after plants and animals. The names of 117 septs have been recorded, and there are probably even more. A selection of names is given in the following list:

1. Andil-Born from an egg
2. Bagh-Tiger
3. Bichhi-Scorpion
4. Bilwa-Wild cat
5. Bokra-Goat
6. Chandrama-Moon
7. Chanwar-A whisk
8. Chita-Leopard
9. Chuva-A well
10. Champa-A sweet scented flower
11. Dhenki-A pounding lever
12. Darpan-Mirror
13. Gobra-A dung insect
14. Hundar-A wolf
15. Janta-Grinding mill
16. Kothi-A store house
17. Khumari-A leaf umbrella
18. Lodha-A wild dog
19. Mama-Maternal uncle
20. Mahadeo- The deity
21. Nun -A packet of salt
22. Sendur- Vermillion
23. Sua- Parrot
24. Telsi- Oily

Generally it may be said that the clans have taken their names from animals, birds and even articles of food or dress and household implements. The totemic objects are taboo for use by the particular totemic group. Those whose

clans are named after plants or animals usually abstain from injuring or cutting them, but where these rule would cause too much inconvenience it is transgressed.

Marriage within the same clan is not possible. The Kavar practice adult marriage. A man can marry his wife's younger sister but marriage with wife's elder sister is prohibited. Marriage by negotiation is common. The proposal for a match always comes from the boy's father. The boy's party has to pay a bride price known as *sule*, which is paid in cash, husked or un husked rice, pulses or oil. The amount of bride price differs from one sub-caste to another. If a widower marries a girl, a larger bride price is expected. The wedding follows, and in many respects conforms to the ordinary Hindu ritual, but Brahmins are not employed. A girl going astray with a Kavar before marriage may be fined and the fine from her parents is spent in holding a feast. For a liaison with any other outsider she is excommunicated. Widow Remarriage is permitted except in the Tanwar sub-caste. The younger brother of the deceased has the right to keep her. If the widow desires to marry another man; she loses her right to property. No particular ceremony is held for the purpose nor is any bride price is paid. Polygamy is permitted, but is not common. Divorce is permitted for serious disagreement or bad conduct on the part of the wife.

Birth pollution continues for five days and after this period the mother is given regular food. On the fifth day the house is cleaned. The umbilical cord is cut by the midwife. It is buried in the market if the parents want the boy to be a trader, in the place where village council sits if they want him to be eloquent, and near the shrine if the child is to be a pious man. In the case of a girl the cord is usually buried in a dung heap which is regarded as a symbol of fertility. Five months after birth the lips of the child are touched with rice and milk and it is named.

The Kavar practice both burial and cremation, which depends on economic condition of the deceased's family. If a family can afford to obtain wood, they burn the dead. In the case of those dying of smallpox and cholera, the dead are usually buried. The corpse is laid on its side in the grave, with its head to the north and face to the east. A little *til*, cotton, *urad* and rice are thrown on to the grave to serve as seed grain for the dead man's cultivation in the other world. A dish, a drinking vessel and a cooking pot are placed on the grave with the same idea, but are afterwards taken away by the Dhoba (washer man). In the case of cremation the ceremonies are very elaborate and generally resemble those of the Hindus. After the funeral the mourners bathe and return home. Death mourning continues for ten days for a man, nine days for a woman and three days for children under three years old.

The religion of the Kavar is entirely of an animistic character. They have a host of local and tribal deities, the main one being the Jhagra Khand or two-edged sword. They also have a supreme deity whom they call Bhagwan and identify Him with the sun. The tiger is deified as Bagharra Deo and worshipped in every village for the protection of cattle from wild animals. The sword, the gun, the axe and the

spear each have a special deity. They also believe that every article of household furniture is the residence of a spirit, and that if anyone steals or injures it without the owner's permission, the spirit will bring some misfortune on him in revenge. Theft is said to be unknown among the Kawar.

The Kawar believe in the efficacy of imitative and sympathetic magic like other primitive people. Every Kawar village has its *tonhi* or witch, to whom epidemic diseases, sudden illnesses and other calamities are ascribed. The witch is nearly always some unpopular old woman, and several instances are known of the murder of these unfortunates. Tuesday is considered the best day for weddings. Thursday and Monday for beginning work in the fields, and Saturday for worshipping the gods.

The Kawar living among Hindus in north-west Orissa live in spacious house and wear the sort of dress and ornaments found among the lower castes of Hindu society. Women wear pewter rings around their necks. They decorate the ears with silver pendants, but as a rule do not wear nose-rings. Women are tattooed on the breast, arms and legs with miscellaneous patterns.

The Kawar consider military service to be their traditional occupation but most of them have given up their traditional occupation and now they are mainly cultivators and labourers. The Routia make ropes and sleeping cots, but the other Kawar consider such work to be degrading. They have the ordinary Hindu rules of inheritance. Hunting in the forest is carried out at times. Collection of edible roots and forest products supplement their food and economy. The staple food of Kawar is rice. They also eat gruel of millet and maize but abstain from eating beef, pork and other unclean foods. They drink rice beer and other alcoholic drinks. The Kawar take food only from Gonds and Gonds also take food from them.

Since independence remarkable changes have been taking place in all sections of the tribal population. This is also true in the case of Kawar, who are rising from their deep slumber and are marching ahead in progress and prosperity.



## KAWAR \*

*A. B. Ota*<sup>1</sup>

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>2</sup>

*A. K. Gamango*<sup>3</sup>

### IDENTITY

The tribe Kavar or Kanwar is numerically a small and little known Scheduled Tribe community inhabiting Sundargarh, Jharsuguda and Nuapada districts of western Odisha and the adjoining areas of undivided Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West-Bengal and are also distributed in Rajasthan and Maharashtra States. Their habitat is generally located in an irregular topography with pictorial landscapes of mountain ranges surrounded by lush green vegetation of deep forest. It is said that they are immigrants to Odisha from their original habitat in Ranchi district in the neighboring state of Jharkhand.

The community has been listed in the ST list of Odisha as Kavar, Kanwar but has synonyms/phonetic variations like Kaur, Kaanr, Kuanr, Kuanwar, Konwar. They use surnames like *Sai*(common), *Kuanr*, *Kuanwar*, *Konwar*, *Chhatar*, *Kapat*, *Banjar*, *Singar*, *Badaik*, *Endua*, *Bag*, *Ray*, *Chitra*, *Kuanar*, *Bati*, *Katri*, *Libri*, *Bardi*, *Baikhar*, etc.

They are a Dravidian tribe, may be an off shoot of the Gond tribe. According to Singh (1997: 485) "on the whole, they maintain a distinct biological identity from the numerically dominant central India tribal groups of Gond id strains." Captain Blunt (1794) in his report in Asiatic Researches, described the community as a "hill tribe called Cowhirs".

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Kavar, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2017

<sup>1</sup> Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI

<sup>3</sup> Deputy Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

The Kawars trace their origin from the Kauravas of ancient era. Early ethnographer, Dalton (1872) opined them as an aboriginal tribe, cling to tradition of their origin who stated themselves as descendants of survivors of the sons of Kuru who formed the armies of Hasthinapur and after their defeat in the great Mahabharat war, took refuge in the hill countries of central India. But Singh (1997) stated them as Tomar, a Kshatriya clan, to whom they trace their origin. He also cited Trivedi (1971), who reported them as trusted soldiers of Haidi banshi chiefs of Ratanpur. They are a migrating community and have left their original home land during long past to other States in search of sustainable pursuits. Dalton (1872:133) reported them as having "resemblance to the offspring of Nishad."

They are bilingual. They have already forgotten their original mother tongue belonging to the Dravidian family of languages and now speak Laria or Sadri, a nonliterary semi-autonomous Indo-Aryan language among themselves. They are well versed with the local tongue Odia, Hindi or Bengali and also use its script for inter-group communication.

According to 2011 Census, their total population in the state is 5225 out of which 2627 are males and 2598 are females and the sex ratio is 989 females per 1000 males. Total literacy of the tribe is 64.44% out of which male literacy is 76.73% and female literacy is 52.38%. The decadal growth rate of the tribe is - 29.20%.

### **Personal Appearance:**

In the remote past the Kawars were aboriginal and primitive hill tribe and living in a stage of isolation, ignorance, poverty and pursuing food gathering for their subsistence. In those days their dress was scanty. Their males were wearing a short piece of loin cloth (*lengti*) to conceal their pubic regions and women were wearing short piece of towel around their waist leaving the upper parts of body fully bare. Little children, below seven years of age were completely naked.

At present, their dress pattern resembles that of neighboring Hindu communities due to cultural assimilation and impact of modernity, influenced by close contact with civilized neighboring societies. Men wear *dhoti*, *kurta* (shirt), *lungi*, *gamucha* (napkin), *banian*, and women wear *saree*, blouse etc. Children as well as well to do persons wear pants and shirts etc.

Kawar women are fond of adorning themselves with various beautiful ornaments to look attractive and charming. Female ornaments consist of brass *khadu*, armlets, glass bangles, necklaces of various designs, *ghagla* made of brass, copper, lead, aluminum or alloy, finger rings made of brass or old coins, toe rings and *pahud* in their legs, silver pendants on their ear lobes. They like to put on these ornaments on festive occasions but according to their custom they do not use any nose ornaments.

Tattooing (*godna*) has become an old fashion. In the past, it was being done just after the marriage of a girl. The tattoos were of various designs and beautiful

motifs printed on the chest, arm and legs. Now for the women of the younger generation tattooing have gone out of fashion.

### SETTLEMENT & HOUSING

Kawar settlements are generally homogenous and are located in hill slope area amidst forest, near perennial hill stream which provides them drinking water throughout the year. In heterogeneous settlements, they exclusively dwell in separate wards, maintaining their own cultural identity while keeping social distance from the neighboring communities. Their houses are arranged in linear pattern leaving a narrow space in between as Village Street.

Individual houses are made with mud walls thatched with paddy straw, date palm leaves or with country made tiles (*khappar*) and are always low roofed. Some well to do families construct the walls using bricks with asbestos roofs. Houses have wide verandahs both on front and rear sides and are generally higher than the floor of the living room. Walls are cleanly polished using red or white clay and the verandahs are polished with black clay by their women folk.

Kawar houses are two roomed and have no windows for ventilation. The front room near the entrance is generally bigger and is used as the living room as well as to store their grains and the smaller one is used as kitchen. They install their household deity at one corner of their kitchen room. They have a separate shed at the rear side of their verandah to accommodate their domestic animals. The front verandah is used as sitting place in their leisure hours as well as to accommodate their guests at night. They keep their surrounding neat and clean.

### LIVELIHOOD

In the past, they were a forest dwelling tribe who they took up military service in the army of the then feudal rulers. At present, cultivation is the mainstay of their subsistence economy, which they supplement by allied pursuits such as wage labour both in agriculture and private sectors, animal husbandry, forest collection, petty business and seasonal hunting and fishing etc. They rear domestic animals like bullocks, cows, goats, sheep, fowls and ducks.

Paddy is their major crop, which they grow in their wet lands. In their up lands they produce a varieties of crops like hill paddy (*beda dhan*), *ragi*, minor millets like *kangu*, *kosla*, *janna*, oil seeds such as *alsi*, *rasi* and ground nut, pulses like *arhar*, *kandul*, *dangarani*, *ganthia*, *bodei*, *kulthi* (horse gram), *biri* (black gram) and *buta* (red gram) etc.

All of them possess small patches of kitchen at the backside of their dwelling house where they grow varieties of vegetables such as brinjal (*baigun*), potato, tomato (*patalghanta*), cabbage (*gobi*), radish (*mula*), pumpkin (*kumuda*), cow-pea (*jhudung*), *lau* (water melon), *semi* (seasum), chilly and maize etc. Women

contribute substantially to their family income, participating in cultivation, wage earning, forest collection etc besides attending to their routine household chores.

Some families among them form a "traditional labour cooperative" (*pancha*) to help each other in agricultural activities without any remuneration. They also have another form of labour cooperative (*madat*) under which one who lends help in agricultural activities is given some food.

### Food Habits:

Kawars are generally non-vegetarians. Rice and ragi constitute their staple diet. They relish on fish, dry fish, chicken, meat, eggs etc, but abstain from taking beef or pork. Both male and female are addicted to alcoholic drinks like country liquor (*mohulia*), rice beer (*handia*) and ragi beer (*kusuna*) and some among them brew it at their home fermenting the grains for home consumption as well as for marketing. Both male and female smoke hand rolled cigars (*pika*, *bidi*) and chew tobacco paste (*gudaku*).

## SOCIAL LIFE

The tribe Kawar is an endogamous community which is broadly divided into eight endogamous divisions such as (a) *Tanwar* or *Umrao* (b) *Kamal banshi* - the stock of the lotus, (c) *Paikara*- the foot soldier, (d) *Dudh Kawar* - the milk or cream of Kawars, (e) *Rathia* - the immigrants from chariot, (f) *Chanti* - who derive their name from the ant, (g) *Cherwa* - an illegal off shoot of Kawar father and Chero tribe woman and (h) *Rautia*- the herdsman. The Tanwar group is regarded as superior among them in social hierarchy and Chanti and Cherwa are inferior as they rear pigs. The Chanti occupies the lowest rank in Kawar society.

All these divisions are again sub-divided into as many as 117 exogamous and totemistic lineages (*gotiar/ gotra*) named after plants, animals and objects to regulate their matrimonial alliances. Some of these are as follows; *andil* (originated from egg), *bagh* (tiger), *bichhi* (scorpion), *bilwa* (wild cat), *bokra* (goat), *chandrama* (moon), *chanwar* (a whisk or broom for dance), *chita* (leopard), *chuva* (a well), *motiyo* (shaman), *singar* (well dressed), *kapat* (door), *pharsa* (a tree), *jhap* (basket), *champa* (a flower), *dhenki* (pounding lever), *darpan* (mirror), *gobira* (dung insect), *hundar* (wolf), *sikta* (jackal), *kolma* (fox), *janta* (grinding mill), *kothi* (grain store), *khumari/ chhatar* (leaf umbrella), *lodha* (wild dog), *chak* (grinder maker), *enua* (bullock), *besra* (praying bird), *khukhuri* (hen), *jada* (grinder), *mama* (maternal uncle), *mahadeo* (lord Siva), *nunmutaria* (salt pocket), *sendur* (vermilion), *sua* (parrot), *telasi* (oily), *mutungal*, *sarjal*, *baikar*, *bandi*, *katar*, *libri*, *badi*, *karsayal* (dear) and *thathmura* (pressed in sugar cane press) etc.

The people, whose clans are named after plants or animals, generally think themselves as descended from the totem and usually abstain from doing any harm to it but where the clan is called after some inanimate object, the rule of legitimacy

is repudiated. The community does not worship their totemic objects nor observe any ritual in honour of their totem.

**Family:**

Kawar family is less nuclear in structure and more in the form of either vertically extended or joint. They follow patrilocal rule of residence and patrilineal rule of descent. The ancestral property is distributed, equally among all the sons leaving an extra share for the eldest son. The daughters do not get any share from the paternal property but in the family having no male successor, the married daughters inherit the paternal property. The family, having no male issues may adopt a male child from the family of nearest patri-lineage, who later on inherits the property.

**Pre-Delivery Ritual:**

Kawar do not observe any pre-delivery ritual for a pregnant woman before the child birth, but if the woman suffers from any disease during this period, they seek the help of their traditional witch doctor - the Baiga/ Gunia for magico-religious healing. The pregnant woman is prohibited to sleep alone, travel alone in dark night or be exposed during lunar or solar eclipses and also imposed with some food restrictions.

**Child Birth:**

Usually, the birth of a child is arranged in a separate confinement in their rear verandah. They engage an experienced woman as midwife (*sutherain*) to assist the pregnant woman for easy and safe delivery of the child. The midwife cuts the umbilical cord using a knife (*chhura*) or a blade. The placenta (*putaphula*) is buried in a dung heap near the hearth (*chulla*) and the naval stump is buried near the threshold of the door way. After delivery of the baby the mother observes food restrictions and is provided with little diet for three days.

**Post-Delivery Ritual:**

Birth pollution continues for twelve days. They observe the rite, *chhati* on the sixth day of the child birth when the house is purified and the mother is allowed to take light food. The tonsure ceremony (*mundane*) and naming ceremony is also observed on this day and according to their custom, the name of day or month, the child takes birth is chosen. In the evening the family entertains the kinsfolk with sweetmeats along with rice beer.

The purificatory rite is observed on the twelfth day (*borein*) in which the mother takes her purificatory bath applying turmeric paste and drinking few drops of turmeric water after which she is allowed to resume cooking and other household chores.

The first cereal feeding ceremony is observed when the baby becomes six months old and the ear piercing ceremony is observed after three to five years of

the child birth. Men of Tanwar clan wear sacred thread and the threading ceremony is observed when the boy is above twelve years of age.

### **Puberty Rite:**

The Kawar do not observe puberty rite for adolescent girls attaining their first menarche. But the menstruating girl is imposed with certain social taboos and is prohibited to perform any household chores, entry into kitchen, touch the foods and water stored in the house for family use during this period. The pollution continues for seven days. On the eighth day morning, she takes purificatory bath anointing turmeric paste, in the nearby hill stream or pond.

### **Marriage:**

In Kawar society monogamy and adult marriage is the rule. In early days, child marriage was prevalent among them. Polygynous families are also seen in few cases where the first wife is found to be a barren or suffers from incurable diseases. Marriage, arranged through negotiation (*bhiha*) is considered ideal and prestigious mode of acquiring a spouse.

As a rule, the groom's family first initiates the marriage proposal as the bride's parents think it undignified to seek a mate for their daughter from their side. The groom's family engages a mediator (*karbaria*) to negotiate the proposal. On an appointed day, the boy accompanied by his friends, visit the chosen girl's house (*rangabula*), where both the boy and girl meet and talk with each other. If they chose each other than the marriage proposal is settled. Payment of bride price (*suk/ sukumal/ sukdam/ kaniamol*) is obligatory and is paid by both in cash and kind, consisting some cash, paddy/ rice, *dal*, *khadi* (clothes) and seven pieces of *sarees* and three to four goats.

The wedding rites are held at the bride's patrilocal residence. On the marriage day, the groom accompanied by his family members, friends, relatives and guests proceeds to the bride's house in a marriage procession with a band of music provided by Dom musicians. The bride's family, kins and villagers receive the party and entertain them with food and drinks.

An elder man, belonging to own community presides over the marriage ritual. A marriage pendal (*mandua*) is constructed for the purpose where the wedding rites are conducted. The bride and the groom revolve seven times around the sacred pole of the marriage altar and then the parents of the bride wash the feet of the newly wedded couple in milk. After that the marriage rites come to an end and the groom's party with the couple return to their home. The marriage is consummated in the patrilocal residence of the groom.

The other modes of marriages are by consent (*uderiyaadhuk*), by capture (*ghichhra bhiha*), by service (*gharajinha*), by elopement (*uderiyaabhagad*) etc. Another mode of marriage (*dharua bhiha*) is prevalent in their society in which a poor boy's

family, financially incapable to pay the bride price to the bride's parents, sends the boy to render his service for a period of one or two years to bride's family.

Junior levirate (*deor bhiha*), junior sororate (*sari bhiha*) and cross-cousin marriage is permitted in their society. Remarriage of widows or widowers (*sagai*) and divorcees (*chadra-chadri*) are also permitted. Divorce is allowed and either party can divorce his/her spouse on the grounds of maladjustment in conjugal life, barrenness or impotency, extra marital relationship, cruelty or sickness from contagious diseases etc.

They maintain marital links with their tribesmen living in a number of villages of neighboring Chhattisgarh State.

#### **Death Rites:**

The Kavar generally practice burial to dispose of their dead. Well-to-do families, who can afford, go for cremation. The corpses of infants, small pox or cholera victims and for deaths occurred due to tiger attack or snake bite and the dead body of pregnant women are buried in a separate burial ground (*mareghat*).

They generally lay the corpse in the burial pit in sleeping posture with its head towards north and face facing east. There they put some seed grains of *til*, cotton, *urad* (pulses) rice and the dead person's used cooking pot, drinking vessel and dish plate with the idea that the dead person's soul in the other world might cultivate and arrange for his/her own survival and will not disturb the family members. After disposal of the dead, the pal-bearers bathe in the nearest hill stream and return home. Near the entrance of the village, the man on the front collects a pebble from the road and passes it to others and after each of them touches it, the last man throws it to back with the belief that the departed soul will not follow them to their village and home to make any disturbances.

On the third day of the death, they visit the burial spot, where their priest cooks food and offers it with milk in a leaf cup to the departed soul. If they had cremated the dead, the priest collects a piece of bone to be immersed in holy water for salvation of the dead person's soul.

Death pollution continues for ten days and during this time, observance of rituals and festivals, relishing on non-vegetarian foods, visiting the sacred shrines, using oil, giving alms and sexual union are strictly tabooed. The purificatory rite is performed on the tenth day conducted by their community priest and the bereaved family hosts a non-vegetarian feast to kinsfolk, relatives and guests.

#### **RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES**

Kavar profess animism with admixture of some elements of Hinduism. Their supreme deity is Bhagwan, the Sun God. Their pantheon includes a number of deities like Thakur deo - the deity of agriculture and his consort Dulhadeo -the

rain god, Jhagara Khanda or two edged sword, Bagharradeo – the tiger god, the mythical snake god who live in forest in Sheshkund etc. Besides, there are many other deities like Mandwa Rani- the goddess of Mandwa hill, the river goddess-Sat Bahini, forest god who resides in sacred groves (*demulu*) at the village outskirts, Patul Paharia Budha (Ashada), Bhataparasi (deity of wealth), Kalamal, Rakasin (the witch deity), Raksha, Baharan, Talaparia, Gajanpot, Rakmauli and Mati Paharia etc.

Even their gun, axe, individual swords and spear each possess a special deity. Their village deities - Gaongasai, Mahamai are installed at the outskirts of village under shady trees. They worship their ancestors as their household deity. They propitiate their deities with great reverence with the help of Baiga, their traditional priest during festive occasions, begging their mercy for the betterment of human lives, wellbeing of their livestock, good rainfall as well as for bumper harvest of crops in their cornfields. Besides that they also worship Hindu deities and observe Hindu festivals like, Rathayatra, Diwali, Sivartri, and Holi etc.

They believe in black magic and existence of ghosts, witches and spirits, among whom some are benevolent and some are malevolent who cause calamities such as spread of epidemics, ill health in human life as well as their livestock. To appease these evil spirits, they seek the help of their traditional witch doctor called *tonhi/ gunia* and perform rituals near hill stream by offering coconut, country liquor and sacrificing hen or goat etc.

Their major festivals are *cherchera*, *akti*, *harelip*, *pitare manna*, *nayakhani* (new cereal eating), *sarhul*, *sohrai*, *karma* and *phogun*, etc. They have rich oral tradition of folk songs and folk tales relating to their origin, migration, origin of deities, earth and animals, plants and their famous folk dance, *karma nach* and *jhanjernach* etc.

## SOCIAL CONTROL

They have their own traditional community council called Jati Panchayat/ Jati Samaj both at village level and regional level. Sian is the head of the community council in a village. He is selected by the community members for five years term to look after their customary affairs. The other office bearers who assist him are *Panch Bhadrak* and community elites.

Their traditional community council acts as the guardian of their social norms and traditions. The Sian presides over its meetings and with the help of council members decides cases of pertaining to family disputes, quarrels, misbehavior, theft, rape, adultery, incest, divorce etc. It imposes penalty (*jarimana*) on the guilty persons in cash or kinds including a feast for community members. In some severe cases when girls / boys marry in lower castes, they are expelled from the community. Unsolved cases are referred to Khetra Adhykshya (regional chief) or Kendriya Adhykshya (central chief)



## CHANGING SCENE

Since independence, remarkable changes have been taking place in all sections of the tribal population. This is also true in the case of Kavar, who are rising from their threshold and are marching ahead keeping pace with the changing times.

Now, in the context of the Kavar, development efforts by the Government have a positive effect even though the Kavar are tradition bound. Their poor economic condition now never stands in their way and the Kavar shown interest in educating their children and accepting the development programmes. Because they have realized that the spread of education among them has a pride of place in the priorities of developmental needs of the people. It brings knowledge to the community and helps in acquiring a new strength to face the challenges of the dynamic and developing society. Earlier, their low economic conditions did not allow their children to go beyond the level of primary school and the girls, mostly dropped out at the primary level. This situation has changed now.

They have become aware of various development and welfare programmes introduced by the Government which has brought noticeable improvements to their socio-economic conditions. Introduction of modern agriculture, supply of improved variety of seeds, irrigation facility, market support for their surplus produce by the Government have brought confidence in them which has led to a remarkable change among them. Use of indigenous methods for their health care has been changed and they are now using both modern and traditional method of treatment but more inclined to modern methods of treatment. Attitude towards family planning is positive and favourable. But usually women get sterilized. The Kavar prefer small family of two or three children. They have improved their sanitary habits and get drinking water from tube wells, sanitary wells and other safe sources. Some well-to-do people possess radios, televisions, motor cycles, modern furniture and educated persons read newspapers. Now few of them are engaged in different institutional services. They are undergoing a phase of transition.

## KHARIA\*

*Umacharan Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

The Kharia, another interesting major tribe of Orissa, which has been classed on racial, cultural and linguistic grounds amongst the Munda group, concentrates chiefly in the north and north-western districts of Mayurbhanj, Sundergarh and Sambalpur. The distribution of the tribe according to 1961 census is given below:-

Sl. No	Name of the District	Total Population	Male	Female
1.	Kalahandi	516	256	260
2.	Koraput	350	145	205
3.	Sambalpur	19,180	9,475	9,705
4.	Bolangir	461	262	199
5.	Boudh-Kandhamal	317	159	158
6.	Ganjam,	252	135	117
7.	Sundergarh	53,243	26,578	26,665
8.	Dhenkanal	8,675	4,321	4,354
9.	Puri	1,344	661	683
10.	Keonjhar	282	170	112
11.	Cuttack	420	225	195
12.	Mayurbhanj	10,930	5,255	5,675
13.	Balasore	721	332	389
TOTAL		96,691	47,974	48,717

The Tribe is broadly divided into three distinctive divisions, viz., the Pahari Kharia or Erenga Kharia, the Dhelki Kharia and Dudh Kharia. The Pahari Kharia or the Hill Kharias have their stronghold in the Similipal range of Mayurbhanj. Besides, they are also seen in a good number in Nilgiri of Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Bonai of Sundargarh and Dhenkanal. The largest

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No.3, (Spl. Issue), TRB, Bhubaneswar 1963-64, pp.175-178

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, TRB, Bhubaneswar

concentration of the Dhelki Kharias is found in the ex-states of Gangpur in the Sundergarh district especially in the police-station of Talsara. Though Ranchi area is the home of Dudh Kharias they have spread throughout the Western Orissa along with Dhelki Kharias. Besides these, there are a few more divisions such as Munda Kharia, Oraon Kharia, Berga Kharia and Satera Kharia but these minor sections are either degraded groups or created on account of intermarriage with Munda, Oraon or other outsiders.

Hill Kharias regard themselves as the autochthones of the Mayurbhanj hills while both the Dudh Kharias and Dhelki Kharias possess traditions of their ancient migration from the Kaimur plateau or Rhotasgarh to Chotnagpur via Kharia Ghat. The Dhelkis came earlier to Chotnagpur and Dudh Kharias followed them.

These three divisions represent three grades of primitive culture. The Hill Kharias depend mainly on food gathering economy. They collect honey, silk cocoon, lac, the edible herbs and tubers and other minor forest products. The religious ideas and practices and social custom of the Hill Kharias are also equally primitive. The Dhelki Kharias have adopted settled plough cultivation and have evolved a more advanced religious and social system. Dudh Kharia section is most advanced culturally and enjoy higher social status. In Physical features also the Dhelki Kharias stand midway between the Paharia Kharias with their coarse features and Dudh Kharias with their comparatively fine features.

The Hill Kharias live on the tops or slopes of hills near forests. Their villages have irregular housing pattern. Some five to twelve families may live together in scattered houses which form their settlement. But Dhelki and Dudh Kharias live in regular villages with other castes and tribes. Every Dudh and Dhelki Kharia village has its separate Akhara or dancing and meeting place, its sacred grove and the cremation ground and clan cemeteries. The Hill Kharia settlements possess only the sacred groves.

The Hill Kharia house is a small rectangular hut with walls made of Sal Wood plastered with mud. The roofs are double-sloped which are thatched with grass. Generally a single room serves the purposes of sleeping and cooking though at times it is divided by an inner wall. The dwelling houses of Dudh and Dhelki Kharia are more substantial than those of Hill Kharias. In Sundergarh and Sambalpur area most of these houses are thatched with Khappar and individual families possess more than one room with verandah and cowshed. The household articles of the Kharias constitute a few date-palm leaf mats occasionally with one or two string cots, some earthen vessels, gourd vessels with a few metal or aluminum utensils and a few bamboo baskets. Besides they keep a number of hunting implements such as bow and arrow, Maha-Kinkom a type of spear, Barha-Kande a type of battle-axe and other agricultural and fishing implements in their houses. Madal a two skin drum; Nagera, a type of drum called kettle drum and Rutu a type of bamboo flute are the chief musical instruments of the tribe. In

Mayurbhanj the Hill Kharias use *change* (circular drum) during their dance and music.

The traditional occupation of Kharias was to carry Dholis or Palanquin. But at present they are mostly agriculturists. Besides agriculture they depend greatly on daily wages. In Sundergarh and Sambalpur there is perhaps no tribe or caste who are more hard working and sincere labourers than the Kharias. A large number of Kharias used to go to tea-gardens of Assam in the recent past. But now most of the Kharias are employed as farm servants or as daily labourers in their area. Some educated Kharias have been employed in different types of services. But Hill Kharias still remain very backward economically.

In social organization the Hill Kharias differ widely from the Dudh or Delkhi Kharias. The absence of clan organization is the interesting aspect of the social system of the Hill Kharias.

The Hill Kharias have no regular clan organization, sometimes, they claim to belong to same Gorta as Nag Saluk or Sal but they follow no clan rule of exogamy in their marriage nor abstain from eating or harming their totem animals or objects. The Hill Kharias have different class or Sangyas of totemic complexion. They have also adopted some titles of village functionaries such as Naek or Dehuri, etc. But possession of a common Sangya or surname is no way bar to inter-marriage among Hill Kharias. The Dhelki and Dudh Kharias are divided into totemistic exogamous clans. Thus the Dhelkis are divided into eight clans, viz. Maru (Tortoise), Soreng (rock or stone), Samad (a kind of deer), Alias Bage (the quail), Barliha (a fruit), Charbad (a bird), Handsa (the eel), Mail (dirt) also called Kiro (a tiger), and Toppo (a bird). The Dudh Kharias recognize nine clans as the original clans of the tribe who first came to Chotanagpur along the banks of the Koel River from the north-west. These are Dungdung (the eel), Kulu (tortoise), Samador Kerkita (the quail), Bilung (salt), Soreng (stone), Ba (Paddy), Tetetohin (a kind of bird) and Kiro (tiger). The other clans are said to have originated as off-shoots from these original clans.

The Kharias live with other tribes and castes in the villages. They are socially considered almost equal with the Munda, Orans and Kisans. The Dudh Kharias strictly avoid to eat from the hands of outsiders. But they drink wine in the houses of these tribes. Generally, Kharia wards are situated at the end of the villages in close proximity to the wards of these tribes.

In Kharia villages generally a senior-most member is selected as priest and he is acknowledged as the leader in all social and religious matters. He is styled as the 'Dehuri' or 'Dihuri' among the Hill Kharias and 'Kalo' among the Dhelkis and variously as 'Kalo' or 'Baiga' or 'Pradhan' among the Dudh section. But priest is by no means the final authority as in each village; the council of elders decides all important matters of local interest. The council of elders also raise funds for public worship or for sacrifice at the time of epidemic. They remain as witness in all

social functions such as in Chatti ceremony after child-birth, marriage, funeral ceremony or at the time of public worship. In all serious offences the village council ex-communicates the culprit. If the offender is not satisfied with the verdict, or if he wants readmission he may convene a tribal assembly or Kutumb Sabha for fresh investigation. The Kutumb Sabha or Parha Panchayat is above the village organization. The inter-village Panchayat is known as Bhira amongst the Hill Kharias. It consists of representatives of a group of related settlements of any particular slope and is presided by the wisest Dehuri of these settlements. The presiding headman is called the Dandia or the Bhira. Among the Dhelki Kharias there is also no standing Panchayat of a group of federated villages called Parha or Gadi nor is there a permanent Mukhia. But a man of Muru clan among the Dhelkis act as Paindiha or master of the ceremonies and a man of the Samad clan acts as Bhandari in a tribal feast or at the time of readmitting an out-casted member of the tribe into the caste. The Paindiha administers the purifying option to the ex-communicated person at the time of re-admission and the Bhandari serves at the purification ceremonies meant to remove birth pollution, death pollution, etc. The Dudh Kharias have also similar Parha organization which has a permanent headman called Kartaha.

The important function of the Parha organization is to readmit an ex-communicated person. After trial when a person is considered fit for readmission he is asked to provide feast to the tribal elders. On the appointed day all the members of the out casted family observe fasting. In the afternoon a white fowl or white goat is sacrificed to the Sun-God or Supreme deity. The chief functionary called Panidiha (among Dhelkis), Kartaha (among Dudha) or the Dandia (among the Hill Kharias) put one or two drops of blood of the sacrificed animal or fowl in the leaf-cup, containing turmeric water and hand sit over to the headman of the ex-communicated family. While the ex-communicated person drinks this purifying potion, the Panidiha declares him as admitted into the community. Next he serves the cooked rice on the plate of each tribe-fellow present. Thus the family becomes purified.

The Hill Kharias observe birth pollution for nine days. During this period the mother must not leave the hut. On the ninth day the mother and baby take ceremonial bath and the family becomes free from pollution. In some places the mother and baby undergo second purification ceremony on the twenty-first day. The Dudh and Dhelki Kharias observe pollution for seven days and final purification ceremony is observed after two weeks or three weeks or even a month later according to convenience. During the purificatory rites, the child is given a name, the selection of which is done by performing a magico-religious rite. The ear-boring ceremony is the next important ceremony which takes place before the child attains the age of about five or six years.

The three divisions of the Kharia tribe never marry within each other nor do they allow outsiders to marry within the group. Generally, the marriage is

celebrated after attaining puberty. Boys generally marry at the age of twenty to twenty-one and girls marry at the age of fifteen to eighteen years. Cross-cousin marriage is most prevalent within the tribe. The marriage is generally arranged and the groom's party pays bride price which varies from one to twelve heads of cattle and some coins. The bride goes to the bridegroom's house for marriage. Besides the arranged marriage, in exceptional cases they marry through other forms of marriages such as 'elopement marriage' 'intrusion marriage' and 'marriage by forcible application of vermillion'. Curiously enough, the more backward Hill Kharias less frequently resort to irregular forms of marriage in comparison with the Dhelki or Dudh Kharias. But the marriage ritual of Dudha and Delkhi Kharias are much more elaborate than that of the Hill Kharias. All the sections allow divorce and widow re-marriage. The Kharias mostly bury the dead, but in exceptional cases they also cremate. In every village the grave yard is situated near the stream or river under a few large trees. A few Kharias carry the corpses for burial in the grave yard of their ancestral village, if it is not too far off.

The Kharias are extremely fond of dance and music. Every evening after the tiresome work of the day all assemble at the Akhara of the village where young men and women dance and sing in accompaniment of Madal. Though at present they have abolished the KhariaJatra, in festive occasions such as Nua-Khai, Karma Puja or Phagua, they plunge in dance and music.

The Kharias worship chiefly the supreme God in the form of Sun and a number of spirits of hills and forests. But above all, on all occasions they worship the ancestor spirits with great reverence.

The language of the Kharias belongs to the Munda group. At present the Hill Kharias of Mayurbhanj have completely forgotten their language and they have adopted Oriya as their tongue. But the other two branches have still retained their primitive tongue though it is no longer a typical Munda language. It has been greatly influenced by Indo-Aryan languages. In the words of Grierson, Aryan principals now pervade its grammatical structure and vocabulary.

## KHARIA \*

*T. Sahoo*<sup>1</sup>

The Kharia are widely spread over Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. Concerning the origin of the name 'Kharia', Russell and Hiralal suggest that it is a jargon term derived from *kharkharia*, palanquin or litter. The original name Khar-Kharia has been contracted to Kharia who carry palanquin. The Kharia are thus named in accordance with the tradition that their first ancestors carried a *banghy* (carrying pole). The Kharia legend of origin resembles that of the Mundas, and tends to show that they are an elder branch of that tribe. The history of origin shows that their traditional occupation had been to till the soil and carry *banghy*. Dalton also records the following tradition of origin: 'There is a tradition that the Kharia with another tribe called Purans were the aborigines of Mayurbhanj, one of the Katak Tributary Mahals. They aver that they and the family of the chief (Bhanj) were all produced from a peafowl's egg, the Bhanj from the yoke, the Purans from the white and the Kharia from the shell.'

The Kharia tribe is split into three social groups, namely the Pahari Kharia (Hill Kharia), the Dhelki Kharia (early-comers) and Dudh Kharia (pure Kharia). These three social groups are distinguished from each other and have, relatively speaking, three grades of primitive culture. The Hill Kharia- the primitive and backward section of the tribe, represent the hunting and food-gathering stage of economic life along with the practice of rudimentary shifting cultivation and primitive culture. The Dhelki section represents a more advanced culture with plough cultivation and food production. And the Dudh Kharia section represents the most advanced culture, bringing them into line with other Munda-speaking tribes in India. In addition to the above three social divisions of the tribe, three other social groups called Munda Kharia, Oraon Kharia and Berga Kharia are found. These sections of the tribe do not have own cultural characteristics but are merely the outcome of the illegitimate sexual union of the Kharia with members of alien ethnic groups. As such they deserve no special mention here.

Regarding the history of migration of the Hill Kharia, it is said that they once lived in the fertile river valley situated towards the north of the Vindhya and

---

\* Published in *Tribes of Orissa* (revised edition), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2004, pp. 170-174

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

Kaimur range. With the coming of the Aryans and conquest by other tribes, they moved south of the hill ranges and subsequently settled in the hill ranges of Mayurbhanj district. In course of time they spread to the hills of Singhbhum and Manbhum Districts and other parts of Mayurbhanj District in Orissa.

But ignoring this historical migration, the Hill Kharia claim to be the autochthons of the Mayurbhanj Hills. The Dhelki Kharia and the Dudh Kharia probably came down from the Kaimur plateau to live in Chotanagpur and Birupargana areas in Ranchi district through the Kharia Ghat. The Dhelki Kharia moved up earlier and subsequently the Dudh Kharia followed their migration route. In time the Kharia moved over to Sundargarh, Sambalpur and Mayurbhanj in Orissa, Midnapur and Bankura in West Bengal and the tea gardens of Assam.

The Similipal hill ranges are the hearth and home of the Hill Kharia. They are also found in insignificant numbers in Manbhum, Chotanagpur and Singhbhum in Bihar, Midinapur and Bankura in Bengal, and Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sambalpur and Dhenkanal in Orissa. The Ranchi plateau is the central place of habitat of the Dudh Kharia. Their habitat extends to the areas of Gangpur in Sundargarh and some areas of Sambalpur in Orissa. Gangpur in Sundargarh District is the stronghold of the Dhelki Kharia. They also live alongside the Dudh Kharia, but the former are numerically preponderant.

According to the 1981 Census the total Kharia population in Orissa was 1,44,178, that increased to 1,68,407 in 1991 registering the growth rate of 16.80 per cent over the decade. In 1991 Census the sex ratio of the Kharia was 1046 females per 1000 males. According to the 1961 Census their rate of literacy was 9.37 per cent which increased to 12.16 per cent in the 1971 Census. Their percentage of literacy further increased to 17.9 percent by 1981 and to 28.37 percent by 1991.

The Hill Kharias live in the hills and forests of Mayurbhanj. Their villages vary in size from five families to twenty families or even more. Their huts are located in a scattered manner on hill tops, slopes or even the foothills. A typical Hill Kharia house is a small multipurpose rectangular hut with walls made of *sal* wood and plastered with mud. The roof of the hut is made out of a double sloped wooden frame and thatched with grass or straw.

The Dudh Kharia and Dhelki Kharia live alongside other castes and tribes in villages of larger size in the plains. The well-to-do Dudh and Dhelki Kharia have more than one hut with a kitchen, a separate cow-shed and pigsty. In Sambalpur and Sundargarh districts most of the Kharia houses are thatched with *khapper* tiles. The household furniture, tools and appliances of the Kharia include date-palm leaf mats, string cots, earthenware vessels, gourd vessels, metal and silver utensils, bamboo baskets, leaf plates and cups, pestle and mortar, grinding stone, bow and arrow, axe and spear.



Kharia children remain naked up to six years of age. Between 7 to 10 years they wear the *boroka* (loin cloth) around their waist. Adult Kharia wear small *dhotis* and women wear white cotton saris, which fall down to the ankles. Nowadays, the Kharia, especially the more advanced sections of the tribe, wear modern dresses. Kharia women adorn themselves with various types of ornaments, which include brass necklaces, armlets, earrings, finger rings and iron hair pins. Some young boys also wear bead necklaces. Women wear ribbons to decorate their hair.

The three sections of the tribe lie at three different stages of economy: the Hill Kharia subsist on food gathering and hunting, the Dhelki Kharia on farm labour and the Dudh Kharia on settled agriculture. Formerly, the traditional occupation of the Kharia was carrying litters. But nowadays the Hill Kharia mostly depend on food-gathering and hunting. Some of them also practice rudimentary cultivation. Their major source of income is derived from the collection of forest products such as resin, wax, honey, tusser cocoon, gum, lac, etc., which they barter for paddy and other cereals. For Dhelkis, agriculture has been the main source of livelihood. Some of them also work as agricultural labourers. The Dudh Kharias are settled agriculturists. In the recent past a large number of Kharia have gone to the tea gardens of Assam to work as daily labourers.

According to the 1991 Census the Kharia work force constitute 38.29 per cent of the total population. Most workers, comprising 82.77 per cent, were engaged in cultivation and agricultural labour. Another 0.77 per cent were found to be associated with the occupational categories of transport, storage and communication. The remaining workers were engaged in mining and quarrying, construction, trade and commerce, household industry, etc. Fishing is a subsidiary and occasional economic pursuit for the Kharia. The habitat of the Hill Kharia provides little scope for fishing, but the other two sections of the tribe go for fishing whenever the opportunity arises.

Many Dudh and Dhelki Kharia spin thread. Generally Kharia women make mats out of date palm and bamboo splits for their own use. The Kharia make ropes out of *sabai* fibres and the leaves of the aloe plant. A few Kharias know the technique of oil pressing. The Hill Kharia are expert hunters. Using bow and arrows, sticks and spears, they hunt wild games like deer, pea-fowls, jungle fowls, snipes and squirrels.

The life cycle of the Kharia consists of such events as birth, childhood, adulthood, marriage, old age and death. In the case of the Hill Kharia, after delivery of a child a period of birth pollution is observed for nine days. The mother and the new-born baby take a ceremonial bath on the ninth day. A few families observe a second purificatory ceremony on the 21<sup>st</sup> day after the birth. In the case of the Dudh and Dhelki Kharia, the first phase of pollution is observed for seven days, and the final purificatory rite is observed after two weeks. During the purification ceremony a magico-religious rite is performed and then the baby is

given a name. The next noticeable event, the ear-boring ceremony, is held when the child reaches five or six years of age.

Different sections among the Kharia never intermarry. Adult boys marry at the age of twenty and above, and girls marry at the age of fifteen to eighteen years. They practice monogamy and cross-cousin marriage. Marriage by arrangement and negotiation is the ideal pattern. The groom's party pays a bride price, which consists of Rs.60/- in cash, six pieces of cloth, one *maund* of paddy, two barrels of liquor, one goat and other such edibles required for the wedding feast. After marriage the couple lives neo locally. The other prevailing forms of marriage are marriage by capture, elopement and service. Divorce is allowed and widows are permitted to remarry. They bury the corpse and observe death pollution for ten days.

The family is mostly nuclear, consisting of parents and their unmarried children. The average size of the family is five to six members. The Kharia family is patrilineal and patriarchal. Among the Dudh and Dhelki Kharia joint families are found rarely. The Hill Kharia of Mayurbhanj have no clan organization. However, there is a totemistic clan organization among the Dudh and Dhelki Kharias. Their clans, which are exogamous, regulate kinship ties and marriage. They believe that the members of a single clan are descended from a common ancestor. Marriage within the clan is strictly prohibited. Incestuous relations between members of the same clan is tabooed. According to S.C. Roy the Dhelk is have eight clans, such as *Muru* (tortoise), *Soreng* (stone), *Samad* (deer), *Barliha* (a fruit), *Charhad* (a bird), *Hansda* (ell), *Kiro* (tiger) and *Topno* (bird). Among the Dudh Kharia nine totemistic clans have been reported, such as *Dung dung* (the ell), *Kulu* (tortoise), *Samad Kerkitta* (quail), *Bilung* (salt), *Soren* (a stone), *Baa* (paddy), *Tetetchoin* (a bird), *Kiro* (tiger) and *Topo* (a bird). There are also some sub-clans.

The Kharia have both classificatory and descriptive kinship terminologies. An avoidance relationship exists between a woman and her husband's elder brother and a man and his wife's mother and sister's son's wife. A man jokes with his wife's younger sister and younger brother and elder brother's wife on a reciprocal basis. Bond friendships are often made between two persons when they perform a ritual to become relatives in faith.

Thakurani or the Earth Goddess is the supreme deity of the Hill Kharia. They also worship Dharani Devata and a hero named Banda. They venerate their ploughs and axes on the day of *dashara*. They worship the Sun. Their religious beliefs and practices are based on the propitiation of various gods and spirits by observing different rites, ceremonies and sacrifices. They believe that the spirits who reside in the hills and forests control nature. The Kharia believe in black and white magic. However, currently their religious ideas, beliefs and rituals have traces of borrowing from the Hindu pantheon.

The traditional political organization of the Kharia is constituted at two different levels, one at the village level and the other at the inter-village level, in order to keep solidarity and law and order intact. Every Kharia village has a panchayat of its own headed by a Pradhan among the Hill Kharia, Kalo among the Dhelkis, and Kalo or Bainga or even Pradhan among the Dudh Kharia. Cases of a breach of any taboo and disputes about partition, divorce, adultery and the like are decided in meetings of the village council, which also raises funds for public worship, religious feasts and sacrifice during epidemics. The members of the council are present at rites and ceremonies relating to birth, marriage and death. In cases of serious offences, the village council has the power to excommunicate a person from the society.

Above the village council is the inter-village council. The Kharia call the organization the Parha Panchayat or Kutumb Sabha or Bhira. Among the Hill Kharia the Bhira consists of the representatives of some inter-linked settlements and is headed by the eldest, wisest and most influential Pradhan of these settlements. The headman is known as Dhira or Dandia among the Dhelkis. Their Kutumb Sabha is composed of members from villages of more than one clan. A man from the Muru clan acts as Painsiha or master of ceremonies, and a headman of the Samad clan acts as a Bhandari (Barber). Among the Dudh Kharia the Parha is composed of villages of more than one clan. The head of the Parha is called the Kartaha and this post is inherited. Nowadays, elections are held for this chair. He acts as the custodian of tribal law and custom. It is the exclusive power of the inter-village council to readmit an ex-communicated person into the tribe. Those cases which cannot be decided by the village council are referred to the inter-village council. Nowadays, the modern panchayat system has been introduced in Kharia areas. But it is not fully effective, as the people are not educated but still guided by the traditional authorities.

Like other tribes, the Kharia are very fond of dance and music. Every occasion of feast and festivities is celebrated by dancing and music. Musical instruments such as the *madal*, *changu*, *dholak*, *nagra* and flute are used for dancing.

The three sections of the tribe have been influenced by the neighboring cultures and have thus undergone certain changes. The Dhelki and the Dudh Kharia have changed more than the Hill Kharia. In the recent past some Hill Kharias have left their hill dwellings and moved to other parts of the area in search of a livelihood. Now they are living with other peasant communities. This contact with caste Hindus has brought some noticeable changes in their techno-economic and religious spheres. As a result they have taken up settled agriculture, animal husbandry and wage-earning for their livelihood. On the other hand, the Dudh and Dhelki Kharia, who have been in contact with Hindu castes for a quite some time, have been more influenced by the caste Hindus.

# KHARIA \*

*A. B. Ota* <sup>1</sup>

*S. C. Mohanty* <sup>2</sup>

*K. Patnaik* <sup>3</sup>

## IDENTITY

The Kharia is a major Scheduled Tribe of Odisha. They are also found in the states of Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra where they also enjoy the status of Scheduled Tribe. In Odisha they inhabit the north-western region of the State comprising the districts like Sundergarh, Sambalpur, Mayurbhanj and Jharsuguda.

Regarding the origin of the name 'Kharia', Russell and Hiralal (1916) suggest that it is a jargon term derived from *kharkharia* meaning palanquin or litter. It has been given to the tribe who carry palanquin. According to their legendary tradition, their first ancestors carried a *banghy* (carrying pole). It resembles that of the Mundas and tends to show that they are an elder branch of that tribe. Their history of origin shows that their traditional occupation had been to till the soil and carry *banghy*. Dalton (1876) reported: 'There is a tradition that the Kharia with another tribe called Purans were the aborigines of Mayurbhanj... They aver that they and the family of the chief (Bhanj) were all produced from a peafowl's egg, the Bhanj from the yoke, the Purans from the white and the Kharia from the shell.'

The Kharia are divided in to three sections namely Hill Kharia, Dudh Kharia and Dhelki Kharia. In the district of Ranchi, they are concentrated on the banks of the river Koel and Sankh. The Hill Kharias are a primitive community identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PTG) in Odisha.

The Hill Kharias, also known as Savar, are still dependent upon forest resources. They subsist on the collection of edible herbs, roots, leaves, flowers,

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on KHARIA, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2016

<sup>1</sup> Commissioner-cum-Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Former Joint Director and then Officer on Special Duty, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Sr. Lab. Asst., SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

fruits, seeds, honey, wax etc. The Dudh Kharias and the Dhelki Kharias are better off than the Hill Kharia. They have taken to plough cultivation. So far as the manner and customs of these three sections of the Kharia are concerned, they are separate and distinct branches of the Kharia tribe. Marriage does not take place between these three sections. Each section is endogamous.

As per 2011 census the total population of Kharia in Odisha is 1,88,331. Between 1991 and 2001 their population has shown a decadal growth rate of 11.83 percent. Their sex ratio is 1015 females per 1000 males. Their literacy rate is 45.23 percent. Among the males it is 56.16 percent and among the females, 34.52 percent. They show little interest in educating their children irrespective of gender.

Linguistically, they belong to Munda language family. In course of time their language has been forgotten and now they speak and understand Odia, Hindi and also broken Bengali.

The Kharias are racially of Proto-Australoid stock. They have fairly strong and stout physique. Though their stature vary from tall to short, most of them are of medium height.

### **Personal Appearance**

The Kharia children in early childhood wear only banyan or shirt in upper part of body. The lower part generally remains naked. But in late childhood, boys wear pant, banyan and shirt, while girls wear pant, frock and *salwar*-suits. Adult men wear only short dhoti and banyan at the time of work, in the house and village. But when they go out of the village, they wear full dhoti, banyan, *kurta* (shirt) and *gamchha* (napkin). The aged women wear *saree* and *jhula*, but the young women wear *saree*, *saya* (petti coat) and blouse.

Like all women the Kharia women are fond of ornaments. They wear ornaments in hair, neck, nose, ear, wrist, feet and fingers. These are made of brass, bronze, nickel, shell, beads, thread, seeds, silver, imitation gold and silver. There is glass or metal bangles, anklets, armlets, ear, nose and toe rings, finger rings, hairpin, bead or metal necklaces. The elder and older women decorate their bodies with tattoo marks especially on their foreheads, eye corners and in hands and legs.

There is no such uniqueness reflected in their dress pattern. Now the younger generation prefers to use modern dress and not interested for tattooing.

### **SETTLEMENT AND HOUSING**

The Hill Kharia lives in the hills and forests of Mayurbhanj. Their settlements vary in size from five families to twenty families or even more. Their huts are located in a linear or scattered manner on hill tops, slopes and bottoms adjacent to a hill stream.

A typical Hill Kharia house is a small multipurpose rectangular hut with walls made of *sal* wood and plastered with mud. The roof is made of a gable sloped wooden frame thatched with grass or straw or *khapar* (country tiles). The houses have only one multipurpose room, which is utilized as bed room, storeroom, kitchen and guest room. There are no windows and only one door and a small verandah. Goat pen and cowshed are built adjacent to the house. Other pet animals and birds are accommodated inside the single living room of the house.

The Dudh Kharia and Dhelki Kharia live alongside other castes and tribes in villages of larger sizes in the plains. Their houses are multi roomed. The well-to-do among them have more than one hut with a kitchen, a separate cow-shed and pigsty. In Sambalpur and Sundargarh districts most of the Kharia houses are thatched with *khappar* tiles. Well-to-do families and those who have got houses under different government housing schemes have constructed *pucca* houses.

### Household Articles

The household articles of Kharia are scanty. For sleeping purpose they keep date palm leaf mats and string cots. For cooking and storing food materials they use earthen vessels, gourd vessels and aluminum utensils, bamboo baskets, leaf plates and cups. Besides these, the agricultural implements like plough, digging stick, leveler, yoke, axe, knife etc. are also kept in their houses. Other important articles, like sling (*sika*), rope, ladders, snuff boxes, combs, winnowing fan, broom stick, mortar and pestle, grinding stone, spinning instruments, rain hats, umbrella, different types of fishing nets and traps, bow and arrow etc. are also kept and used by them in their day to day activities.

### LIVELIHOOD

The Hill Kharia section of the tribe is the most ancient and marginalized community. For their sustenance, they depend mainly upon forest resources. They are expert tree-climbers and honey collectors. They collect minor forest produce like honey, bees-wax, resin, arrowroot, edible roots, fruits and herbs which they consume and sell the surplus to the people of other castes and tribes.

The honey is available in plenty for collection in two main periods, first from March to June and then from October to November in a year. They collect *sal* resin (*jhuna*) during the months of September to November and from March to June, which gives additional income to them. They are also skilled in making ropes from Sabai grass and wild fibers collected from the forest. They move and camp in the forest in search of food and other items round the year.

The other sections of the tribe pursue cultivation as the major source of livelihood and also depend upon seasonal forest collections. The Kharia women are expert in weaving mats out of date palm and splits of bamboo for their personal use. They also prepare leaf plates and cups of *siali* leaves for their own use as well as for sale.

Animal husbandry and fishing is their supplementary occupation. The Kharias rear fowls and different types of animals like cattle, pigs, goats, sheep, etc. for their agricultural works, domestic consumption, ritual requirements and sale for meeting the expenses in festivals and rituals. At the leisure time they go to nearby streams and rivulets for fishing. They are expert in hunting wild animals and birds. Using bow, arrows, spear, gum sticks and traps they hunt wild games like deer, *sambar*, boar and catch rabbits, pea fowls, wild cocks, snipes and squirrel.

At present they have adopted some new occupations like small business and vending of vegetables for their livelihood and some of them migrate to nearby cities to work in mines or industries as daily wage labourers.

### **Food Habits**

The staple food of Kharia is rice. It is supplemented by different edible seasonal forest products like fruits, roots, tubers, green leaves, mushrooms, flowers etc. which are boiled and eaten. In the morning usually they take watered rice with fried green leaves, green chilies and salt. For lunch and dinner they eat boiled rice with vegetable curry. Besides rice, they also eat *ragi* gruel, maize and other minor millets like *janha*.

Like other tribal people they are fond of non-vegetarian items. They consume the meat of goats and chickens and fish, which they catch from the fresh water in the hill streams. During festive and ritual occasions they prepare special food, like-boiled and backed rice cake and meet curry for their consumption.

The Kharias drink two varieties of liquor i.e. rice beer (*handia*) and Mahua liquor (*mohulimad*). Liquor is first offered to the deities, spirits and ancestors to satisfy them during festivals and rituals. Tobacco is very popular among them. It is smoked and chewed with lime.

### **SOCIAL LIFE**

The Kharia live in a patriarchal society. Family is the core of social set up in their society. It is nuclear, patrilineal and patrilocal in nature. Descent, succession and inheritance go along the male line. The father as the head of the family controls the family affairs and allots duties and responsibilities to each member in consultation with grown up male and female members of the family. Property owned by the father, is divided among the sons after his death. The sons of the second wife are entitled to inherit the father's property. While an adopted son can inherit the property of the adoptive father, a daughter is not. The general trend is that the children of Kharia tribe live separately after getting married.

Women in the family assist men in most of the economic activities. They are tabooed to plough land or thatch the house. They are also not allowed to take part in their traditional council as well as worshipping ancestors. However, women are well treated by their husbands as well as in the society.

## Life Cycle

The life-cycle of Kharia begins with conception and child birth and passes through certain successive stages and events, like childhood, adolescence, adulthood, marriage, old-age and ends in death.

### Pregnancy and Child Birth

Pregnancy and child birth is an important land mark in the Kharia life cycle. Among the Hill Kharia the birth pollution is observed for nine days. On the ninth day the mother and child come out of seclusion and take a ritual bath. After this the mother resumes her routine activities. A few families observe a second purificatory ceremony on the 21<sup>st</sup> day. Name-giving ceremony is held either on the ninth day or any day afterwards. The next important ceremonial event is the “ear-piercing ceremony” which is held on any auspicious day during the period of early childhood i.e. before the child completes five years of his/her age.

In the case of the Dudh and Dhelki Kharia, the first phase of pollution is observed for seven days, and the final purificatory rite is observed after two weeks. During the purification ceremony a magico-religious rite is performed and then the baby is given a name. On this day a small feast along with traditional drinks like rice beer and wine is hosted by the family to all the relatives and neighbors. The next event i.e, the ear-boring ceremony, is held when the child reaches five or six years of age.

### Puberty

The Kharia girls generally attain puberty at the age of 13-16 years. During the onset of menses the girl remains in seclusion for 7 days during which she is considered to be polluted and tabooed to look or be looked at by the males. At the end of the period she takes a purificatory bath anointing turmeric paste and oil and wears a new *saree*. Her family hosts a small feast for their relatives.

### Marriage

The Kharia tribe is endogamous. Marriage with other tribes and castes are regarded as social crime and the offender is excommunicated from the society. Among them, there is prevalence of exogamous clan system which regulates their marital alliances. Different sections among the Kharia never intermarry.

Marriage is an important institution in the Kharia society. They prefer adult marriage. The boys and girls are considered fit for marriage after attaining the age of eighteen and sixteen, respectively. They enjoy liberty in choosing their mates and so, the consent of both the partners, especially, the consent of the girl is a deciding factor in finalizing the matrimony.

They practice monogamy though at times polygamy is permitted. Their modes of acquiring mates are by elopement, by negotiation, by intrusion and by service. Besides, junior levirate, sororate and widow remarriages are allowed



under certain situations. Parallel cousin marriage is prohibited and classificatory cross-cousin marriage is allowed. Bride price is an important element of the marriage. The groom's party pays bride price to the bride's side in the regular type of marriages and sororate marriages except marriage by intrusion, marriage by service and 'son-in-law in house' types.

After marriage, the Kharia couple set up their separate residence in the groom's village. However, depending upon individual situations the couple may stay at the bride's village or at the groom's maternal uncle's village or with any of their kins.

### **Divorce**

Among the Kharias divorce is allowed on certain grounds like infertility or incompatibility. The traditional community council is the tribunal to adjudicate on the validity of the claim for divorce. On the ground of adultery divorce is permitted. In such cases wife's family is required to return the cash and kind which they received as bride price.

### **Death**

When a married person dies, he/she is cremated and the un-married are buried. In case of cremation, the bones and ashes of the deceased are put in new earthen vessel with some parched rice and thrown into deepest part of a river. The death pollution is observed for ten days and mortuary rites are performed at the end of the period. The relations and friends of the deceased are given a feast and a tall slab of memorial stone set up near his house.

## **RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES**

The stronghold of religion is conspicuous in the Kharia way of life. They worship a number of supernatural beings and their preparatory rituals and festivals are associated with their traditional subsistence activities round the year. "Thakurani" or the Earth Goddess (Dharani Devata) and the Sun God (Dharam Devata) are their supreme deities. They have strong faith in spiritual beings that they are endowed with personality and they preside over various fields of human life and capable of influencing human destiny. They believe that the spirits who reside in the hills and forests control nature.

Their religious beliefs and practices comprise the propitiation of the deities and spirits in various ways, like magico-religious rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices etc. According to their belief, the powers and forces of nature are personified by different supernatural beings. There are several hill-spirits or "Pats". Besides, there are village deities, clan spirits and other malevolent spirits or ghosts. The Kharia also strongly believe in black and white magic. But now-a-days, their religious

ideas, beliefs and rituals show traces of Hinduism owing to the impact of neighboring caste Hindu communities.

Their traditional village sacerdotal leader is called 'Dehury'. His post is hereditary. He shoulders the responsibility of worshipping the deities and spirits during rituals, festivals and ceremonies that in certain cases involves appeasing the deities by offering liquor and animal sacrifices. Besides he also discharges some secular duties and responsibilities for which he is held in high esteem.

### **Festivals**

The Kharia observes a number of rituals and festivals round the year, which are mostly, connected with their subsistence activities connected with agriculture, hunting, seasonal forest collections, first eating of seasonal fruits as well as prevention of diseases and epidemics etc. Some of these festivals have been adopted from their caste neighbors. The Kharia who live from hand to mouth celebrates these occasions rather with austerity. Their important festivals are, Phagu, Paridhi (ceremonial hunting), Am Nuakhia, Karma Puja, Chait Parab, Kali Puja, Pus Parab, Makar, Simadeota Puja, Jeth, Nuakhia, Raja and Dassara etc.

The festival of *Phagu* has its origin in food gathering and hunting stages of Kharia. The festival consists of two parts. One part is the ceremonial hunting expedition (*Pardhi*). On the day before the full- moon day of the month of Phagun (February-March), all the Kharia males go in a ceremonial hunting expedition. In the morning all the men assemble with their bows, arrows and axes. Under the leadership of the Dehury - the village priest they start the hunting expedition. No hunter is allowed to carry any copper coin or article with him as it is believed to abort the expedition. The other part of the festival is the conservation of edible fruits, leaves, tubers and other seasonal produce before first eating or using them.

The festival of *Am Nua khia* is observed for the first eating of mango. In the month of Bhadrap (August-September) the deity *Karma Thakur* is worshipped. *Pus Parab*, one of the important festivals of the Kharia, is observed in the month of January (*Magh*). It is celebrated for the first eating of rice after offering it to the ancestors and the village deity with sacrifice of animals. The main idea of worshipping such deities is to get their blessings for the general well-being of the people and for getting food all the time and also for success in their various economic activities without falling into any accident and illness.

### **Dance & Music**

Traditional dance and music still continue to be the main forms of recreation in the life of the Kharias. Dancing and singing are performed on the occasions of rituals and ceremonies. Young boys and girls of the neighboring villages come in batches and participate in *change* dance at a village. These occasions provide a common ground for the unmarried boys and girls of different

villages to mix freely and select their prospective mates. During the festivals, at the time of dance, the Kharia use musical instruments like *changu*, *nagra* and flute etc.

### SOCIAL CONTROL

The Kharias have a simple socio-political organization. Their traditional council is constituted at two different levels, one at the village level and the other at the inter-villages level to maintain social solidarity, law and order. During king's rule, the administration ran through the Sardar / Zamindar (Pradhan). The Kharia were paying revenue in shape of kinds (forest produce) to the Pradhan / Sardar of the locality, who in turn paid the same to the king.

Every Kharia village has a traditional *panchayat* of its own headed by Pradhan among the Hill Kharia, Kalo among the Dhelkis, and Kalo or Bainga or Pradhan among the Dudh Kharia. He presides over the council meeting, acts as a judge and settles disputes relating to partition of property, divorce, bride price breach of taboo, adultery, sale and mortgage of land, marriage, with the help of other village leaders. He is assisted by Dehury, Chhatia/Dakua (messenger), Gunia (magician). The punishments given to the convicts depend upon the gravity of their offences. Usually the convict is asked to pay fine in shape of kind and cash. In case of serious violation of the social norms, the convict is ex-communicated. The traditional village *panchayat* also raises funds for public worship, religious feasts, festivals and sacrifices as a matter of routine and also during crises.

Above the village council is the inter-village council called *Parha Panchayat* or *Kutum Sabha* or *Bhira*. Among the Hill Kharia the Bhira consists of the representatives of the inter-linked settlements of a clan and is headed by the eldest, wisest and most influential Pradhan of these settlements. Among the Dhelkis, the head is designated as Dhira or Dandia. The *Parha Panchayat* / *Kutum Sabha* is composed of members from villages of more than one clan. A man from the Muru clan acts as Painsi or master of ceremonies and a headman of the Samad clan acts as a *Bhandari* (the Barber). Among the Dudh Kharia the body is composed of villages of more than one clan. The head of the Parha is called the Kartaha and this post is hereditary. Now-a-days, he is appointed by election. The regional *panchayat* acts as the custodian of tribal customary law. The cases cannot be decided by the village council are referred to the inter-village council. It has the exclusive power to readmit an ex-communicated person into the tribe.

This traditional socio-political system of the Kharia had been duly recognized and reinforced by the administration of the ex-Princely States and later by the British administrators as they did not want to interfere with the traditional way of life of the tribals. But with the introduction of democratic system of elections and welfare administration as well as super-imposition of Panchayat Raj system after independence, the importance of their traditional political institutions has declined. Now the elected representatives, like the Sarpanch, Ward Member, Block Chairman, M.L.A. are assuming greater prominence in their village and

regional political spheres. However, the traditional leadership and councils still continue to regulate their traditional and customary affairs because the people have confidence in their traditional leaders and indigenous institutions.

### CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

Change and planned change through development interventions are inevitable. The Kharias are no exception to this. Their lives are not static, or 'stuck in the past'. In recent times, like others, they have adopted new ideas and new situations. A host of factors such as their prolonged contact with their neighboring castes, tribes and other communities, impact of the protective and promotional state policies including various planned development interventions by government and non government agencies have brought noticeable changes in the life and livelihood of the Kharias. These changes are reflected in their economic, religious and social spheres of life.

Now-a-days, they have taken up the diversified economic activities like settled agriculture, animal husbandry, wage earning for their livelihood. They have adopted modern methods and techniques of agriculture and allied pursuits. This they have to adopt as an alternative to their traditional forest based subsistence economy for rapid deforestation and enforcement of stringent forest and wild life conservation laws against exploitation of forest resources and hunting wild animals.

The recent development interventions through SHGs of men and women have brought significant changes in the socio-economic life of Kharias. They are preparing and processing broomsticks, leaf plates; honey, resin, arrowroots, pickles etc. and selling these products in the local market. Financial assistance is provided to these SHG by different government and non-government agencies.

Now different ITDAs and blocks of Sundergarh, Sambalpur and Mayurbhanj districts and the PTG development Micro Project named the Hill Kharia and Mankirdia Development Agency (HKMDA) of Jashipur in Mayurbhanj district are implementing various developmental activities like construction of roads and bridges, check dams, education complex, 100 seated ST Girls Hostels and such other income generating and infrastructure development schemes in the Khadia inhabited pockets.

The change and modernity is visible in different spheres of the way of life of the Kharia tribe. Their level of literacy and education as well as income has been improving. Currently, one may look forward to the Kharia to advance socio-economically and come up to the level of the general population in course of time.

# THE HILL KHARIA OF SIMLIPAL HILLS : A STUDY OF AN ISOLATED FOOD GATHERING COMMUNITY\*

*Nityananda Das*<sup>1</sup>

Simlipal hills in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa has an area of nearly 1,100 square miles. These hills are spread over all the four revenue subdivisions of the district. The main area lies in Panchpirh subdivision. The entire belt is cut off during the rains by hill streams from all sides. River Bolang takes its origin from these hills descending through a number of waterfalls both big and small. The fall at Boraipani is the highest and the most attractive one. The fall at Joranda is another picturesque one with steep clefts on sides. The area is full of luxuriant growth of Sal and other forests and once had the most exhaustive fauna. It was declared as a National Park during the First Five-Year Plan period.

In consideration of the vast area the population is rather scanty. In some of the valleys, there are a few settlements of Ho or Kolha. Some of them are converted Christians who migrated from Chotanagpur. In and around Gudgudia, there are a few Bathudis. Among the other castes and tribes there are a few others like Bathudi and Kharia and artisans, who had come only to help the tribes in agricultural pursuits. The Hill Kharia whose population is approximately about a thousand or so, are found only in a few centres.

Khajuri on the road from Gudgudia to Garh Simlipal is the principal centre of Kharia. Moreover, there are 9 families at Jenabil, 12 families at upper Barakamra, 6 at Sano Makabadi and 8 at Buddha balang. The present study was projected to assess their social life in relation to their food gathering economy and adjustment in relation to the peculiar habitat and to suggest ways and means to ameliorate their condition.

The Kharia is an ancient tribe extending over a large area of Chotanagpur

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. IX, No.2, 1967-68, pp. 44-49

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Director, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

belt, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. They have subdivisions like Hill (Pahari, Dudh and Dhelki. The first is relatively backward and eke out their living by primitive agriculture or shifting cultivation on hill slopes, but principally by food gathering. The other sections are fairly advanced and have been recently converted to Christianity. In fact there is very little resemblance between the Hill Kharia and other Kharias. One is a semi nomad, constantly changing their settlement in search of minor forest produce. The others are settled agriculturists with well built houses, farms, etc. One looks emaciated and dejected, as their future is always charged with uncertainties. The others are fairly developed and even converted to Christianity. Hence although these divergent groups have a common tribal name, they are widely different from each other from social and economic standards.

It could not be ascertained definitely whether the Hill Kharia are autochthons of Simlipal hills. They are found in Dalbhum subdivision of Bihar and other adjoining areas of Orissa. Simlipal hills are farther away from those areas. The economic life of the Hill Kharias elsewhere as in Simlipal has resemblance and identity. Hence it could be construed that Hill Kharia's pursuits to collect minor forest produce like honey, resins arrowroots, etc., might have guided them to Simlipals which abound with those.

Simlipals were not opened to human habitation for a pretty long time. Areas around Gudgudia and Boraipani have some ancient shrines of the Bathudi tribe. The latter are an assimilated tribal group in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar. They revere Asta Deuli in Simlipal and stress their origin to a place nearby. Their legend attributes their origin to those areas from where they had wandered to other places whether the hill Kharia came to Simlipals after the Bathudi left the area, or at the same time when the latter were still preponderating is difficult to stress out in absence of any legendary or documentary evidence. However, other castes and tribes around, describe Simlipals as the homeland of Bathudi and Kharia. The Kharia have adopted local dress and common pattern of house building, which clearly show that they have come in contact with other tribes quite early. They also speak Oriya, and whether they had ever a language of their own, which belongs to Austric group is difficult to ascertain.

Towards the eastern parts of Simlipals in Udala subdivision there are Birhor or Mankadia (a local nick name, attributed due to the habit of catching and eating monkey). They are a nomadic tribal group living in conical leaf huts at the outskirts of forests. They are rope-makers and hunters. They move from place to place in the forests in search of games and barks for rope-making.

The nomadic Birhor and semi-nomadic Kharia have some identities. Those are the nomadic life, clinging to forests, meagre material apparatus incumbent on a nomadic life and social adjustment peculiar to the changing habitats. Simultaneously there are wide divergences. The Birhor has a language of their own akin to Mundari. They build conical leaf huts (*kumbha*), with a narrow passage to one side. The Kharia build houses with wooden planks and thatch

those with grass. The houses are small but are regular ones. Kharia have forgotten their language and now speak only Oriya.

Birhor migrate too frequently over a wide area. Kharia limit their itineraries only to those sites which are predetermined and often continue to live there for a few years. The Birhor are rope-makers and monkey catchers, hunting other games occasionally. The Kharia are known as collectors of honey, resins and arrowroot. Both live on tubers, roots, honey and other produce and sell ropes or honey and arrowroots to buy grains.

In this context the adjustment of the Hill Kharia particularly in Simlipals is worth discussion. As stated earlier, the Kharia are not strangers to Simlipals. At present the main population in those parts is the Hos and Kolhas. Peculiarly enough the affluent Santals are not seen in Simlipals, although they predominate the entire district of Mayurbhanj. Hos are divided into various sections like Bamanghatia, Raijanghai and Singhbhumia according to their places of original emigration. The first group denotes that they were from the neighboring Bamanghati area and came first to settle in Simlipals before other groups. However, they are few in number and mostly live on agriculture and forest labour.

In the early part of the 19th century the then state administration thought seriously to populate Simlipals to facilitate exploitation of forests and they granted Sardari or overlord rights over Simlipals to one Peter Dubraj, a Ho from Singhbhum. He was a Christian and working as a village Post Master. He settled near village Astakuanr, which is known as Garh Simlipal. It is said in many present settlements that the Hos from Singhbhum were induced to come to settle down in Simlipals by Mr. Dubraj, who granted them lease of land and Amarnama or record of rights. Thus several Ho settlements grew up in Simlipals.

Collaterally in other areas around Jenabil, M/s. Barua & Co. were granted monopoly of forest contract by the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj. There were hardly usable roads in the area. Labourers had to be frequently brought from Bihar and other parts for forest operations. The roads required constant maintenance due to ravages of elephants and gales. After rainy season the roads were to be elaborately repaired to make those useable for vehicular traffic. The company therefore encouraged some of their labour to settle down in Simlipals. These were in early thirties. These settlers obtained record of rights from the State in due course. After independence there came the third spate of migration. Some Mundas mostly converted came down from Ranchi district and reclaimed forests in the area after independence. They encroached forest land without authority and built big settlements around Jamuna, Makkbadi, etc. Recently those encroachers have been ousted from all those areas, which raised some political controversies between the leaders of Bihar and Orissa.

In this background the position of the Kharia has to be analyzed. Kharia have no land, nor have they taken to agriculture. They have been obliged by

traditions to collect honey, arrowroot, etc., which they sell to petty traders or in the local markets. They sometimes earn some wage as day labourers in forest operations, but they do not show any preference towards that avocation. Only compelled by circumstances they rarely take up the engagement. On other occasions they collect tubers and roots to supplement their diet.

Arrowroots are collected from January till March. The roots are gathered in baskets and soaked in a water course for a few days. Thereafter, those are rubbed on a stone and kernels are taken out after several washings to remove the peels. Then those are pestled in a hole and grounded. The soft parts are washed repeatedly and are dried up in small pellets. Honey is collected during summer months of April and May. For this the Kharia have to risk their persons. A look at the precipice at Joranda falls studded with beehives will scare a stout heart. Yet Kharia descend with ropes to tap those hives. A slight slip leads to disaster, yet they risk, because collection of honey is the main source of their livelihood.

However, all these labour and risk of the Kharia do not yield all the benefits, due to them. The sly traders advance them grains and money and in exchange appropriate the fruit of their toil at a very cheap rate. Recently, the National Park authorities of Forest Department are collecting honey and arrowroots at the rate of Rs. 1.50 per Kg. Those are sold at Jashipur at the rate of Rs. 4.50 and elsewhere at the rate of Rs. 5 per Kg. The traders collect those at a still cheaper rate. The economy of those transactions is not difficult to visualize. The bargaining power of the Kharia is very low. Being in subsistence economy, they have to procure food to maintain themselves. They do not practice agriculture to assure them food supply, at least for a few months in a year. Wage-earning is limited to four months during fair-weather when forest operations continue. But there again Kharia are never preferred as a useful labour force and they exhibit little inclination for that occupation. Being ignorant of agricultural practices they are not engaged in that job by other tribes. Hence they have limited opportunity of assured income from any source. Food and other collection is a hazardous and risky job. It is fraught with unforeseen vagaries beyond human control. The forest which abounds in those produce, is full of wild animals, and there are chances of being attacked by wild beasts. Moreover rainfall in Simlipals is widespread. There are leeches and treacherous hill streams which make passage arduous. During the rainy season the area is cut off from all sides. All these factors make food and collection of forest produce extremely difficult. Hence the Kharia have to depend on the mercy of traders and forest authorities and lose bargaining power. Particularly after declaration of National Park, hunting as a source of food supply has been discarded. The subordinate staff of Forest Department does not deal with them sympathetically.

Thus one sees the hill Kharia as a completely broken group of tribals, absolutely lacking self-confidence. The vast expanses of forests in which they live and survive with innumerable risks are also something which is studded with



restrictions. Sometimes due to sympathy of a few officials they are allowed certain concessions, but those are denied on other occasions. A typical instance is the transfer of Kharia settlement from Tinadiha to upper Barhakamra. When the Forest Department required the former area for starting a nursery, the Kharia there, were asked to vacate and they left with all their belongings to Barhakamra. Some Kharias migrated to different villages from Khajuri. After being hard pressed in those new settlements they returned to Khajuri. Recently out of 12 families at Jenabil, 3 have returned to Khajuri. All these incidents developed indomitable capacity among these tribals for adjustment. Being denied with modern trends of development and settled life, they toil under multiple dangers and risks and they are scuttled from place to place with no aspiration.

Marriage expenses and corresponding bride price among the Kharia have been reduced to a small amount. Women are entrusted with food gathering and other domestic occupations while the males are busy in honey and arrowroot collections. Men learn skills associated with those professions. They feel that with proper observance of magical rites and taboos the stings of bees become ineffective. Hindu Gods and deities have been adopted long since and tribal faith has been twisted to incorporate them. Ceremonies and festivals connected with agriculture and animal husbandry have not been adopted.

Recently they have acquired *dhotis* and saris by selling honey, etc. A few aluminum utensils have also been purchased, from the markets. Contact with outsiders at Jashipur, Dengam and other market centers have generated new ideas and values but they have not been able to adopt those due to the factors discussed above.

In this context it is being proposed to settle the Hill Kharia in land and agriculture. Land is available in Simlipals in plenty. Particularly the reclaimed land vacated by encroachers could be easily settled with Kharia. But this is not a simple task, as Kharias have never practiced agriculture and are extremely tradition-directed to adopt it straight way. Collection is a hazardous occupation, but less cumbersome. Agriculture without protracted irrigation remains a gamble between alternate drought and downpour. A reserve stock of grains and other subsidiary occupations enable the agriculturists to tide over the vagaries of nature. Agriculture needs resources. All these are not within the reach of the Kharias, nor could they think of those in their present mental frame work. They have no livestock and do not rear cattle. All those are to be provided to them. But more than supplying material part is to imbibe among them the mind to adopt the change. Their cultural base has to be widened to incorporate the new mode of life. They have to be provided with regular houses. They must feel the pride of ownership and possession, over houses, land and cattle.

Hence their rehabilitation has to be planned with precision and on scientific lines. The help of an anthropologist should be imperative in such a venture.

This little community has to fore shake their traditions and age-old social values. These require to be planned with full understanding of their cultural life. The transformation of their norms and standards is not a simple affair. This is the greatest folly we generally commit while dealing with human groups. Our ethnocentrism does not permit us to give due credence to the cultural traditions of preliterate groups. Thus our *bona fide* intentions fail to draw their admiration and our efforts turn out in fructuous. Hence it becomes essential to take into account the imponderable of Kharia life and traditions before settling them in land and agriculture without thwarting their opportunity to collect minor forest produce.

Before the aforesaid aspects are fully dealt and tackled any large scale rehabilitation of outsiders within Simlipals will, do more harm to the Kharia there. In their present social and economic life, exposure to abrupt and wanton change in the ecological balance will make this tribe fall prey to cunning and undesirable outsiders. Even other advanced tribes will be no exception in exploiting the Hill Kharia. This, in due course will lead to total annihilation of the tribe, as has been the case in many parts of the world. Of course the present isolation is doing no good to any. But isolation has somehow kept the existence of the tribe so far. Hence before the Simlipals are opened up, the Kharias should be given the lease of settled life with associated amenities. Their collection should fetch higher price by raising their bargaining power. For this purpose the forest and district authorities should combine and prepare a plan with the help of an anthropologist. In course of a decade or so the hill Kharia should be brought to the level of other tribes in Simlipals.

# THE SOCIETY AND ECONOMY OF THE HILL KHARIA IN DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE \*

*Jagannath Dash*<sup>1</sup>

The Hill Kharias of Orissa are mostly found in and around Similipal hill ranges of Mayurbhanj District. They present an interesting example of transformation and change following certain local historical incidences. They say, little more than a century ago they were not in a state of hunting and gathering economy as we see them now. They were inhabiting the forest-plains fringe region depending on agricultural practices. They had occupied a territory of their own in Jashpur under the leadership of Jashu Digar, the Kharia chief. As per the local oral history of the people, the Bathudis attacked their territory several times and ultimately occupied Jashpur by defeating them. The Kharias were driven out of their homeland and they took refuge in the Similipal forest. In course of time, they adapted to forest based economy and were identified as a hunting and gathering tribe. Thus Hill Kharias set an example of secondary primitivization changing their agrarian economy into an archaic primitive type of subsistence economy. Among the hunter-gatherers of Orissa this is a unique and interesting case of ecological transformation and adaptation.

## **Historical Background**

The tribe 'Kharia' has three distinct sub-groups, namely the primitive Kharia, the Dhelki Kharia and the Dudh Kharia. In Orissa, the Dudh and Dhelki Kharias live in Sundargarh district whereas the so-called Hill or primitive Kharias are confined to Mayurbhanj district mainly. As S.C. Roy (1937) has mentioned, the main habitat of the Hill Kharia is extended from the Similipal hill-range of Mayurbhanj to the hills of Singhbhum and Manbhum districts of Chhotanagpur. They are also found in Surguja and some other parts of Central Provinces. Sir Edward Gait (1901) has stated about the difference between the Hill Kharia of

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXVII, Nos.1&2, 2007, pp.25-40

<sup>1</sup> Professor, Department of Anthropology, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar

Ranchi and Similipal. In West Bengal also, they are found in Bankura, Medinipur and Purulia districts and a number of differences can be marked when compared with those of Similipal hill range.

Besides the above stated 3 divisions of Kharia, a few more number of sub-types are also noticed in the writings of Risley. In his 'Tribes and Castes of Bengal', Risley has mentioned six sub-types of Kharia namely, (i) Berga Kharia, (ii) Dhelki Kharia, (iii) Dudh Kharia, (iv) Erenga Kharia, (v) Munda Kharia, and (vi) Oraon Kharia. However, practically Dudh, Dhelki and Erenga or Hill Kharias are mainly found.

As S.C. Roy (1937) has stated, the term Dhelki has been derived from 'Del' (to come) which is used by the Dudh Kharias to state that Dhelkis would proceed or surpass them. The 'Dudh' on the other, means milk and Dudh consider themselves as pure as milk. The main concentration of the Dudh is on both sides of Sankh and Koel rivers in Gumla and Simdega sub-division of Ranchi district which extends to the Gangpur State in the Central Provinces. The Dhelki Kharias are mainly found in Gangpur State of Orissa along the Valley of Ib River towards the Jashpur State of Central Provinces.

According to Dalton (1872) in his 'Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal', there is a tradition that the Kharias with another tribe called Puran were the aborigines of Mayurbhanj, one of the Katak Tributary Mahals. "So far as the present state of condition is concerned, the Kharias of Mayurbhanj can be further divided into Hill and Plains-sections. This is mainly dependent on their socio-economic and religious characteristics. The Kharias in the hill range are mainly foragers (food-gatherers and hunters) whereas the Kharias in the plains are primarily dependent on the agricultural economy." As regards the origin of the term, Kharia, Russell and Hiralal (1916) suggested that the term has been derived from 'Kharkhaij' which means a 'palanquin' or litter. According to this interpretation, Kharias are said to be palanquin carriers. But under no circumstance this is proved. As the local peoples as well as the Kharias in Similipal say, during the Kingship, when high officials, ministers or the kings visit the hill villages not only the Kharias alone but, it is an usual practice that the villagers irrespective of caste or tribe carry them in palanquins to their village.

Earlier in this report, the migration of the Kharias (in the hills) to Mayurbhanj district has been discussed in detail basing on the local sayings as well as oral traditions. In the delineations of Colonel Dalton (1872) who had given the first ethnographic account on the Kharias (in the hills), a different fact has been suggested regarding the coming of the Kharias to the Similipal hill range. To, him, the Kharias might have come from their original home in some part of the central hill belt by the same route as the Savaras of Ganjam district and reached Mayurbhanj subsequently.

M.G. Hallett (1912) in the Bihar and Orissa District Gazetteers (Ranchi: 1912: 78) has also mentioned about three traditions of their origin. According to the first one, the Kharias were originally settled between Rohtas and Patna. After a quarrel with the relatives they fled away and settled at Pora on the Koel River. According to Gagan Chandra Banerjee (1894), they arrived at a place known as Khariaghat while wandering and hence called Kharia. Finally they came to Biru and Kesalpur. The second tradition says that "They came from Mayurbhanj in the south and ascended the valley of the South Koel till they came to the present location". According to Dalton, "they may have fallen back from Gangetic Province, passed through the Vindhya Range and come gradually round to the south-east watershed of Chota Nagpur." (in Hallett, 1917: 78).

Among the Kharia (Savara) of Similipal hills, one finds a number of myths of their origin. They depict themselves as 'Savara' who are primarily foragers (food-gatherers and hunters). They feel proud of being 'Savaras' who are depicted in Orissa as the first worshippers of Lord Jagannath in a hill cave. A very common legend of Bidyapati, a Brahmin boy and Lalita, a Savara girl which is popularly associated with the origin of the cult of Lord Jagannath, has been adopted without any drastic change by the Kharia (Savara). As they had donated their daughter to a Brahmin according to the legend, they usually don't receive food from the Brahmins. As the worshippers or sacred servants of the Lord, they also consider themselves socially higher to all the tribes and castes in Orissa.

According to the local Kharias (Savara) there are four different types of 'Savaras'.

- i. Lodha Savara (tribe-Lodha)
- ii. Mankidia Savara (tribe-Birhor/Mankidia)
- iii. Ujia Savara (tribe-Ujia)
- iv. Kharia Savara (tribe-Kharia)

From these categories of Savara, it is conceived that in general the primitive communities who are either forest-based or food-gatherers, are usually denoted as Savaras. In another categorisation, the Kharias also make the following divisions of their own community

- (i) *Angarapoda Kharia'* - (*Angarpoda* = charcoal making)
- (ii) *Khairamara Kharia'* - (*Khairamara* = Khaira (catechu) Processing)
- (iii) *Tungadhua Kharia'* - (*Tungadhua* = washing of 'Tunga' tuber)

Some also add to this:

- (iv) '*Pata bandha Kharia'* - (Those who wear the turban of silk cloth during the car festival of Lord Jagannath)
- (v) Lodha Kharia-(Lodha-an ex- criminal tribe)

In the above classification, it is generally found that the term 'Kharia has been used as a synonym for 'Savara' or primitive forest dependent people. Besides all these categories, all Kharias generally accept that there are four types of Savaras, and Kharia is one among them. They are namely:

- (i) *Basu Savara* - Descendants of Biswabasu Savara
- (ii) *Ujia Savara* - Ujias
- (iii) *Mankidiii Savara* - Birhors
- (iv) *Jara Savara* - Lodhas

There are also a number of origin myths of the Kharia. According to a very common myth, it is said that both the Bhanja Kings of Mayurbhanj and the Kharia were born out of a pea-fowl's egg. The King was born out of the yoke of the egg, the Purans (another community) out of the white and the Kharias out of the '*kholapa*' or shell. Dalton (1872:159) has also mentioned about this myth.

Russell (1916) has mentioned about a different legend of origin. According to it "... a child was born to a woman in the jungle and she left it to fetch a basket to bring it home. On her return she saw a cobra spreading its hood over the child to protect it from the sun. On this account, the child was called '*Nagvansi*' (of the race of the cobra) and became the ancestor of the Nagbansi Rajas of Chhota Nagpur. The Kharias say that this child had an elder brother and the two brothers set out on a journey, the younger riding a horse and the elder carrying a '*kawal*' or '*banghy*' with their luggage. When they came to Chhota Nagpur, the younger was made the king, on which the elder brother also asked for a share of the inheritance. The people then put two caskets before him and asked him to choose one. One of the caskets contained silver and the other only some earth. The elder brother chose that which contains earth, and on this he was told that the fate of himself and his descendants would be to till the soil, and carry *banghys* as he has been doing" (1916:445:46). Thus the Kharias are said to be the descendants of the elder brother whereas the younger brother became the ancestor of the Nagbansi kings, who are actually Mundas. This Kharia legend of origin resembles that of the Mundas. Basing on this legend, Russell (1916) has also mentioned that Mundas acquire daughters in marriage from the Kharia but do not give their daughters to them.

In the Kharia (Savara) traditional locality the social hierarchy was maintained as follows:

1. Kharia (Savara) - consider Ujias as equal
2. Bhuiyan
3. Bathudi
4. Santal
5. Kol
6. Birhor

The Kharias (Savara) do not accept cooked food from the Bathudi but may accept raw food. It is interestingly found that both the Kharia (Savara) and Ujia

(Savara) hold their positions at the top in their respective localities. In both the local hierarchies, Birhors are found to occupy the lowest position.

### **Linguistic and Racial Affiliation**

According to S.C. Roy (1937), Kharias in general are considered to be a branch of Munda linguistic stock. Sir George Grierson has included Kharia language as a branch of the Munda language under Austro-Asiatic sub-family of Austric family. In respect of physical features, social structure and religious practices, the Kharias are said to have affinity with other Munda-speaking tribes.

The Kharias (Savara) of Mayurbhanj on the other hand have forgotten their own mother tongue completely and speak a corrupt dialect of Oriya. It is usually noticed that they have adopted the language of their nearest neighbours. From the writing of S.C. Roy (1937), it is known that in Singhbhum, Manbhum, Bankura and Midnapur districts they speak Bengali, in Surguja and other parts of the Central Province they speak mainly local Hindi.

### **Ritual Kinship or Friendship**

Besides the relationships of kinship, there are also existing relationships analogous to kinship ties in almost all societies. Because of its analogous to nature it is often denoted as pseudo-kinship tie. In some cases, such relationships are institutionalized through certain ritual performances and therefore, called as institutionalized kinship or ritual kinship (or friendship), such a relationship is basically, dependent on the factor of mutual need fulfillment of both partners or friends. The ritual friends come to each other's help at the time of need. Because of this, such a relationship is developed mainly outside one's own endogamous society. Among the Kharia (Savara), Ujia (Savara) and Birhor, both ritualized and non-ritualized Kinship are very much found.

Among the Kharia (Savara) ritual friendships like *Phula*, *Sangata*, *Maitra*, *Dharam-Bapa*, *Dharam Pua*, *Dharam Bhai*, *Makara*, *Jamudal* etc. are mainly found. Similar types are also found among the Ujia (Savara). But among the Birhors only *Saya*, *Phula* and *Makara* relationships are found. The partners choose each other as ritual friends or kins on the basis of the following criteria:

- (i) When two partners have equal age
- (ii) When two partners have the same name
- (iii) When two partners have equal height and similar physical features.

As per the above criteria, the relationships like, *Sangata*, *Maitra*, *Makara*, *Phula*, *Jamudal* etc. are possible within the same generation. But among the partners of different generations only *Dharam-Bapa* or *Maa* and *Dharam-Pua* or *Jhia* relationships are possible. Among the Kharia (Savara) ritual friendship or kinship has been established with the neighboring tribes and castes like the Santal, Kol, Bathudi, Patra Tanti, Gauda, Kamar (Blacksmith), Bhuyan etc. Similarly Ujias (Savara) have established ritual friendship with the neighbouring communities like

the Bathudi, Gauda, Khsatriya, Gonda etc. After two partners enter into ritual friendship, their parents become automatically related to each other. Some major purposes of establishing the ritual friendship are as follows:

- i. Other tribes like Bathudi, Santals, Kols in the neighborhood try to establish ritual friendship mainly for learning the techniques of arrowroot preparation, honey & *sal* resin collection from the Hill Kharia.
- ii. Few land-owning Kharias (Savara) also try to get agricultural implements, bullocks and other kinds of help through such relationships.
- iii. In some cases, a few persons who are coming from a distant place at regular intervals for the sake of marketing or business also develop ritual friendship with the local people mainly for availing proper accommodation facilities.
- iv. In other cases, as mentioned earlier almost all the local traders or business men (called 'Mahajana') for the sake of their trade of various forest products, establish ritual kinship with a number of Kharia (Savara) males.

Roy (1937) has mentioned about the practice of cross-cousin marriage among the Kharia (Savara). But the present study reveals that both parallel cousin and cross-cousin marriages are considered incestuous among that Kharia (Savara) and Ujia (Savara).

Among the Kharia (Savara) seven types of marriages are found in the target villages like Baniabasa and Khejuri (see the Table 2.4). Marriage by negotiation (12+17 cases) although mostly preferred, majority are love marriages (27+ 16 cases). In 4 (2+2) cases, the family heads have also adopted the son-in-law (resident son-in-laws) after marriage. Although marriage by capture is not preferred in view of promoting their own tribal image, it is found only in two cases in Baniabasa and in one case in Khejuri village. Similarly marriage with other caste people though prohibited, but still one such exceptional case is found in Baniabasa village. Marriage by service is also practiced in some villages but in my two study villages no such case is found.

### Gods and Spirits

The deities and spirits in accordance with their nature and function are divided into two broad categories: (i) Malevolent, and (ii) Benevolent. All the three communities in common, pay equal respect to the Sun god and Earth goddess. Although for these three communities the sun god is the Creator of the Universe and supreme deity, for the Kharia (Savara) and Ujia (Savara) 'Badam' the presiding deity of Simlipal Hills is regarded most. Among all the three communities there are numerous forest deities who are mainly divided into two categories. The first category refers to some major forest deities who are treated as the custodians of Similipal forest resources and the second category refers to a number of deities named after each and every important hill of Similipal. In the village, clan, lineage or family levels, similarly, a number of deities are also propitiated, who are



differently named in different communities. The Kharia (Savara) call the male deities as 'Debta' and female deities as 'Thankurani' whereas the Birhor use the term 'Bonga' for all the deities.

### **Political Organization**

Among the Kharia (Savara) the village council or panchayat is composed of the following officials:

- |                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Mukhia – Head man          | 2. Lataa-babu – Assistant  |
| 3. Chhatia – Messenger        | 4. Dehuri – Village Priest |
| 5. Gunia – Magician or Shaman | 6. A group of elders.      |

Ideally the above mentioned positions (except no. 6) continue from father to son, if the son is capable enough to carry on the responsibilities. Otherwise, a new leader is selected on the basis of personal ability. In my study villages – Baniabasa and Khejuri two different instances are observed. In Baniabasa, one person because of his intelligence and accumulation of property has taken up the village leadership. He is also functioning as the village priest. The post of 'Lata-babu' or assistant is not there in all villages. In Khejuri village, similarly an intelligent and wealthy person is the village leader. But he is not the priest or Dehuri. He also has no assistant. In his absence Chhatia or the messenger presides over the village meetings.

### **Musical Instruments**

Among the Kharia (Savara) and Ujia (Savara) the accompanying musical instruments are very few and simple. Both the communities use only one instrument of percussion or tambourine called as 'Changu'. This is a circular shallow drum with tin discs. This is to be held in the left hand and played by the right hand striking with knuckles. A special kind of wooden split is moulded to circular shape by fixing it tightly to the ground for a few days. After this, the hide of Sambara (*Cervus unicolor*), deer or goat is tightly fixed to one side of it. Tin discs are attached for making musical sound while striking.

### **Territoriality and Nomadism**

The concept of territoriality looks into several interrelated parameters like economic dependability, predictability of resource distribution and abundance or density of resources. Such parameters are very much related to resource utilization and the degree of mobility.

Dyson-Hudson & Smith (1978:26) have presented a table for showing the relationship between Resource Distribution and Foraging strategy:

### Resource Distribution and Foraging Strategy

	Resource Distribution	Economic Dependability	Resource Utilization	Degree of Nomadism
A.	Unpredictable and Dense	Low	Info-sharing	High
B.	Unpredictable and Scarce	Low	Dispersion	Very High
C.	Predictable and Dense	High	Territoriability	Low
D.	Predictable and Scarce	Fairly low	Home ranges	Low-medium

As Similipal is declared a National Park as well as Wild Life Sanctuary since 1958 and a Tiger Reserve since 1973, restrictions have been imposed on the collection of minor forest produce in the reserve forest area and hunting has been strictly banned. Although the Kharias (Savara) have been permitted to collect only minor forest produce on the mutual condition that they would provide such produces to the forest department, practically they enjoy no official right or freedom in the Similipal hills since independence. Under such circumstances, the Hill Kharias are continuing forest collections mainly on mercy or sympathetic grounds. Forest no more belongs to them and this has greatly regulated the maintenance of territoriality among such communities. However, with reference to past, the tradition of food-gathering activities are still maintained within a defined range or territory for each village. The case of Birhor is little different from this. The Kharias and Ujia (Savara) never go for communal hunting of big games. While moving in search of minor forest produces in small groups if they come across small game animals, kill them by the help of dogs, axe or stick and consume in the forest itself.

During the rainy season, as the forest becomes dense and inaccessible, collection is minimised and continued in the forest nearest to the residential site. Thus, during the winter and summer, major food collections are undertaken. Among major collections of Kharia (Savara), honey is available more during summer season. Similarly arrow-root is mainly collected during winter and Sal resin towards the end of rainy season and early winter. Other collections of plant resources are similarly seasonally available. Thus, in Similipal, the resources are no doubt predictable and dense, but due to the above discussed factors as well as present circumstances of official restriction and competition among the local communities, no item can be guaranteed regarding its availability or amount or quantity of collection. One may return with a greater amount or much less than that and sometimes also empty hand. Therefore, the economic dependability is rarely 'high' and most often 'fairly low'. Regarding resource utilisation, it signifies little sense of territoriality and more about the 'home ranges', microhabitat or micro-ecological zones. Thus, territoriality which was there to some extent in the past, at present is much more flexible. Similipal environment exhibits some form of zonation and diversity of resources. Further, it is also noticed that in spite of adequate rain, resource sites in forest are having specific locations which are

suitable for their growth and abundance, may be because of better soil and other geographic conditions.

Therefore, in consideration with both the fairly low economic dependability and specific location of some sites mainly for the major produces like the Sal resin and arrowroot, degree of nomadism becomes "low-medium." Thus, the Kharias (Savara) under such ecological settings, continue a semi-nomadic way of living.

Among the Kharias (Savara) in the past specifically before the merger of Mayurbhanj State in 1949 with Orissa, that is, during the King's rule, different village groups have been permitted the scope or opportunity to forage within a definite micro-ecological zone or territory around each village. This has been finalized mainly on the basis of mutual division of territories or ecological zones of Similipal hills, among various village units. In the 'Revised Working Plan of Reserved Forests of Baripada Division' (for the period from 1973-74 to 1992-93) it is therefore mentioned that, "It seems the Kharias (Savara) have divided the hill reserves among groups of village for collection of minor forest produce. In order to put stop to their nuisance in the forest, the Ex-Durbar administration of Mayurbhanj had expelled the Kharias from Similipal hills in 1940 and they were forced to settle on lands in the villages around the Similipal Hills. But the Kharias are now back again in their original domain. At present the exploitation of some of the minor forest produces in Similipal hill, is mainly done through Kharias."

### **Technology of Honey Collection in Similipal Hills**

In Similipal hills honey is a major item of collection. Besides Kharia (Savara), Ujia (Savara) and Birhor, a few other neighboring tribes also collect honey occasionally for self consumption. The Kharia (Savara) and Ujia (Savara) collect honey mainly for the market whereas Birhor occasionally collect it for own consumption.

According to the entomologist, in Orissa four species of honey bees are found. They are Rock Honey Bee (*Apis dorsata* Fabricious), Little Honey Bee (*Apis florae* Fabricious), Medium size Honey Bee (*Apis Cerana* Fabricious) and Dammer Bee (*Trigona* Species). Both the Kharia (Savara) and Ujia (Savara) categorise the honey bees into two broad types on the basis of their size.

1. Bada (big) Mahu (honey) (Baghua in Oriya)
2. Sana (small) Mahu (Honey)

On the basis of the location of honey combs, they categorise the small honey bees into 3 types. Considering all of them, 4 types of honey bees are found in total.

The Birhor on the other, although do not collect honey regularly, they follow a similar categorization of 4 types of honey in the forest. They never collect the honey of *A. dorsata* bees that are very aggressive by nature. They only collect the other three types mainly for consumption.

### Types of Honey-Bees

Sl. No.	Types of Bee	Nest Building	No. & Size of Combs	Honey Bee
1.	Bada Mahu (Big-Honey)	In open (on very high tree branch & cliffs)	Single & Big	Apis dorsala Fabricious
2.	Chhatarali Mahu (hollow trunk-honey)	Inside hollow tree trunk & under ground	Several & medium	Apis cerana indica Fabricious
3.	Kathi Mahu (Kharia) stick honey) or Khadi Mahu (Ujia) (Stick honey)	In open (on thin tree branches	Single & small	Apis florae Fabricious
4.	Kanjia Mahu (Sour-honey)	Inside hollow tree tunk	No comb but honey cells	Dammer bees (Trigona-species)

(According to Kharia (Savara) & Ujia (Savara))

### Types of Honey-Bee and Their Collection

Sl. No.	Types of Bee	Size & Colour of Bees	Period of Availability	Maximum Qty. Per Swarm
1.	Bada Mahu (Baghua in Oriya)	Big & Brown	Chaitra to Jyestha & Kartik (Mar-Jun. & Oct. - Nov)	10-30 kgs
2.	Chhatarali Mahu	Medium & Brown	All though the year	5-6 Kgs
3.	Kathi or Khadi Mahu	Small & Reddish Brown	Pausa & Magha (Dec-Feb)	500gms

On the basis of the nature and behavior of honey bees and location of the bee-hives, Kharias (Savara) adopt appropriate techniques for the collection of honey. Except *A. dorsata* and *A. cerana*, the other two kinds of bees collect very little honey which are generally consumed on the spot by the gatherer himself and his group members. Therefore, the technology of honey collection here considers only the honey of *A. dorsata* (Baghua or Bada Mahu) and *A. cerana* (Chhatarali) as they are most significant for the market.

### The Technology of Arrowroot Collection

Arrowroot is another major collection of the Kharia (Savara). The wild arrowroot has a greater medicinal value than that of the cultivated stuff and therefore, it is of great demand in the market. Unlike the honey and Sal resin, which other tribes are also able to collect, in the field of arrow-root collection no other

community has yet attempted to collect. It signifies the highly specialized skill in the collection and processing of arrowroot. But it involves no life risk as found in case of honey (from the cliffs) and Sal resin collections. It includes a series of laborious processes for days together and constant as well as careful watching. It needs patience and often needs the shift of the group to a site near by the river stream for smooth operation of the different stages of processing.

Arrowroot is a kind of tuber which is produced at the root under the ground. Arrowroot is called as '*Palua*' by the Kharia (Savara), Ujia (Savara) and the local Oriya people. Kharias (Savara) divide arrowroot or '*Palua*' broadly into two types on the basis of the size. The first category of arrowroot tubers are found to have many off-shoots around the mother shoot. In the second category, arrowroot tubers are found with only a single shoot without any off-shoot. Both the categories are finally divided into five major types.

In the forest, as the people say, Bhandua and Chauli type of arrowroot is found in plenty. The botanical name of this arrowroot is *Curcuma angustifolia* Roxb. The Haladia (yellow) arrow root is called as *Curcuma aromatica* Salisb.

### Technology of Hunting

The forest of Similipal is full of plants, animals and water resources which are essential for the minimum maintenance of livelihood. Out of these three, the technology of the collection of plant resources have already been discussed. The animal resources are to be discussed here under the caption of 'hunting'. It is to mention here once again that early hunters were exclusively depending on hunting where as the modern food gatherers and hunters except those in arctic and subarctic areas are to depend on it only from 20% to 40% (Lee, 1968:7). It is generally considered by most of the modern hunters and gatherers that hunting would not save anybody from starvation. People do consider that hunting may not be a basic necessity, as without it one can survive. The absence of vegetable food may question the sustenance of life. The availability of plants foods are also comparatively more guaranteed than the game animals. Besides these general factors, in specific cases (i) the scarcity of game animals due to reckless and rampant hunting by several communities and, (ii) restrictions imposed on hunting in a National Park and Wild life Sanctuary as well as Tiger Reserve like that of Similipal hills, hunting has become an occasional activity for most of the foragers (hunters and food-gatherers) today. The case of the Kharia (Savara) in Similipal hills is no exception to it. However, in spite of all such restrictions, people have developed an additional taste for the wild meat coming from hunting and hunting for them. Due to above mentioned reasons hunting is mostly considered as a pleasure or leisure time activity.

In most of the gathering activities, Kharia (Savara), usually collect renewable resources; some of these are consciously collected along with the practices of replenishment and renewal. Most others are naturally propagated, renewed and conserved. A few other resources which are basically non-renewable,

are only to some extent manageable by the natural process of propagation, and mostly accounted for as a loss. A general idea about all such collection of renewable or non-renewable items can be available from the following table.

As mentioned in the table in the collection of renewable resources like arrowroot, *sal*, resin, fruits, nuts and berries, greens, grasses, flowers (edible and inedible), mushrooms, roots and tubers, *sal* and *siali* leaves, broom stick etc. only are collected without incurring any substantial loss or destruction to the ecosystem. But in case of honey collection, there are chances of loss or destruction of trees. But in the collection of honey from the cliff, there is no such chance of destruction of trees. In the collection of honey from the *A. dorsata* bees, which build the nest on the tall trees, people never fall down from the trees for the purpose of honey collection, as by this process, hives along with the honey are all destroyed by falling down on the ground. But the collection of honey from the hives of *A. cerana* bees which build the nest inside hollow tree trunks involves tree-falling sometimes. Usually such bees build their nests on the trees of medium height and people climb up the tree, open the mouth of the trunk with the help of the axe and collect the hives containing honey and larva. But in some cases where the mouth of the hollow tree trunk is located on a very inconvenient part of the tree to which no one can reach, for opening the mouth, people are compelled to cut down the tree. As such trees are of medium height and the hives are located inside the tree trunk, no honey is wasted by this process. However, people try their best not to fell down the tree, as the same tree by the application of a piece of stone on the opened mouth of the hollow trunk, can attract the bees once again. However, under compelling circumstances, such a destructive activity is resorted to.

#### Renewability and Non-Renewability of Forest Resources

Sl. No.	Items Collected	Renewable/ replaceable	Non-renewable or irreplaceable	Destroyed/Lost
1.	Honey	√	-	Trees (occasionally)
2.	Arrow-root	√	-	No
3.	Sal Resin	√	-	No
4.	Gums	√	-	Tress (rarely)
5.	Mango	√	-	No
6.	Other Fruits, Nuts & Berries	√	-	No
7.	Greens	√	-	No
8.	Grasses	√	-	No
9.	Flowers (Edible & Medicinal)	√	-	No
10.	Mushrooms	√	-	No
11.	Roots & Tubers	√	-	No
12.	Sal & Siali Leaves	√	-	No
13.	Broom stick	√	-	No

14.	Bamboo	√	-	No
15.	Timer		-	Trees (often)
16.	Fire-wood Usually dead & dried logs		-	Trees (occasionally)
17.	Catching of birds (a) Hill Myna (b) Horn Bill  (c) Jungle fowl (d) Parrot (e) Other birds		- √  √ - √	No (Pet birds) Female birds caught & consumed Caught & consumed  No (Pet birds) Caught & consumed
18.	Fishing		√	Poisoned & caught
19.	Hunting		√	Mostly small games
20.	Chopped Fibres	√		The bark of the creeper/tree used

Under such circumstances, it is interestingly found that destruction of such trees although affect the ecosystem, do not cause any substantial financial loss. On empirical scrutiny it is noticed that mostly in the miscellaneous trees which are not so costly or useful, such hollow-trunks are noticed. Although, the economically important trees are not free from hollow-trunks, as compared to the miscellaneous trees their number is negligible. The classification of trees by the forest authorities in respect of their cost and importance may be useful to estimate the loss and gain.

### THE HILL KHARIA DEVELOPMENT SITUATION

The Hill Kharia society in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa may be divided into three major sections. The first category of Kharias remains in the peasant villages away from the forest and live on the agricultural activities like non-tribal peasants. The second category of Kharias live in the periphery of the forests or in the fringe areas in between forests and plains and depend on both forest collections as well as agricultural activities. But they continue forest collections as primary occupation and get enough opportunities during the lean months to work in the fields of the local peasants on daily wage basis. The third category of Kharias live in the remote forest areas and live on the forest collections. Although they continue little bit of agriculture of their own, they usually get few opportunities for working as daily labourers. Here the author has studied only the forest dependent Kharias known as Hill Kharias who live in the fringe areas as well as remote forests. Specifically, the author has covered the Hill Kharia villages of two Gram Panchayats namely Khejuri in Gudugudia Gram Panchayat and Baniabasa in Bholagadia Gram Panchayat for preparing this article.

In these two Gram Panchayats Hill Kharia live mainly in multi ethnic villages as a minority group. Till the end of 1986 they were included under general

development programmes along with other tribals of the Panchayats. As hunter-gatherers, no specific attention was paid to them. Moreover, most of the general programmes were agriculture-oriented. Bholagadia Gram Panchayat is connected by all weather road communication with the block headquarters. As the Panchayat is situated towards the Similipal forest, government officials occasionally visit the interior villages. They usually come up to Panchayat headquarters at Bholagadia. Although the Hill Kharia live in road side settlements, they are very rarely visited by the officials as their villages are situated in interior foot-hill areas. The villages under Gudugudia Gram Panchayat are also similarly connected through all weather forest roads and most of the Hill Kharia villages are situated on the road side. As these roads are regularly maintained by the forest department, Hill Kharia inside the forest or in the interior foot-hill regions get all weather road communication with outside markets and societies for economic transactions throughout the year. However, the road side non-Kharia tribal villages nearer to the Block headquarters get more opportunities for the implementation as well as supervision of development programmes.

#### Hill Kharia Hamlets (1971 Census)

Gram Panchayats	No. of villages	Total Population	Kharia Hamlets	Kharia Households
Bholagadia	13	6107	Two	33 in Baniabasa
Gudugudia	24	3310	Six	34 in Khejuri

Besides the general development programmes in the fields of health and education, the most common programmes implemented in these Gram Panchayats are agricultural programmes which include the provision of bullocks, kitchen garden-cum-cowshed development, supply of seeds, fertilizers and agricultural implements. There are also other programmes like food for work, irrigation, plantation, dug-well, housing, nutrition etc. implemented in these Panchayats. But the Hill Kharias who are primarily food-gathers and sub-marginal farmers are least benefited by all these programmes. Out of all the Hill Kharias in these two Gram Panchayats, only two households are found to possess a little more than 5 acres of land (Table 10.2).

Category	Villages	
	Banisbasa	Khejuri
Landless	16	17
Less than ½ acre	9	3
Less than 1 acre	1	5
1 to 2 acres	1	6
2 to 3 acres	-	2
3 to 4 acres	6	-
5 to 6 acres	One household form each village	



A few of them have about 2 acres to 4 acres of land each. Few others have 1/2 or 1 acre of land. As most of these lands are upland, the cultivable land for each Kharia land-owner is totally insufficient for the maintenance of the family. Due to their continuous engagement in food-gathering and hunting activities as primary occupation in the rich forests of Similipal, a few Hill Kharias who cultivate their land cannot take proper care of the crop. Therefore, a majority of them usually give their land to the local Santal, Kol or Bathudi farmers for share-cropping and try to be content with the ultimate return.

However, after Independence, for the first time two Hill Kharias of village Baniabasa (Bhogagadia Gram Panchayat) received a loan of Rs. 29 each from the local LAMPS for agriculture in the year 1963.

Due to greater dependence on forest collection as well as little interest in agriculture, the loan money was spent other wise and as a result, till June, 1985, both of them have not been able to repay the principal amount. In the year 1968, Kharias namely Sanu, Radha and Haya have been also granted loan of Rs. 100, Rs. 100 and Rs. 200 respectively for agriculture. Except Raya, the other two have not been able to repay the dues till the end of December, 1985. In the year 1980, Sania, Purna, Bhakta and Bina of the same village have been also granted Rs. 400 each for purchasing 4 numbers of sheep. In spite of being granted 50 per cent subsidy, only except Purna, others have not yet cleared up their dues. Besides such short term loans, a few medium term loans also had been sanctioned to some of the Hill Kharia and the result was equally shocking. In no case the basic objectives or purposes of the programme are government.

Despite their illiteracy, Hill Kharias are conscious of their development programmes implemented earlier and now and categorically during the periods of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Ministers. They express their satisfaction about the continuation of previous programmes and inclusion of some new ones. Although, such programmes are not specifically planned to suit their own culture, the Kharias manifest their gratification as they get some kind of ready cash or kind through these programmes.

They are often misinformed that these loans are free gifts donated by the government and they do not have to repay the balance after the deduction of subsidy. A number of economic upliftment programmes in this way, are operated in and around the tribal areas under ITDA, ERRP and IRDP development schemes. Scheduled tribes under ITDA schemes get 50 per cent subsidy, under JRDP 50 per cent subsidy and under ERRP 75 per cent subsidy. The ERRP programmes are sanctioned only to landless poor people. Through such development schemes, a variety of small business and trade schemes like leaf-plate making, goat-rearing, rice business, rope making, mobile grocery and stationery shops, etc. have been sanctioned to Hill Kharia and other worthy people both in terms of cash and kind. Eleven Hill Kharias of village Baniabasa (Bhogagadia Gram Panchayat) have been provided bi-cycles and cash for starting

rice business and mobile grocery and other shops. As in the previous programmes, they also took once again the help of the mediators to assist them in fulfilling the required conditions of the concerned bank. They have also to pay some amount to the mediator towards his service. It was finally observed that the rice and other consumable business items were readily consumed; the cash was utilised for purchasing fashionable items and garments. Bi-cycles are now utilised for various personal visits or movements either to the market centres or the relative's village. In most of the cases the bicycles are also given to the local peasants on lease for getting cash loan during festive or ceremonial occasions. A few are also found to dispose of their bi-cycle at a very low price. In Gudugudia Gram Panchayat also, most of the Hill Kharias have been sanctioned such small business loans with subsidy and the ultimate consequence has the same story of failure to delineate.

It is empirically enquired that the Hill Kharia, who are food-gatherers, hunters as well as sub-marginal farmers, are basically semi-nomadic by nature and therefore, neither have any acquaintance nor any interest in business which requires full time personal interest, effort and meticulous attention for achieving success. As they, are misinformed that such loans with subsidy are only a kind of financial help to poor tribals and free of any interest, they come forward to avail such programmes. Although, a few Hill Kharia beneficiaries have tried to repay some amount in the plains area, none has really cleared up the total amount till now. In view of such food-gathering and semi-nomadic nature, and non-paying tendency of the Hill Kharia in most of the cases, the Baitarani Gramya Bank authorities are now sanctioning only the 75 per cent subsidy amount (under ERRP scheme for small business) to the people of Gudugudia Panchayat deducting the loan amount of 25 per cent at the time of sanction. Thus, the account is closed from the beginning and the beneficiary is informed not to repay any amount towards the loan. This, on the other hand, has rightly strengthened the previous misinformation (as spread by the local mediators) that whatever government is providing is a kind of help and if one cannot repay nothing will happen. Because of such misconceptions mostly in the interior areas, the Hill Kharia beneficiaries irrespective of their basic need, whatever scheme is launched, they are accepting it without any hesitation. Moreover, when almost all are not repaying their 25 per cent or 50 per cent loan amount (as per the scheme) after subsidy, and no action is taken for recovery, the new beneficiaries automatically feel encouraged to continue the old unhealthy tradition of nonpayment of the loan amount. Therefore, such small business schemes although provide bi-cycle and other material benefits to the Hill Kharia for their personal use, in terms of basic objectives, they experience a great failure.

From the above case studies it is learnt that ignorance and illiteracy are two major responsible factors remain at the root of all sorts of problems in life. Educated persons not only safeguard themselves, but also lead the nation towards the prosperity. Therefore, education may be treated as basic to all the development

programmes in a developing country like that of ours. In foot-hill or fringe areas, the Hill Kharia boys get the scope for lower and upper primary education, whereas in interior villages scope for education is limited. Out of all the Hill Kharia settlements inside the forest area only in Khejuri village, one L.P. School is established and because of its situation in a forest village, no teacher is agreed to serve here. Besides the limited or no scope for education for the interior Hill Kharia children, the cultural constraints are equally responsible for their illiteracy. As per the demand of the tradition, when both the parents or only fathers set out for forest collections daily, the children are left in the settlement either to guard the huts or to take care of the domestic animals like goat, cattle and fowls. Often the boys and girls who are capable enough, usually above 10 years of age, accompany and assist their parents in forest collections as well as domestic activities. As a result of such cultural constraints where there are schools, only a few Hill Kharia children come to the school due to the personal efforts of the teacher. Thus, in Baniabasa L.P. School, Khejuri L.P. School and Gudugudia residential school, only a few Hill Kharia children are coming regularly in comparison to other tribal children. It is also worth-mentioning that rarely any officer-in-charge visits or supervises such interior schools. Thus, in the matter of education, defects or faults are lying with both the sides. But as most of the tribals are illiterate or ignorant and being still not conscious of the value of education, the responsibility for their education is lies with the government. Adult education had not been also properly organised in the interior hill villages. Health programmes too, have no remarkable impact or achievement among the Hill Kharia of fringe as well as interior areas.

As regards the housing schemes for semi-nomadic Hill Kharia, it is observed that only in Gudugudia Gram Panchayat, one such scheme has been implemented by the Jashipur Block. For the landless Hill Kharias in the interior village of Khejuri, 25 single *naria*-tile houses (12" X 10" size single room) have been constructed in the year 1978-79 under Integrated Housing Scheme. The cost of each house at the time of construction was Rs. 1,250. Though the people felt better with the completed houses, because of the single room structure it became difficult to accommodate later when the family size increased. Thus, except a few, some have extended the original structure and most others have shifted their house to a suitable site in the village. On enquiry it is found that, the house structures differ significantly from the traditional Kharia houses and as a result, most of the beneficiaries wanted to modify them. No such housing scheme has been implemented in other Hill Kharia villages of different Gram Panchayats.

In Gudugudia Gram Panchayat, the lady and male health workers designated as MPHWS (Multi-Purpose Health Workers), hardly come to visit the Hill Kharia villages in the interior forests, although they are appointed for that purpose and paid Rs. 30 as hill allowance in addition to the salary. They usually find it convenient to meet the people in the weekly market days and handover the malaria tablets etc. to them. It is a great pity that although there is a dispensary as well as, a mobile medical unit established at Gudugudia (nearest hospital on the forest

periphery), the concerned doctor is coming: only once in a week for the last 5 years and the pharmacist has to manage the overall hospital duties. As a result of this, people have no reliance on the hospital and the local quacks get enough scope for selling their medicines to these poor tribals. Malaria is the main disease in the locality and almost all the tribals suffer from malaria. Spraying of DDT although has been carried on in the area; it has no beneficial effect. But the drinking water problem has been solved in most of the interior villages except only a few, by installing tube-wells. In addition to the problems of communication, physical setting and infrastructural problems, the people have also a significant role to make their own health condition worst by following the traditional belief and magical treatment. In comparison to other local tribes, the Hill Kharias, by nature, are very unclean or dirty. Only when they fail to get any result by magical treatment, they think of the doctors and the patient at the worst condition is brought to the doctor. But the Family Planning Programmes (see Table 10.3) on the other hand, have a comparatively better achievement. Normally in the area due to malaria and other magical treatment, infant mortality rate is high and most of the aged couples for the intention of getting some financial help, come forward to undergo family planning operations.

### **SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

In view of the backward conditions of the primitive tribes who are not duly benefited under the general development programmes, specific micro-projects have been constituted for specific or selected primitive tribal communities. Basing on the lists prepared with reference to the reports of Dhebar Commission (1961) and Shilu Ao Team (1969) and guidelines provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India to the State Government for the identification of primitive tribal groups, 9 such groups had been identified in Orissa till the end of 1979-80. The Hill Kharia was one among them. Although various micro-projects for the Pauri Bhuiyan, the Bonda, the Juang, the Kutia Kondh, the Dongria Kondh, the Saura and the Lanjia Saura had started years before, the micro project for the Hill Kharia in combination with the nomadic Mankidia was started only in the year 1986 which started to function in 1987. Thus, the HKMDA (Hill Kharia and Mankidia Development Agency) has started with 21 sparsely distributed villages in 2 Gram Panchayats of Jashipur and Karanjia blocks. Some of the villages are situated in the interior parts of Simlipal hills whereas others in the fringe or peripheral regions.

Since Independence, though the Hill Kharia had been included under the general development programmes, meant both for tribals and non-tribals, their living conditions have not changed materially. As gathered from the case studies mentioned earlier, it was because of their ignorance, forest-based economy and semi-nomadic way of life, they were continuing at the mercy of the local leaders, representatives, government officials, mediators and exploiters. However, within only one year of functioning, the HKMDA has achieved tremendously in comparison to the previous achievements.

The HKMDA micro-project has started various development programmes in the fields of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, cottage industry, business, education, employment, health, entertainment, training, demonstration, housing and land distribution.

However, in addition to the above development programmes it is quite shocking that in the beginning of the Tiger Project, the Hill Kharias were considered to be an essential part of the forest ecosystem and the Project Directors were trying to involve them in all kinds of forest management activities. But at present the situation has gone against the Hill Kharias in the sense that they have been ousted from the core area of the Tiger Project whereas the other tribals could thrive because of their political influence and generations of long habitation in such areas. It is needless to say that no tribe other than the Hill Kharia is eco-friendly. Thus the Kharias from Jenabil, Jamuna and Kabatghai have been ousted to Jashipur area where there is no scope for forestry and food gathering. The Hill Kharias here are just feeling like fish out of water. Maintenance of livelihood is a big question before them. They are bound to change their forest-based economy to a new unknown type of livelihood thereby killing an age old culture for all time to come.

### **Bibliography**

- Dalton, Edward Tuite (1872). *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing Press, Calcutta, (under the direction of the Council of the Asiatic Society of Bengal), p. 156-219.
- Dash, Jagannath. *Human Ecology of Foragers*. Commonwealth, New Delhi, (1998).
- Dyson-Hudson, Rada & Smith, Eric Alden (1978). Human Territoriality : An Ecological Reassessment, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 80, No. 1, March.
- Report of the Working Groups on Tribal Development During Medium Term Plan 1978-83 (1978). Govt. of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi.
- Report (1983-84). Report of the Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 6<sup>th</sup> Report, (April 1983 –March 1984).
- Roy, Sarat Chandra (1937). *The Kharias*, Man in India Office, Ranchi.
- Russell, R. V. and Hiralal, (1916). *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, Vol. III, Macmillan & Co. Limited St. Martin's Street, London (Published under the Order of the Central Provinces Administration).

# HILL KHARIA: SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE \*

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

The Kharia is a major tribe of Orissa. They inhabit the northwestern region of the State. Their principal concentration is in the district of Mayurbhanj. The total population of the tribe is 2, 22, 844(1, 09, 817 males and 1, 13, 027 females) as per 2011 Census recording a decennial growth rate of 18.33 per cent from 2001 census. The sex ratio is estimated at 1029 females for 1000 males. The percentage of literacy is 58.46 %. For males it is 66.42% and females, 50.78%.

The tribe has been subdivided into three major sections on the basis of their geographical location,, group identity and relative level of socio-economic development, such as, (i) Pahari Kharia, (Hill-Kharia), (ii) Dhelki Kharia and (iii) Dudh Kharia. While the Dhelki and Dudh sections represent a relatively advanced culture with their settled agricultural economy and occupational diversification, the Hill Kharias live in a primitive condition, pursuing a forest based subsistence economy and more or less, a semi-nomadic life-style.

In Mayurbhanj district, the Hill Kharias are largely concentrated in and around the Similipal forest region. Small Hill Kharia settlements are found scattered inside the remote parts of this hill region. They claim themselves to be autochthones of Similipal.

They have a dialect of their own which belongs to the Austro-Asiatic sub-family of the Mundari branch. But now they have forgotten their dialect and have started speaking Oriya, the regional language.

The Hill Kharia of Similipal live amidst remote forest and mountainous habitat. Generally their settlements are situated at the foothills but neither at the top nor on the slope. Their settlements are mostly smaller in size, hardly exceeding thirty families. In the surrounding plains they live in big villages of heterogeneous ethnic composition of different tribes and castes. In these villages they live in separate wards usually located at the periphery of the main village.

---

\* Published in *Particularly Vulnerable Tribes (PVTGs) of Odisha*, Vol. I, 2015, pp.417-426

<sup>1</sup> OSD, (Research), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

The huts in their villages are scattered here and there in a haphazard manner. The rectangular huts have walls made of a wooden frame plastered with mud. The roof has a double-sloped wooden superstructure thatched with wild grass or straw. Generally, it has only one room without any window and it serves the purpose of living, sleeping, cooking and storing. Sometimes domestic animals, like goats, poultry birds etc. are accommodated either in the same room, or on the front verandah. But cattle if any are kept in a separate open shed inside the courtyard. Every house has a courtyard but there is no community hut or dormitory inside the village. Therefore, community activities are conducted under mango groves or under big trees. The seat of the village shrine (Sal) is located in a secluded spot at the periphery of the village under the shadow of tall trees. The villages have no proper roads but linked by footpaths.

The household belongings of the Hill Kharia are quite simple and small in number including house implements, string cots, earthen-ware vessels, utensils, bamboo baskets, leaf mats, grinding stone, leaf-cups and plates etc.

They do not take proper care in keeping themselves and their surroundings neat and clean. As a result, they suffer from a number of physical ailments, like, malaria, influenza, yaws, typhoid, skin diseases and stomach troubles. When they suffer from prolonged and acute diseases they usually take recourse to their traditional magico-religious treatment rather than availing the modern medical facilities. It is found during our study that apart from other diseases, malaria and malnutrition are very common 'among' them.

Rice is their staple food. But they do not get rice always. Their food is supplemented by seasonal collections of edible fruits, roots, leaves and tubers from the jungle. Having expertise in honey collection, they collect honey from the forest, eat it and sell the surplus in the local market. They are very much fond of drinking honey and alcoholic drinks such as *handia* (Rice Beer) and *mahuli* liquor. They also chew tobacco and smoke *biris*. Occasionally, they get meat of the wild animals by hunting and also get fish by fishing in the nearby streams and rivers. They are experts in hunting but not so in fishing.

There is nothing so remarkable about the dress pattern of the Hill Kharia. Their low economic status is a big constraint against fulfillment of their minimum and basic needs, and so, they have scanty clothing. Scarcity of clothes makes the small children to remain naked up to 5 to 6 years of age. After that they put on a loincloth. Adult male members wear small *dhotis* and women wear white cotton saris falling up to their ankles. Now days, due to culture contact and modernization they are using dresses like shirts, pants, banyans and frocks and blouses which they purchase from the local markets. Kharia women adorn themselves with various kinds of ornaments, such as brass necklace, bead necklace, earring, finger ring, armlet, hairpin etc. mostly made of brass and silver.

The Hill Kharia of Similipal is a pre-agricultural and pre-literate community. Forest based subsistence activities, like hunting, food gathering and collection of minor forest produces have become the mainstay of their economy. While their counterparts living in other parts of the district are entering into agrarian economy they continue to pursue their living as forest gatherers. Most of them are landless and not acquainted with agricultural practices. They gather variety of minor forest produce, such as resin, wax, honey, arrowroot, tapioca, *tussar* cocoon, gum, *lac*, etc. it is their major source of income. They engage themselves in forest collection activities round the year. The rainy season is the lean period for such operations. For seasonal collection Kharia families camp inside the forest till the collection is over. These collections are individually owned other than honey, which is collectively collected, and shared among the households who join the pursuit. Cases of inter-group conflicts and disputes are rare since collections are made on sheer individual efforts. The minor forest produce items are either sold to forest agents or to the local traders and *sahukars* (money lenders). Very often the Kharias are cheated in the transactions.

The life-cycle of Hill Kharia begins with conception and child birth and passes through certain successive stages and events, like childhood, adolescence, adulthood, marriage, old-age and ends in death. The birth pollution is observed for nine days. On the ninth day the mother and child come out of seclusion and take a ritual bath. After this purificatory ritual the mother resumes her routine activities. Name-giving ceremony is held either on the ninth day or any day afterwards. The next important ceremonial event is the "ear-piercing ceremony" which is held on any auspicious day during the period of early childhood i.e. before the child completes five years of his/her age.

The socialization process of the Hill Kharia is designed to prepare the young men and women to face the hard crises of life for survival. It further makes the children to learn to become obedient, disciplined and self-dependant. As a matter of routine, parents go to the forest to gather edible and minor forest produce everyday and in some seasons they camp in the forest for a couple of days leaving their children in their homes. During the absence of parents, the children manage to look after themselves. Grown up children take care of infants and younger children and also look after the household. At the age of ten or so a Hill Kharia girl learns to perform ordinary household chores, like husking and pounding of grains, cooking, serving food, preparing leaf cups and plates, fetching water, cleaning utensils, plastering the walls and floor of her house with cow dung and mud, nursing the infants, taking care of the livestock and household pets etc. "The girls get a more consistent training and so as to develop a constructive and careful mental outlook (Vidyarthi, 125,1980).

As compared to the girls, the boys are more privileged. They are given certain amounts of freedom to spend their early childhood days by playing and merry-making. On their late childhood, they learn to attend minor household



chores if necessary and also some outdoor subsistence activities. After the age of 10-12 years i.e. during their adolescence the boys are imparted practical training, slowly and gradually by their parents and elders on forest based subsistence activities. They learn the skills, techniques, expertise, norms and customs associated with their vocation by assisting their parents and elders. By the time they grow up and step into adulthood they become self-sufficient and thus, full-fledged earning members of their respective natal families. When they are found to be capable of earning their livelihood they are considered fit to marry and establish their own family of procreation after leaving their natal family i.e. the family of orientation in the Hill Kharia society.

To sum up, the late childhood and adolescence among the Hill Kharia “is the important period in which they come to adjust themselves to the norms and values of their society for surviving in the jungle. It is at this age, they start developing their personalities.” (Vidyarathi, 125, 1980)

Marriage is the most significant event in Hill Kharia life. The Hill Kharia sub section of the tribe is strictly endogamous. Marriage outside the tribe is strictly prohibited. A Hill Kharia marrying a non-Kharia is severely punished and often ostracized from the community.

Further, the Hill Kharia is divided into several exogamous clans and marriage within the same clan is a serious offence as it amounts to incest. The regular type of marriages are, marriage by negotiation, marriage by elopement, love marriage, marriage by capture, marriage by intrusion, marriage by service and son-in-law in house. Other forms of marriages, such as widow remarriage, junior levirate, sororate and remarriage of divorced and separated persons are also permitted. Parallel cousin marriage is prohibited and classificatory cross-cousin marriage is allowed. The groom's party pays bride price to the bride's. The groom's party pays bride price to the bride's party in the regular type of marriages and sororate marriages excluding marriage by intrusion, marriage by service and 'son-in-law in house' types. Monogamy is the ideal and common practice though polygamy is not prohibited.

The Hill Kharia prefers adult marriage. The boys and girls are considered fit for marriage after attaining the age of eighteen and sixteen, respectively. They enjoy liberty in choosing their mates and so, the consent of both the partners, especially; the consent of the girl is a deciding factor in finalizing the matrimony.

The Hill Kharia society is patrilocal and neolocal in nature. After marriage, the Hill Kharia couple set up their separate residence in the groom's village. However, depending upon individual situations the couple may stay at the bride's village or the groom's maternal uncle's village or with any of their kins.

Family, as the smallest basic unit of their social organization is patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal in nature. Nuclear type of family is common and joint

and extended families are rarely found. It normally consists of husband, wife and unmarried children. The average family size does not ordinarily exceed four persons. The family functions as a corporate unit in which all the members contribute towards the upkeep of the family according to their age and sex. The father or the eldest male member acts as the head of the family.

Women do not take an active part in communal matters. But they are very hard working. They are good at collecting minor forest produce, such as edible roots, tubers, fruits, leaves, etc. Major items of agricultural works, like weeding, transplantation, reaping, harvesting etc. are done by women folk except ploughing which is tabooed for them. Women exclusively do household works. Though the authority of household lies with men, women play very important role in the management of domestic affairs and economic pursuits. In Kharia society theoretically women are subordinate to men but in practice they enjoy equal status with men. They are regarded as valuable economic assets of the Kharia households and their society at large.

No dormitory organization is found in the Kharia villages. But social status and respect grow with successive age groups. During childhood and adolescence, a Kharia learns the art of living under tough circumstances. With adulthood comes marriage. With marriage he acquires full-fledged membership of his society and enters into his own family of procreation being separated from his natal family. As he grows old he becomes a respectable member of his society. He continues to remain economically active instead of depending on his younger kins as long as possible. So the old men and women are given a position of honour in the Hill Kharia society. Their valuable advice is sought for in all-important matters and they are called to participate in communal affairs.

No dormitory organization is found in their society. This does not stop them to enjoy their leisure time and ceremonial occasions with recreational activities by performing their folkdances and songs. A circular drum, called Changu (tambourine) is used as a musical instrument in their songs and dances. Both men and women dance together. Sometimes old men and women participate in the dance. The dance is accompanied by songs and riddles.

The stronghold of religion is conspicuous in the Hill Kharia way of life. They worship a number of supernatural beings and their propitiatory rituals and festivals are associated with their traditional subsistence activities i.e. forest collections, all round the year. "Thakurani" or the Earth Goddess (Dharni Devta) and the Sun God (Dharam Devta) are the supreme deities of the Hill Kharia. The Hill Kharia have strong faith in spiritual beings endowed with personality who preside over various fields of human life and capable of influencing the destiny of man. Their religious beliefs and practices comprise the propitiation of the spirits in various ways, like rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices etc. The spirits are also believed to control the nature. The powers and forces of nature are personified by different supernatural beings. There are several hill-spirits or "Pats". Besides, there are

village deities, clan spirits and other malevolent spirits or ghosts. The Kharia also believe in black and white magic. But now a days, their religious ideas, beliefs and rituals show traces of Hinduism owing to the impact of neighbouring caste Hindu communities.

The Hill Kharia observes a number of rituals and festivals round the year, which are mostly, connected with their subsistence activities, like hunting, food gathering and honey collection, agricultural activities, first eating of seasonal fruits as well as prevention of diseases and epidemics etc. Some of these festivals have been adopted from their Hindu neighbors. The Hill Kharia who live from hand to mouth celebrates these occasions rather with austerity. The important festivals are, Phagu, Paridhi (ceremonial hunting), Am Nuakhia, Karma Puja Chait, Kalipuja, Pus Parab, Makar, Sima deota Puja, Jeth Nuakhia, Raja, and Dassara etc.

The traditional socio-political system of the Hill Kharia have evolved in course of time for the purpose of enforcing social control, conformity and discipline by way of administering customary law and justice. The system functions at two levels- the village level and regional (inter-village) level. At every level there is a corporate and representative body of community leaders and elders and office bearers to shoulder the responsibilities of decision-making and providing leadership.

At the village level, there is a traditional village Panchyat headed by the village chief, called Pradhan. In Similipal area where many Hill Kharia settlements form a part and parcel of multi-community villages, the village headman- Pradhan usually belongs to the non-Kharia community which is the influential and dominant community of the village. In some remote and interior Hill Kharia villages, the village headman, called 'Dehuri' manages both secular and sacerdotal functions. In large, multi-community villages the Pradhan's responsibilities are mainly secular though he attends to some important sacerdotal matters while Dehuri acts as the village priest. A subordinate called 'Dakua' assists both the office bearers.

The traditional village *panchayat* composed of the household heads is a very powerful body. It decides cases of inter-personal, inter and intra familial disputes and offences relating to incest, adultery, prohibitive marriage, divorces, separation, partition of family and property, breach of taboos, theft, assault, misbehavior, non-payment of bride-price, adoption, property inheritance, witchcraft, sorcery, black-magic and the like. Punishments are awarded in the form of fine, feast and liquor. In extreme cases, corporal punishment is awarded and in very serious cases, the offender is excommunicated or ostracized. The Panchayat meetings are also held to take decisions on certain important social, religious, economic and political matters concerning the village community. These include organization and arrangements to celebrate communal rituals and festivals, commencement of communal hunting expeditions, getting rid of disasters and epidemics etc. The meetings are usually held in leisurely hours in the

evening either in a central place of the village or in the house of the Pradhan or Dehuri or on the courtyard of the accused or before the seat of the village shrine, as the case may be.

The inter-village council at the regional level called 'Parha Panchayat' or 'Bhira' comprises the village chiefs and elderly representatives from a group of adjacent villages. An elderly and influential Pradhan of one of the member villages presides over the meetings of the Panchayat. The Parha Panchayat meetings are held to decide, inter-village and intra-village issues. It has power to revoke the decision of the village councils and restore the social and ritual status of the offender ex-communicated and ostracized by the village council or inter-village council.

This traditional political system of the Hill-Kharia had been duly recognized and reinforced by the erstwhile feudal administration of the ex-Mayurbhanj State and later by the British administrators as they did not want to interfere with the traditional way of life of the natives. But with the introduction of democratic system of elections and welfare administration as well as superimposition of Panchayat Raj system, after independence, the importance of their traditional political institutions has declined. Now the elected representatives, like the Sarpanch, Ward Member, Block Chairman, M.L.A. are assuming greater prominence in their village and regional spheres. However, the traditional leadership and councils still continue to regulate their traditional and customary affairs because the people have confidence in their indigenous institutions.

Culture-contact, external exposure and the forces of modernization have created some awareness among the Hill Kharia and brought some changes in their way of life. Their increased interaction with Government and non-Government welfare agencies has accelerated the pace of change. Government of India has recognized the Hill Kharias of Similipal as one among the 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) of Odisha. Thereafter, the Hill-Kharia Development Agency, a Micro Project, has been functioning in Jashipur of Mayurbhanj district since the eighties to take care of their specific felt needs and implement different development programmes for them. Currently, one may look forward to the primitive Hill Kharia to advance socio-economically and come up to the level of the general population in course of time.

## Bibliography & References

- |                         |         |  |
|-------------------------|---------|--|
| Archer, W.G.            | 1943    | In Indian Riddle Book, Chhotnagpur Kharia, <i>Man in India</i> No.23, pp.284-288   |
| Archer, W.G.            | 1946    | Two Kharia Weddings. <i>Man in India</i> , Vol.26, Nos. 3 & 4, pp.215-219  |
| Ball, V.                | 1968    | Notes on Kerriahs, Proceedings of Asiatic Society, Bengal.   |
| Banerjee, H.N.          | 1959    | The Kharia of Madhupur, Singhbhum District and Neighbouring Regions. <i>Bulletin of Department of Anthropology</i> , No.2, pp.91-104                           |
| Cardon, L.              | 1903    | Marriage Ceremonies of the Kharias. <i>Journal of Asiatic Society, Bengal</i> , Vol.27, pp.225-29.   |
| Dalton E.T.             | 1872    | The Kharias. Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, Calcutta, pp.158-67  |
| Das, Nityananda         | 1967-68 | Hill Kharias of Similipal Hills, <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. IX, No.2, pp. 44-49.  |
| Das, T.C.               | 1905    | <i>The Wild Kharias of Manbhum</i> , Calcutta.   |
| Ibid                    | 1931    | <i>The Wild Kharias of Dalbhum</i> , Anthropological Papers No.3, Calcutta University, Calcutta.   |
| Datta, B.N.             | 1935    | 'Kharias' Ethnological Notes on Some of the Castes of West Bengal. <i>Man in India</i> . No.15, pp.196-224.  |
| Deb, P.C.               | 1962    | Marriage among the Dhelki Kharias. <i>Bulletin of the Tribal Research Institute, Chhindwara</i> , Vol.2, No.1  |
| Despande, R.K.          | 1951    | "Kharias": Tribes of India, Part-II, New Delhi, Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangha, pp.154-159  |
| Drover. W.H.P.          | 1881    | "Notes on Some Kolarian Tribes"(Asurs, Birijyas, Birhors, Khariyas), <i>Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal</i> , Vol.57, No.1, pp.7-18                       |
| Ibid                    | 1891    | "Notes on some Kolarian Tribes" (Asurs, Birijyas, Birhors, Khariyas), <i>Journal of Asiatic Society, Bengal</i> , Vol. 60, No.1, pp.24-37                      |
| Enthoven, R.E.          | 1922    | "Kharia": Tribes & Castes of Bombay. Bombay, p.199.  |
| Floor, H.V.G.& G. Durat | 1934    | Dictionary of the Kharia Language, Calcutta Tea District Labour Association.   |
| Gupta, S.P.             | 1975    | "A Reconnoitral Survey among the Hill-Kharia and Proposed Action Research Programme". <i>Bulletin of Bihar Tribal Research Institute</i> , Vol. 17, pp. 25-72. |
| Haffman, J.             | 1933    | "Kharia": Encyclopedia Mundarica, p-8.   |

- |                                     |         |   |
|-------------------------------------|---------|---|
| Harimohan                           | 1961    | Socio-Economic Organisation and Religion among the Hill Kharia of Dalbhum". <i>Bulletin</i> , Ranchi, Vol.3, No.1, pp.180-212.  |
| Hutton, J.H.                        | 1951    | 'Kharia', Caste in India, Bombay, p.282.  |
| Mc Fee, M                           | 1976    | "Social Organistion : Marriage and the Family" in the Study of Anthropology, Ed. Hunter and Whitten, Harper & Row, New York, pp.188-207.                              |
| Mitra, S.C.                         | 1944-45 | "On a Kharia Astronomical Myth about the Metamorphosis, the Dove and her Eggs in to Stars." <i>Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society</i> , Bangalore, Vol.35, No.1. |
| Mohammed, L.                        | 1937    | "Kharia, Khadia". Census of Mayurbhanj State, 1931, Vol.I, Calcutta, pp.155, 212.   |
| Mohanty, U.C.                       | 1963-64 | "Kharia", <i>Adibasi</i> , No.3, (Spl. Issue) pp.175-78   |
| Risley, H.H.                        | 1981    | "Kharia": Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Calcuttta, Vol.I, pp.466-472   |
| Roy, S.C.                           | 1935    | "Past Migration of the Kharia Tribe". <i>Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society</i> .   |
| Roy, S.C. &<br>R.C. Roy             | 1937    | The Kharias, Man in India Office, Ranchi, Vol.I& II   |
| Russel R.V.<br>&Hiralal             | 1916    | "Kharia": The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol.III, London, p.445   |
| Sahoo, T.                           | 1990    | "Kharia". Tribes of Orissa, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, pp-135-139  |
| Senapati, N.&<br>N.K.Sahoo          | 1967    | Orissa District Gazetteers: Mayurbhanj Govt. of Orissa, O.G.P. Cuttack.   |
| Vidyarthi,<br>L.P.&V.S.<br>Upadhyay | 1980    | <i>The Kharia: Then and Now</i> , Concept Publishing Co. New Delhi.   |

# HILL-KHARIA\*

A. B. Ota <sup>1</sup>

T. Sahoo <sup>2</sup>

## Socio-Cultural Identity

The Hill Kharia, locally known as '*Pahari Kharia*' is a semi-nomadic highland tribal group. They are expert in collection of honey, resin and arrowroot. They are a section of the 'Kharia', one of 62 Scheduled Tribes of Orissa. The tribesmen are primarily a forager community in the Similipal forest in Mayurbhanj district. They feel proud of identifying themselves as the descendants of the legendary Viswvasu Sabara, the first worshipper of Lord Jagannath in hill cave.

The Kharia legend of origin resembles that of the Mundas, and tends to show that they are an elderly branch of that tribe. Their traditional occupation was to till the soil and carry *banghy*. The term 'Kharia' is derived from *Kharkharia* which means a Palanquin or litter. The Kharias are named so in accordance with the tradition that their first ancestors carried a *banghy* (carrying pole).

According to the 2007 survey (SCSTRTI) the Hill-Kharia households in the HKMDA, Jashipur, Mayurbhanj (Micro Project) area are 606. The total population of the Hill-Kharia in all the villages of the project is 1900. The average size of the household is 3 persons. Out of total population of 1900, male population is 939 and female population is 961. The sex ratio is 1023 females per 1000 males. The percentage of literacy among them is 28.89%.

The Hill-Kharias wear simple dress and ornaments. Their children up to three years remain uncovered. Children of the age group of 3 to 6 years use *boroka* (loin cloth) around their thigh and waist. Adult men wear small size *dhotis* and women wear short size cotton sarees, which fall up to the ankles. Now-a-days the advanced section of the tribe is using modern dress. Their women adorn

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Hill-Kharia, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>1</sup> Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

themselves with various types of ornaments, which include brass necklace, armlet, ear ring, finger ring and iron hairpin made of white metal or aluminum and glass or metal bangles. Some young boys also use neck-laces made of beads. Women use ribbons for adorning their hair.

The ladies of old generation decorated their bodies with tattoo marks, especially on their foreheads, eye corners, both hands and legs. The Keluni, (snake charmers' wife) used to make these tattoo marks on payment of charges.

### **Habitat & Settlement**

The Hill Kharias claim themselves as the autochthones of the Mayurbhanj hills. Similipal hill ranges are the hearth and home of the tribe. As a forager tribal group, the Hill-Kharias live in remote hill and forest areas. Wild animals, like elephant, tiger, bear, deer, monkey and wild dog are seen in the Similipal National Park. The total Similipal area is full of big trees, like Sal, Mohua, Karanja, Simili and other forest species. The Hill Kharia very well adapt to the natural environment of Similipal. All most all Hill Kharias found in different villages inside Similipal forest today were originally settled in villages located in the forest and plains fringe-regions. The present hill villages were their favorite arrowroot collection as well as processing site near streams to which every year they were coming during winter. In fact their location is usually close to the villages of agricultural tribes or Hindu castes.

The Kharias live in multiethnic villages of agricultural tribes, like the Bathudi, Gond and Kol for socio-economic security in a forest environment. A few Hill-Kharias live along with other castes and tribes in villages of larger sizes in the plains. Their villages vary in size from five to twenty families or even more. Their huts are located in a scattered manner either on the top or slope or even on the foot of the hills. But they live in separate hamlets adjacent to water source.

Their houses have no window and not provided with any ventilators. A typical hill Kharia house is a small multipurpose rectangular hut with walls made of *sal* wood and plastered with mud. Like the local peasant communities, the Hill-Kharias show their simplicity in the art of wall paintings along with ritual diagrams. The roof of the hut is made out of a double sloped wooden frame and thatched with grass or straw. The well-to-do Hill Kharia houses are thatched with *khapper* tiles. The house plinth is rectangular.

The single room is divided by a partition wall into a small kitchen and relatively bigger bed room. Close to the house, goat pen, pig sty and cattle shed are constructed separately for domestic animals. But the poultry birds are kept in a corner inside the living room. During the collection seasons the Hill-Kharias use to live in the makeshift leaf huts made out of tree branches and leaves and built away from their permanent settlement, but adjacent to the collection sites and water source inside the remote forest. The household furniture, tools and appliances of



the Kharias include date-palm leaf mats, string cots, earthen vessels, gourd vessels, metal and silver utensils, bamboo baskets, leaf plates and cups, pestle and mortar, grinding stone, bow and arrow, axe and spear. The village deity *Thakurani* and supreme deity *Dharani Devta* reside in a place called *sal* at the outskirts. They also worship Sun god, *Dharam* and other deities and spirits by offering them sacrifices of goat, fowl, liquor and other ritual food. The Hill Kharias live along with other castes and tribes in villages of larger size in the plains. The well-to-do Dudh and Dhelki Kharias have more than one hut with a kitchen, a separate cow-shed and pigsty.

### Food & Drink

The staple food of the Hill-Kharia is rice. The rice is supplemented by *mandia*, maize and other minor millets (*janha*) and different seasonal edible roots and tubers, honey, arrowroots, greens, fruits, nuts, berries, flowers, mushrooms, etc. collected from the forest. Besides, their food includes occasional consumption of meat from animal hunting and sacrificial meat of goats and chicken. They catch fish in fresh water of the hill streams mostly for personal consumption. They prefer water rice, which is taken with salt, chilly and edible greens collected from forests. They grow vegetables such as pumpkins, chilies, gourds, bitter gourds, etc during rainy seasons mostly for their own consumption.

They rarely consume dal. During the rainy season, most of the Hill-Kharia face rice scarcity and they principally depend on other food stuffs, like maize, edible roots and tubers. During festive occasions they prepare special food, like boiled and baked rice cake and meat curry for their own consumption.

In every Hill Kharia village there is a tube well, but they prefer to drink water from the streams as the tube well water has a bad smell and taste. They procure *handia* (rice beer) and *mahuli* (country liquor) from the Kol and Santal tribe in the weekly market and in festive occasions and drink.

### Livelihood

The Hill-Kharia livelihood is determined by forest environment. They primarily depend on Similipal hills and forest for a living. They do major seasonal collections along with agricultural labour/activity in agricultural season. In the forest habitat they think hunting and food gathering are more reliable than the agricultural pursuit. They usually lead a semi nomadic life and subsist on food gathering and hunting by application of four major techniques, like picking, digging, climbing and cutting.

The Similipal forest and hills are hospitable for natural growth of honey. The Hill-Kharias traditionally living close to the forest take the advantage of collecting honey since time immemorial. They collect two types of honey, *bada/bhagua* (big) *mahu* and *sana* (little) *mahu*. Big bees build large hives on the rock

caves (*mahu bhandara*) or branch of big and tall sal trees and also their hollow trunks. They in a group of three or more persons use tools, like axe, rope, tin container, handmade straw torch for making fire and smoke and basket (*pachhia*) for collection of honey by climbing up to the top of the hill rocks or *sal* trees. One climbs up and uses the torch for creating smoke to drive out the bees and others on the ground help him for smooth collection of honey. Sometimes it becomes a hazard on part of a person to climb up for honey collection and falling down may leads to death or serious injuries. Honey at times is also found at different furrows. There the honey combs are collected by digging out the soil with help of hoe (*gondra*). The honey combs are squeezed to get the honey and keep them in tins or aluminum pots. The honey is available in plenty for collection in two main periods, first from March to June and then from October to November in a year.

Collection of *sal* resin (*jhuna*) is done by them during the months of September to November firstly, and then from March to June. . The resin collections for the sale give an additional income to the hill Kharia. Two or three persons move together with knives, axe and baskets for collection of resins from the forest. One expert makes notches on the matured *sal* tree trunk and climbs up the tree with axe on his shoulder and a basket hanging down from his waist and then reaching at the resin spot he scraps the resin from the bark with help of the axe and gets it collected in the basket keeping a balance carefully. After collection, they process the resin at home by separating them from the barks before sale.

Wild arrowroot (*palua*) carries more medicinal value than the cultivated ones. Unlike resin and honey collection the arrowroot collection bears no life risk but it is tedious process and very time and labour consuming. Traditionally, arrowroot collection by the Hill-Kharia, except old and incapacitated, during the months- December to March of a year requires temporary shifting of residence in forest, preferably close to a stream/river side, the arrowroot processing site. The use *gandra* (digging hoe) *ganjia* (big net made up of *siali* fiber), small knife, a big and new earthen pot and a piece of cloth for collection and processing the arrowroot. In the forest they dig out the arrowroot tubers by help of *gandra*. They wash and dress the tubers by scraping out the roots and soak them in the stream water in stone or basket enclosures. Then they pound the tubers by rubbing on the sand stones. Thereafter the pounded arrowroot is filtered in to an earthen pot through a piece of cloth. Then the filtered arrowroot is washed time and again and finally kept under the Sun till they are completely dried to get the finished product of *palua* for marketing.

The Hill Kharia are expert hunters. Using bow and arrows, sticks and spears they hunt wild games, like deer and *sambar*, boar and catch pea-fowls, jungle fowls, snipes, and squirrels. Formerly, the traditional occupation of the Kharia was to carry litters. But now-a-days the Hill Kharia foragers principally depend upon food-gathering and hunting. Some of them are also practicing cultivation in small chunks of lands. Their major source of income is derived from

collection of forest produce, such as resin, wax, honey, tussar cocoon, gum and lac, etc. They barter the forest produce with paddy and other cereals.

Their habitat provides a little scope to go for fishing. Fishing has been a subsidiary and occasional economic pursuit for the Hill Kharia.

Generally, their women weave mats out of date-palm and splits of bamboo for drying mango jelly, rice, minor forest produce and their own use such sleeping and sitting.

The Kharias make ropes out of jute, *sabai* fiber and leaves of aloe plant for personal use. They also prepare leaf plates and cups for own use and also for sale. A few of them know the technique of oil pressing by using two wooden planks and *siali* fiber baskets. They prepare their own hunting implements, bow and arrow, agricultural implements, fishing nets and traps for own use in hunting expedition, agricultural pursuit and catching fish. They also do rear live stock and poultry for their personal consumption, ritual requirements and as saving for meeting the expenses in festivals and rituals, like Makara, marriage, birth, death, illness and unforeseen expenditures.

Under the changing circumstances, the Hill Kharia has been pushed out of their foraging activities and adopted some new-occupations, like small business, vending of vegetables, such as potato, onion, dry fish, cycle repairing etc. to eke out their living.

### Social Life

The life cycle of the Kharia passes through such events as conception, birth, childhood, adulthood, marriage, old age and death. Life cycle rituals are meticulously observed. An old lady of the community helps in the delivery. After delivery, the period of birth pollution is observed for nine days. Sometimes, it continues for 21 days; after that the name giving ceremony is observed. The mother and the newly born baby take ceremonial bath on the ninth day. A few families observe a second purification ceremony on the 21st day after the child birth. During the purification ceremony a magico-religious rite is performed and then the baby is given a name. The next noticeable event, ear-boring ceremony, is held when the child crosses five or six years of age.

Marriage, *bivaha*, by arrangement and negotiation is the ideal pattern. Different sections among the Kharia never inter-marry. Adult boys marry at the age of twenty and above and girls at the age of fifteen to eighteen years.

They practise monogamy and prefer cross-cousin marriage. The other forms of marriages prevalent among them are marriage by ceremonial capture, marriage by elopement and marriage by service. Marriage with *kutum* members is tabooed. Members from *bandhu* group can be accepted as potential spouse. The groom's party pays bride price, which consists of Rs.60/- in cash, six pieces of

clothes, one *maund* of paddy, two barrels of liquor, one goat and other such edibles, which are required for the wedding feast. In the marriage, the wife uses vermilion mark on her forehead. After marriage, the couple establishes a nonlocal residence. In their society divorce is allowed and widows are permitted to remarry.

The family, '*ghar*' as the Hill-Kharia say, is mostly nuclear consisting of parents and their unmarried children. A few extended families are also found. Among them, average size of the family varies from 5 to 6 members. The Kharia family is patrilineal and patriarchal. The newly wedded sons with their wives live in separate houses and as soon as possible form separate nuclear families of their won. The wife respects the husband as superior and takes food after him. Both men and women contribute to the forest based family income. The family head consults with his wife in management of family affairs, social, economic and matters relating to prosperity and poverty, and when necessity arises.

The Hill Kharias call their blood relatives as *kutum/bamsa* and marital relatives as *bandhu*. No clan organization is found among the Hill Kharias of Mayurbhanj. They believe that the members of a lineage are descended from a common ancestor. The members use the same surname like Dehuri, Dandsena, Naik, etc. Their lineage which is exogamous regulates kinship ties and marriage. Marriage within the lineage is strictly prohibited. Incestuous relation between the members of the lineage is tabooed. All the members of a *kutum/bamsa* observe the restrictions and rites in the birth, marriage and death pollutions.

The Kharias use both classificatory and descriptive kinship terminologies. They have joking relationship between grandparents and grand children, sister-in-laws and brother in laws and avoidance relationship between elder brother and younger brother's wife. Besides, bond friendship is often made between two persons when they perform a ritual to become relatives in faith. The ritual friendship and relationship is established outside the endogamous group. The relations are addressed by the terms, like *phula*, *makara*, *dharma bhai/bapa/pua*, etc. and they exchange gifts and help each other in various functions.

The villagers and relatives mourn over the death of a person. They bury the corpse. All the *kutum* members of the deceased person observe death pollution for 10 days. In the mortuary rite they take a mixture of ghee and honey in the purification rite.

### Religious Life

The Hill-Kharias observe religious rites to appease the supernatural elements for the betterment of the society and welfare of the community. Athara deuli is a sacred place in Similipal. It is the shrine of Baram surrounded by holy sal trees. They regard the Badam, the presiding deity of Similipal. The Hill Kharia

believe that if worshipped and offered sacrifices, the deity will fulfill the desire of the devotees.

They think the Sal trees as sacred because fire of its wood is sacred, leaf provides sacred plate, *sal* resin is sacred perfume and serves as disinfectant. Sal trees believed as abode of deities and spirits. Religiously, the Hill Kharia considers the *sal* (*Shorea robusta*) trees a sacred species and do not cut the trees. Only the priests go for worshipping it twice a year.

The grave yard containing trees are venerated and not cut. Totems and taboos refrain them from cutting trees and killing animals and birds. They worship forests and *jahira*- a patch of *sal* groves, where their village deity resides to protect the village and villagers.

The Hill Kharia believe in the Sun god, *Dharam*, as the creator and worship Him. For them, every hill in Similipal is regarded as a deity and believed to be the custodian of forest resources. They call the deities as Badam Budhi (female), Ramaraja, Pabanbira, Mahabira, Bhandar Debata, Thakurani, Bauli, Basuli, Basuki, Gramadebi, etc. Besides deities, they also worship *Dahani* (witch) and *Bhuta* (spirit). Bamsa and lineage deities along with the ancestral spirits are properly propitiated in most of the rituals and festivals for family wellbeing. The forest deities are worshipped for successful food gathering and hunting. In every village, there is a sacred place called Jahira, where *sal* is the dominant tree, and the tribals offer worship to satisfy the god.

At village level *Thakurani* or the mother goddess is the main deity of the Hill Kharias. In the Melani Parab, they organise annual worship of *Thakurani* for prevention and cure of the diseases, like small pox and chicken pox. They also worship *Dharani Devata* and a hero named Banda. They worship their ploughs and axes on the day of Dashara. The tribesmen believe that the cause of diseases and illness are due to wrath of god and goddess, spirit intrusion, evil eye and sorcery and breach of taboo and norms.

Their religious beliefs and practices are based on the propitiation of various gods and spirits in various ways by observing different rites, ceremonies and sacrifices to get rid of illness and to be blessed with boon. They also worship Sun god, and other deities and spirits by offering them sacrifices of goat, fowl, liquor and other ritual food. They believe that the spirits who reside in hills and forests control nature. They believe in black and white magic. They invite Gunia/Raulia, who is expert in diagnosis of cause of the diseases by examining oil, water and sticks in the name of the patient. But currently their religious ideas, beliefs and rituals witness traces of borrowing from the Hindu pantheon. Hinduised Hill-Kharia depend on magico-religious specialists (Gunia) and medicine man (Kabiraj), who treats a sick boy. Bhandar Puja: the first collection of honey offering to mother goddess is performed.

### Fairs, Festivals and Entertainment

The Hill Kharia celebrate Hindu festivals, like Raja and Makara in great joy. They enjoy Raja festival by making and playing Ramadoli, a special type of swing made of wooden log and bamboo. In the Makara festival, they put on new dress, eat rice cake, worship the ancestors by sacrifice of cocks and at the village fringe but close to the stream they organize burning of heap of firewood uninterrupted over the night and offer sacrifice to fire god for their wellbeing. Unless and until the Maghuani puja is observed and completed, collection of plant resources are restricted in the forest. Jungle/forest puja is observed twice a year, once in April-May for bumper honey collection and then, in September-October for *sal* resin collection in good quantity and quality. They also observe a Hindu ritual, Manabasa in November-December to appease Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity.

Like other tribal brethren, the Hill-Kharias irrespective of their age and sex are very fond of dance and music and perform these in every rituals and festivals. In the marriage ceremonies, and festivals, like Makara, Asthamai, Manabasa wall decorations with *jhoti* or *chita* are made by the women folk. The walls are decorated mainly with paste of powered rice and water. The *jhoties* are painted by ladies with help of fingers and handmade brush made of a stick and a piece of cloth. They also draw ritual diagrams (*chita*) on Manabasa on the Thursday of Margasira month.

All occasions of feast and festivities, like *raja*, *maker*, marriages, child birth and post harvesting events and Thakurani puja are celebrated with entertainment by dancing, singing and playing Changu, a type of musical instrument of percussion/tambourine. The Changu is a circular shallow drum fitted with tiny discs. It is considered sacred as it was said to be played by Badam, the presiding deity of Similipal. So, the Changus are played by males only with different rhythms in tune with the singing and dancing. Women and girls mostly dance. In the beginning of every performing art, like dance and song, the Changu bandana (a prayer in respect of Badam and his tutelary) is first invoked and then the singing of songs and dance start and continue. Another dance type of the hill-Kharia is Jhumar, which is commonly performed among the Kudumi neighbour. For them performance of dance is a group affair. It is intended for entertainment. Among the bachelors and spinsters the dance performances help develop courtship. *Nua Khia*, *Raja*, *Makar*, *Pusa Parab*, and *Chait Parab* are some of their main festivals. They perform their characteristic dance and music and play Changu, flute, *nagra* etc. In the festive occasions and market days the young people love to enjoy cock fights.

### Village Council

Like other semi-nomadic forest-based communities, the Hill-Kharia have a simple political organization. Their authority structure is very simple. In the

past, in the king's time the administration ran through the *Sardar/Zamindar(Pradah)*. The Kharia were paying revenue in shape of kinds (forest produce) to the *Pradhan/Sardar* of the locality, who in turn paid it to the King. The Kharia people were accompanying the King of Baripada (Mayurbhanj) during his hunting expeditions to Similipal forest.

The traditional political organization of Kharias is constituted at two different levels, one at the village level and the other at the inter-village level, to keep the solidarity and law and order intact. Every Hill-Kharia village has a Panchayat of its own headed by *Pradhan/Mukhia* among the Hill Kharia. He, as a judge, usually suggests, extends advices and settles the matter with the help of other functionaries of the tribe. He has no special attire. He is assisted by Dehuri (priest), Chhatia, (messenger), Gunia (magician).

Cases regarding breach of any taboo, and disputes about partition, divorce, adultery and the like are decided in the meeting of the village council. In case of serious offences the village council has the power to ex-communicate a person from the society. The council also raises funds for public worship, religious feasts and for sacrifice at the time of epidemic. The members of the council remain present in rites and ceremonies relating to birth, marriage and death.

Above the village council, there exists the inter-village council in the political organization of the Hill-Kharia. They call the organization as *Parha Panchayat* or *Kutum Sabha* or *Bhira*. The *Bhira* consists of representatives of some inter-linked settlements and is headed by the eldest, wisest and most influential *Pradhan* of these settlements. The *Pradhan* acts as the custodian of tribal customs. It is the exclusive power of the inter-village council to readmit an ex-communicated person into the tribe. Those cases which cannot be decided by the village council are referred to the inter-village council.

Their *Kutumb Sabha* is composed of members from villages of more than one lineage. A man from the *Murubasam* acts as *Paindiha* or master of ceremonies and a head-man of the *Samadbasam* acts as a *Bhandari* (Barber).

After independence, modern Panchayat system was introduced in the Hill-Kharia areas. As a result, some Hill-Kharia people have been selected as Ward Members/Sarpanches. In few cases, the traditional elites have been elected as the modern leaders. But it is not fully effective as the people are not educated, and guided by traditional authorities. However, for all socio-cultural and religious purposes the traditional leadership still holds good and effective.

### Change and Development

The factors, such as, far-reaching contact with the culture of neighboring caste Hindu people, own endeavor, encroachment of outsiders into traditional forest based economy of the forager, impact of forest policies and restriction of Project Tiger/Elephant and Biosphere Reserve for exploitation of MFP collection in core and reserve areas, planned development interventions by the Government and private agencies have brought forth changes in the life and livelihood of the Hill Kharia. Thus, the changes have reflected in their social system, techno-economic and religious spheres. In the recent past, some of the Hill Kharia left their hill dwellings and moved up to other parts of the area in search of livelihood. Now they are living with other peasant communities. All the Hill-Kharia families in the villages still depend on the nearby forest for their daily livelihood. However, depletion of the forest cover has posed a major threat to their livelihood.

They have taken up economic activities, like settled agriculture, animal husbandry; wage earning and fuel wood collection and timber cutting for sale for their livelihood. Religiously, they have followed the Hindu faiths and observed some Hindu festivals. Now-a-days low grade Brahman priests, Barber and washerman extend their services in the marriage and death rites and rituals of the Hill-Kharia.

Different development programmes have been implemented through the different government agencies, like ITDAs, DRDA, Block, GPs and ICDS and also the NGOs. The Hill- Kharia section of the Kharia tribe has been identified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) by Govt. of India and Govt. of Orissa. By the governmental effort a Micro Project (Hill-Kharia & Mankirdia Development Agency) at Jashipur in Mayurbhanj District has been established and working since 1987 for the total development of the Hill- Kharia population of 18 villages. The Hill Kharia due to the factors, like development interventions by the Govt., especially the HKMDA, Jashipur, cultural contacts with other communities, non-avail ability of major forest produce in specific months, change over to other new occupations to maintain their livelihood. Due to restrictions of Similipal Biosphere Reserve and Project Tiger and over exploitation of forest resources by other communities, the Hill-Kharia have been constrained to take up other occupations such as share cropping, wood cutting, small business, wage earning in road and other construction work, contractual labour, motor driving, pickle making, leaf cup and plate making. And this has been possible due to the organization of orientation training by the HKMDA Micro Project. A few educated youths have been engaged as Teachers in the Gyan Mandirs and Educational Complex, Watchman and Field Attendants in Forest Department and other Govt. dept. and agencies.

The HKMDA Micro Project is operating for the holistic development of the Hill Kharia including implementation of economic development programmes to raise their standard of living and to ensure quality of life. The multifarious



development programmes, such as housing under Indira Awaas Yojana, drinking water provision, link roads, health and sanitation, education, environment, including other infrastructure works and packages of benefit schemes both individual and in group mode, like tailoring, goat rearing, fishing leaf cups and plates making have changed their outlook.

The recent development interventions through SHGs, by both men and women have brought significant change in the socio-economic life of the Hill Kharias. Introduction of modern agriculture, multiple cropping, use of high yielding variety of seeds, provision of irrigation facility, input assistance, horticulture activities including backyard plantations with vegetable inter-cropping, marketing of goods, etc. through group approach have brought forth noticeable changes in their life style. After being trained, some educated Hill Kharias have adopted small business and bee keeping.

The human resource development programmes taken up by the Micro Project, like nursery education and primary education by opening up Gyan Mandirs and one Residential Educational Complex and organization of health check up at village level have very good developmental impacts on the Hill Kharia children and their parents.

# PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE AMONG THE HILL KHARIAS OF SIMILIPAL, ODISHA: A STUDY OF CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS \*

*S. C. Mohanty* <sup>1</sup>

Oxford dictionary defines property as 'possession (s)' or 'things owned'. In reality the term 'property' simply does not mean 'things' or 'possessions' only but the relationship between people and things. The concept of property assumes or set of things or possessions and social relationship in the socio-cultural nexus of every society that is universal in character. According to Mac Iver, 'Property' is not wealth or possessions but the right to control, to exploit, to use or to enjoy wealth or possessions (1945). Hence, to understand the concept of property in any society, it is not important only to know who owns what but who holds what kinds of rights or exercises command over things called 'property'. Since, these rights are different and applied at different levels under different circumstances, generalizations about who owns what may be misleading.

Further the 'things or 'possession' called 'property' does not mean tangible material objects only such as land, house, and livestock etc, which are called 'corporeal property'. It is also includes intangible and non-material possessions like song, music, art, literature, knowledge, skill, expertise and the like called 'incorporeal property' which cannot be divided like corporeal property but can be shared and inherited.

"In fact property is as heterogeneous as the societies within which it is found; among every people convention limits the opportunities which property affords; the law resting upon customs disburses ownership between individuals and the community and morality restrains even the pleasure of a man to do as he will with his own" (Hamilton; 1933;529). Since the concept and usage of property differ from one society to another, it has been established by several anthropological studies in tribal societies in various parts of the world that, the

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXXV, Nos. 1& 2, 1995, pp.35-45

<sup>1</sup> Research Assistant, SCSTRIT, Bhubaneswar

tribal people not only have their specific connotation of property but also have a larger inventory of possessions than the modern man can conceptualize.

In essence, property is a conditional equity in the valuables of tribals community. It is a conceptual way in their folk system for linking the system of material culture with their social system. It is their society but not the individual, which specifies what, is considered property. These are social in nature, for they may change over time.

In this paper an attempt has been made to look into the concept of property and the customs and traditions regulating the property and rules of inheritance among the Hill Kharia, a Primitive Tribal Group of Similipal in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa. The Hill Kharia are the primitive and backward section of the Kharia tribe who earn their livelihood by pursuing a subsistence economy of hunting and food gathering. Currently they are in a transitional state, aspiring for a shift from the traditional subsistence economy to a settled agricultural economy. In this context it is significant to comprehend if at all they have realized the value of land as an important productive asset and an item of immovable property. The paper seeks to analyze the socio-cultural and economic implications of property and the rules of inheritance from the view points of anthropological study of customs and traditions of the tribe in particular and the domain of customary law in general.

The Hill Kharias have developed their own concept of property and the customs and traditions regulating inheritance, transmission, management and control of property as a part of their socio-economic system. Their inventory of the possessions includes a verity of objects. The territory which they inhabit; the beasts that move upon its wilderness; their domestic animals graze upon it; the forest and its resources that they exploit to earn their livelihood; the dwelling huts they erect to live in; the clothes they wear; the weapons implements and artifacts they use; the shrines Gods, deities and spirits they worship; and also their song, music, dance, verses, magic, medicine and many more items are their property.

#### **Private and Public Property:**

Their concept of 'property' and 'public' property is not very clear. Since the recent past they have come across certain state managed public utilities and infrastructures, like roads, wells, tube-wells, tanks, irrigation structures, Government buildings, schools, community centers, health centers, electrical installations, etc. They call these assets as "Sarkari" meaning 'belonging to Government' or 'Government Property'.

#### **Private and Communal Property:**

The notion of their 'private property' is linked with 'communal property' in one way or other. As they were leading a semi-nomadic band life in the past, everything that is useful to them and specially the productive assets belonged to

the community. The territory of land and forests that provided them with the means of subsistence was divided among the local groups. The local groups in turn were administering the management, distribution, redistribution and allocation of economic resources among the families within the groups. Now with the growth of population, competition from the immigrant non-Kharia tribal groups into their traditional territory, rapid depletion of forest region their socio-economic life is undergoing changes. In course of their transition from a hunting and food gathering economy to a productive agricultural economy, they are beginning to understand the importance of land and allied productive assets as items of private property and distinguish the private property from communal property in terms of “mine” and “ours”.

### **Forest: A Communal Property:**

The forest which they regard as their foster mother as it nourishes them and provides all their needs has been their communal property. Every one of them has right to exploit its resources freely without encroaching upon the rights of others. But the items collected from the forest by an individual become his/her personal property because he acquires them by his personal endeavor. Further the customary law of the Hill Kharia provides that every one of them should exploit as much resources as required to meet his consumption needs. No commercial exploitation by individuals for earning profit is allowed. The Hill Kharia believed that such selfish acts displease their Gods and deities and results in disastrous consequences. The following case study will explain this point.

### **Case Study (1):**

Ramjodi is a Hill Kharia settlement located in the interiors of Similipal forest. In the village the seat of village shrine (*salagram*) lies in a sacred groove having tall trees. Once a villager felled a tall tree from that groove and sold the logs to an illegal timber trader to meet his needs. The villagers were angry on the man for this selfish, highhanded and unholy act. They were also afraid of the village deity who was supposed to be angry and punish the villagers. Before, they could take any corrective action by punishing the culprit and appeasing the angry Gods, harsh supernatural punishment came to the culprit. There was an outbreak of fire in the house of the culprit. Despite all the efforts of the villagers to put out the fire, the house was reduced to ashes.

Another customary law relating to exploitation of forest resources is that when a Kharia person detects a bee-hive, resin or any other produce on a tree inside the forest and he is not in a position to collect the produce at that time, he puts a mark on the trunk of the tree to establish his exclusive right to collect that produce later. If another person sees that mark later, he does not touch that produce respecting the right of the first person who has put his mark. If the second person violates this custom by ignoring the mark and stealing the produce, then the first person tries to identify and locate the offender and lodges complaint against him before the traditional village Panchayat. The Panchayat hears such

cases and punishes the culprit by realizing a fine in cash and kinds and compensating the aggrieved party. Such a case study is presented below.

**Case Study (II):**

J, a man of Budhigan once detected a bee-hive full of honey in a tree in the forest. He left after putting an identification mark on the tree trunk to collect the honey the next day. After his departure two Kharia men of Kabatghai saw the honey. Ignoring the identification mark they collected the honey. As they were hungry and thirsty, they consumed the honey at the spot and sold the surplus to a trader. The next day J was surprised to find the bee-hive gone. He enquired in the neighboring villages and gathered clues about the offenders. Then he went to Kabatghai and complained before the village chief, Dehury. A village Panchayat meeting was convened by the Dehury in which the accused confessed that they had to steal the honey to quench by their thirst and hunger. They were asked to tender apology to the avenged party and entertain him with food and liquor.

Now the forest is the state property. As aboriginal inhabitants of the territory, The Hill Kharia have been granted limited rights to exploit the forest resources only for the purpose of their own consumption but not for commercial purpose. Their age old freedom has been further squeezed with the Government notification declaring the Similipal forest as "National park" and "Wildlife Sanctuary" and with execution of "Project Tiger" subsequently. The Hill Kharia who claims themselves to be autochthones of Similipal find it hard to accept the fact that, their beloved forest which was theirs for centuries no longer belongs to them. Still they claim the forest as their exclusive property both private and communal, though now they can exercise their limited usufructuary rights over it.

**Land: An item of Private Property:**

Land, a most valuable item of immovable private property is yet to assume importance in the economy of Hill Kharia because their traditional forest based subsistence necessitates a semi-nomadic life within their forest habitat. But certain changes have taken place now affecting their traditional life style. Their population growth, depletion of forest and restrictive forest laws have forced them to settle down and seek alternative means of livelihood in the surrounding peasant economy predominated by many advanced tribal and non-tribal communities.

Since the community was self-sufficient and happy with their forest based subsistence in the past and attached little importance to acquire cultivable lands, the majority of the Hill Kharia families living in the Similipal region are landless and very few of them are marginal farmers. Now when they are beginning to realize the importance of land and trying to graduate into a settled agricultural economy, their scope appears to be limited. Over period of time, advanced peasant communities-both tribal and non-tribal such as Munda, Ho, Santal, Gond and Hindu castes have migrated into the area, cleared the forests and acquired the best

variety of cultivable lands. Further, whatever cultivable lands the Kharia possessed in the past have passed into the hands of these advanced communities through debt redemption, trickery and manipulation. Hence, the poor and landless Hill Kharia have no other alternative but to serve the local landlords as agricultural laborers, bonded laborers or contractual laborers to earn a meager wage in order to keep their body and soul together.

The following table presents comparative data on the present situation of possession of land holdings by Hill Kharia households in the Simlipal region which have been based upon three surveys conducted between 1981 and 1992.

**TABLE**  
**Size of Land Holding Possessed by Hill-Kharia Households**

Year of Survey	No. of villages Surveyed	Total No. of House-holds	Distribution of land possessing Households according to land holding size					No. of Landless house-holds
			Up to- 1 Ac.	1 Ac.- 2.5Acs	2.5 -5 Acs.	Above 5 Acs.	Total	
1981	20	314 (100)	59 (18.79)	3 (18.79)	....	.....	62 (19.8)	252 (60.2)
1991	19	187 (100)	55 (29.41)	1 (0.54)	.....	.....	56 (29.95)	131 (70.05)
1992	2	61 (100)	20 (32.26)	2 (3.23)	3 (4.84)	1 (1.61)	26 (41.90)	36 (58.06)

(Percentages are given in brackets)

*Source-- 1981- Action plan for Hill Kharia & Mankirdia Development Agency (HK&MDA)- G.B. Sahoo & S.C. Mohanty. THRTI, Bhubaneswar (unpublished)*

*1991- Action Plan for Hill Kharia of Additional Villages of HK&MDA, Jashipur, Mayurbhanj district- B. Choudhury and G. B. Sahoo, THRTI, Bhubaneswar (unpublished)*

*1992--Author's own survey for Study of Customs and Traditions of Hill Kharia.*

The table reveals that only 19.8 per cent of the Hill Kharia Households were possessing land in 1981 which increase to 29.95 per cent in 1991. It further increased to 41.94 per cent in 1992. But this remarkable increase in 1992 can be attributed to allotment of house and the land adjoining the house site below 0.5 Ac to each landless Hill Kharia household in both the surveyed villages namely, Ramjodi and Matiagarh under development programmes implemented by the Micro Project, the Hill Kharia and Mankirdia Development Agency (HK&MDA). Thus the number of landless households which constituted 80.2 per cent of the total households was reduced to 70.05 per cent in 1991 and 58.06 per cent in 1992. It is significant to note that among the land owning households the largest number i.e. 18.79 per cent in 1981, 29.41 per cent in 1991 and 32.26 per cent in 1992 come under the category of marginal farmers each of whom have landholdings within

one acre. They are followed by small farmers having land 1 acre to 2.5 acres who accounted for 0.96 per cent in 1981, 0.54 per cent in 1991 and 3.23 percent in 1992. There were no medium farmers (2.6 Acres to 5 Acres) in 1981 and 1991. In 1992 only 4.84 per cent of the households entered into this category. Similar trend is also noticed in case of medium farmers under 5.1 Acres to 10 Acres category. There was no household under this category in 1981 and 1991. Only one household belonging to Ramjodi appeared under this category in 1992. This clearly shows that possession of land holdings by the Hill Kharia of Similipal is quite negligible and marginal and majority of them are landless. Though current economic and environmental pressures create a desire in the typical Hill Kharia to possess some cultivable lands like their prosperous neighbors, the situational constraints discussed above as well as their poverty and ignorance limits their scope for fulfillment of their desire. Therefore, the land is yet to adorn the Hill Kharia economy like a feather in the cap.

### **Inheritance:**

The customary rules of inheritance among the Hill Kharia reflect the total ideology of their society. All though both the sexes contribute, more or less, for acquisition and management of property, only the dominant male sex enjoys the monopoly of the right of inheritance and ownership of property. Being a patrilineal society, social position, rank, office and property are inherited / succeeded along the line of patrilineage.

The pattern of inheritance and management of property is governed by customary rules of kinship and descent. The Hill Kharia family forms the basic corporate socio-economic unit to administer and perpetuate transmission of private property and other attributes across generations. It keeps property in tact while distributing rights among the members. It also deals with the practical problems of relationship between people and possessions and maintains continuity of rights across generations.

The father or the patriarch is the head of the family as well as the sole owner of his family's properties. Only he can take decisions on management and transaction relating to his property. In actual practice a good patriarch consults his family while taking such decisions. On the other hand, an autocratic father who squanders away his properties at his will and pleasure instead of augmenting the economic assets and utilizing them prudently for the welfare of his family is publicly criticized and his family members disregard him.

In the event of death, disability and prolonged absence of the household head, his son, preferably the eldest one or any other legitimate direct male heir assumes the responsibility of managing his family and its assets. But the successor should have to be an adult male and he should be capable and willing. If the heir apparent is a minor or when the household head dies, remains absent or becomes disabled leaving minor children, his widow officiates as the head of the family and

manage the family's assets till the son or male heir reaches his adulthood and becomes capable of shouldering the responsibility. If there are no male heirs and there are only female children, then one of the girls is married to a man who is willing to stay with the girl's natal family as a son-in-law-in house to look after the family and its property. In case of an issueless man who has no direct male heirs in his family, his properties are inherited by his close agnatic kins-both lineal and lateral. Usually a major share in such cases is claimed by the kin who has maintained close ties with the concerned family and rendered timely service and assistance during the period of crises, like death, disease, accident, etc. occurring in the family. Especially the kin who arranges and pays for the mortuary rites of the dead person gets a larger share of the latter's property.

### **Order of Inheritance:**

As per the customary norms of inheritance of private property which follow the lines of kinship and descent, the order of inheritance begins with primary agnatic kins and then covers secondary and tertiary kins as the case may be. In the first order are immediate lineal kins like, sons and grandsons. In absences of these first and second order kins, the right of inheritance passes to the third order comprising the brother, cousin brother, his sons and grandsons. If there are many claimants and disputes arise, the traditional village *Panchayat* intervenes to appoint the heir successor. In absence of any claimant the properties of an issueless person are taken over and administered by the village community through the traditional village *Panchayat*.

### **Property Rights of Women:**

Theoretically, Hill Kharia women are not eligible to inherit property. But they enjoy residuary property rights to claim maintenance out of the properties of their fathers, brothers or husbands as the case may be, depending upon their marital status and place of residence. A daughter or sister whether she is unmarried or married, a widow or a divorcee, is liable to be maintained in her father's or brother's family if she lives and works there. A married woman even if she is a widow, is liable to be maintained by her husband or deceased husband's agnatic kins who take over the properties as long as she continues to stay with the family and does not remarry or gets divorced or deserts to live elsewhere.

A Kharia woman may not inherit property but as stated earlier, but a married woman can manage her husband's properties in the event of death, disability and prolonged absence of her husband when the children especially the male heirs are minor. In this situation she officiates as the head of the family till the male heir becomes adult and capable of shouldering the responsibility of managing the family and its assets. If there are no direct male heirs, the woman continues as the head of the family till her death, disability, divorce, departure or remarriage to an outsider.



But while officiating as the family head she has no right to sell or otherwise dispose off the properties at her will and pleasure except for the purpose of meeting the exigencies of death, disease, marriage, bride-price, accidents, disputes, debt redemption etc. affecting family or for the welfare of the family. Further she cannot take such decision all by herself but is required to consult and obtain approval for her husband's agnatic kins and the village elders before doing anything in this regard.

Ordinarily, a Hill Kharia woman is not eligible to inherit her paternal property as only male heirs i.e. sons inherit father's properties. However as stated earlier, when there are no male heirs but only the daughters, sisters or granddaughters available, one of the girls is married to a man who is willing to stay with her girl's natal family as a son-in-law in house (Ghar Jamai) after the marriage to look after the girl's dependant old parents or grandparents and other family members and manage the properties. After the death of the old parents, the girl inherits her parents' properties but not her husband. After her, her male children inherit the property. But the girl can inherit her father's property provided she stays at her father's place after her marriage and does not shift elsewhere, say to her husband's place. Such a case study is given below.

### **Case Study (III):**

P. Dehury son of late M. Dehury of Chiligan was an orphan boy. Both of his parents died when he was a little child. His maternal uncle late C. Dehury of Matiagarh assumed the responsibility of maintaining him. When he grew up, he did not want to become a burden on his uncle who had a large family to support. So he went to his mother's sister's house at Baniabasa and lived there. There he married a Kharia girl who was the only child of her parents and lived at his father-in-law's house as a son-in-law-in house (Ghar Jamai). After the death of his father-in-law, his wife inherited his father-in-law's property and he managed the property. Now P and his wife have become old. They are blessed with a son who is the heir apparent to inherit the property from her mother.

### **Partition of Property:**

For division of private property among the sons or heirs, the Hill Kharia custom provides for equal partition. All the male heirs are entitled to get an equal share of the property belonging to their father or predecessor. Even an adopted son can get a share.

In actual practice, grown up sons get married and set up separate residences during their father's lifetime. Though they are physically separated from their natal family, they jointly manage the natal family's productive assets, share the yields among themselves according to their needs and do not usually claim formal partition of joint property as long as the father is alive. Ordinarily formal partition of property does not take place during the life of the patriarch.

A conscientious father may divide his property among his sons during his life-time to avoid conflicts and tensions. Sometimes he is compelled to do so under pressing circumstances arising out of the aggressive demands of arrogant sons after they get married and set up separate residences. In that case he keeps a share for himself that is for his own maintenance. After his death, his share is again equally divided among his sons. If he does not keep a share for himself and distributes everything among his sons, then it becomes the obligation of his sons to maintain him and his wife. It is the duty of the sons to look after their old parents during their old age even though their father has no property for them to inherit. If the sons neglect their old parents they are publicly criticized.

Though married sons live separately, their emotional ties with their parents, unmarried brothers and sisters and other members of the natal family remain intact. They maintain close links by looking after the good health and wellbeing of their natal family members. They assume the responsibility of guardianship and maintenance of their widow mother, minor children and other handicapped and dependant members of their natal family after father's death.

A Kharia father who has only one son, persuades the boy not to live separately after his marriage because old parents remain physically and emotionally dependant on him especially more so during their old age. After the death of his parents, the boy inherits all their properties including the paternal house.

More often it is noticed that, Kharia parents having more than one son become dependent on their youngest son who even after his marriage stays with and support them at their old age unlike other elder sons who live separately after their marriage. For such special and indispensable services, the youngest son gets the paternal house and the personal belongings of his dead parents.

While inheriting the paternal property, the sons also inherit their father's liabilities. It is their duty to attend to the liabilities jointly even though their father left no property for them to inherit. Failure to do so invokes public criticism. Daughters are not liable to do so as they do not inherit paternal property. But a widow who manages her deceased husband's property when her sons are minor, may be asked to repay her husband's debts

#### **Case Study (IV): (Partition of Property after Father's Death)**

Late C. Dehury of Matiagarh had three acres of cultivable land which he had acquired by reclaiming some patches of forest land. He was the father of eight children-five sons and three daughters. When the children grew up, they worked in their father's field and assisted him to reclaim another two acres of forest land. In course of time, C. the patriarch grew old and died. At that time all of his three daughters were married off and two elder sons J and K living separately after getting married. But they had not asked for partition of their paternal property during father's life time as they were managing somehow from external sources. Subsequently, the three unmarried sons living with the widow

mother got married and two elder ones B, and D lived separately. The youngest son, L continued to stay with his mother. In the meantime the mother also died. But formal partition of paternal property had not been made till the year 1991. Till then, the brothers were cultivating the land jointly and sharing the produces according to their need and capacity. There were no quarrels and tensions among themselves in this regard.

Formal partition of paternal property among five sons took place during 1992. The paternal landed property measuring five acres approximately has been divided into eight plots. By way of partition, the eldest brother J got one big plot, the next two brothers K and B got two small plots each, the next one D got one big plot and the youngest one L got the remaining two plots. The sharing of plots has been done on mutual basis. Last year they had cultivated the lands jointly and harvested twenty five quintals of paddy. Each of them had got a share of five quintals.

Besides the cultivable lands, the following items of property were there at the time of C's death.

Livestock- Cow-1 head, Goats-2 heads, Poultry birds- 2 Nos.

Trees- Kusum- 1 No, Drumstick-2 Nos, Papaya- 2 Nos, Jackfruit- 2 Nos.

Ornaments- Gold nose-ring-1 No, Silver Necklace- 1 No.

Utensils - Brass and Bell-metal utensils- 12 Nos.

The cow and the silver necklace belonging to the mother were sold to meet the expenses for father's funerary rites. The goats and poultry birds were also sacrificed for the death rites. The gold nose-ring was gifted to the youngest sister. The old mother who was staying with the youngest son L died a few years ago. L sold all the brass and bell utensils to spend for her death rites.

As the regards the trees, one jackfruit tree was sold for Rs. 300 and the sale proceeds were equally shared among all the brothers. The second jackfruit tree became old. The brothers fell the tree and shared the logs for use as firewood. The papaya and drumstick trees grew old and died. When these trees were bearing fruits, all the brothers were sharing the produces among themselves.

#### **Case Study: (V) (Partition of Property during Father's Lifetime):**

A is an old man of Ramjodi. Years ago his first wife died after giving birth to four sons and two daughters. 'A' faced difficulties to manage his family and take care of his minor children. So as advised by his friends and relatives, he went for second marriage. He remarried R, a young widow of Kumudabadi who had two children-one son and one daughter from her deceased husband. 'A' agreed to adopt the widow's two children. In course of time all the A's children grew up one after another, got married and lived separately.

'A' is an industrious man. During his lifetime he has acquired 21 plots of cultivable lands measuring 10 acres approximately. All his sons after their marriage and physical separation from the natal family were jointly cultivating A's cultivable lands and mutually sharing the produces among themselves according to their need while leaving a share for the maintenance of their old parents. Unfortunately there was some misunderstanding between A and his sons. The four sons of A's first wife felt that their step-mother was influencing their father to give a larger share of property to her own son. Hence, they quarreled with 'A' to get an equal share of his property. At last A' yielded to their demand and divided his landed property among all the sons after two years of his youngest adopted son' marriage. Out of 21 plots all his five sons including the adopted son got three plots each. A' being a self made and self dependant man did not want to become dependent on his sons during his old age. Sohe kept an equal share of property i.e. three plots of cultivable land for the maintenance of himself and his second wife. One plot of land was gifted to one of his son-in-law D' who has married to the youngest daughter of his first wife. D was an orphan boy who was brought up by his mother's sister in the village Ramjodi. So after his marriage with A's daughter continued to live in Ramjodi. Considering his poor conditions A and his sons agreed to gift him a plot of cultivable land. The remaining two plots were sold off by 'A' to a Gond peasant of Panposia to meet some urgent expenditure.

At the time of partition, A has some livestock such as a pair of bullocks, six goats and eleven poultry birds. He kept the bullocks with himself. All the five sons got one goat and two poultry birds each. The remaining one goat and one poultry bird came to A. The utensils and ornaments were not shared but remained with A and his wife. These items will be shared by the sons after the old couple's death.

There were fruit bearing tress like jackfruit (6 Nos) and tamarind (2 Nos) which have not been distributed but kept as common property. A and his sons are sharing the fruits.

Now A and his second wife are living alone independently. Though they have grown old they are struggling hard to support themselves instead of becoming a burden on their sons. The sons who live nearer to the old couple also help them at the time of need.

### **Disqualification for Inheritance:**

There are certain circumstances under which a son or heir is not allowed to get his due share of paternal property as discussed below.

1. When a man leaves his father's village and settles in another place. Such cases arise out of adoption migration, long term private service, like bonded labor, regular institutional employment, becoming Ghar Jamai (Son-in-law-in-house) and

the like. Since the man gets an alternative means of livelihood other than his paternal property, he gives up his right to get a share of his paternal property which is shared among his brothers who live in their father's village and depend on the paternal property for their sustenance. If the man comes back to his native place leaving his service later, his brothers or kinsmen who have shared the paternal property in his absence give him a part of it to enable him to settle down and earn his livelihood. Some case studies of this nature are reported below.

**Case Study (VI):**

D of Kiajhari married T, the daughter of late N of Ramjodi. After his marriage he shifted to Ramjodi i.e. his wife's village at the insistence of his wife. His father-in-law and brother-in-law did not give him a share of their family property as he was not granted the status of a Ghar Jamai. On the other hand his own brothers living in Kiajhari did not give him a share of his paternal property, as he has shifted, to his father-in-laws place instead of staying with them. Losing his share of property on both the sides, poor N is now living in Ramjodi and earning his livelihood with difficulty by collecting and selling forest produce.

**Case Study (VII):**

Years ago, B, a Kharia man came and settled down at Ramjodi. He had three sons named T, D and S. He had reclaimed few patches of forest lands for cultivation with the help of his two elder sons T and D. At that time, the youngest son S was working as a cattle-herder under a Gond landlord in another village. Since S could not help his father and brothers for reclamation and acquisition of the landed property, he did not claim any share when his brothers shared the property among themselves after B's death.

After the partition the second brother D shifted to his father-in-law's place leaving his share of property with his elder brother, T. After fifteen years, D, returned to Ramjodi and retrieved his property from his elder brother.

2. When a Kharia marries a non-Kharia of opposite sex belonging to a lower social order violating the rule of tribal endogamy, he is not entitled to inherit any property from his father or any other kin, because he is socially boycotted and disowned by his family and kin group. His parents and nearest kins perform prescribed purificatory rituals and pay the penalty imposed by the traditional village council so as to restore their social and ritual status. In the recent past this social sanction was being strictly enforced to preserve the purity and social identity of the community. Currently, there have been some relaxations. The socially boycotted offender can be readmitted into the society after breaking off his marital ties with the lower caste partner and then paying the prescribed penalty and then undergoing the purificatory rites. After his readmission, he is eligible to inherit property and regain his social status.

**Case study (VIII):**

B the daughter of late G. of Ramjodi married a man of the same village and became a widow after a few years of her marriage. Then she remarried a married Kharia man of Chardiha who had a living wife. The first wife quarreled with her and at last drove her out of her house. Her new husband could not help her. She had nowhere to go except the house of her married cousin sister in Kabatghai. There she developed intimacy with a man of Pano community and eloped with him. In the mean time, her parents were no more and her three brothers had shifted their residence from Ramjodi to Jabuna. Owing to her marriage with a man of lower caste, the Kharia villagers of Jabuna demanded a penalty feast (Jatibhat) from her brothers. They were readmitted in to the community after paying the penalty and undergoing purificatory rites. They also disowned their sister and cut off all ties with her.

Insanity, disease, disability and any other kind of mental and physical handicaps are not taken as grounds for disqualification of an heir in respect of inheritance of property. Their share of property is managed by their kins who take care of them.

**Conclusion:**

The Hill Kharia of Similipal are a pre-agricultural community. Being a primitive food gathering community, they are custom-bound and tradition-oriented. Gone are the days when they were enjoying considerable freedom to live inside and exploit the forest of Similipal. In these days with the growth of population, immigration of other advanced communities into their natural habitat, rapid deforestation and stringent forest laws, their traditional dependence on the forest based subsistence is a declining day by day. But the change from hunting and food gathering to settled agriculture is becoming difficult as majority of them are landless and the existing cultivable lands in the area are under the possession of other tribal and non-tribal communities. Thus land is yet to feature as a valuable item of private property in their economic life.

As regards inheritance of property, it is governed by customs and traditions that they have inherited from their forefathers. Though property is transmitted along the male line of kinship and descent, women enjoy residuary rights of maintenance depending upon their material status and place of residence.

Currently the forces of modernization are knocking at their doors. Some new modern items, such as torch light, bicycle, transistor radio, tape recorder, wrist watch, cycle rickshaw, etc. have found their way into the Hill Kharia households. The Hill Kharia are showing a tendency to acquire these objects. There is also a growing interest to acquire cultivable lands, raise livestock and take up diversified modern economic pursuits in order to minimize their dependence on diminishing forest resources. Further the Hill Kharia of Similipal has been

identified as a primitive and economically backward tribe. A primitive tribe development Micro-Project, named the Hill Kharia Development Agency is functioning at Jashipur since 1987 to look after their socio-economic development. The agency is making attempts to bring them to an agricultural economy by developing waste lands wherever these are available and allotting the lands among landless Hill Kharia families. Modernized agricultural practices and economic crops are also being introduced. It will take some time for the Hill Kharia to realise the importance of land and agriculture and depend upon them for their sustenance. Then only perceptible changes will be seen in their concept and practices relating to private property.

### Bibliography

- |                              |           |   |
|------------------------------|-----------|---|
| Choudhury, B. & G. B. Sahoo  | (1991-92) | Action Plan for Additional Villages of Hill Kharia and Mankirdia Development Agency, Jashipur in Mayurbhanj District, THRTI. Bhubaneswar (Unpublished Report).    |
| Das, N.                      | (1967-68) | The Hill Kharia of Similipal Hills, <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. IX, No. 2, pp 44-49.  |
| Glukman, Max.                | (1968)    | <i>Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society</i> , Basil Blackwell, Oxford.  |
| Goswami, M.C.                | (1982)    | <i>The Customary Laws and Practices of the Pati Rabha of Assam</i> . The Law Research Institute, Eastern Region, Gauhati, Assam.                                  |
| Gupta, S.P.                  | (1975)    | A Reconnoitral Survey among the Hill Kharia & proposed Action Research Programme. <i>Bulletin of Bihar Tribal Welfare Research Institute</i> , Vol. 17, pp 25-27. |
| Hamilton, W.H & Lrene, Till. | (1933)    | "Property", <i>Encyclopedia of Social Science</i> , Vol. XI-XII, Macmillan & Co, New York, pp 528-538.  |
| Hoebel, E.A.                 | (1954)    | <i>The Law of Primitive Man</i> , Cambridge Mass, Havard Univ. Press.   |
| Lobingier, C.S.              | (1930)    | "Customary Law", <i>Encyclopedia of Social Science</i> , Vol. III-IV. Macmillan Co. New York, pp 662-667.   |
| Mohanty, S.C.                | (2008)    | <i>Tribal Traditions and Customs: An Anthropological Study of the Kutia Kandha of Belghar, Phulbani Dist. Orissa</i> . SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar.                      |
| Ibid                         | (2008)    | <i>Tribal Traditions and Customs: An Anthropological Study of the Lanjia Saora of Puttasing, Koraput, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar</i> .                                  |

- Ibid (1992-93) *Tribal Traditions and Customs: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Kharia of Similipal Mayurbhanj Dist, Orissa.* THRTI, Bhubaneswar (to be published)
- Ibid (1992-93) *Social Position and Property Rights of the Kutia Kondh Women of Belghar, Phulbani.* Adivasi, Vol. XXXIII, No.2, 1993, pp.16-21
- Ibid (1992) Birinda- The Agnatic Lineage System of the Lanja Saora, *Orissa Review*, Vol- XLVIII No. 6 pp. 24-28.
- Mohanty U.C. (1963-64) Kharia. *Adibasi*, No. 3, pp. 175-178.
- Radin, Max. (1930) "Tradition", *Encyclopedia of Social, Science*, Vol. XV, Macmillan & Co, New York, pp-62-67.
- Roy, S.C. (1935) Past Migration of Kharia tribe, *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*.
- Roy, S.C. and R.C. Roy. (1937) *The Kharias*, Man in India Office, Ranchi, Vol. I & II
- Sahoo, G.B and S.C. Mohanty. (1982) *Action Plan for Hill Kharia & Mankirdia Dev. Agency Gudugudia, Mayurbhanj District, 1981-1985*, THRTI, Orissa.
- Sapir, E. (1930) 'Custom' *Encyclopedia of Social Science*, Vol. III & IV. Macmillan & Co, New York, pp. 658-662.
- Sahoo, T. (1990) "Kharia", *Tribes of Orissa*, THRTI, pp. 135-139.
- Senapati, N. and N.K. Sahoo. (1967) *Orissa District Gazetteers*, Mayurbhanj Govt. of Orissa, O.G.P. Cuttack.
- Vidyarthi, L.P. & V.S. Upadhyay. (1980) *The Kharia-Then and Now*, Concept Publishing Co. New Delhi.



# TRADITION & CHANGE IN HILL KHARIA SOCIETY \*

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

## (I)

Hill Kharia is the highland group among the Kharia. The other groups are Dhelki and Dudh Kharia. They are the autochthons of the Simililpal hills. Majority of the Kharia lives in the forest ranges of Similipal, Singhbhum, Manbhum of Bihar, Bankura and Midnapur of West Bengal, Balasore, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Dhenkanal and Sambalpur. The Hill-Kharia are also known as *Pahari Khadia* and included in the list of Primitive Tribal Groups.

The Similipal National Park-cum-Tiger Project – the home of the Hill Kharia is infested with wild animals like elephants, tigers, bears, deers, monkeys and wild dogs. The total Similipal forest area is full of big trees like Sal, Mohua, Karanja, Simili and other forest species. The Hill Kharia are very well adapted to the natural environment of Similipal. They earn their livelihood mainly out of collection of forest produce like honey, resin, arrowroot etc.

They used to settle in the foothills. They live in small thatched huts. The houses are found scattered. They live in small groups of 20 to 25 families. The village deity *Thakurani* and supreme deity *Dharani Devta* reside in a place called *sal* at the village outskirts. They also worship Sun god, *Dharam* and other deities and spirits by offering them sacrifices of goat, fowl, liquor and other ritual food. They prepare their own hunting implements, bow and arrow, agricultural implements, fishing nets and traps. They use leaf cups and leaf plates.

Though they have arranged-marriage practice, they prefer cross cousin marriage and pay bride price. After marriage, the newlywed set up separate establishments. They have joking relationship between grandparents and grand children, sister-in-laws and brother in laws and avoidance relationship between elder brother and younger brother's wife. Life cycle rituals are meticulously observed. Birth pollution goes for 21 days; after that the name giving ceremony is observed. They bury the dead and the death ritual is observed on the tenth day.

---

\* Published in *Particularly Vulnerable Tribes (PVTGs) of Odisha*, Vol. II, 2015, pp. 343-349

<sup>1</sup> O.S.D. (Research), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

They perform their characteristic dance and music and play *changu*, flute, *nagna* etc. *Nua Khia*, *Raja*, *Makar*, *Pusa Parab* and *Chait Parab* are some of their main festivals. The village council constituted of the village head, priest, *Dehury* and the village elders adjudicates cases of theft and homicide. The Santal, Bathudi and a few scheduled caste people are the neighbors of the Hill Kharia.

## (II)

An eminent India anthropologist, S.C. Roy (1935) who had studied the socio-cultural life of the Kharia during the British period, states, "Forced into comparative isolation by their geographical environment and having for long centuries had very little intercourse or communication with more civilized tribes and castes or even with other sections of their own tribe or sub-tribe and with all their energies absorbed in solving the food problem, the Hill Kharia have necessarily remained for untold centuries almost stagnant at the same primitive level of social, economic and intellectual culture. Their tool and implements.... are few, their dress and ornaments scanty and their food supply inadequate and precarious. In social organization and in religious ideas, as in arts and crafts, they are the most unprogressive section of the Kharia tribe. Circumstanced as they are, they are naturally very timid and suspicious of strangers."

"Although owing to the need for collaboration to procure food by hunting, and for protection against common dangers, a few families band together and occupy a definite area, yet such limited aggression, constituting as it does, the physical foundation of Hill Kharia society, does not appear to have developed such an intimate and their association and prevent individuals and families from easily leaving one local group and joining another. The social cohesion is rather loose. Totemic clan organization, which might have once existed and combined a number of kins has practically disappeared among the Hill Kharias of Mayurbhanj".

Further, Roy (1935) holds the view that; their strong belief in their religion is a potent force to unite them together. Their prolonged contact with their dominant caste Hindu neighbors have resulted in their borrowing the religious ideas, beliefs and practices of their caste Hindu neighbors with a view to get some upward mobility in the traditional social hierarchy. In the process of borrowing the cultural elements from their neighbors, they have totally forgotten their own dialect and have been speaking in the regional tongue, Oriya.

Our study finds that the Hill Kharias mostly live in villages inhabited by caste Hindus and other tribal and non-tribal communities. There are few villages in which Kharias live alone. In the multi-caste and multi-community villages the Kharias live in separate quarters, like other communities but form a part and parcel of the traditional social hierarchy. As the Caste Hindu exercise dominant influence in the village affairs, the Kharias remain at times subservient to them.

Whether spontaneously or under pressing circumstances, the Kharias observe the Hindu customs and traditions, in many occasions.

They have adopted many Hindu deities into their pantheon, such as Laxmi, Durga, Mahadev, Hanuman, Rama, Kali, Basuki etc. some annual festivals and rituals observed by them such as Dola, Holi, Nuakhia, Karma Puja, Durga Puja, Makar Parab etc. are in fact Hindu festivals,. Use of materials like coconut, milk, turmeric powder, rice and rice powder, incense sticks and the like for conducting rituals and offering to the deities are being done following the Hindu concept of ritual purity and pollution for which, they outcaste a sinner and readmit him after restoring his ritual status by conducting purificatory rituals in which the sinner is cleanly shaved, takes a ritual bath in the river and drinks a cow dung solution in water. The customary rules for acceptance or non acceptance of cooked food from the members of non-Kharia communities are being followed by imitation of similar Hindu practices.

The other two sections of the Kharia i.e. the Dhelki and Dudh Kharias have been influenced by the Christianity. It has brought about certain changes in their socio-cultural life-style. But the Hill Kharia are still unaffected by the Christianity and they have rather preferred to follow their traditional life style borrowing some elements of the Hindu culture.

After independence, there is a rapid change in the socio-political scenario. Several welfare schemes have been launched to develop them. Being a tradition bound small ethnic group, the Hill Kharia have lagged behind though the change has affected their traditional institutions. "Again the new found Panchayat system has brought an enormous change in the socio-political life-style of the Kharias. On account of the backing of the government in power, the Panchayats have a stronger power façade than the traditional councils. Consequently the Panchayats are gaining prominence, while the traditional political system is waning. Education an import of information has further hastened this process. Naturally with the advent of this new political system the traditional socio-political system the traditional socio-political mores and values are changing and new modern ideas of democracy are taking seed. (Vidayarthi, 1980:187)

The modernization is a potent force to effect change. It has been entering slowly into the Hill Kharia from various directions. The package of developmental programmes being implemented through several Government and non-Government agencies for effecting planned change are also acting as agents of modernization. Spread of education and exposure to the world outside are factors accelerating the process of change. The Hill Kharia living in or adjacent to urban, industrial and growth centers have slowly picked up the trends of modernization. They send their children to schools, wear modern dresses, buy modern gadgets like, transistor radios, watches, bicycles, tape recorders, torch lights, etc. and take up diversified modern occupations, like rickshaw pulling, timber trading, masonry, carpentry construction works, petty trade, liquor vending, tailoring,

cycle repairing, mining and querying and the like. Therefore, they claim to be more advanced than their jungle dwelling counterparts and in these days they hesitate to maintain marital alliances with the latter.

Many Hill Kharias are going to the neighboring states, like Bihar, west Bengal, Assam to work as agricultural labours, industrial, mining and construction workers. When they come back they bring with them some elements of modernity which they spread among their fellow men.

A micro project, named the Hill Kharia and Mankirdia Development Agency (HKMDA) is functioning at Jashipur since 1987. This agency has been doing a good job to implement several welfare schemes and create awareness among the Kharia. For example the Hill Kharia inhabitants of Matiagarh, a village lying on the outskirts of Jashipur town, have taken a decision to put a stop to the liquor vending business of some people and to the drinking habits of the people of their locality which is the greatest evil to their progress.

No doubt, the Hill Kharia is passing through a crucial phase of transition between tradition and modernity. Few decades ago they have been free from the subjugation to feudal chiefs and their subordinates who were forcibly extracting *bethi* (free labour) and *bheti* (free gift) from them in one pretext and another. At that time their traditional institutions and leadership were more effective to maintain cohesion, solidarity and to preserve their group identity by enforcing their customary laws. This was being backed by the feudal chiefs. During the feudal rule, the rulers were more concerned with revenue collection, law and order problems and civil and criminal matters rather than looking after the traditional needs of the Hill Kharia. Soon after independence the intermediary system was abolished and Panchayati Raj system was introduced. The Hill Kharia as citizens of free India have been made to participate in the democratic system through elections. As a result a kind of modern leadership is emerging from among the Hill Kharia youth who are largely in favour of the change. However, they have not yet lost their faith in the traditional leadership. While the modern leaders, like Sarpanch, Ward members are assuming greater dominance in the village sphere, the traditional leaders, such as the Dehury and Pradhan have not lost their importance and are being respected and consulted in all traditional matters.

Against the onslaught of modernization and planned change, the Hill Kharias living in the interior pockets of Similipal forests, still preserve their social identity. Each Hill Kharia is conscious of other's rights, duties and obligations and thus avoids encroaching upon other's rights. He or she remains a part and parcel of his local community. The Hill Kharia customary law is self-regulatory in the sense that they consider that to insult a fellow being or to encroach upon other's rights displeases the super naturals and hence, brings disastrous consequences.

Nevertheless, change is a universal phenomenon. The Hill Kharia have been influenced by the dynamics of change whether they want it or not. Under the

present circumstances, the tradition and change interact with each other. Vidayarthi observes, "the dynamics of cultural change vary the three Kharia sections due to their diverse situations and frequency of contact with the new environment. Kharia arts, myths, folksongs and legends are preserved in original form, but a few new ones have been acquired from outside. A number of traditional village organizations are still prevalent but most of them are disorganized and getting less and less in use. Community considerations are losing importance... (1980: 188-89). Further he states, "On the whole in the democratic life of the Indian State the freedom and liberty of Kharia tract have been amalgamated. It forms a selective and accommodative new life pattern as reflected in all their cultural spheres. The change in social, economic, political, religious, educational field has brought about a remarkable transformation. Yet the domestic experiments, urbanization and modernization have definitely spoiled the peace, social health and happiness of these simple folk without adequate economic development." (1980:189)

### Bibliography

- |                 |         |   |
|-----------------|---------|---|
| Archer, W.G.    | 1943    | In Indian Riddle book, Chhotnagpur Kharia, <i>Man in India</i> No.23, pp-284-288  |
|                 | 1946    | Two Kharia Weddings. <i>Man in India</i> , Vol.26, nos. 3 & 4, pp.215-219   |
| Ball, V.        | 1968    | Notes on Kerriahs, Proceedings of Asiatic Society, Bengal.  |
| Banerjee, H.N.  | 1959    | The Kharia of Madhupur, Singhbhum District and Neighbouring Regions. <i>Bulletin of Department of Anthropology</i> , No.2, pp. 91-104 |
| Cardon, L.      | 1903    | Marriage Ceremonies of the Kharias. <i>Journal of Asiatic Society, Bengal</i> , Vol.27, pp.225-29.                                    |
| Dalton, E.T.    | 1872    | The Kharias. <i>Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal</i> , Calcutta, pp.158-167  |
| Das, Nityananda | 1967-68 | Hill Kharias of Similipal Hills, <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol.IX, No.2, pp.44-49  |
| Das, T.C.       | 1905    | <i>The Wild Kharias of Manbhum</i> , Calcutta.  |
| Ibid            | 1931    | The Wild Kharias of Dalbhum, Anthropological Papers No.3, Calcutta University, Calcutta.  |
| Datta, B.N.     | 1935    | 'Kharias' Ethnological Notes on Some of the Castes of West Bengal. <i>Man in India</i> . No.15, pp.196-224.                           |
| Deb, P.C.       | 1962    | Marriage among the Dhelki Kharias. <i>Bulletin of the Tribal Research Institute, Chhindwara</i> , Vol.2 No.1                          |
| Despande, R.K.  | 1951    | "Kharias": Tribes of India, Part-II, New Delhi, Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangha, pp.154-59  |

- Drover, W.H.P. 1881 "Notes on Some Kolarian Tribes" (Asurs, Birijyas, Birhors, Khariyas), *Journal of Asiatic Society, Bengal*, Vol.57, No.1, pp. 7-18
- Ibid 1891 "Notes on some Kolarian Tribes" (Asurs, Birijyas, Birhors, Khariyas), *Journal of Asiatic Society, Bengal*, Vol, 60, No.1, pp.24-37
- Enthoven, R. E. 1922 "Kharia": *Tribes & Castes of Bombay*. Bombay, p.199.
- Floor, H.V.G. & G. Durat 1934 Dictionary of the Kharia Language, Calcutta Tea District Labour Association.
- Gupta, S.P. 1975 "A Reconnoitral Survey among the Hill-Kharia and Proposed Action Research Programme". *Bulletin of Bihar Tribal Research Institute*, Vol, 17, pp.25-72.
- Haffman, J. 1933 "Kharia": *Encyclopaedia Mundarica*, p-8.
- Harimohan 1961 Socio-Economic Organisation and Religion among the Hill Kharia of Dalbhum". *Bulletin, Ranchi*, Vol-3, No.1, pp.180-212.
- Hutton, J.H. 1951 'Kharia', *Gate in India*, Bombay, p.282.
- Mitra, S.C. 1944-45 "On a Kharia Astronomical Myth about the Metamorphosis, the Dove and her Eggs in to Stars." *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Bangalore, Vol.35, No.1.
- Mohammed, L. 1937 "Kharia, Khadia". *Census of Mayurbhanj State, 1931*, Vol.I, Calcutta, pp.155,212.
- Mohanty, U.C. 1963-64 "Kharia", *Adibasi*, No.3, pp 175-78
- Risley, H.H. 1981 "Kharia": *Tribes & Castes of Bengal*, Calcutta, Vol.I, pp.466-72
- Roy, S.C. 1935 "Past Migration of the Kharia Tribe". *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*.
- Roy, S.C. & R.C. Roy 1937 *The Kharias*, Man in India Office, Ranchi, Vol.I& II
- Russell, R.V. & Hiralal 1916 "Kharia": *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, Vol.III, London, p.445
- Sahoo, T. 1990 "Kharia". *Tribes of Orissa*, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, pp.135-139
- Senapati, N.& N.K. Sahoo 1967 *Orissa District Gazetteers: Mayurbhanj Govt. of Orissa*, O.G.P. Cuttack.
- Vidyardhy, L.P.& V.S. Upadhyay 1980 *The Kharia: Then and Now*. Concept Pub. Co. New Delhi.

# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH STATUS OF THE HILL KHARIAS OF ODISHA, INDIA \*

*G. K. Pedi* <sup>1</sup>

*N. C. Dash* <sup>2</sup>

*J. Dash* <sup>3</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*This is an empirical attempt to study the reproductive health practices of the Hill Kharias: a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PTG) of north Odisha. They are sparsely distributed mostly in Mayurbhanj District of Odisha. For this study Data have been collected from 460 ever-married women of the reproductive age group (15-49 years) during 2010. The present paper deals with the actual reproductive scenario of the Kharia women. It is noticed that the Kharias are extremely poor and thrive on a food gathering and hunting economy. The observation of their fertility shows that though their mean age at marriage is slightly low (17years), the average fertility of their women is not so high ie.3.1 (mean conception). This community is far away from the reach of the modern family and health services provided by the government. However, it is observed that the prolonged breastfeeding and the prevalence of widespread traditional contraception methods are identified as the responsible factors for affecting such a low fertility of the present population.*

**Keywords:** Primitive, reproductive health, conception, fertility, breastfeeding, contraception

## Reproductive Health

Reproductive health has been a recent thrust issue in most of the countries in the developing world; India is no exception. Reproductive health includes the age at marriage, reproductive performance and fertility regulation, care during pre-natal, natal and post-natal period, breast feeding and infant care practices etc.

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXXIII, Nos. 1 & 2, 2013, pp. 12-26.

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Department of Population Studies, F.M. University, Balasore, Odisha

<sup>3</sup> Professor, Department of Anthropology, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, India

World Health Organization (WHO, 1995) estimates that of the 150 to 200 million pregnancies that occur worldwide each year, about 23 million lead to serious complications and half a million of these end with the loss of mother. Ninety nine percent of these deaths take place in developing countries.

Women are more vulnerable in the society, especially the poor tribal women who are more prone to the reproductive health problems such as pregnancy, delivery and post-delivery complications, side effects of contraceptive use and other reproductive health problems. To avoid these health problems, women should have health checkup like ante-natal check-up during pregnancy, natal and post natal check-up at the time of delivery and after delivery which would protect the health condition of the future born babies of women. Further, health check-up for children (Immunization and other ailments) would maintain a good health status and ultimately better survival of children.

### **The Hill Kharia**

The Hill Kharias are widely spread over Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal and M.P. They claim to be the autochthons of the Mayurbhanj Hills. The Similipal hill ranges are the hearth and home of the Hill Kharia. They are also found in insignificant numbers in Manbhum, Chotanagpur and Singhbhum in Bihar, Midnapur and Bankura in West Bengal, and Baleswar, Keonjhar, Sambalpur and Dhenkanal in Odisha. According to the 2001 Census the total Kharia population in Odisha was 1.9 lakhs and increased to about 2.2 lakhs in 2011, (Census 2001, 2011).

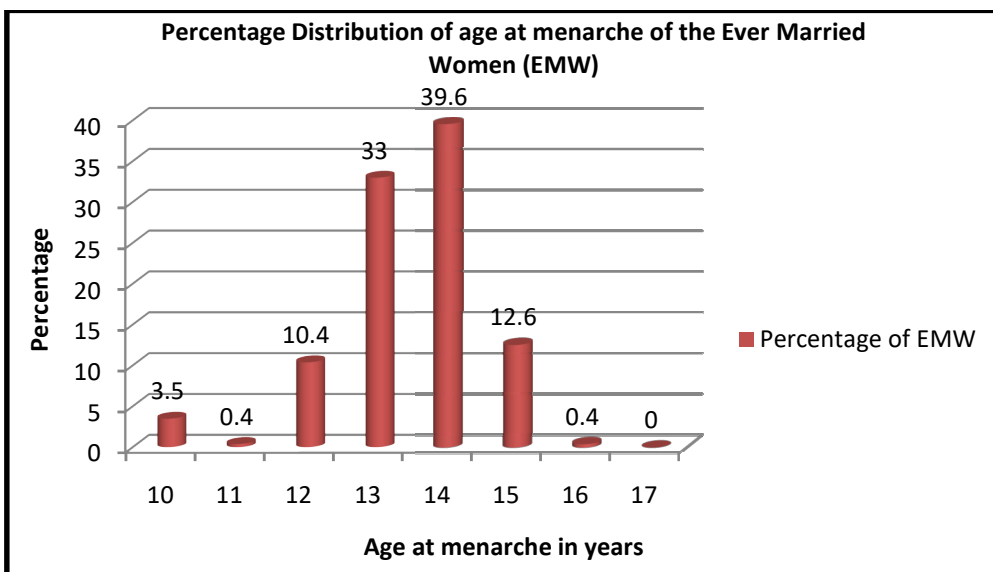
### **Age at Menarche**

Age at menarche is important to record the biological age of the members of any community for their entry into the reproductive age, (Balgir, 1994). The age at menarche of the Kharia women is given below.

<b>TABLE - 1</b>		
<b>Age at menarche of the Ever Married Women (EMW)</b>		
<b>Age at menarche in years</b>	<b>Number of EMW</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
10	16	3.5
11	2	0.4
12	48	10.4
13	152	33
14	182	39.6
15	58	12.6
16	2	0.4
17	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Mean age at Menarche - 13.4</b>		



FIGURE - 1



The mean age at menarche of the Kharia women is found to be 13.4 years. Maximum percentages of the Kharia women attain menarche at the age of 13 to 14 years. It is interesting to note that only 0.4% women attain menarche at the age of 16 years.

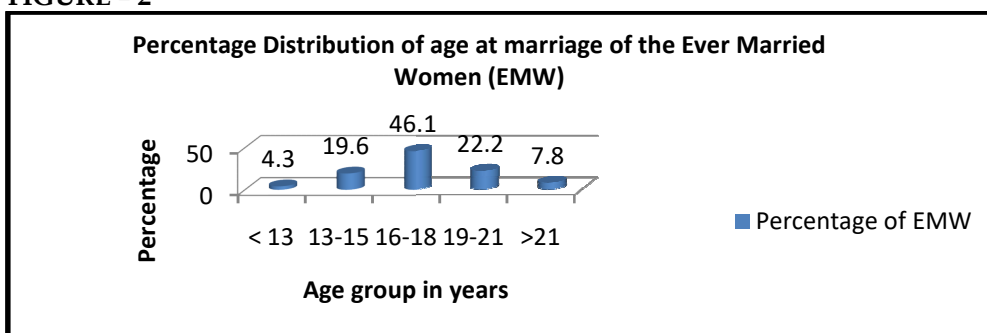
#### Age at First Marriage

Age at first marriage is the actual age of women for their entry into the reproductive process, (Pandey and Talwar, 1987). The age at first marriage of the Kharia women is given below.

**TABLE - 2**  
**Age at Marriage of the Ever Married Women (EMW)**

Age group in years	Number of EMW	Percentage
< 13	20	4.3
13-15	90	19.6
16-18	212	46.1
19-21	102	22.2
>21	36	7.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Mean age at Marriage - 17.2 years</b>		

FIGURE - 2



The mean age at marriage of the Kharia women is found to be 17.2 years. Table-2 shows that maximum percentage of women (46.1%) get married between 16 to 18 years. It is also observed that 4.3% women get married below 13 years of age which is a little early.

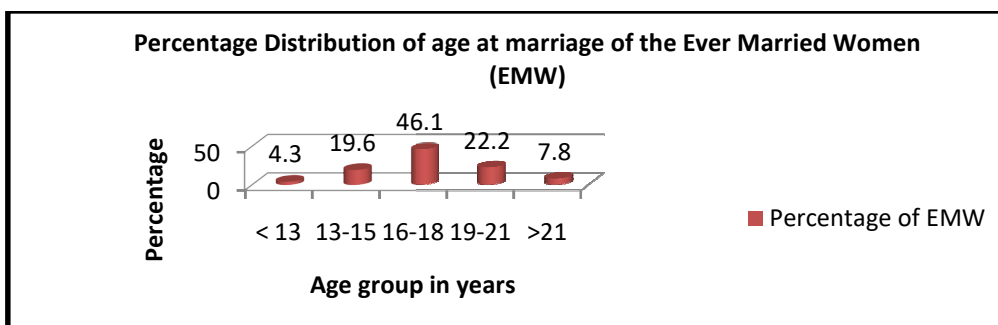
### Age at First Conception

Age at first conception shows the gap between the age at marriage and the readiness the women for the first birth. The Age at first conception of the Kharia women is given below.

**TABLE - 3**  
**Age at 1st Conception of the Ever Married Women (EMW)**

Age group in years	Number of EMW	Percentage
<13	2	0.5
13-15	88	19.1
16-18	192	41.7
19-21	124	27
22-24	38	8.2
>24	16	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Mean age at 1st Conception - 17.98 years</b>		

FIGURE - 3



The mean age at first conception is found to be 17.98 years. This shows that the gap between age at marriage and age at first conception is nearly eight months. This is also observed from the table that maximum percentage of women (41.7%) have conceived between 16 to 18 years.

### Age at First Child Birth

Age at first child birth of any woman belonging to any community is very important not only to the woman but also to the family and society. The age at first child birth of the Kharia women is given below.

**TABLE - 4**  
**Age at 1st Child Birth of the Ever Married Women (EMW)**

Age group in years	Number of EMW	Percentage
<13		
13-15	52	11.3
16-18	178	38.7
19-21	116	25.2
22-24	94	20.4
>24	20	4.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Mean age at 1st child birth - 19.0 years</b>		

**FIGURE - 4**

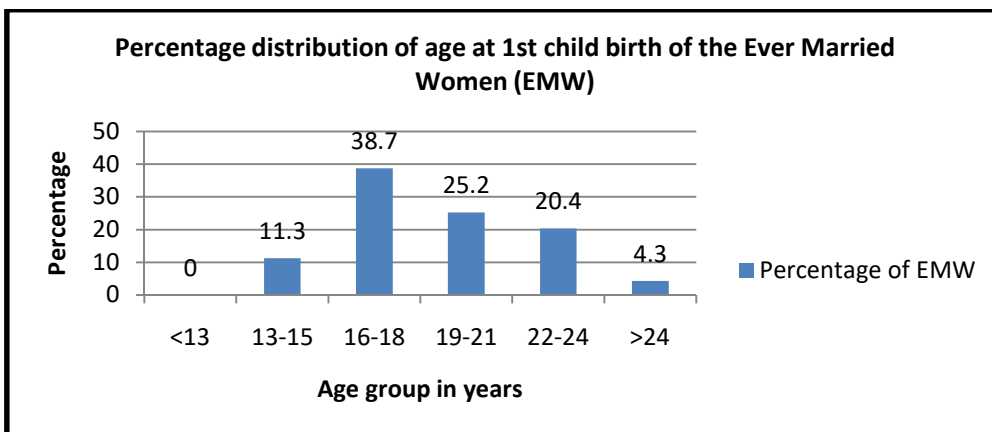


Table 4 reveals the mean age at first child birth of the Kharia women which is 19.0 years. The gap between the mean age at first marriage and the mean age at first childbirth is 1.8 years which further confirms the fact that the average women conceive after eight months of marriage.

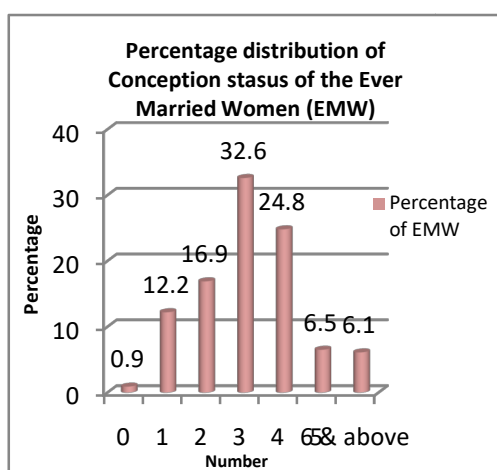
### Fertility Performance

Human fertility is responsible for the biological replacement and maintenance of the human species. Table 4.3.5 presents the fertility performance of married women. The total number of conceptions, uterine wastage (abortion and stillbirth) and live-births are some of the major findings of the study.

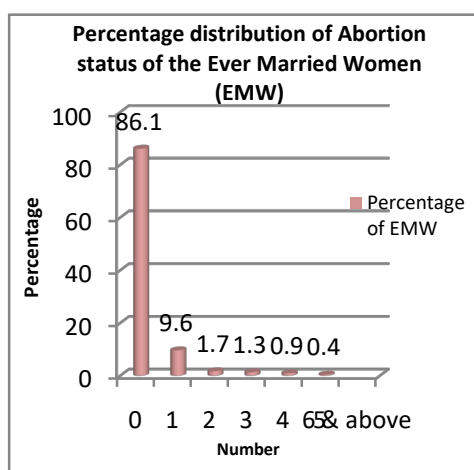
**TABLE - 5**  
**Fertility Performance of the Ever Married Women (EMW)**

Number	Conception		Abortion		Still birth		Live-birth	
	No of EMW	%	No of EMW	%	No of EMW	%	No of EMW	%
0	4	0.9	396	86.1	412	89.6	15	3.3
1	56	12.2	44	9.6	36	7.8	74	16.1
2	78	16.9	8	1.7	6	1.4	97	21.1
3	150	32.6	6	1.3	2	0.3	146	31.7
4	114	24.8	4	0.9	4	0.9	88	19.1
5	30	6.5	2	0.4			28	6.1
6 & above	28	6.1					12	2.6
<b>Total EMW</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total no of</b>	<b>Conception - 1436</b>		<b>Abortion - 104</b>		<b>Still birth - 70</b>		<b>Live birth- 1270</b>	
<b>Mean (per woman)</b>	<b>3.12</b>		<b>0.23</b>		<b>0.15</b>		<b>2.76</b>	

**FIGURE - 5.a**



**FIGURE - 5. b**



The total number of conception of the 460 Kharia women is found to be 1436 and thus the mean conception per women is 3.12. The conceptions terminating before birth are taken as uterine wastage (Abortion + Stillbirth). In this population the uterine wastage is found to be 0.38 which is a moderate value. It is further noticed that the total number of live-births of the women is 1270 and thus the mean live-births per woman is 2.76.

### Antenatal Care

Antenatal care refers to pregnancy related health care provided by a doctors or health workers in a medical facility or at home.

**TABLE - 6**  
**Antenatal Checkup Received**

Antenatal checkup received				Antenatal checkup not received	
Number		Percentage		Number	Percentage
298		64.8		162	35.2
Iron Folic Acid (IFA)		Tetanus Toxoid (TT )			
No of EMW	%	No of EMW	%		
146	31.7	207	45		

**FIGURE - 6**

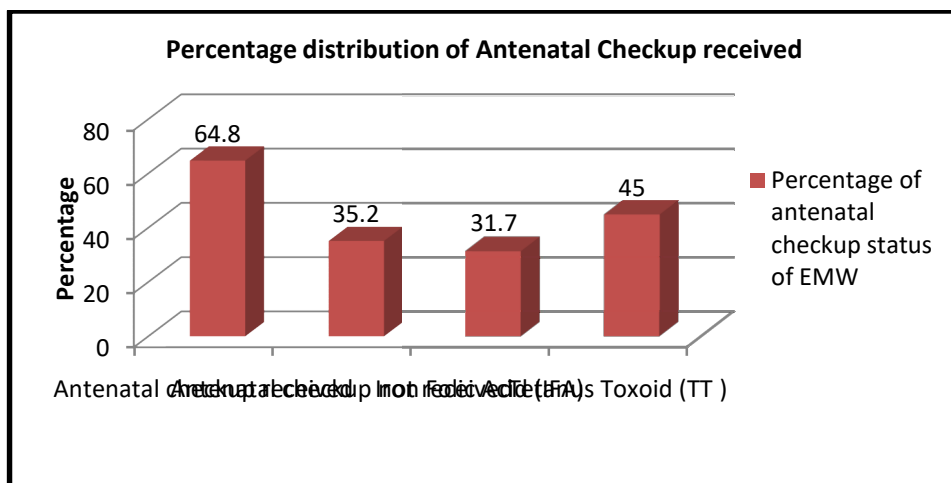
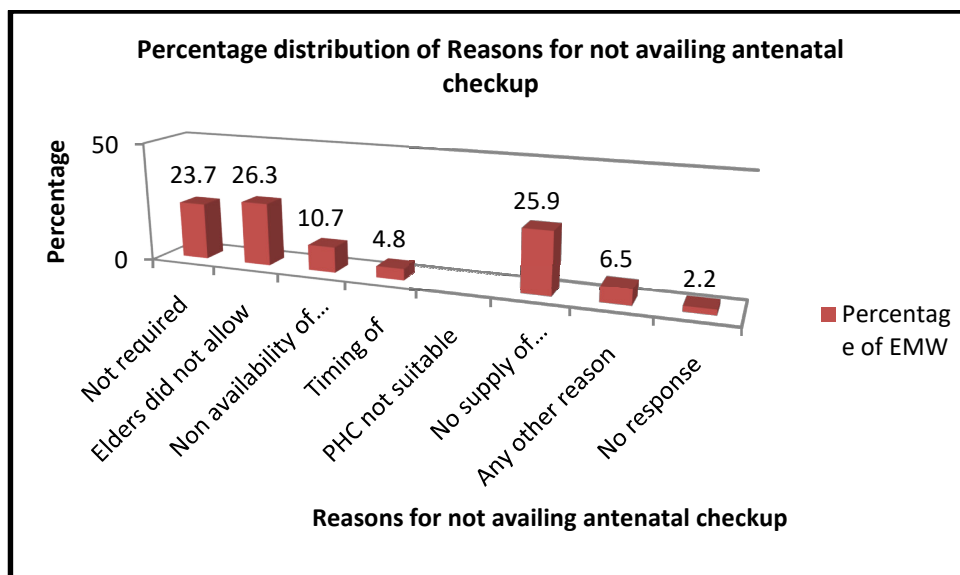


Table 6 highlights the acceptance of the maternal care services provided by the Government. 64.8% women received antenatal checkup where as 35.2% did not receive any antenatal checkup. It is also observed that 31.7% of the women have taken IFA tablets and 45.0% of the women have taken at-least one TT vaccine.

**TABLE - 7**  
**Reasons for not availing antenatal checkup**

Reasons for not availing antenatal checkup	Number of EMW	Percentage
Not required	109	23.7
Elders did not allow	121	26.3
Non availability of staff	49	10.7
Timing of PHC not suitable	22	4.8
No supply of medicine	119	25.9
Any other reason	30	6.5
No response	10	2.2
Total	460	100

**FIGURE - 7**



There are several reasons reported by the women for not availing any antenatal checkup. Maximum percentage of women reported that elders did not allow (26.3%) and there is no supply of medicine (25.9%) while 23.7% women also reported that it is not required and pregnancy is a normal phenomenon.

### **Natal Care**

One of the important major thrust areas of the RCH programme in India is to encourage and promote deliveries under proper hygienic conditions and under the supervision of trained health professionals.

**TABLE - 8**  
**Place of Delivery**

Place of delivery	No of EMW	Percentage
Home	367	79.8
Hospital	93	20.2
Total	460	100

**FIGURE - 8**

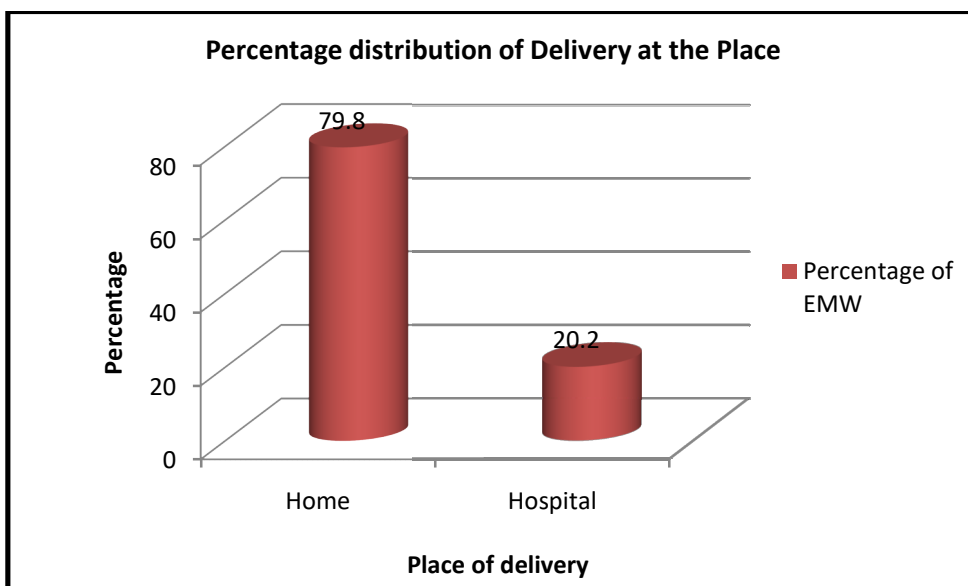


Table-8 shows that in spite of the various schemes of Government for promoting institutional delivery, 79.8% women still have home deliveries and 20.2% go for institutional delivery.

**TABLE - 9**

<b>Birth assisted by Doctor/ANM/Elderly Woman</b>					
<b>Individual attending the delivery</b>					
Doctor		ANM/LHV		Elderly woman	
No of EMW	%	No of EMW	%	No of EMW	%
70	15.2	26	5.7	364	79.1
<b>Total No of EMW - 460</b>					

FIGURE - 9

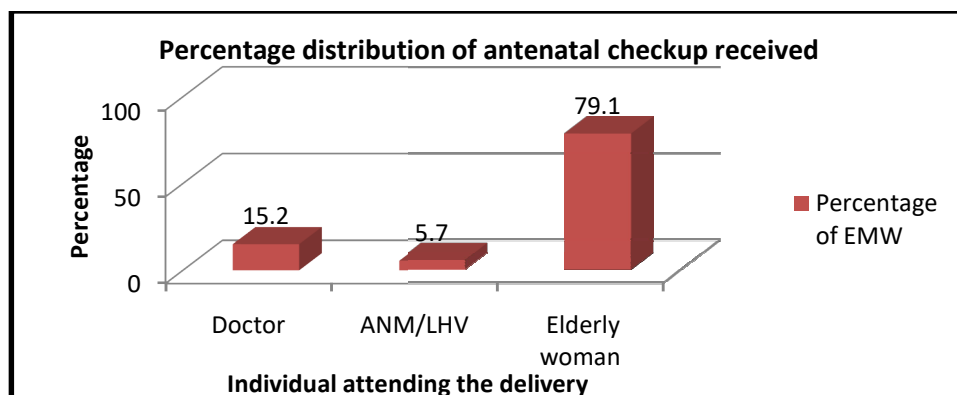


Table-9 provides information on assistance during delivery by doctors, health professionals (ANM or LHV) and elderly women. It is seen that maximum percentage of women (79.1%) are assisted by the elderly women while 5.7% receive assistance from ANM and 15.2% avail assistance from the doctors.

### Child Care

The healthy survival of the newborn baby is dependent on the health status of the mother and the feeding and weaning practices among infants which have always been an area of special interest where child rearing practices are concerned, (Srinivasan et.al. 1989).

**TABLE - 10**  
**Initiation of Breastfeeding**

Initiation of Breast feeding	No of EMW	Percentage
1st day	66	14.3
2nd day	259	56.3
3rd day	78	17
No response	57	12.4
Total	460	100

FIGURE - 10

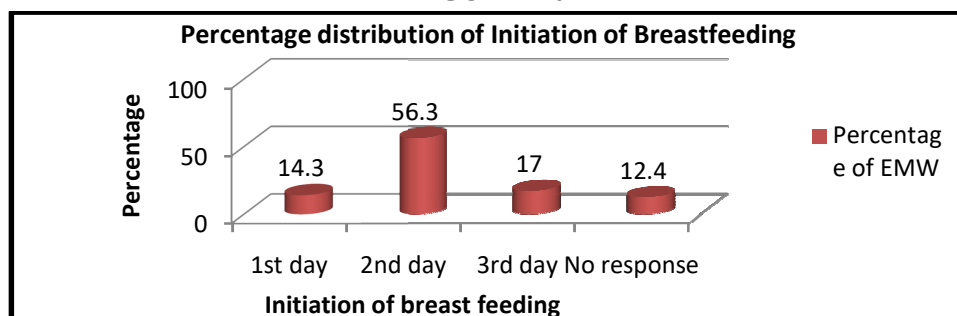


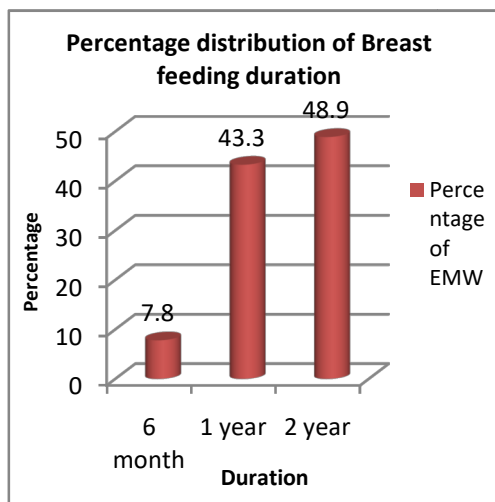


Table-10 presents the details of the initiation of breast feeding after childbirth. Maximum percentages of women (56.3%) initiate breast feeding on the second day while 14.3% of the women initiate breast feeding on the first day and 17.0% of the women initiate breast feeding on the third day. Thus the practice of discarding colostrums is prevailing in this tribe.

**TABLE - 11**  
**Duration of breast feeding & Introduction of Supplementary Food**

Duration	Duration of Breast feeding		Breast feeding along with Supplementary Food	
	No of EMW	Percentage	No of EMW	Percentage
6 month	36	7.8	231	50.3
1 year	199	43.3	179	38.9
2 year	225	48.9	50	10.8
Total	460	100	460	100

**FIGURE - 11.a**



**FIGURE - 11.b**

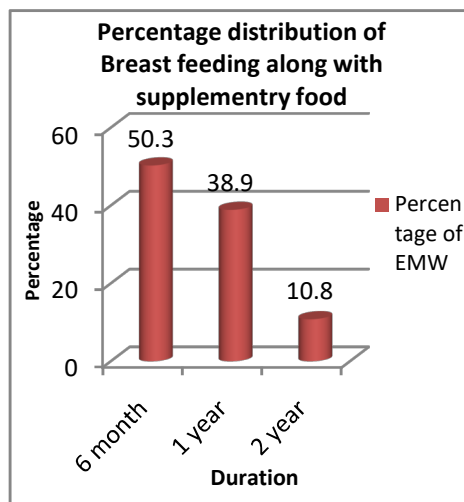


Table-11 highlights the duration of breast feeding and the introduction of supplementary food. It is observed that maximum percentage of women breast feed their babies for a period of one year (43.3%) and two year (48.9%) while only 7.8% women breast feed their babies for only six months. Thus a prolonged duration of breast feeding is practiced among the Kharia women.

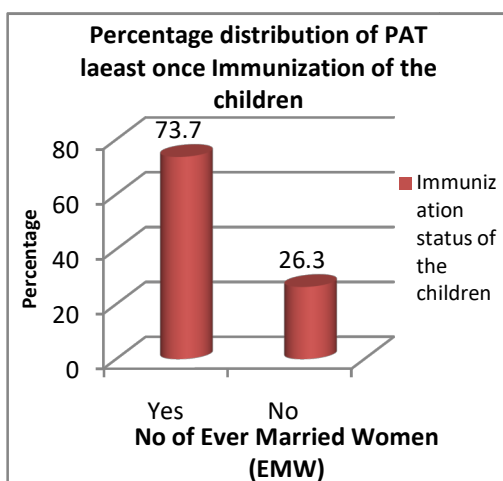
The introduction of supplementary food in right amount and frequency is important for appropriate infant and child feeding practices, (Vimala & Ratnaprabha 1987). It is noticed that normally the Kharia women introduce

supplementary food at the age of six months (50.3%) whereas 38.9% women start supplementary feeding at the age of one year. Thus it is observed that the Kharia women introduce the supplementary food at the right age.

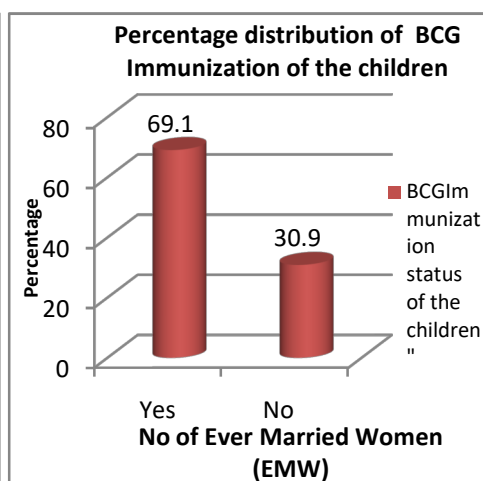
**TABLE - 12**  
**Immunization status of the children**

	At least one		BCG		DPT		Polio		Vit-A		Measles	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	339	73.7	318	69.1	321	69.8	325	70.7	310	67.4	305	66.3
No	121	26.3	142	30.9	139	30.2	135	29.3	150	32.6	155	33.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>

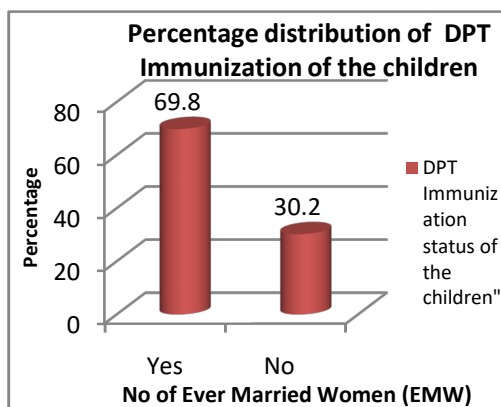
**FIGURE - 12.a**



**FIGURE - 12.b**



**FIGURE - 12.c**



**FIGURE - 12.d**

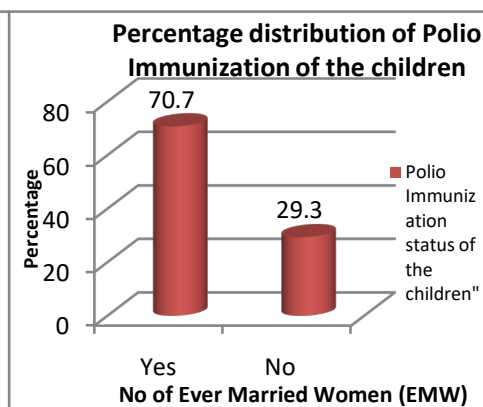


Table-12 reveals the coverage of various vaccines (BCG, DPT, Polio, Vit-A & Measles) among the children. It is noticed that 73.7% mothers immunized their children with at-least one vaccine while 26.3% mothers do not immunize their children. The table also shows that maximum percentage of mothers avail the Polio vaccine (70.7%) , BCG (69.1%) and DPT(69.8%) vaccine while 67.3% mothers give their children the Vitamin-A supplementation and Measles is received by slightly less percentage of children.

### Family Planning

The use of family planning methods is of vital importance to control the fertility of the population. Of all the methods, the permanent method or the sterilization method (Vasectomy/Tubectomy) is found to be a highly accepted method.

**TABLE - 13**  
**Family Welfare data (Permanent method)**

Method	Adopted		Not adopted	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Sterilization	255	55.4	205	44.6

**FIGURE - 13**

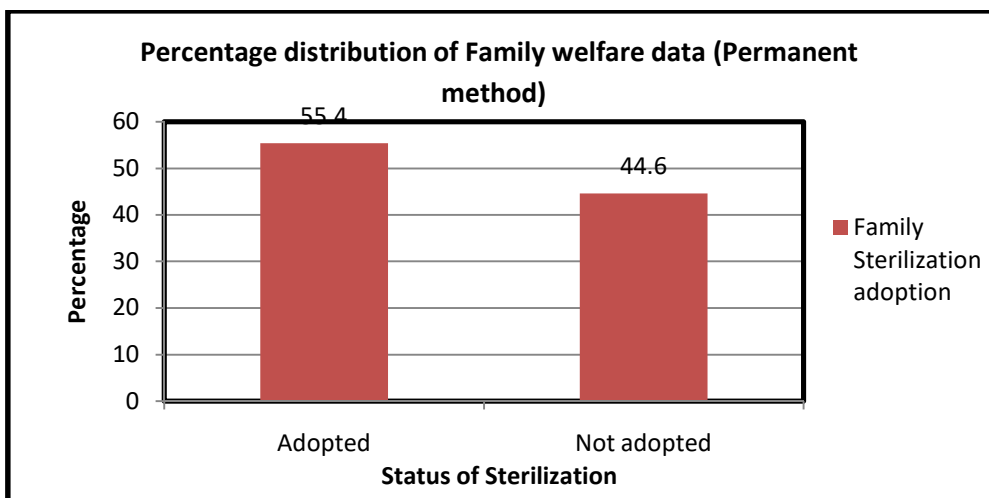


Table-13 highlights that 55.4% of the Kharias accept the permanent method (Vasectomy/Tubectomy) of fertility regulation while 44.6% of the Kharias do not adopt this terminal method. It is confirmed in the study that Kharias adopt some of their indigenous anti fertility methods for spacing as well as limiting their family size.

## Conclusion

This is an empirical attempt to study the reproductive health practices of the Hill Kharias: a PTG of north Odisha. They are sparsely distributed mostly in Maurbhanj District of Odisha. Data have been collected from 460 ever-married women of the reproductive age group (15-49 years) during 2010. The present paper deals with the actual reproductive scenario of the Kharia women. It is noticed that the Kharias are extremely poor and have a food gathering and hunting economy. The observation of fertility shows that though the mean age at marriage is slightly low (17years), the average fertility of the women is not so high ie.3.1 (mean conception). This community is far away from the reach of the modern family and health services provided by the government. However, it is observed that the prolonged breast feeding and the prevalence of widespread traditional contraception methods are identified as the responsible factors for affecting such a low fertility of the present population. Hence, trends of fertility need to be monitored regularly and appropriate measures should be taken to raise the socio-economic status of the Kharias and of the women in particular.

## References

- Balgir, R.S, 1994, Age at Sexual Maturity among the Eight Endogamous Populations of North-Eastern India. *Journal of Human Ecology* 5(2):91-96.
- Census of India, 2001, Tribes of Odisha (Special Volume), Census Operation; Odisha.
- Census of India, 2011, Population Totals (First Publication), Census Operations, Odisha.
- Dash, N.C, 2010, Reproductive Health, Nutritional Status and Demographic Profile of Primitive Tribes of Odisha, Report of the Major Research Project, Submitted to UGC, New Delhi.
- Pandey, G. D. and Talwar, P. P, 1987. Some Aspects of Marriage and Fertility in Rural Uttar Pradesh, *Demography India*, 16: 301-310.
- Srinivasan, K., Pathak, K.B. and Pandey, A., 1989, Determinants of Breast feeding and Post-Partum Amenorrhea in Odisha. *Journal of Biological Sciences*, 2193: 365-371.
- Vimala, V. and Ratnaprabha, C, 1987, Infant Feeding Practices Among Tribal Communities of Andhra Pradesh, *Indian Pediatric*. Vol. 24: 907-910.

# K H A R W A R \*

*A. B. Ota* <sup>1</sup>

*S. C. Mohanty* <sup>2</sup>

*Pollishree Samantray* <sup>3</sup>

## Introduction

The tribe Kharwar is numerically small and little known tribe of Odisha and are sparsely distributed in Angul, Mayurbhanj and Bargarh districts of Odisha. They are also known as Lulkidihe. Kharwar are aboriginals. They claim themselves of Kshatriya origin as are descendants of *Suryabashi* dynasty of Rajput king Ben (Bana) who being cursed had been exiled and lived a life of Chandala, the flesh eater. Etymologically the term Kharwar denotes Catechu maker or inhabitants Khairagarh, their original habitat in Chhatisgarh from where they have migrated to Odisha. In another view they are originated from Khairi spring for which their community is named as Kharwar.

Their mother tongue is Kherwari which belongs to Austro-Asiatic family of languages in Proto-Munda branch. They have already forgotten their mother tongue. Apart from their mother tongue they speak *Sadri* (Indo-Aryan). It is a semi-autonomous non-literary dialect having inter-tribal function in western Odisha having language affinity with Odia and Hindi. They also converse in the regional language Odia and use the Odia script for writing. Racially they belong to Proto-Australoid stock.

The Kharwar community is divided into six endogamous sub groups, i.e. *Suryabansi*, *Daulatbandi*, *Kheri/Chero*, *Bhogati/Ganju* and *Manjhia*, which is again divided into a number of totemistic exogamous clans (*Kili*) like *Nag*, *Aiyen*,

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Kharwar, 2020, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>1</sup> Director & Special Secretary, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Former Research Scholar, Academy of Tribal Languages & Culture, Bhubaneswar

*Karketta, Kachhap, Parasai, Parbandi, Tirua, Desuwari, Khairi, Patabandh, Benbanshi, Bhogta, Singruli, Chikchikwa, Khairaha, Kharchurha, Shandilya.* Their surnames are *Naik, Aiyen, Kerketta, Kachhap and Parasai.* They use *Majhi, Khandohar, Ray, Naik, Ohadar, Singh, Brahil, Bhitria, Pradhan, Panjiara, Sandi, Mirdha, Bhakat, Bhogta, Das, Gaunju, Kapri, Mahto, Mandar, Behera, Bair, Banria, Bandhia, Rout, Baria, Bail* etc.

According to 2011 census, the total population of the tribe in Odisha is 2265 out of which 1122 are males and 1143 are females. The ratio sex ratio is 1019. Their total literacy rate is 62.49 % in which male literacy is 73.48 % and female literacy is 51.87 %.

### **Dress Pattern**

In old days their dress pattern, were crude and underdeveloped due to their isolation and ignorance as well as living a life of food gatherers. During that period males were putting on a loin cloth (*malkachha*) - a short piece of worn out cloth to cover their pubic region only and women were wearing a short piece of hand woven coarse Saree which covered only up to their knees.

Now-a-days, due to the process of acculturation, the trend of modernity has been affirmatively noticed in their dress pattern. At present their males wear pants, shirts, banyans, *dhoti, gamucha, lungi* etc. and females wear mill made print sarees with coloured blouse and *saya* and girls put on fashionable frocks, *salwar* with *kameez*. Little children in their early childhood remain completely naked. During festive occasions or market days or while visiting relatives' house they put on modern dresses.

Women are fond of ornaments. They wear ornaments in head, neck, nose, ear, hand, wrist, fingers and feet. The ornaments are made of brass, bronze, copper, steel, fiber, seed, shell etc. Women of well-to-do families are using gold ornaments. They buy ornaments from the local vendors. The younger generations are using readymade garments and foot wears which are generally purchased from the local markets.

### **Settlement & Housing Pattern**

Kharwar settlements are generally homogenous and are located near hill slopes or foot hills where perennial hill streams are flowing to provide them drinking water throughout the year. But in heterogeneous settlements they exclusively dwell in separate hamlets keeping their own ethnic identity as well as maintaining distance with the neighboring ethnic groups. They generally live among other tribal communities whom they consider at par with them is social ladder but construct their own houses detached from the houses of other communities.

Kharwar houses are arranged in linear pattern, leaving wide space as Village Street. Individual houses are built with clay walls and are thatched using forest grass and have wide verandahs both in front and rear sides which they use

as their sitting place during recreational hours and to accommodate their guests. The verandah is generally higher than the plinth of their house. The walls of the house are regularly polished by their women using red and white clay and the verandahs with black clay. They also construct separate shed in rear side of their house to accommodate their livestock.

Their house are generally low roofed, having two rooms and without windows for ventilation. They leave a little hole in the front wall for light. The entrance room is usually bigger and is used as their living room and to store their grains and assets. The smaller one is used as their kitchen and in its corner lies the seat of their household deity. They have cot, mat, *Machia*, *Sujani*, and sack for sleeping purpose. They have *pidha* for sitting and *sika* for placing food materials. Food grains are stored in soil made granary called *kothi* and earthen pots. Water is stored in earthen pots. Food is cooked in aluminum utensil. They have bronze *thali*, *lota* and glass. Some utensils of copper and brass are also found in their house. Now-a-days, steel utensils, gas stove, fridges can also be seen in their houses.

### **Livelihood**

Kharwar are a landowning community. Settled cultivation is the mainstay of their subsistence economy which they supplement with allied pursuits such as wage earning in agriculture and other sectors, livestock rearing, forest collection, small business, share cropping and seasonal hunting and fishing etc. As their crop lands lies in upland belts near foot hills of forest clad region it is generally devoid of irrigation facilities for which the Kharwars resort to mono-cropping pattern during *Kharif* season, depending upon adequate rainfall for proper harvest of the crop.

Their major crop is paddy. They possess small patches of wet lands near valley or arable lands in meadows, where they raise paddy. In their uplands they grow *padadhan*, early varieties of hill paddy, *ragi*, *suan*, *kangu*, *gullji*, maize, pulses like *biri*, *kolatha* and oil seeds such as *niger*, mustard and *til* etc. They possess small patches of kitchen garden near their houses, where they produce varieties of vegetables like brinjal, radish, tomatoes, cucumbers, cowpea, drum sticks, bitter ground, papaya, pumpkin and chilly etc.

Their females contribute to family income substantially by participating in cultivation, wage earning and seasonal forest collection such as fruits, edible roots and tubers, green leaves, mushrooms, flowers, fuel woods, timbers, wild grasses etc. besides their routine household works.

### **Food Habit**

Kharwar are purely non-vegetarians. Rice and *ragi* are their staple food. They consume locally available green vegetables and pulses and use mustard and *sarguja* oil as cooking medium. They relish on fish, meat, chicken, eggs, dry

fish, frogs and pork but abstain from taking beef or flesh of buffalos. High salt consumption characterizes the Kharwar's food habit. They prefer water rice, which is taken with salt, chilly and edible greens collected from forests. People often take pepper (called *Silchuran*). In the harvest months, when the house is full of grains, people may have several meals in a day. During the period of food scarcity, on the other hand, they may often go without meals and survive mainly on wild leaves, flowers, fruits, roots and barks of the tree.

Both males and females are addicted to alcoholic beverages like country liquor *mohuli*, rice bear (*handia*) and toddy (*khajuri*) etc. Alcoholic drinks are indispensable for them in the matter of entertaining their guests, observances of life cycle rituals, festival as well as to appease deities and spirits. They either brew the liquor at home or purchase from the local vendors. The festivities, marriage ceremony and other rituals are celebrated with the consumption of rice bear.

Kharwar's are also fond of tobacco and both the males and females like to chew and smoke tobacco, which they grow in their backyards. They smoke hand rolled *pikka* and *bidi* and chew tobacco paste and powder which they raise in their backyard. Now-a-days, tea is becoming more popular due to outside contact.

### **Social Life**

The Kharwar are related to each other in a specific social network based on consanguinity and affinity. The family is the smallest unit of the society. The Kharwar live in both nuclear and extended families. Parental property is divided among the sons equally, with the exception that the eldest son gets an extra share. The married sons start living with their wives in separate family. But for the smooth functioning of the family, they follow the division of labour based on age and sex. The cooking and the household management lies with the mother, while the outside management is done by the father. The daughters extend cooperation to their father.

The kinship system of the Kharwar presents a model of relationship based on family and marriage. It is transmitted from one generation to the next. The wife is an affinal relative before her marriage, but she is included in consanguineal relative after marriage. Adopted son is also included in consanguineal relatives. Cousins are also treated as blood relatives. On the basis of blood relation, each individual has his ascendants and descendants. Family, lineage and clan members are treated as consanguineal kin group. For establishing kinship through marriage, community endogamy and clan exogamy is the norm in Kharwar community. In kinship system, different kins behave following the rules of avoidance, joking. Avoidance relationship exists between elder brothers of a person with his younger brother's wife. Grandparents with their grandchildren enjoy joking relationship. All kindred of an individual are invited on the occasion of ceremonies and rituals. This witnesses the reciprocal



exchange of invitation, visit, gift, presentation, service, feast, respect and hospitality.

### **Life Cycle Rituals**

#### **Birth**

When it is confirmed that a woman is pregnant, she has to observe certain taboos by devotion and sincerity. Experienced and elderly women of the same community act as midwives at the time of delivery. After the delivery, the new born baby is bathed and the mother cleans her body in lukewarm water. The birth pollution lasts for six days. During this period celebration of rituals and festivals, visiting or worshipping deities are tabooed.

#### **Marriage**

Monogamy is the general form of marriage and the earlier practice of polygyny is now being discouraged. Adult marriage has replaced child marriage. Widow re-marriage, levirate and sororate marriage are also permissible. The marriage outside the tribe is not permissible. The marriage within the same clan is not allowed.

Marriage by negotiation is considered as a prestigious and ideal mode of acquiring a life partner. The other modes of marriages are by mutual consent, by capture, by service and by exchange. The father of the boy has to visit several villages in search of the bride. Only then he is able to get the marriage settled. He approaches the father of the guardian of the girl. When the father of the girl accepts the proposal, he is requested to disclose the demand of the bride price. The bride price is demanded in cash and kind. But it is very nominal. In cash it varies between Rs. 25 to 51 and in kind, dress for the bride, bride's parents, brothers, sisters and food grains and goat for extending hospitality.

The bride price is paid a week before the marriage when, the father of the boy visits with the male kins along with the bride price. They are treated well by the kins of the bride and are entertained well by food with rice beer. When the father of the girl accepts the bride price, the marriage is settled. Then the village priest, who is generally a *Shakyadwipi* Brahman or *Kanyakubja* Brahman, is requested to fix a suitable date. The marriage is generally held in between the months of February and May.

#### **Death**

Death is a sorrowful event in their community. They practice burial and cremation to dispose of their dead and observe death pollution for ten to twelve days. On the twelfth day, a community feast is hosted. *Sraddh* is performed ten days after death and once in a year in the month of *Aswin*. Regular oblations are made for the appeasement of deceased ancestors in general.

## Religious Life

Kharwar's religion is animism amalgamated with some elements of Hinduism. The Kharwar observe religious rites to appease the supernatural elements for the betterment of the society and welfare of the community. They employ members of Munda tribe as their village priest. This indicates that the latter are the earlier residents of the country, and are on this account employed by the Kharwars for the conciliation of their indigenous deities.

Their priests (*baiga*), are from the Munda or from their own community. They officiate in *Sarhul* and *Karma* rituals and for protection of the people from evil spirits. For officiating over other rituals, they depend on Brahman priests. Brahman priests conduct their marriage rituals. Every three years a buffalo and other animals are sacrificially offered in the sacred grove (*sarna*) or on a rock near the village to appease their deities.

They also worship the tutelary God of their village called *Daur Pahar*, *Dharti*, sometimes *Purgahaila* or *Daknai*. *Durga*, *Mahadeo* and *Sitaram* are popular deities. Gauri and Ganesh are worshipped during marriage. In addition to these, many deities whom Munda or Oraons worship are also worshipped by the Kharwar with reverence. They believe in the existence of ghosts and evil spirits.

## Political Organization

Kharwars have their own traditional village council, (*baithki*) and inter-village council, (*chata*), to deal with their intra-community socio-economic disputes. These traditional councils are responsible to maintain the law and order in the society. The members of the council remain present during observance of rituals and ceremonies relating to birth, marriage and death. In case of serious offences the village council has the power to ex-communicate the guilty person from the society.

In case of partition of parental property and inheritance Kharwars follow tribal customs. The eldest son of the senior wife, even if younger than one of the sons of the second wife, inherits the entire property subject to the obligation of providing all other legitimate children separate maintenance grants in favour of his younger brother. Daughters do not inherit ancestral property, but are entitled to live in the parental house until they are married.

Now-a-days, the traditional council of village elders is more or less defunct. They have accepted the new *panchayatiraj* system. People now prefer to go to a court of law for adjudication of disputes.

## Development Scenario

With the passage of time, there are many changes happening in the Kharwar community. The age old traditional social institutions are declining under the impact of planned change and modernization. Kharwars occupational

pattern and means of subsistence have changed. Traditional barter scheme has been replaced by money system. Change has been observed in their living pattern, social customs, food habits and dress pattern. There is increasing use of modern electronic gadgets, cloths, cosmetics etc. Development is taking place in road links, housing, livelihood patterns, health and hygiene. Priority is being given to spread of education. As a result significant improvements in their level of literacy are remarkable. The socio-economic development activities have brought immense change in their cultural pattern and lifestyle.

Development and change are predictable and the Kharwars are no exception in this context. Kharwar youths are found engaged in small business, cottage industries, institutional services, etc. The Kharwars are now heading for a new modern life at the cost of their traditional values and virtues. However, our endeavor should be to preserve their unique tribal traditions and to see them socio-economically developed simultaneously.

\*\*\*\*

# KANDHA \*

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

Kandha is numerically the largest tribe of Odisha. They number 1627486 individuals (790559 males and 836927 females) in 2011 census. The sex ratio is 1059. In 1981 their literacy rate is 46.95% (59.17% for males and 35.57% for females). They are largely concentrated in Rayagada, Kandhamal, Kalahandi and Koraput districts. Originally all the Kandhas were inhabiting the hilly forest areas, due to deforestation, urbanization and social changes some Kandhas came closer to urban centres and occupy the plains. Others still remain in their traditional land in hilly forests. They speak *Kui* and *Kuvi*, the dialects of the Dravidian language. The Desia section speaks Odia.

The tribe is distributed in various pockets of southern Odisha forming several endogamous territorial sections, namely, Kutia, Dongria, Desia, Sitha, Nanguli, Jhamia, Pengo, Jhuria, Malua etc. with the suffix Kandha. Territorial and exogamous clan groups called *Kuda* or *Bons* form each section.

The Kandha villages have linear settlement pattern. *Jarkhiri*, the altar of their earth goddess, *Dharni Penu*, lies at the centre of the village street in between two rows of houses. The institution of youth dormitory is called in various names, such as, *Dhangda-Dhangdi Basa*, *Dhangda-Dhangdi-Ghar*, *Dhanger*, *Idu* etc.

Kandhas generally live in two roomed thatched house. No particular pattern is followed while constructing the huts and the houses are mostly scattered. Houses are open to the front and some to backside too. A narrow verandah is left in the front side of each house. Huts are thatched with paddy straw, thatch grass, sago palm leaves along with bamboo sticks.

Their subsistence activities revolve round land and forest. Different sections of them earn their livelihood by pursuing shifting and settled cultivation, hunting, food gathering, animal husbandry, wage earning etc. The Dongria Kandha are expert horticulturists.

---

\* Unpublished article of 2000 updated in 2019

<sup>1</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

The dress pattern and adornments among them vary from section to section. Generally men put on loincloth and grow long hairs. Women wear pieces of cloth as skirts and aprons. Nowadays they wear coloured saris. The women put on tattoo marks.

They acquire mates by negotiation, service, and bride capture. Levirate and sororate practices are there. Bride price is paid in cash and kinds. They follow both burial and cremation practices. Death pollution continues for ten days and purificatory rites are performed on the eleventh day.

Dharni Penu, earth goddess is their supreme deity. In the past, the Kandha used to make human sacrifices called *Meriah*. The British rulers had suppressed this custom and now it is substituted by buffalo sacrifice. *Jatrakudi*, village deity, *Gungi Penu*, stream deity, *Bhima Penu*, mountain god, *Lai Penu*, the forest god, Sita Penu, deity of wealth, *Birna Penu*, rain god etc. are propitiated by them. They also worship ancestral spirits, ghosts and other benevolent and malevolent spirits and firmly believe in the efficacy of black and white magic. Their mangico-religious activities are conducted by various specialists designated as *Jani*, *Lamba* and *Pujari*. *Dishari*, the astrologer, *Beju*, *Bejuni* and *Kalisi*. Sacrifice of buffalo, goats, pigs, pigeons, chicks, cocks etc. is indispensable in Kandha rituals. Their important festivals are *Kedu* or *Meriah* and *ChaitParab*.

The village functionaries are *Saanta*, *Mondal*, *Jani*, *Bismajhi* and *Barik*. At the regional level they have *Mutha* organization headed by *Mandal*, *Majhi* or *Patro*. Now the traditional leaders are losing their importance and replaced by democratically elected leaders.

## KONDH \*

*Kiran Bala Debi*<sup>1</sup>

The Kondhs, Khonds or Konds are one of the well-known tribe of Orissa who were famous in history for their Meriah sacrifice (human sacrifice). According to Macpherson the name Kondh is derived from the Telugu word "Konda", a hill. The Telugu people call them Kotuvandlu. These people are not only found in Orissa but also in Andhra, Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. In Orissa they are distributed in all the districts but concentrated in large number in Phulbani, Ganjam, Sambalpur, Koraput and Bolangir. According to 1961 Census the total Kondh population in Orissa is 818,847. The following table shows the distribution of population in different districts.

Sl. No	Name of the District	Total Population	Male	Female
1.	Kalahandi	146,553	72,017	74,536
2.	Koraput	271,698	135,672	136,026
3.	Sambalpur	23,636	11,576	12,060
4.	Bolangir	59,596	28,357	31,239
5.	Boudh-Kandhamal	199,006	96,947	102,059
6.	Ganjam	53,317	26,056	27,261
7.	Sundergarh	3,329	2,000	1,329
8.	Dhenkanal	29,563	9,722	10,841
9.	Puri	31,845	15,779	16,060
10.	Keonjhar	4,048	2,065	1,984
11.	Cuttack	4,740	2,298	2,442
12.	Mayurbhanj	193	110	83
13.	Balasore	323	149	147
<b>Total</b>		<b>818,847</b>	<b>402,748</b>	<b>416,099</b>

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No.3, (Spl. Issue), TRB, Bhubaneswar 1963-64, pp.69-74

<sup>1</sup> Research Assistant, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

The Kondhs are any very simple, frank and naive. They are very hospitable. Whenever a guest will arrive he must be supplied with food and drink whether the host is rich or poor. Their height is of average standard. They are healthy, strong and stout, in spite of their poverty and lack of nourishing food and adequate clothing. They are jolly and do not think for future. During harvest when food is plenty, they spend extravagantly and during scarcity of food, they have to live sometimes without food. They are drunkard; they may live without food but not without drinking. The Kondhs are courageous in the jungle but coward before non-tribals.

As regards the language of the Kondhs G. A. Grierson has written "The Kondhs or Khonds are a Dravidian tribe in the hills of Orissa and neighboring districts". "The name which they use themselves is Ku and their language should accordingly be denominated Kui". The word Ku is probably related to Koi, one of the names by which the Gonds used to denote themselves. The Koi dialect of Gondi is, however, quite different from Kui. The language varies locally all over this area. The differences are not however, great though a man from one part of the country often experiences difficulty in understanding the Kui spoken in other parts. There are two principal dialects, one eastern, spoken in Gumsur and the adjoining parts of Bengal and one western spoken in Chinnakimedi. In the north Kui has come under the influence of the neighboring Aryan forms of speech and a specimen forwarded from the Patana State was written in Oriya with slight admixture of Chattisgarhi".

The Kondh language has the following local variations:-

- (1) Kondhs of Koraput subdivision speak Kuvi language.
- (2) Dongira Kondhs of Baliguda Agency of Boudh-Phulbani speak a language which resembles to Kuvi language.
- (3) Kutia Kondhs of Gudari police-station speak Kutia dialect. Kutia dialect is a mixture of Savara and Kui dialect.
- (4) Kondhs of Raygada speak Kuvi with an admixture of Telugu.

## **SOCIAL ORGANISATION**

### ***Internal division of tribe***

The tribe is divided into different subdivisions according to different localities. But all believe in their common ancestor. Each local division is called Mutha. It has separate name in separate regions. From the economical point of view the Kondhs may be divided into four groups. (1) Those who live in plain area (2) Those who live on firewood cutting and selling and basket-making (3) Those who live on plains for some parts of the year and live on hills for the rest of the year. (4) Those who live on hills. From the functional point of view some Kondhs have adopted a new occupation, living their own hereditary occupation that is hunting and cultivation. They are blacksmiths, milkmen and potters. But mainly the Kondhs may be divided into three subdivisions. (1) Desia Kondhs

who live in plain area mixing with other non-tribals.(2) Dangaria Kondh who live on highland hills. The name Danger means the highland. (3) Kutia Kondh found in Phulbani district. The name Kutia is derived from the word "Kuti", the meaning of which is hole. The Kutia Kondh's house is constructed in such a way that the level of the floor is below the level of the ground around the house.

**Villages-** The Kondh villages are just like Oriya villages. Each village is comprised of a number of houses. Besides the dwelling-houses, there are other houses such as boys' dormitory and girls' dormitory. The houses are situated in rows. The Kutia Kondhs live on the foot of the hills or in between two hills in the midst of dense forest. One village is comprised of eight to ten houses. They migrate from one place to another after five or six year if there is scarcity of food or water. For domestic animals they have separate houses. The village communal ground and verandah are dirty and full of cow dung, stool of the pigs, and pigeons.

**Youth Organization** –Youth organization play an important role in the life of Kondhs. They have well organized dormitories for both unmarried boys and girls. Grown up girls sleep together and spend most of their time in their dormitory known as "dhangerddu" or Dhangerbasa. One old woman is in charge of the girls' dormitory likewise for unmarried boys separate dormitory is provided. When boys and girls attain the age of seven or eight they start their dormitory life. They only come to their house for taking meals. These are the centre of recreation and a sleeping house for bachelors.

**Family** – The Kondhs live in joint family. But sometimes nuclear families are found. The joint family consists of parents, married sons and daughters. The family is patriarchal. The father controls the family whether the married sons live with him or separately. After the death of the father the property is divided in equal portion among the sons. Sometimes the father also divides his property while alive.

Family is patrilineal. The Kondhs reckon their descent through male line. The office of the headman is hereditary but it depends upon the fitness of the man.

The parents without issue sometime adopt child. The child is considered as his own son and has to obey all the rules and regulations of the family just like own child regarding marriage and inheritance of the property.

### **INDIVIDUAL LIFE CYCLE**

**Birth rites-** the Kondhs love their children very much. When a woman is barren they may marry a second wife or adopt a child. The Kondh woman works as usual up to the time of delivery. When she feels pain she is attended by an experienced Kondh midwife. She rubs the pregnant women's abdomen with castor-oil. The umbilical cord is cut by the mother with the help of a sharp edged



arrow. The mother warms her hand on fire and applies to the body of the child for five or six days. Each day the baby's body is smeared with castor-oil and turmeric paste. After 3 days of childbirth a chicken is sacrificed for their dead ancestors. Its blood is kept on a bark and it is smeared on the walls. One portion of the sacrifice is hanged in-front of the door, so that the evil spirit will not be able to enter. The Kondhs believe in the immortality of the soul and rebirth. After some days of childbirth the village priest is asked to tell which of the ancestors has born. He holds a bow by two hands and mutters the names of the ancestors. When the bow trembles slightly the name he speaks at that time is supposed to be the newborn child. After one month the child is shaved and feast is given to all villagers.

The name of the child is chosen by the mother or grandmother. The name giving ceremony is performed in different ways in different places. The Kutia Kondh's child remains nameless until he suffers from any disease. Among the Kondhs of Gumsur, Mr. J. A. R. Stevenson says, "Six months after birth, on a fix day they make Gadathuva, the ceremony of naming the child. On that day killing a dog, and procuring liquor, they make *baji*. They wash the feet of the child. The Jani comes to tie a cord from the half the point of sickle and they divine by means of it. They put rice on the sickle. As the names (of the ancestors of family) are repeated in order, each time the rice is put on; that name is chosen on the mention of which the sickle moves and is given to the child. Then they drink liquor and eat *baji*. They give rice and flesh to the Jani".

The Kondhs do not feel their children as burden. Children are taken care of by their mother. When they become one year or so and when the parents go to search after food child rearing is entrusted upon the younger children. At the age of ten to twelve years, they start to help their parents in cooking, house building, rearing of the children. They help their father during transplanting and harvesting time. From the childhood they become active and dutiful so that they do not feel any difficult in future life.

**(2) Marriage and Family Life-** *Marriage* is the accepted form of union between a man and a woman in the Kondh society. An illegal union is strictly prohibited. Marriage is generally performed after some years of puberty. The boys usually marry between ages of eighteen and twenty-one if they are rich fellow. Otherwise due to heavy bride-price they marry at a later age. Girls are generally married between the age of seventeen to twenty-two. In majority cases husbands are older than wives.

A marriage with a kinsman is prohibited. The tribe is divided into different septs. Marriage is not possible within the same sept or with a girl of the mother or paternal grandmother's sept. But one can marry a girl belonging to his maternal grandmother's sept.

Kondhs want that their wives should be active, strong and able in domestic as well as outward activities. Hence these types of brides are selected.

Marriage by negotiation is found among Kondhs. Generally courtship is followed by negotiation. Both the parties visit each other houses. Then the parents of the boy have to pay a small portion of the bride-price. Some omens are observed during and before marriage. The rice is boiled in a pot by the boy's parents in the name of the girl. If the rice overflows they break the marriage negotiation as it is sign of ill omens. If any wild animal or snakes is seen on the way to the bride's house while the parents are going for negotiation it brings ill luck to the couple. Sometimes the bride is selected by the groom himself. He informs and takes consent of his parents. Young boys and girls mix freely. The boy is allowed to dance and sing with the girl. Both boy and girl have freedom to declare their love.

In the Kondh society the marriage is determined by the amount of bride-price which is determined by the bride's parents. Bride-price varies from time to time and place to place. Generally it is demanded in forms of cow, buffalo, rice, paddy, etc. Those who are not able to pay, is asked to work under his father-in-law's house until his bride-price is repaid.

After the settlement of bride-price the marriage date fixed. On that day, the broomstick is removed from the bride's ear and she wears brass ring. The bride is taken away by the bridegroom's party which is followed by bride's party. Both men and women participate and marriage ceremony is accompanied by singing and drinking. A mock fight is held between two parties. The bride's party follow them upto one mile or so to rescue the bride and afterwards they are allowed to go peacefully.

Divorce is very easy in Kondh society. A woman may say before village Panchayat that she does not want to stay with her husband. Then a new sari and one rupee are given to her. She returns to her father's house. When she remarries, bride-price given by the first husband is demanded from the second one. Adultery, incompatibility of temper are the main cause of divorce.

Widow re-marriage is practiced. But generally a widow marries the younger brother of her husband. She is also permitted to marry outside her family. In this case her children are taken care of by the relatives of her first husband.

In the family life, both husband and wife are supporters of each other. Like Hindu woman, they are not parasites on their husbands. The women as well as men-folk work jointly though there is division of labour. The women do all the domestic work, take care of children and help their husbands in field. After day's hard labour, in the evening the women prepare meal and then sit around fire to gossip and drink.

**Death rites-** The dead body is burnt except pregnant women or at childbirth and one month baby which are buried. The dead body is wrapped by a new cloth. The ornaments are not removed. The relatives' lights the pyre. Personal used materials of dead person are thrown, where they are cremated. The family members of the dead person do not eat flesh or drink up to purification day. The village priest throws oil and brooms over the head of the relatives of the dead person. There is no particular date when the death rite is observed. One day the family members throw their earthen cooking pot and a feast is given to the relatives. All go to the cremation ground taking cooked rice and a chicken, offer them to the dead person.

Observance of death rites differs from place to place. In the manual of Ganjam district it is written, "Immediately after death a cloth is wrapped, round the corpse, but no cloths or valuable are removed. A portion of paddy (unhusked rice) and all the cooking utensils of the deceased are given to the village Sitra. (The Sitras manufacture the brass rings and bangles worn by the Kondhs). The body is then burnt. On the following day, a little rice is cooked, put on a dish and laid on the spot where the corpse was burnt. An incantation is then pronounced requesting the spirit of the deceased person to eat the rice and enjoy itself and not to change itself into a devil or tiger and come bothering the survivors in the village. Three days after death the *Madda* ceremony is performed. An effigy of the deceased is prepared of straw which is stuck up in front of or on the roof of the house and the relatives and friends, assemble, lament and eat at the expense of the people of the deceased's house. Each person brings a present of some kind or other and on his departure on the next day, receives something of slightly higher value. The death of a man in a village requires a purification which is made by the sacrifice of a buffalo on the seventh day after death".

### IMPORTANT FESTIVALS

Kondhs life is full of festivities. Feast is accompanied by singing and drinking. Two important festivals are held at the time of sowing and harvesting. At that time they worship their deities. They worship eighty-four gods and goddess. The chief god is *Dharani Penu* or Earth Goddess also known as *Tanapenu*. In the past human sacrifice was practiced by Kondhs who offer the blood of human to the *Tanapenu*. She is represented by a rectangular wood or stone. Now in place of human beings, buffaloes are being sacrificed. In Kalahandi, a lamb is sacrificed every year. Its flesh is buried in the field so that mother earth will be satisfied and give more crops. On that day before sacrifice, villagers dance and sing songs. About human sacrifice Mr. Farzer writes "the sacrifices were offered to the earth Goddess, *Tana Pennu* or *Bore Pennu* and were believed to ensure good crops and immunity from all disease and accidents. In particular they were considered necessary in the cultivation of turmeric, the Kondhs are gulling that turmeric could not have a deep red colour without the shedding of blood". But this barbarous rite has been stopped by British rule.

In Kondhs society the life is full of dance and music. They compose their own songs. The contents of the songs are love, marriage ceremony, harvesting, etc. The village women sing and dance joining hands and making a circular form binding one white cloth on the waists. The boys standing around the girls sing. They move slowly to the front and back and move slowly round the circle.

### MATERIAL CULTURE

**Housing and settlements-**The Kondhs of Phulbani live in wooden houses. It is made of planks and wooden posts. These are fixed by wooden pins. The roofs are thatched with straw. The walls are made of earth with raised verandah. The house is divided into two small rooms partitioned by railing. One room is used for cooking and sleeping purposes and the other room is used for sleeping of the parents. Sometimes they have separate room for keeping cattle.

The Khonds take rice, green vegetables and curry. The usual method is to boil rice in an earthen vessel called *Teki*. In some areas the Kondh women cook on leaf vessel. It is made of leaf, around which they taub mud to close the holes and save the leaf vessel from burning when placed on fire. The food is distributed in a plate called *Talendi* or in a pot called *Mandi*.

**Dress and Ornament-** the Kondh women wear two clothes, one around the waist to the knees and another for the upper portion of the body. But those who are coming in contact with non-tribals and Desia Kondh wear saris. The saris are coarse and of different colour such as red or yellow with beautiful borders. The Kutia Kondh women wear only one loin cloth. Any woman can be marked where she is married or not by seeing their dress. The married women can only wear earring, earrings are made of brass. The Kondh women wear different kinds of *Baalanga* (Bangle) on hand, *Khagala* (necklace) on neck, silver chain on neck, *Gunag Taponi* (head ornament), *Mudurange* (earring) leg ornament, etc. All these ornaments are of brass or aluminum or silver.

Among the musical instruments, the *Pleka* is most important. It is made of a round piece of wood of 12 inches long. Towards one end, two gourds are fixed and three iron strings are attached which are tied on the end near the gourds, and other end coming over the gourd is tied towards the other end of the rod. A bow shaped reed whose two ends are tied with horse hair is moved on the iron wire of the *Pleka* to produce musical sound. Another musical instrument is the single membrane drum consisting of a wooden hoop and a piece of hide. The wooden hoop is more or less semi round.

The Kondhs who have learnt ploughing from non-tribals use iron plough share, iron pick for digging hoe and harrow, sickle, knife for cutting paddy during harvesting.

The weapons of hunting are bows and arrows and axe. By help of these the Kondhs pray animals and birds and also defend themselves from wild animals.

### ECONOMY

**Consumption-** The Kondhs eat rice. But the paddy produced by them is not sufficient. For two or three months in a year they are able to get rice. In some areas maize is cultivated. In rainy season they prepare their food from mango kernel mixed with small quantity rice and sugar. In the month of February they start to collect fruits and edible roots. In winter season one type of hill paddy is harvested. They take curry occasionally. Green vegetable is most important item of curry. They add salt and sometimes oil which is not purchased but extracted from the seeds of the *Mahula* fruit. In rainy season fish is available. Deer, hare, supply them meat. All kinds of birds such as parrot, fowl, doves, peacock are eaten

Rice beer is the universal drink of the Kondhs. Where there is scarcity of food, the Kondhs have to live on liquor. In cold climate it is necessity. Hence Kondhs have to drink. They are so much habituated with it that they may live without food but not without beer. The beer is brewed in ordinary days as well as on ceremonial occasions. Except this rice beer they also drink *Mahula* wine. Juice of the *Salap* tree mixed with root and fibre of *Kenua* tree act as another type of wine.

Clothes used by the Kondhs are purchased from the Doms who weave. The ornaments are also purchased from the non-tribals.

**Production-** The chief occupation of the Kondh is agriculture. The hill Kondhs practice shifting cultivation and Desia Kondhs have learnt ploughing from non-tribals. They depend upon nature. Over the hills cultivation is not very remunerative due to want of irrigation facilities and poor soil. A crude type of paddy is grown.

The most important crop they raise is turmeric. But due to primitive method of production, turmeric is less profitable. They monopolies the cultivation because non-tribals in the area do not produce it due to superstition that cultivation of turmeric will bring ill luck and death.

The Kondhs on the hills practice shifting cultivation. In summer months, before the outbreak of monsoon the Kondhs who live on the hills cut woods and set fire on them. When the woods are burnt and turned in to ashes they leave it till starting of rain. The site is ploughed and maize or paddy seeds are broadcasted. Then they harvest the paddy or maize in the months of October and November. They cultivate the particular site for one or two years. As they do not put any manure, the yields become less if it is cultivated for successive years.

Therefore, one or two years they abandon the place and clear another site for cultivation. Shifting cultivation is the most primitive type of agricultural practice. The yield in comparison with wet cultivation is less but more labour is required. It is a destructive process of cultivation. The shifting cultivation is responsible for soil erosion, destruction of valuable trees and forest products. Hence Government is trying to stop it totally. Wet lands where possible are given to them.

***Indebtness and Exploitation-*** Indebtedness is one of the occurrences in the life of Kondhs. The Panos (non-tribal *harijanas*) who live nearby exploit them, by giving loans and taking higher rate of interest. The Kondhs are illiterate. They sign on a plain paper and take money which becomes double within a few years. It is not repaid though each year they give turmeric and paddy during harvesting time. Paternal debts are paid and repaid by sons and grandsons. Bride-price compels them to borrow. Sometimes they work in the field of the debtor without wages.

Another type of exploitation is selling them ornaments, agricultural implements, cloths at high rate by non-tribals such as Pana, Dom, etc. They are compelled to buy from them as they have little opportunity to come to the markets of the nearest town. Hence, they have to exchange paddy and turmeric for ornaments cloths, etc.

### ***Conclusion***

The Kondhs have come to the notice of civilized people since 19<sup>th</sup> century for their practice of human sacrifice. Due to the British rule, imposed upon them, they have abandoned that cruel and barbarous rite. But curiosity of the civilized mind to know about the tribe has enabled them to come to the light. Many administrators, missionaries and ethnographers have studied them and have brought their problems to the forefront. Missionaries are running schools and medical centers in the area. In recent years ample opportunities are given to the scheduled tribe and scheduled castes by the Government through the tribal and Rural Welfare Department. They are given more opportunities than non tribals so that they will come forward and stand on the same footing. The Ashram Schools run by the Government in Kondh areas are educating them. The Government is providing them with all sorts of facilities as a result of which, after a few years they may attend a better standard of living.

# KANDHA TRIBE OF ORISSA: AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE \*

*Malaya. K. Misra*<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

Geographers consider the Kandhamal hills in the Phulbani (renamed as Kandhamal) district of Orissa as forming the northern extremity of the eastern Ghats. However, others consider the Similipal mass if lying to the north-west of the Kandhamal hills (generally include within the Garhjat (Gadajat) group of hills) is the northern limit of the Eastern Ghats (Legris and Meher-Homji, 1984).

Among the several tribal communities who inhabit the Eastern Ghats of Orissa, Kandha is one. Kandha is spelt differently such as Kandh, Kondh, Kond, and so on by different people. About seven million tribal people of 62 ethnic groups settle in the forest areas of Orissa. Out of the total population of 31.55 in, tribal population is 7.032 in in the State. Kandhas are the second largest tribe in India and they constitute about 8% of the total population of the State (Praharaj, 2000). Kandhas generally inhabit in Phulbani (Kandhamal), Rayagada, Kalahandi, Ganjam and Ga. iapati districts of Orissa. There are many sub-tribes of Kandha such as Dongria, Malua, Jharia, Desia, Pengo, Nanguli, Buhar, Kutia and others (Sahoo, 1992). The Kandha tribe can broadly be divided into three broad groups: Kutia, Dangria and Desia Kandha (Behera, 1995). Originally all the Kandhas were inhabiting the hilly forest areas, due to deforestation, urbanization and social changes some Kandhas came closer to urban centres and occupy the plains. Others still remain in their traditional land in hilly forests.

The Kandhamal (Phulbani) district is predominated by the Kandha tribe. The district is renamed after the tribe (Kandha- hill tribe, Mals- a hilly track). Desia Kandhas are very common in this district. The Kandhas of Phulbani district are famous for their historic human sacrifice in the turmeric farm:

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 42 & 43, Nos.1 & 2, SCSTRTI, 2002-03, pp. 110-125

<sup>1</sup> Ecology and Floristic Laboratory, Deptt. of Botany, Berhampur University, Odisha.

The Dongria Kandhas are a major section of the Kandha tribe. They are mostly confined in a contiguous area of the Niyamgiri hill range. It covers some portion of Bissam-cuttack, Muniguda and Kalyanisinghpur blocks of Rayagada district and Biswanathpur area of Lanjigarh of Kalahandi district of Orissa. Their total population is about ten thousand, out of which about 6,500 are found in Rayagada district (Sahoo, 1992). They are comparatively shy in nature and avoid unknown faces. Males grow long hairs like ladies, comb it and use brass jewelry on their nose and ear. In most of the families, the wife is older than her husband. The Dongria Kandha women are more active than the male.

KutiaKandha, a primitive tribe is predominately found in Belghar, Guma, Lankagarh, Jhiripani Gram Panchayats of Tumudibandh block and in Subarnagiri area of Kotagarh block of Phulbani district.

Little work has been done on the ecology of the Kandha. Therefore, in this review paper an attempt has been made to collect all the information available on the tribe, which are fragmentary in nature, with a view to have database for further research on the tribe for their socio-economic development.

## 2. The Kandhas

The Kandhas are medium stature people with brown to dark brown skin colour. They possess a broad head with a wide nose with scanty bodily hairs. They speak Kui language which has a Dravidian origin. Generally the Kandhas settle in few numbers at a place. The small population in their hamlets is the characteristic feature of tribal communities residing inside the forest, who mostly depend upon the forest resources for their livelihood (Dash & Misra, 2001 a). Population distribution of Kandhas shows that maximum population is in the age group of 15-40. The decrease in population beyond 40 is because of death. Due to scarcity of food the Kandhas suffer from malnutrition and starvation, and ageing process starts at an early age.

The average literacy rate is very low. Some case studies revealed that it varies from 8-14% (Dash, 1997), while it is 43% and 20% for male and female Kandhas respectively (Praharaj, 2000).

Kandhas generally live in two roomed thatched house. No particular pattern is followed while constructing the huts and the houses are mostly scattered. Houses are open to the front and some to backside too. A narrow verandah is left in the front side of each house. Huts are thatched with paddy straw, wild grass, sago palm leaves along with bamboo sticks.

There is no age bar for marriage. Girls are generally considered fit for marriage after attainment of puberty. Marriage among Kandhas takes place between both closely and distantly related clans. Newly married couples are allowed to stay in a separate house known as "Dhangada Glrar". Family planning is not popular and the interior Kandhas use traditional drugs for family planning and



abortion. However modern methods are also followed by the frontier (civilized) Kandhas. On an average monthly income of the Kandha families is Rs 780 and Rs 512 for frontier and interior Kandha families respectively (Praharaj, 2000).

The Kandha woman is hard working and equally joins with her husband at the economic front of the family. She is responsible for doing household works such as cooking, cleaning and plastering of the house and fetching water. Besides, she goes to forest every day to collect forest products including firewood. Modernized Kandha girls, although go to school their percentage becomes low at high school level. They undergo tattooing at the age of 9 or 10 years (Baral & Bakshi, 1994).

### 3. Religious Beliefs

Kandha believes in the power of nature and worships their Gods and Goddess in different occasions during the year. The religio-cultural beliefs are also attached to agriculture and health of the community. It is a part of their culture. Few of the festivals performed by the tribe are described below.

In January Kandhas collectively observe Tuki Mara festival and the Disari worships the Earth Goddess (Dharni Penu) by sacrificing a sheep (Godra). Ghusura Puja (seed worship) is observed collectively in February in which Jani worships Dharni Penu by sacrificing a pig (Mohanty, 1991). The Chait Parab is observed with pomp and ceremony in March. Sacrifice of animals such as sheep, goat and poultry and offering of liquor to village deities are done by the priest (Pujari) for good health, better crop and healthy environment (Dash and Misra, 2001). In April Am Nua and Kandul Bhaja Parab are observed individually and collectively. The Jani worships the village deity by sacrificing a fowl. During monsoon, before the seeds are broadcast in the *podu* field Bali Parab is observed for a good harvest. Dishari performs the puja before the village Goddess. Similarly, Nel Penu is worshipped in hills by Jani before the sowing operation by individual families. Before the first eating of finger millet (*ragi*) and paddy in Mandiarani and Dhana Nua Parab village Goddess is worshipped by Jani by sacrificing a fowl (Mohanty, 1991).

### 4. Occupation

Most of the Kandhas live in hilly tracts with forest cover. They are economically backward and most of them are below the poverty line. They are mostly illiterate, conservative in nature and landless. They depend upon wage labour or on the non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for their sustenance. Besides, agriculture is another important economic pursuit of the Kandhas. Most of them depend upon daily wage or cultivation coupled with daily wage. In forest areas collection of NTFPs in all seasons is a common practice. Generally from morning to evening all members of the family go out to the field to work or to the jungle for the collection of NTFPs. Kandha women are hardworking and more responsible than their male counterparts. Young unmarried boys and girls engage themselves in singing and folk dancing.

## 5. Agriculture

The Kandhas of Orissa practice the traditional agriculture and maintaining the traditional agro-ecosystems (defined as “ecological systems’ modified by human beings to produce food, fiber or other agricultural products” for their sustenance (Conway, 1987)). The cropping pattern adopted by the Kandhas can broadly be grouped under three categories: valley (settled), *podu* (shifting) and home garden.

Mohanty (1991) while studying a Kutia Kandha village eco-system (Kossabera) in Kalahandi district of Orissa observed that the Kandhas practice cultivation in four types of land, viz., Bada, Bhatta, Bada and Dangar. Bada is valley plain land where rice is cultivated. Bhatta lands are the up lands where herbs and shrubs generally grow which are cleared and then cultivated continuously for 3 to 4 years then it is abandoned for regeneration. They grow paddy in 1st year, *niger* or *kosala* in 2nd year, and *kosala* or finger millet in 3<sup>rd</sup> year. In Bada, horticultural crops are grown and in Dangar, shifting cultivation is practiced. The crops grown under *podu* are Bajra, Finger millet, Kosala, Kating, Ghantia, Kangu, Biri, Baragudi, Jhudunga, Kandula and other crops.

### 5.1 Valley cultivation

Settled agriculture is mostly done in the valleys lying near the village. Croplands are divided into a number of small plots. A variety of crops are cultivated in the valley land such as paddy (low land and up land), finger millet and maize. The legumes (pulses) and oil seeds cultivated by the Kandhas are horse gram, black gram, green gram, red gram, peas, beans, *niger*, black mustard, groundnut, castor etc. Table I shows some of the crops cultivated by the Kandhas and their sowing and harvest season. The annual rice yield in a Kandha village is 2062.5 kg ha<sup>-1</sup> (29.8 GJ ha<sup>-1</sup>) for low land and 1811 kg ha (29.2 GJ ha<sup>-1</sup>) for up land (Dash and Misra, 2001). Wide variations occur in yield pattern in the Kandha village agro-ecosystems because of the absence of any management practice in the agriculture sector. Further, the agro-ecosystems totally depend on nature.

### 5.2. Podu

Podu (shifting cultivation or *jhum*) is the traditional agriculture practiced by the Kandhas of the Eastern Ghats from time immemorial. It is also called slash and burn agriculture. Podu cultivation is carried out on forestlands of about 30-40° angle/slope. During February-April trees including undergrowths are completely slashed from an area, but short tree stumps and large tree boles are left intact. After the slash become dry burning operation is carried out. These processes are either carried out by individual family or jointly by the villagers. Sowing is generally done after the first few showers. The important crops cultivated under *podu* are common millet, barnyard millet, pearl millet, red gram, castor maize and other crops.

But in course of time in many areas deforestation and desertification have

taken place because of repeated *podu* cultivation. In many areas burning operation of *podu* is eliminated or restricted to the burning of annual weeds. As a result the soil fertility has been lost rapidly. Moreover, there is no source of fertilizer into the soil. Because of these factors the fallow ecosystems become unproductive and uneconomic. In *podu* cultivation, major part of the energy input in the form of manual labour, which is provided by the tribal people, goes to slash and burn operation. For example, in the Kandha village Rajikakhola the human power (energy) input in *podu* for red gram was 1273.5 MJ ha<sup>-1</sup> (1481 h ha<sup>-1</sup>), for common millet 1147.3 MJ ha<sup>-1</sup> (1303 h ha<sup>-1</sup>), and for barnyard millet 1089.5 MJ ha<sup>-1</sup> (1217 h ha<sup>-1</sup>) (Dash and Misra, 2001). With increased population pressure and decreased forest area for *podu* cultivation, the land nearer to the villages where secondary succession is arrested are cultivated repeatedly. However, red gram as a *podu* crop helps fixing atmospheric nitrogen. In this type of situation mixed plantation of tree crop could be an alternative. Agro forestry can help improve the environment.

### 5.3. Home-garden

The home garden in Kandha villages plays an important role in enhancing the economic status of the Kandhas. This helps the Kandha to meet a variety of requirements round the year for his sustenance. In home-garden they cultivate a variety of crops, but vegetable crops dominate the system. Seasonal-vegetables and spice crops are grown in backyards. In the valley and up land fields these are grown as secondary crops. The important vegetable crops are brinjal, tomato, bean, pea, edible arum, pumpkin, sweet potato and so on. The spice crops are turmeric, ginger and chili. Besides, in the wet season other vegetables are also cultivated in the backyard (Table 2). Of all traditional agro-forestry systems 'home- garden' plays a significant role in meeting a variety of needs of the traditional societies in the tropics (Ramakrishnan, 1993; Dash & Misra, 2001).

Dongria Kandha of Rayagada district love fruit trees and orchards. They grow jackfruit, banana, mango, citrus, and turmeric since time immemorial. Since the inception of the Dongri Kandha Development Agency at Kurli, Chatikana of Rayagada district the Kandhas are motivated to take up horticulture and it was successful. The total area under horticultural crops was 9091.6 acres in that area. Table 3 depicts the details of crop plantation and their coverage (Sahoo, 1992).

The agriculture practiced by the Kondhas is still traditional and they maintain a variety of pure indigenous crops (germplasm) since time immemorial which reflects socio-culture of the tribe. The technological development has little impact on agriculture. The market demand/economic consideration has not influenced the tribe on the choice of the crop.

The present cropping system of the tribe can be transferred into a sustainable land use system (Blaschke et al., 1992) by adopting mixed cropping and agro-forestry keeping in view the socio-economic and ethno-specific peculiarity (Caesar, 1990) of the target area.

## 6. Animal husbandry

The Kandhas domesticate the animals in a traditional way and the animal husbandry among the Kandhas of Orissa is not well developed. However, in addition to agriculture domestication of animals is one of the main subsidiary occupations of the Kandhas. The animals reared by them are: cow, buffalo, bullock, goat, sheep, pig (swain) and poultry.

In Kossabera Kutia Kandha village of Kalahandi district the people extract milk from the cows and it is consumed and sold for cash (Mohanty, 1991). However, the Kandhas of Kandhamal never extract milk from the cows but buffaloes are reared for milk production (Dash, 1997). The cattle reared by the Kandhas are of indigenous varieties and milk production efficiency is very low.

Goat and fowl are used as sacrificial animals. The Kandhas of Kandhamal district even sacrifice the buffaloes in their festivals. Flesh of all domesticated animals and poultry are consumed by the Kandhas. Besides, flesh of wild bores and wild birds are also consumed by them (Misra, 1986).

Bullocks and he-buffaloes are generally used as draught animals, but in Kandhamal district cows are also used as draught power (Dash, 1997).

## 7. Non-Timber Forest Products

Kandhas collect a variety of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) from the forests within their reach for their own consumption and for sale. They use it for different purposes such as food, preparation of domestic materials, medicine, and beverage and so on. Table 4 enlists some of the NTFPs those are generally collected by the Kandhas of Orissa. The quantity of collection of NTFP varies from place to place as it depends on several factors such as availability of the NTFPs, interest of the people for collection, market for export, domestic requirement and so on. Among the NTFPs, *mohua* flower and seed, *siali* leaf, *sal* leaf, tamarind pulp, thatch grass, thatch rope, hill broom, *salap*, medicinal herbs, minor timbers, wild vegetables and fruits, leafy vegetables, mushrooms are important. Kandhas protect *mohua* plant (*Basialatifolia*) for its flowers. *Siali* (*Bahuniavahlii*) leaves are most important NTFP from economic point of view. They prepare leaf plates (*khali*) and cups (*dana*) out of the *siali* leaves by stitching together. Leaves are generally collected by the women folk. *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*) leaves are collected for their own domestic consumption and sometimes they sale it outside the village. Bamboo, thatch grass and thatch rope are collected to thatch the huts and sheds, and to fence the backyard. Quantity of collection of NTFPs mostly depends upon the requirement of these materials by the Kandhas. Medicinal herbs, myrobalans and gooseberry collection depend upon the requirement; but in some areas these products are marketed and accordingly the collection is made. Consumption of NTFPs varies from village to village and it is more in interior villages than the villages near to towns or urban centers.

## 8. Consumption pattern

### 8.1 Food

The staple food of the Kandhas is rice, common millet, barnyard millet, finger millet (*ragi*), maize and other minor millets. This varies from season to season depending on their availability. In summer season mango and jackfruits are consumed by the Kandhas in large quantities as they are plentifully available during the season. The general combination of diet is cereal, legume (pulses) and vegetables. Liquid curry (*kanji*) is prepared out of leafy vegetables depending upon its availability. The variety and quantity of different items consumed by the Kandhas during the year varies from time to time depending upon the availability and economic condition of the household.

Consumption of rice by the Kandhas varies from 462-512 gm per capita per day while finger millet consumption is 29.4 gm per capita per day in the three villages of Kandhamal district (Dash 1997). Routray and Pattnaik (1985) reported that the Kandhas consume 558 gm rice per capita per day.

The important legumes (pulses) consumed by the Kandhas are: horse gram, green gram, red gram, black gram, and cow pea. However, the quantity of legume they consume is very low.

The vegetables consumed by the Kandhas vary from place to place and season to season depending upon its natural availability and its cultivation. The important vegetables consumed by the Kandhas are potato, brinjal, red pumpkin and so on (Table 2).

Kandhas collect some wild fruits (Table 5) from the nearby jungles around the year for their consumption. Kandhas take leafy vegetables (green leaves) round the year but the maximum consumption is in the rainy season. The important leafy vegetables are listed in (Table- 5). On an average a Kandha consumes 71 gm (fresh weight) leafy vegetable per day (Misra, 1996).

Fruits like banana, papaya, guava, orange and other fruits cultivated by the Kandhas are generally sold in the daily market or weekly market (fair days) and they seldom consume these fruits.

Besides all these food items they consume the roots and tubers and mushrooms collected from the wild. During ceremonial days the Kandhas generally consume flesh of domesticated animals and birds, however, flesh of wild animals are consumed as and when available. They also take fresh water fish and dry marine fish (*sukhua*). At the time of scarcity Kandhas (Dongria and Kutia) of interior areas consume mango kernels as food.

The average per capita cereal consumption by the Kandhas is 664.9 gm day<sup>-1</sup>. However, the total food energy consumption by them is 10580 KJ day<sup>-1</sup> (Dash, 1997). The Desia Kandhas of Kukudakhandi and Chikiti blocks of Ganjam district, Orissa take food energy of about 7911 KJ and 7242 KJ cap<sup>-1</sup> day<sup>-1</sup> those who reside near the

road and in the interior areas respectively (Sabat, 1996). The Kandhas of Phiringia Gram Panchayat of Phulbani district consume about 8687 KJ cap<sup>-1</sup> day<sup>-1</sup> of food energy. All these figures are less than the average requirement of 11700 KJ cap<sup>-1</sup> day<sup>-1</sup> as suggested by the Nutritional Expert Group of the Indian Council of Medical Research (cited in Gopalan et al., 1982).

Siali and *sal* leaf plates (*khali*) and cups (*dana*) are used invariably while serving the food. The peculiarity observed by Dash & Misra (2001) is that the Kandhas never take food directly in bare hand, but they use a *sal* leaf like a spoon while taking food. The reason is unknown, but may be for cleanliness.

### 8.2 Consumption of alcohol, black cigar and snuff

Tribal people including Kandhas are traditionally habituated with consumption of country liquor and it is linked with the socio-economic life of the Kandhas. Alcohol consumption is a regular habit among the tribes including Kandhas of Orissa (Nayak et al., 1993) and is a chronic widespread vice of the male section of the tribal societies (Ullaka, 1976). Kandhas older than eleven years generally consume liquor (*mahuli*) every day. Occasionally the Kandha children also consume diluted country liquor. In festive days consumption of alcohol is maximum in age group of 25-40 years in both sexes. Average daily per capita alcohol consumption varies from 220-257 ml (Dash, 1997). Women are not habituated but take alcohol in festive days.

Country liquor is generally prepared by the Kandhas from *mahua* flowers, molasses (*gur*), rice and finger millet (*ragi*). However, the middle man (*sundhi*) plays a great role in alcohol trade.

Sago palm sap (*salap*) extracted from the plant (*Caryota urens*) is naturally available in the forest is consumed by the Kandhas during the winter season when sap flows in the tree. Adult men and women, and children all consume *salap* whenever available and daily consumption varies depending upon the sap extraction. An empirical study of a Kandha village revealed that daily a Kandha consumed 1.8 litres during the season (Misra & Dash, 2000). During sap production period the Kandhas take only *salap* continuously for weeks without taking any food and do the normal work.

Kandha men and women, particularly of working class of different age groups are habituated to smoking of *pikka* (black cigar), rolled tobacco leaves and snuffing (snuff, called "nasha", the powdered tobacco leaves).

### 8.3 Fuel energy use pattern

The stem wood and branch wood collected from the forest meets the fuel energy demand for domestic activities such as cooking, heating, cremation of dead bodies, camp fire and festive fire of the Kandha families. Kerosene is used invariably by nil Kandha families for lighting. Kerosene consumption varies from 3

-23 ml per capita per day. On an average a Kandha spends about 5-6 hours per day for fire wood collection. Forest meets 93-96 % of the domestic fuel need of Kandha household. Annually stem wood and branch wood consumption is 1.06 t per capita. However, agricultural residue and dung cake are also used in some of the Kandha villages where firewood has become scarce.

## **9. Health care**

From ancient time Kandha used the medicinal plants growing in adjacent forest areas to cure the diseases they suffer from. For this purpose they generally depend on the Priests (Jani, Pujari and so on) who prescribe the indigenous drugs (traditional medicine) They take the traditional medicine with a strong spiritual belief which has its importance. The medicinal plants, used by the Kandhas are described by few author such as Girai (1992), Dash & Misra (1999), Misra & Dash (1999), and Das & Misra (1988). In interior areas use of allopathic drugs by the Kandhas is almost unknown. In some areas where modern medical facilities are available, only few of the Kandhas avail the facility. However, because of their low economic status they could not meet the expenditure towards medicine and other materials for health care. On the other hand in the interior areas where modern medical centers are available either the Physician or the technician or other technical personnel are not available. Besides, in some places even cotton and spirit are not available for first aid. In these circumstances the tribal people are sometimes compelled to take the help of the traditional medicines for their treatment. Table 6 describes some of the important medicinal plants used by the Kandhas to cure the ailment they suffer from.

## **10. Conclusion**

Kandhas mostly inhabit in hilly forest areas. However, many of them are now residing in plain areas near the urban centers. No doubt social changes has taken place among them to some extent still the majority of them are maintaining the traditional culture. The social changes are not significant as literacy level has not increased significantly and most of the Kandha families are below poverty line. The traditional Kandha economy depends mostly on valley cultivation and collection of non-timber forest products. Kandha inhabiting areas are deforested rapidly and the Kandhas face a lot of trouble for their livelihood. Non availability of good agricultural land, reduction in forest cover, illiteracy and alcoholism among the Kandhas, and interference of plain land people in their life-supporting activities are some of the important factors which hinder the development process of the tribe.

As Kandha economy depends upon the village resource base, suitable methods must be developed and adopted at the grass root level to improve the socio-economic condition of the tribe.

The rain fed agriculture fields in the recent past were getting a large amount of nutrients as wash-out when the forests cover was thick, but it has reduced to a

great extent because of deforestation. Moreover, fertilizer is not applied to the agricultural farms. In the valley areas introduction of suitable high yielding early rice varieties with sustainable management practice would help improve the yield.

In the present situation *podu* (shifting) cultivation must be stopped and the Kandhas must be provided with alternate agro-systems like plantation of horticultural crops and nitrogen fixing fodder plants in the sloppy areas which help improve soil fertility and reduce soil erosion. Home-garden system which is very important for the tribal economy must be properly improved. Animal husbandry which is totally neglected by the Kandha community should be handled carefully taking into account the genetic diversity, which can help improve the nutritional condition of the Kandha tribe. Forest conservation and marketing facility for NTFPs should be enhanced. Cultivation of economically important grasses such as *sabai* grass, broom grass, thatch grass, and lemon grass in the area would be of much help to the Kandhas.

As a whole much research on all aspects on Kandha community and Kandha village ecosystem is necessary for the total development of the Kandha community of Orissa.

### References

- Anonymous (1999). District Statistical Handbook, Khandamal. Government of Orissa, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Orissa, Bhubaneswer.
- Behera, B. K. ( 1995). Socio-cultural and environmental factors of health : A case study of the Kondhs. *South Asian Anthropologist*, 16: 73- 77.
- Blaschke, P. M., N. A. Trustrum, and R. C. DeRose (1992). Ecosystem processes and sustainable land use in New Zealand Steeplands. *Agric. Ecosyst. Environ.*, 41: 153-178.
- Bohidar, N. (1973). Problems of shifting cultivation with reference to Balliguda division. *Adibasi*, 14: 29-36.
- Caesar, K. (1990). Development in crop research for the third world. *Ambio*, 19:353-357.
- Champati, M. (1991). The primitive tribes of Belgarh and Mudulipara area: their plight, problems and an alternative strategy for economic development. *Adibasi*, 31: 22-36.
- Conway, G. R. (1987). The properties of agroecosystems. *Agric. Syst* , 24 : 95- 117.
- Das, P. K. and M. K. Misra (1988).Some medicinal plants among Kondhs around Chandrapur (Koraput). *J. Econ. Tax. Bot.* 12:103-109.
- Dash, S.S. (1997).Studies on Floristic, Biomass and Energetics in tribal village ecosystems of Eastern Ghats of Orissa. Ph. D. Thesis. Berhampur University.
- Dash, S.S. and M. K. Misra (1999).Plant diversity and sustainable development in a tribal village ecosystem on the Eastern Ghats of Orissa. *J. Hum. Ecol.* 10: 415-419.



- Dash, S.S. and M. K. Misra (2001). Ecological and socioeconomic profile of three Kondh villages of Phulbani district of Orissa, India. *J. Hum. Ecol.* 12: 101- 107.
- Girach, R. D. (1992). Medicinal plants used by Kondh tribe of district Phulbani (Orissa) in eastern India. *Ethnobotany*, 4: 53-66.
- Gopalan, C., B. V. Rama Sastri and S.C. Balasubramanian (1982). Nutritional Value of Indian Foods. National Institute of Nutrition, ICMR, New Delhi.
- Legris, P. and V. M. Meher-Homji (1984). The Eastern Ghats: vegetation and bioclimatic aspects. In: P. V. Bhairavamurty (Ed.) *Proceedings of the Seminar on Resource, Development and Environment in the Eastern Ghats*. Andhra University, Visakhapatna.
- Misra, M. K. (1996). *Studies on Biomass and Energy Flow in Tribal Village Ecosystems of South Orissa*. Final Report. Department of Science and Technology, Govt. India, New Delhi.
- Misra, M. K. and S.S. Dash (1999). Biodiversity conservation and sustainable utilization of minor forest resources in a cluster of tribal villages on the Eastern Ghats of Orissa. in: M. Sivadasan and P. Mathew (Eds.) *Biodiversity, Taxonomy and Conservation of Flowering Plants*, pp. 133- 143. Mentor Books, Calicut.
- Mohanty, B.B. (1991) Techno-dimensions of a tribal village in Kalahandi district, Orissa. *Adibasi*, 31: 37-44.
- Nayak S.P., S.K. Nisnaka and M.K. Mishra (1993). Biomass and energy dynamics in a tribal village ecosystem of Orissa, India *Biomass & Bioenergy*, 4: 23-34
- Praharaj, M (2000) Social change and fertility among the Kondhs of Phulbani district, Orissa. Ph.D. Thesis, Berhampur University, Berhampur.
- Ramakrishnan, P.S. (1993). Shifting agriculture and, sustainable development: An interdisciplinary study from North Eastern India. UNESCO-MAB Series. Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Routray, S. and K. Patnaik, (1985) Physionometric and nutritional survey of Kondhs of Phiringia Grampanchayat of Phulbani district Adibasi; 24:31-38.
- Sabat, K.R. (1996) Nutritional Status and Demographic Profile among the Kondhs of Ganjam district. Ph.D. Thesis, Berhampur University, Berhampur.
- Sahoo, A.C. (1992) Shifting cultivation to horticulture: A case study of the Dongria Kondh Development Agency (Kurli), Chatikana. *Adibasi*, 32: 30-35.
- Tripathy, S.N. (1989) Tribal development programmes in Phulbani, Orissa: A review, *Adibasi*, 29: 23-26
- Ullaka, R.C. (1976). The social life of tribal women. *Adibasi*, 16: 1-5.

**Table 1**

Cropping pattern, seasonal distribution and yield of different crops in three Kondh villages of Orissa (Source: Dash, 1997).

Crops	English/ Local Name	Sowing season	Harvesting season	Yield (kg/ ha)
<b>Valley and shifting cultivation</b>				
<b>Cereals</b>				
Paddy ( <i>Oryza sativa</i> L)				
Lowland	Dhana	June-July	Nov.-Dec.	2062
Upland	Dhana	May- June	Sept.-Oct.	1811
Finger millet ( <i>Eleusine coracana</i> )	Mandia, Ragi	July	Sept.-Oct	175
Common millet ( <i>Panicum sumatrense</i> )	Ganga, Kosla	June-July	Oct.-Nov	176
Barnyard millet ( <i>Echinochloa colonum var frumentacea</i> )	Swan, Sanu	June-July	Oct.-Nov	217
Foxtail or Italian millet ( <i>Setaria italica</i> )	Khira, Kangu, Tangu	June-July	Nov-Dec.	-
Pearl Millet ( <i>Pennisetum americanum</i> )	Bajra, Gantia	June-July	Oct.-Nov	294
Maize ( <i>Zea mays</i> )	Macca	June-July	Sept.-Oct	53
<b>Legumes</b>				
Horse gram ( <i>Dolichos biflorus</i> L)	Kulthi, Kolatha	Oct-Nov.	Jan-Feb	166
Black gram ( <i>Vigna mungo</i> )	Biri	Oct.-Nov	March	138
Green gram ( <i>Vigna radiata</i> )	Muga	June-July	Aug-Sept.	104
Red gram, Pigion Pea ( <i>Cajanus cajan</i> )	Kandula	Aug-Sept	Jan.-Feb	126
<b>Oil seeds</b>				
Niger ( <i>Guizotia abyssinica</i> )	Aalshi	Sept.-Oct	Feb-March	118
Black mustard ( <i>Brassica nigra</i> )	Sorisa	Feb- March	Sept-Oct	71
Groundnut ( <i>Arachis hypogaea</i> )	Bhuinchana	June-July	Feb-March	173
Castor ( <i>Ricinus communis</i> )	Jada	June-July	Dec.- March	

**Table-2**

**Average yield (fresh weight) of vegetables under home garden (courtyard and backyard) in three Kandha villages of Kandhamal district of Orissa (Source: Dash & Mishra 2001)**

Name of the plant	Location / Oriya Name	Yield	
		Kg plant-	Mjh <sup>-1</sup> yr <sup>-1</sup>
<i>Carica papaya</i> (Papaya)	AmurtBhanda	60.2	69.0
<i>Colocasia esculenta</i> (Edible arum)	Saru	666.7	500.0
<i>Cucurbita maxima</i> (Red pumpkin)	BoitiKakharu	73.3	128.3
<i>Cucumis sativus</i> (Cucumber)	Kakudi	3.9	2.1
<i>Ipomoea batatas</i> (Sweet potato)	Kandamula	366.7	2761.0
<i>Lagenariasiceraria</i> (Bottle gourd)	Lau	39.8	19.9
<i>Luffaacu tangula</i> (Ridged gourd)	Jhani	13.2	9.4
<i>Capsicmannuum</i> (Chili)	Maricha	206.0	206.7
<i>Momordica charantia</i> (Bitter gourd)	Kalara	20.2	75.2
<i>Musa sapientum</i> (Plantain)	Kadali	77.8	208.4
<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i> (French bean)	Bean	13.1	14.1
<i>Vignaunguiculatasubp. Unguiculata</i> (Cow pea)	Jhudunga	32.2	64.7
<i>Vgnaunguiculatasubp. Cylindrica</i> (Cow pea)	Baragudi, Barbati	32.2	64.7
<i>Dioscoreaalata</i> (Great yam)	KhambaAlu	3.9	13.0
<i>Solanum melongena</i> (Brinjal)	Baigana	407.0	705.0
<i>Trichosanthes anguina</i> (Snake gourd)	Chachidra	0.6	0.5
<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i> (Jack fruit)	Panasa	466.1	992.8
<i>Lycopersicumesculatum</i> (Tomato)	Tamato	440.0	422.4
<i>Curcuma domestica</i> (Turmeric)	Haladi	340.0	4967.4
<i>Zingiber officinale</i> (Ginger)	Ada	260.0	728.0
<i>Lablab purpurens</i> (Carpet or Field bean)	Simba, Baila	-	-

**Table-3**

**Horticultural plant coverage under the DongriaKandha Development Project in the Chatikona area of Rayagadadistrict of Orissa (Source: Sahoo, 1992)**

Sl. No	Plants under cultivation	Area (in Acres)
1.	Orange, Lemon and other cigtrus varieties	3545.4
2.	Banana (different varieties)	1547.5
3.	Mango (both <i>in situ</i> and grafts)	1247.1
4.	Pine apple (Spanish and other varieties)	1127.8
5.	Cashew nut	510.1
6.	Mixed plantation (Banana and pineapple, citrus and	428.4

	pineapple, mango and pineapple, jackfruits and pineapple, banana with mango graft, banana with citrus plants and some other types)	
7.	Turmeric and ginger	329.0
8.	Papaya	140.9
9.	Sapota	118.8
10.	Lemon	
11.	Jackfruit	61.8
12.	Lichu, Guava, Illachi	34.7

**Table 4**

**Non Timber Forest Products used by the Kandhas as economic resources.**

Sl. No.	Name of the plant/product	Plant parts	Uses
1.	Broom grass ( <i>Aristida setacea</i> )	Inflorescence stalk	Broom
2.	Bamboo ( <i>Bambusa arundinacea</i> )	Young shoots Culms (Stem)	Vegetable (Karada)
3.	Bamboo ( <i>Dendrocalamus strictus</i> )	Stem	House building
4.	Belleric Myrobalan ( <i>Terminalia bellirica</i> )	Fruit	Medicine
5.	Chebulic Myrobalan ( <i>Terminalia chebula</i> )	Fruit	Medicine
6.	Hill broom ( <i>Thysanolaena maxima</i> )	Inflorescence stalk	Soft broom
7.	Indian gooseberry ( <i>Emblica officinalis</i> )	Fruit	Medicine
8.	Karanja ( <i>Pongamia pinnata</i> )	Seed	Oil
9.	Mohua ( <i>Madhuca latifolia</i> )	Flower, Seed	Liquor Oil
10.	Mushroom (fresh)	Plant	Vegetable
11.	Sal ( <i>Shorea robusta</i> )	Leaf Seed	Plate and cup Oil
12.	Sago palm ( <i>Caryota urens</i> )	Sap	Soft drink & Liquor
13.	Siali ( <i>Bauhinia vahlii</i> )	Bark Leaves	Making ropes Making cups & plates ( <i>khali</i> )
14.	Tamarind ( <i>Tamarindus indica</i> )	Pulp	Food (Spice)
15.	Thatch grass ( <i>Imperata cylindrical</i> )	Plant	Thatch
16.	Wild date palm ( <i>Phoenix sylvestris</i> )	Leaf Sap	Mat Liquor

**Table 5**

**List of wild fruits and leafy vegetables consumed by the Kandhas of Phulbani (Kandhamal) district of Orissa,**

Sl. No.	Name of the Plant	Common /Local: Name
1.	<i>Aeglemarmelos</i>	Bela
2.	<i>Alangiumsalviifolium</i>	Ankula, Dhalaku
3.	<i>Annonareticulata</i>	Bull's heart, Ramaphala, Neua
4.	<i>Annonasquamosa</i>	Custard apple, Sitaphala, Ata
5.	<i>Artocarpusheterophyllus</i>	Jack fruit, Panasa
6.	<i>Bauhinia purpurea</i>	Baradasaga
7.	<i>Diospyros melanosylon</i>	Persimmon, Kendu
8.	<i>Emblia officinalis</i>	Indian Gppsenerry, Amla
9.	<i>Feronia elephantum</i>	Wood apple, Kaitha
10.	<i>Ficusrecemosa</i>	Dimiri
11.	<i>Flacourtia indica</i>	Madagascar plum, Bainchakoli
12.	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Mango, Amba
13.	<i>Phoenix humilis</i>	Hill date palm, Khajurikoli
14.	<i>Phoenix sylvestris</i>	Wild date palm, Khajurikoli
15.	<i>Semecarpus anacardium</i>	Marking nut, Kala bhalia
16.	<i>Syzygium cumini</i>	Java plum, Jambakoli
17.	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	Tamarind tree, Tentulitree.
18.	<i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i>	Common jujub, Barakoli tree
19.	<i>Amaranthusviridis</i>	Kanta saga
20.	<i>Ziziphusrugosa</i>	Tinkoli
21.	<i>Celosia argentea</i>	Quill grass, Gudugudia saga
22.	<i>Canthiumparviflorum</i>	Totodi saga
23.	<i>Marsiliaminuta</i>	Sunsunia saga
24.	<i>Glinusoppositifolius</i>	Pita saga
25.	<i>Ipomoea batatus</i>	Kalam saga

**Table 6****Important medicinal plants used by the Kandhas of Orissa**

S1. No.	Name of the plant	Location/Oriya Name	Parts used	Disease(s) against which used
1.	<i>Abrus precatorius</i>	Indra Marish	Seed, Leaf	Eye diseases Constipation
2.	<i>Acalyphai ndica</i>	Indra Marish	Leaf	Mouth infection
3.	<i>Achyranthus aspera</i>	Apamarga	Root	Gynec& Sexual Diseases
4.	<i>Andrographispaniculatus</i>	Bhuinim	Plant, Root & Leaf	Skin disease Malaria
5.	<i>Alstonia scholaris</i>	Rukai, Chatiana	Bark Stem	Fever Gyn. & Sex diseases
6.	<i>Aspaugusracemosus</i>	Iswarjata Satabari	Root	Urinary discharge, Excess bleeding
7.	<i>Argemone mexicana</i>	Nirpania, Odasamari	Root	Gyn& Sex diseases
8.	<i>Barleriaprionitis</i>	Daskaranta	Leaf	Ringworm, Rheumatism, Scabies
9.	<i>Bombaxceiba</i>	Simuli	Gum	Gyn. & Sex diseases
10.	<i>Breyniavitis-ideal</i>	Jajhangi	Plant	Eye diseases
11.	<i>Cassia tora</i>	Chakunda	Seeds	Gyn. & Sex diseases
12.	<i>Calotropis gigantean</i>	Arakh	Root	Stomach disorder
13.	<i>Centel laasiatica</i>	Thalakudi	Plant	Madness
14.	<i>Curculigoorchioides</i>	Talmuli	Root	Gyn. & Sex diseases. Enlarged spleen
15.	<i>Cuscutareflexa</i>	Nirmuli	Plant	Gyn. & Sex diseases
16.	<i>Datura fastuosa</i>	Dudura	Root	Pimples, Boils
17.	<i>Ecitaprostrata</i>	Kesadura	Leaf	Jaundice & liver disease
18.	<i>Elephantopus scaber</i>	Mayurchulia	Root	Pimples in infants
19.	<i>Gloriosasuperba</i>	Dasarfula	Root	Abortion
20.	<i>Hemidesmus indicus</i>	Sugandhi	Root	Gyn. & Sex diseases & diarrhea
21.	<i>Justiciaadhatoda</i> ( <i>Adhatodazylanica</i> )	Basanga	Root Leaf	Gyn. & Sex diseases Cold & cough
22.	<i>Mimosa pudica</i>	Lajakuli	Root	Urinary diseases
23.	<i>Nyctanthes arborescens</i>	Harsingar	Leaf	Malaria
24.	<i>Pavetta indica</i>	Kukurchali	Leaf	Skin diseases
25.	<i>Rauvolfia serpentina</i>	Patalgaruda	Fruit Root	Gyn. & Sex diseases Snake & Scorpion bite
26.	<i>Sidarthia bifolia</i>	Brajramuli	Root	Bile complain in infants
27.	<i>Strychnos nuxvomica</i>	Kochila	Seed Steam Bark	Piles, Skin diseases, Soaring ear, Acidity
28.	<i>Tadehagitriquetrum</i>	Dhuaja Bhango	Root	To cure sexual weakness
29.	<i>Vanda tessellata</i>	Nirgundi	Plant	Otitis
30.	<i>Woodfordia fruticosa</i>	Dhutukifula	Plant	Unconsciousness

Source ; Girach (1992), Dash and Misra (1999 a,b ), Das &amp; Misra(1988)

# KANDHA \*

*P. S. Das Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

Numerically, the Kandha form the largest group among the 62 tribes in Orissa, with a population of 11,40,374 according to the 1991 Census. They constitute 16.20 per cent of the total Scheduled Tribe population of 70,32,214. Although they are largely concentrated in the Central and Rayagada Sections of the Eastern Ghat region, they are found sporadically throughout the state. Customarily they were once famous for their brutal acts of human sacrifice (*meriah* sacrifice), carried out to produce bumper crops and the killing of infants for a better yield of turmeric. The word 'Kandha' is derived from the Telugu word 'Konda', a hill, according to Macpherson. He further states that the Telugu people call them 'Kotuvandlu'. Besides Orissa, these people also live in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. Originally they were hill-dwellers.

The tribe registered a growth rate of 15.27 per cent during the period 1981-91. The sex ratio is 973 females per 1000 males. The percentage of literacy has increased substantially from 12.4 in 1981 to 20.2 in 1991. There are various sections of Kandha. Each section is endogamous, though originally they hail from the Kandha community. The Dongria Kandha of Koraput District and Kutia Kandha of the Belghar area of the Boudh Kondhamals in Phulbani District represent the primitive sections.

The Desia Kandha inhabit the plains and coastal areas. They represent the Hinduized section of the tribe. There are various other sections in between these two extremes who are at various stages of socio-economic development. The primitive sections are shifting cultivators. The Dongria Kandhas are expert horticulturists. The Desia Kandha are settled agriculturists. There are other sections like the Malwa and Penga Kandha who are in between shifting cultivation and settled cultivation. However, all these sections are the

---

\* Published in *Tribes of Orissa* (revised edition), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2004, pp.159-165

<sup>1</sup> Research Assistant, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

descendants of the seven brothers who lived at Gumma in Baliguda sub-division in Phulbani District, and were created by the Supreme Being, 'Sapangada'.

Racially, the Kandha are related more closely to the Proto-Australoid stock with considerable Mongoloid admixture. They are divided into two linguistic groups, 'Kui' and 'Kuvi'. The Kutia Kandha, whose distribution corresponds approximately to the area of Boudh Kandhamal district, speak the Kui dialect, while Kuvi is spoken mainly in the eastern part of Koraput District. However, the primitive sections of the Kandha communities are found largely in the districts of Phulbani and Koraput. The Desia Kandha have left their hill fortress and are found in large numbers in the northern plateau of the central table land, the northern section of the Eastern Ghats and the coastal region. They comprise approximately 39.4 per cent of the Kandha population.

The settlement pattern of the Kandha village is of linear type. Two rows of houses on either side of the central street is the average pattern of settlement. The thatch of the adjacent houses merge in such a way as to give an impression of a long roof stretching from one end of the village to the other. There is an altar to the Earth Goddess called *jakhri* at the centre of the village street. In some villages, among the primitive sections, they have well organized dormitories called *dhangeriddu* for both unmarried boys and girls.

The permission of the chief headman is obtained before one constructs a house at a site of one's choice. The layout of a primitive Kandha house generally consists of front and rear verandah, a bedroom in the centre and a small kitchen. The floor is slightly above the level of the central street. The walls are made of mud, and the roof is grass-thatched. Each house has a low ceiling which provides as a garret (*attu*). The Kandha of Phulbani live in low wooden houses. The house is rectangular in size. Walls are made of wooden planks or bamboos plastered with mud. Wooden poles are then placed to construct a trellis over the wooden scaffolding to fix the thatch. Then construction of the two-sloped roof begins either by thatching it with tall grass or by fixing wooden planks, the latter being fixed by the more acculturated Kandha. The actual construction is preceded by an ordinary ceremony of a symbolic nature. A careful look at the Kandha house shows use of very simple equipment, including a gourd, wooden, bamboo and stone articles, and baskets, earthenware pots and iron implements.

The dress worn by the Kandha is not in keeping with their environment. They use some covering on the body, of course, to withstand the cold, yet their way of life has made them conditioned to the local climate, which indirectly helps them maintain their traditional dress. Kandha women wear two pieces of clothing, one around the waist up to the knees and another for the upper portion of the body. But Desia Kandha women wear saris. Kutia Kandha men wear only a loincloth. A Dongria male wears a cloth called a *kodi*, 16 feet in length and one foot in width. The sophisticated Kandha have started wearing *lungi*, shirts and



half-pants. On special occasions headgear is worn. A coloured turban is worn by the groom during marriage.

Kandha women are very fond of ornaments. Among the Dongria Kandha the women beautify themselves with hair-pins, earrings, nose-rings and head necklaces. Wristlets and earrings are used by the men among the primitive sections of the Kandha community. Men also like to grow their hair long and tie it into a knot at the nape of the neck in traditional fashion. The Desia Kandha follows the Hinduized way of living. The Kutia Kand has tattoo their faces and hands whereas the Dongria do not.

Men and women dine together. The children are served earlier. *Feja*, a gruel prepared from millet (*ragi*), serves as morning tiffin, which is usually eaten at 9.00 a.m. The same is also taken during lunch in the terrains or swiddens or in the forest. The day's hunger is relieved by drinking sago-palm juice (*salap*). The evening meal is considered to be the best meal, as rice and a leafy vegetable curry add charm to the supper. But the Hinduized section eats rice as their staple food because they are settled agriculturists. The primitive sections eat buffalo, beef, pork, mutton, etc. The advanced section has not relinquished this habit altogether. Turmeric and chilli are the only condiments used in cooking. Boiling is the only process of cooking. They are fond of fish, crabs and snails. Dry fish is relished with the greatest satisfaction.

The Kandha use both distilled and fermented liquor for socio-religious purposes. Distilled liquor is largely consumed by the Desia Kandha. Even the primitive sections have a great fascination for distilled liquor, but they cannot afford to purchase it regularly. They therefore depend upon local varieties like sago-palm juice (*salap*) and date-palm juice (*tadi*). Local herbs and roots are added to the juice to increase its alcoholic content. Sometimes, *mahua* flowers are collected and liquor is prepared to meet the requirements of special occasions. Liquor is regarded as a food and at the same time a ritualistic food to satisfy deities and spirits. It is considered a social necessity and therefore consumed irrespective of sex and age. Negatively it also affects the economy of the Kandha, as they incur loans and are exploited by the Dombs, local Sahukars and liquor vendors. Tobacco is used as a narcotic. The leaves are dried and powdered. This powder is eaten casually to provide energy. Tobacco leaves are rolled in *sialior sal* leaves and smoked as *pika*.

The Kandha are agriculturists. Occupational patterns vary. The primitive groups are mainly shifting cultivators. They carry on cultivation on swiddens, including hunting and food gathering. They do not have enough scope for wage-earning. Casually, as and when required, they are engaged as labourers by the villagers and paid *bhuti* (food) and an amount of Rs.5/- to Rs.10/-. This amount is not distributed individually. When the amount increases, it is used for a group feast. The Kandha who live in the plains and in coastal areas are simply agriculturists. They have better opportunities to develop their land by using

fertilizers, insecticides, etc. With opportunities for irrigation, they also produce short-duration paddy, wheat, etc. besides long-duration paddy. They have better scope for wage-earning and other sources of livelihood. There are also other sections in between these two polarities, who have different occupational patterns and accordingly have different economic statuses and degrees of cultural development. The primitive sections produce paddy on the uplands and wherever available at the foot of the hills, but mainly depend upon minor millets and cereals. They also produce cash crops like turmeric, ginger, mustard, *niger*, black gram, arrowroot, etc. The Dongria section of the Kandha community produce fruits like bananas, pineapples, oranges, jackfruits etc. All these sections raise livestock. The primitive sections also keep buffaloes for sacrifice. They use their cattle wealth mainly for feasts and festivals. But the Desia Kandhas use their cattle mainly to plough the fields.

The distribution of land among the primitive sections is clan-based. That is, a large territory is earmarked for a specific clan, the members of which may be living in eight to ten villages. All the members share the land in that area equally. These lands are owned according to hereditary rights but not yet recorded in favour of anybody, as there has not been any settlement operation in most of the areas where the primitive sections are living. Further, each of the agricultural phases is pursued collectively with ritual formalities and under the direct supervision of the clan leaders. The agricultural calendar is followed strictly. As the plain Kandha own land individually in the record of rights, they do not have any compactness or any communal feeling in carrying out agricultural operations. There is no direct supervision as they are answerable to the common leaders of the village rather than to their community leaders.

The barter system is still the traditional method of exchange among the primitive section. Money is the basic unit of exchange. As a result, outside traders still have the upper hand in exploiting the primitive sections. Lands have therefore mostly been alienated and fruit-bearing trees and cropped fields mortgaged to eke out a livelihood. Co-operative societies called LAMPS have been organized in these areas to control the usurper's tricky ways, to provide reasonable prices for their commercial crops and also to supply them with their daily necessities at reasonable prices. Infact, steps are now being taken by the government to improve the economic condition of these primitive sections through various schemes and projects.

The family is the smallest unit in Kandha social organization. The family occupies a single domicile. The nature of the family is conjugal, for it consists of a husband, wife and their children, who live in a two-roomed domicile. They share a common kitchen and work for the maintenance of the family. Most families in Kandha society are at first simple or nuclear in nature, after which there is extension in the vertical line when the respective sons bring in their wives. The sons separate after dividing the property into equal shares. Joint and extended

families are rare. The father is the head of the family and he exercises authority in every sphere, which is passed on to the eldest son after death. The family is patrilineal, the Kandha reckoning descent through the male line.

Children receive orientation in their culture within the family. Grown-up children pass the night in their respective dormitories, according to traditional custom. Though such buildings are not found in most Desia Kandha villages, the custom still persists in a modified form. The boys visit the girl's dormitory in the adjacent village as suitors, observing the rules prescribed to that effect.

The next largest group is the clan, which is a unilineal group consisting of agnates residing in a number of elementary families. These elementary families live in a number of villages constituting a *mutha*. The respective heads of these families have clear genealogical relations, for they are the descendants of the same great-grandfather. Each clan is exogamous. Each Kandha looks towards these patri-kins as his second line of defence with whom he cooperates in many of his activities. The members of the patrilineage help the head of the family meet many of his obligations by contributing cash or kind during ceremonies observed in connection with birth, marriage, etc.

A Kandha is introduced to the various stages of the life-cycle through characteristic rites of passage. A Kandha marries a second time if his first wife proves barren, because he loves children very much. An expectant mother is loved by everybody. The delivery is attended by an old lady. The delivery takes place in a secluded room or on the rear verandah. The umbilical cord is severed by the midwife with the help of a sharp-edged arrow and then subsequently buried in a deep hole in the back yard or near the threshold. The baby is then given a thorough wash in lukewarm water mixed with turmeric powder. Both mother and baby spend the next six days as the lying-in period and are carefully attended by the midwife. On the sixth day, a chicken is sacrificed to the dead ancestors. The blood is smeared on the walls using a piece of bark from a mango tree. A portion of it is hung at the entrance door to avert evil eyes. This frees the child from birth pollution, though the mother remains confined to the lying-in room for a month, after which the head of the family offers rituals again with chickens to the dead ancestors. On that day the child is given a name. However, these customs are performed in different ways at different places. The children in the Kandha society are not considered burdens. They help their parents when they grow to five or six years of age.

Marriage is the accepted form of union between a man and a woman in the Kandha society. Generally adult marriage is the prevailing custom. Traditional marriages are conducted by either negotiation or service. The informal types, namely marriage by consent and marriage by capture, are very popular. They perform traditional marriage only in the months of Push and Magha. The conventional bride price includes cash amounting to Rs.50/- to Rs.80/-, two cows, one buffalo, 15 kilograms of rice, and saris among the

primitive sections, but is more among the advanced sections. *Iрпи-kalu* or distilled liquor is also a prestigious gift exchanged between the two parties. The bride comes to the groom's house for marriage. The marriage nuptial is solemnized when the left foot of the bride and the right foot of the groom are tied together, the former above the latter, with a thread under a mango tree by the village priest or Jani. A grand feast is organized on the occasion with buffalo meat and barrels of distilled liquor. Young boys and girls of different clans have an opportunity to dance, sing and woo each other for the whole night. The advanced sections of the Kandha community have started imitating the Hindu fashion of marriage.

In marriage by capture the bride price is more and the groom's father pays a penalty as compensation for the bride's loss of prestige. If the normal bride price cannot be paid, the groom serves in the bride's house for some years until the amount of bride price has been paid in full, after which the marriage takes place. Levirate and sororate marriages are prevalent in Kandha society. Polygynous marriages are also preferred if the first wife proves to be barren or indolent. Widows remarry widowers and no bride price is paid.

The Kandha practice cremation, but burial is also undertaken when the death is due to infectious disease. After death, the corpse is taken outside after an hour to give the body a thorough wash. Female affines do this. The hair of the corpse is shaved and the body is covered with a new piece of cloth, after smearing it with castor oil. Men and women both follow the bier. The corpse is kept on the pyre, and one of the consanguine inserts a bunch of grass and lights it by means of burnt firewood. They all leave the pyre still alight. On the way back they bathe in the stream and become free from pollution.

The final offering to the departed soul is performed on the eleventh day. The ancestor spirits (*dumba*) are worshipped by the shamans (Bejuni). The Earth Goddess is also worshipped by the village priest or Jani. The ceremonial function comes to an end when the Janis sprinkles water on the feet of each person present there to absolve the house finally from death pollution. The evening is devoted to a grand feast which is attended by the members of the patrilineage, as well as affines.

The Kandha believe in Dharani (the Earth Goddess), the Supreme Being. She is all powerful and the highest of all deities. She is therefore worshipped in all ceremonies as a mark of honour and respect. She is represented by a block of stone erected in a hut. She has her own twelve disciples, who are represented by different stone slabs. The entire structure is called a *jhaker*. She is responsible for the growth of vegetation and other produce of the land. She used to be satisfied with human blood only, which was called *meriah* by the Dongria section and *toki puja* by the Kutia section of the Kandha community. This custom was suppressed long ago by the British, and buffalo are sacrificed instead at present.

In addition to Dhareni, the village deity Jatrakudi is installed at the outskirts of the village. Gungi Penu, Bhime Penu and Lei Penu are deities of stream, hill and forest respectively. They have not been installed in any temple nor are they represented by any image but they are worshipped periodically. The Kandha worship ancestors, who are called *dumbas*. These ancestor spirits appear in dreams when they desire to receive periodic worship. Sita Penu is considered to be the deity of wealth. Birna penu is responsible for giving rain. There are various deities and spirits, who differ with the different localities that are inhabited by the various sections of the Kandha. Apart from these spirits, they believe in the existence of ghosts (*mahane*), which are controlled by the shamans. The Kandha also believe in white and black magic. They are fatalists and believe in chance and luck.

The Lamba, Jani, Pujari, Dishari, and Beunis or Kalisis are various religious functionaries who preside as and when necessity arises. The Lamba presides only when the Earth Goddess is worshipped during the Meriah festival. The Jani is the village priest and offers rituals to different gods, deities and spirits at the village level. The Pujari is the assistant of the Lamba. The Dishari is the medicine man-cum-astrologer. The Bejunis or Kalis are the shamans.

Dependence, conciliation, propitiation and prayerful submission are the various means used to appease supernatural forces. The materials and objects required to satisfy these forces are standardized. Unboiled rice, incense powder and joss-sticks are the main items to worship with. Buffalos, cows, pigs, lambs, goats and fowls are sacrificed. Animals are tortured and killed to obtain the desired result quickly. Eggs are also offered as a ritual food to satisfy the ghosts and spirits. The Khanda have drawn up a programme of feasts and festivals throughout the year for better yields of crops. Two festivals such as Chaitra parab observed before sowing paddy and other millets and the Meriah or Kedu festival, observed in the month of February-March, are the most important and are observed with pomp and grandeur. The Hinduized sections also observe the Hindu festivals in addition to these festivals.

The primitive sections still have well-organized patterns of traditional leadership not only at the village level but also at the *mutha* level. The Hinduized sections have no such organization at present as they have become subservient to the caste panchayat of the village. However, the Jani, who is the religious headman, is also the secular headman of the village among the primitive sections of the Kandha community. His post is hereditary. The Bish majhi is the assistant to the Jani. The Barika or village messenger belonging to the Domb or Pano community is the assistant of the Bish majhi. The post of Barika is remunerative. The Mandal is the head at the *mutha* level. While this is the system among the Dongria Kandha, the Kutia section call their leaders at the village and *mutha* level the Majhi and Patro respectively. Since the *mutha* is gradually losing its importance, the *mutha* heads have also become unimportant.

Generally, the venue of the village panchayat is the seat of the Earth-Goddess, Jhaker. This body consists of all households in the village and is strictly limited to cases of black magic, witchcraft, incest, adultery, rape, divorce, etc. Matters regarding bride price, land disputes, etc. are referred to the *mutha* panchayat. Since the tribals believe in customary laws and go by their own codes, they generally avoid referring any case to the law courts. At present, the tribals are also nominated statutory leaders in Kandha society.

However, the Kandha have taken adequate advantage of the local environment in setting up their domiciles and the village and in developing their patterns of subsistence. The various networks of relationships, and the concrete series of activities in the social, economic and religious spheres, are organized in relation to an ideal model in which each sub-system contributes to the totality of activities in such a way as to bring about coherence to the entire structure. The clan occupies the lowest level of their overall organization and is where members unite and co-operate to enable the clan to function as a whole and to maintain its continuity in the form of a descent group. The Kandha of the Eastern Ghats region consider themselves as belonging to one community by virtue of being worshippers of the same Earth Goddess, who is believed to maintain the fertility of the area they cultivate for their subsistence.

# KANDHA \*

*A. B. Ota* <sup>1</sup>

*S. C. Mohanty* <sup>2</sup>

*N. Kanhar* <sup>3</sup>

## IDENTITY

In Odisha, the Kandha is numerically the most populous tribe. In this regard it is a major tribe of the state as well as the country. Though their population is unevenly spread throughout the State, their main concentration is in south Orissa. Geographically, their stronghold lies in the central region (Boud & Kandhamal districts), Rayagada region (Rayagada district) and south-western part (erstwhile Kasipur and Mahulpatna areas) of Eastern Ghats Region.

The word 'Kandha' is derived from the Telugu word *Konda* which means a small hill as well as the hill men. Originally they were hill dwellers. Kandha is the name the non-tribal people have given them and in course of time, the tribesmen have accepted the name. But they identify themselves as 'Kui loku' "Kui enju" or "Kuinga" because they speak 'Kui' or 'Kuvi' language belonging to Dravidian linguistic group. 'Kui' and 'Kuvi' are two regional linguistic variations. While 'Kuvi' is spoken by a majority of the Kandha of undivided Koraput, Kalahandi and Bolangir districts, '**Kui**', is spoken by the Kandha of Phulbani district. Kuvi appears to have original structural composition while Kui, an acculturated and transformed form of Kuvi language.

On the basis of their socio-cultural characteristics, the Kandha may be divided into several sections such as; Desia Kandha, Dongria Kandha, Kutia Kandha, Buda Kandha, Pengo Kandha, Malua Kandha, etc. Among several sections of the Kandha communities, two sub-sections such as Kutia Kandha and Dongria Kandha have been identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Kandha, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2013

<sup>1</sup> Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Officer-on-Special Duty & Former Joint Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Tribal Museum Guide, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

The name of Kutia Kandha refers to their house floor known as '*Kutti*' that is about 2ft. below the level of the village road. Accordingly, they are named as Kutti-dwellers or Kutia Kandha. They mostly inhabit the Tumidibandha Block of Kandhamal district and Lanjigarh Block of Kalahandi district of Odisha. The word 'Dongria' in Kuvi language means 'Hill'. As Dongria Kandhas inhabit the high altitude hilly terrain of Odisha, they are popularly called as Dongria Kandha. They are mostly found in Bissam-kattack and Muniguda blocks of Rayagada district of Odisha. Other sub-groups of the Kandha tribe like Sitha Kandha, Buda Kandha, Desia Kandha and Malua Kandha live in Koraput, Kandhamal and Bolangir districts of Odisha. The Sitha Kandhas (*Sitaranga*) are basket makers. The Malua Kandhas are well-known for their patterns of living in groups in hilly areas for which they are called so. On the other hand the Desia Kandhas are found in 'desh' or plains area for which they are called Desia Kandha. We also find a group of Kandha people who incorrectly pronounce the word 'Bengo' (frog) as 'Pengo' and relish the flesh of frogs. They are locally known as "Pengo Kandha."

### Population and Concentration

According to 2001 census the total population of Kandha tribe is 13, 95, 643, (male 6 88 402 & female 7 07 241) which is numerically highest among all the 62 tribes of Odisha. The Kandhas comprise 17.13% of the total tribal population of Odisha. Their sex ratio is 1027 per 1000 males and their literacy rate is 31.87 per cent (13.89 % for male and 17.98% for female). The Decadal population growth rate among the Kandha during the period from 1991 to 2001 is 22.38 percent.

### Dress and Ornaments

The dress pattern of the Kandha is very simple. The women of the community used to wear two pieces of clothes (*sinda*), one around the waist up to the knees and another for the upper portion of the body. But now they prefer to wear one piece saree which is available in the local market. They prefer to adorn themselves with various types of ornaments like coloured bead necklace (*sursuria mali*), silver bangle (*bala*), neckband (*gogla*), nose flower (*naka putuki*), hairpin (*pujupaka*), ear ring (*kichedka*) etc. Traditionally Kandha women are very fond of making different tattoo (*tikanguhpa*) designs on the face. Now-a-days tattooing (*tikanguhpa*) is not preferred by the women of younger generation. The Kandha men wear *dhoti* (loin cloth) and *ganji* (banyan). On special occasions, a headgear is also worn. A coloured turban is worn by the groom during his marriage ceremony.

### SETTLEMENT AND HOUSING

Generally the Kandha villages are surrounded by mountains (*saru*). Their house settlement pattern is scattered throughout with large patches of land (*keta*) adjoining the homesteads. They grow vegetables, turmeric (*singa*), jackfruit (*ponosi*) tree, date palm (*tadi*) tree, sag-palm (*mada*) tree in those patches of land. The mango (*maha*) groves as well as *mahua* (*irpi*) trees are found at the village borders. In the



village there are a number of footpaths crossing each other. Generally a village consists of a number of hamlets, which are locally known as '*sahi*' or '*pada*'. The Kandhas cremate their dead body in the cremation ground (*tunenji*) which are situated in groves adjoining the village. In every village there is an altar for the Earth Goddess (*Darni penu*) located at the side of the village.

#### HOUSE:

The Kandha houses are identical with regard to design and building materials used for construction. Their houses face almost every direction. Generally a new house (*edu*) is constructed in the month of February (*Mag*), March (*Paagan*), April (*Baisaak*) and May (*Jeset*). Before selecting a place for construction of a new house, the male elders of the household go to the proposed site at night (*nadangi*). They carry with them some rice (*pranga*), *mahua* liquor (*irpi kalu*) and few cups made of *siali* leaves (*paeri aaka*). At the site, they keep those leaf cups (*chaukuni*) containing a few grains of rice. In each cup they pour the liquor on the rice and offer it to their ancestors (*pideri penu*). After the ritual is over, they themselves enjoy the surplus liquor (*kalu*) and return home. Next morning (*beea diesi*) they again visit the same site to verify whether the grains are in order and intact or not. If not found intact there is presence of some evil spirits (*doi pideri*). Hence, the place is inauspicious and unsuitable for house construction. If the grains are found to be intact, then it is considered to be an auspicious place by the ancestors. They sacrifice hen (*kaju*) at that place to mother goddess (*darni penu*) and build the house (*edu*).

The construction of a Kandha house (*edu*) is very simple. The walls of the house are made of planks of *sal* trees (*jargi mrahanui*) covered with mud and trellis made of bamboo splits and its roof is thatched with wild grass. The house is of very low height, not exceeding 10ft. and its entrance is at a height of about 4ft. from the ground level. A typical house consists of one or two rooms with a separate kitchen room (*baja edu*) and a cowshed (*goheli*) at its backside. A narrow verandah (*pinduli*) is found in the front as well as at the backside of the house. In each house paddy husking pedals (*dhinki*) is installed on the verandah (*pinduli*). The front verandah is always kept clean and used as a meeting place where leisure hours are spent for recreational activities. They stack and store fire wood (*erpa beska*) and forest products on the backside of the house. Each house has two doors (*dara*) one at the front side and another at the backside. The front door is made-up of wood with different carved designs and the back door is made-up of bamboo (*mani pata*).

Inside the house one room is used as kitchen (*baja edu*) and storage of household utensils (*muta mand*) and the other room which is comparatively large is used as living room (*dopa edu*). In this portion one or two mortar holes for husking grains are embedded on the ground. On one side of the living room a large wooden shelf is built for keeping household objects and the grain bin (*duli*) is kept on the wooden platform (*dadi*). Their wall (*kudu*) is coloured with red soil and verandah is polished by smooth stone. Their agricultural and household implements such as plough (*nangeli*), yoke (*jueli*), spade (*rapa*), leveler (*patasingh/kurli*), sickle (*kele*),

winnowing fan (*sesi*), measuring pot (*tambi*), gourd (*laka*) etc. are kept inside their house along with their hunting weapons such as bow (*wilu*), arrow (*ambu*), axe (*tangi*) spear (*garka*), gum stick (*sindu nala*) etc. and fishing implements. The Kandha also keep different Dhokra (*linga/darba*) objects.

Currently due to modernization and development, the Kandha houses are constructed by bricks, cement and concrete under the Indira Awas Yojana.

## SOCIAL LIFE

Family is the smallest social unit in Kandha society. Nuclear family is common and joint family is rarely found. The members of the partilineage help their head of family during birth, marriage and death rituals etc. They use surname like Kanhar, Mallick, Pradhan, Majhi etc.

As soon as a boy gets married, he builds a new house of his own and lives there separately from his parents. In their society the Kandha people call daughter-in-laws by name of (clan) *mutha*. There are fifty *muthas* in Kandha society namely *Saiti, Paba, Jurapi, Bongodi, Baka, Bidu, Teriki, Damsing, Pira* etc. As per the rule of exogamy, a man cannot marry within his clan or *mutha*, because members of a *mutha* consider themselves as brothers and sisters.

The Kandha lineage is exogamous and marriage within the lineage group is strictly forbidden. It comprises a number of blood related families living in different hamlets or in a group of villages. They trace their decent from common ancestors and occupy a distinct territory belonging to their *mutha*.

## LIFE CYCLE:

### Pregnancy and Child birth

Pregnancy and child birth are welcome events in the Kandha society. A new born child is considered as a gift of nature. During pregnancy women observe many taboos against going to the cremation ground (*tunenji*) and eating food offered to the deities. Even they don't allow her to come out at the time of solar eclipse or lunar eclipse, because they believe that the baby may be affected by the eclipse and become *garna khandia* (*kanduna*).

The delivery is attended by an old and experienced lady. It takes place in a secluded room or near the verandah (*pinduli*). It is the duty of the father to cut the umbilical cord (*pudenji bahi*) of the child. In case of a male child it is cut with an arrow head or oyster (*samuka*) and in case of a female child it is cut with a small knife (*kude*). Then the new born baby is given a thorough wash in lukewarm water mixed with turmeric power. On the sixth day, a ritual called *sana handi* is observed. In that ritual, a chicken is sacrificed to the dead ancestors. The blood is smeared on the wall using a piece of bark from a mango tree. A portion of it is hung at the entrance door to avert the eyes of the evil spirits. Till twenty days, both the child and its mother remain confined in the back side of the house (*edu*). On the 21<sup>st</sup> day,

the head of the blessed family conducts a ritual again with sacrifice of chicken to the dead ancestors, which is known as *handi sara*. On that day they wash their clothes, plaster their house with cow dung (*goberi*) and use new earthen pot (*teki*) for cooking. Naming of the child is also performed on this day. These rituals are performed in different ways at different places. In the Kandha society their children help their parents when they grow up to five or six year of age.

### **Puberty**

A Kandha girl on reaching her first menstruation stays in seclusion in an isolated room. During this time she is forbidden to talk to her kins and eat ritual food. After that period she takes bath with oil and turmeric to get rid of pollution.

### **Marriage**

Marriage (*rdanja*) is one of the important social functions in the Kandha community. Marriages are conducted by either negotiation or service. Adult marriage is practiced among them. An adult boy marries at the age of 20 to 21 years and girl at 15 to 18 years of age.

In negotiation marriage, first the groom's family visit the bride's house with a basket of rice. If the bride's family accepts the gift, it indicates that they agree for marriage. Next time the groom's father with other male members visits the bride's house to fix the date for marriage. They go with some country liquor (*irpi kalu*) which is called agreement liquor (*gati kalu*). Next day the groom's party pays the customary bride price (*suhupa*) of Rs. 101/- in cash, two cows or buffalos, brass vessel and an axe to bride's father to finalize the matrimony.

On the marriage day the groom's kinsfolk present gifts to bride such as rice (*pranga*), goat (*aada*), and utensil etc. which are required and used for wedding feast. During the marriage the bride puts vermilion mark on the bride's forehead. After marriage, the newlywed couple set up new residence.

Another type of marriage is marriage by capture (*dripa sedi*) in which the groom's friends help him to capture the bride of his choice, after an offer of liquor and food. Then the girl's father visits the groom's house with his villagers. That matter is decided in the bride's village. This village council levies a fine of Rs. 300/- in cash and a buffalo to the groom's party. Then the captured bride is brought back to her father's house and later she is taken back to the groom's village.

In the Kandha society, sororate, widow remarriage, cross-cousin marriages are prevalent. Polygyny is allowed in case the first wife is barren.

### **Divorce**

Divorce is allowed on the ground of mis-understanding between couple, barrenness etc and such cases are finalized by their traditional *panchayats*. The bride's side has to return the bride price in case she leaves her husband for her own fault. Divorced (*sadri*) persons are also allowed to remarry.

## Death

The Kandhas believe that death is a natural phenomenon. When a person dies his family member start crying before the deceased person remembering his day-to-day activities and his works in his life time. The corpse is kept in the north-south direction with the head towards north. The lineage members present there carry the corpse to the burial ground covered with a new cloth. Then fire is set to it. After the cremation their relatives take bath and return home. The family of the deceased and the lineage members observe death pollution for 11 days. On the 12<sup>th</sup> day they observe mortuary rite, locally known as *Mana*. In that day they clean their house, clothes and all other materials used by them. They cut their hair, beard and nails. A feast is arranged on this occasion. The family members of the deceased and their relative's take part in the feast and the ritual comes to an end.

## LIVELIHOOD

The Kandha are agriculturists. They practice both shifting cultivation (*dahi*) on the hill tops and hill-slopes and plough cultivation (*nela*) in valleys and low lands. They cultivate on three types of lands namely Dhipa -upper land (*depa keta*), Berena (*jodi keta*) and Sarada (*suruda keta*) for paddy cultivation and they cultivate Kandala (*kanga*), Jununga (*judungaga*) Biri (*masangaga*) etc. in their hilly areas.

They cultivate different kinds of crops such as Paddy (*kudunga*), Ragi (*tedi*), Maize (*jaylaka*), Black gram (*biridi*), Horse gram (*kadpaka*), Sesamum (*rasi*), Mustard (*saras*), Bean (*sainga*), etc. They also grow vegetables in their kitchen garden (*akali bada*) for their own consumption and also for sale in the local market. They collect minor forest produce like timber (*beska*), fire wood (*erpa beska*), bamboo, *kendu*, *sal* leaves and *siali* creepers, etc. They use timber and bamboo for house building and making their hunting implements and fishing traps. They collect fire wood for their own use and also for sale in the local market. Collection of *kendu* and *sal* leaves are an important source of their income. They make leaf cups (*chaukuni*) and plates (*khali*) for their own use and often for sale. They collect different seeds and flowers such as Karanja (*ponagamia glatera*), Kusum (*Keheli*), *gora* (seed) for extracting oil and *mahua* (*irpi*) flower for brewing wine (*kalu*), which is used for ritual and ceremonial offering to the Earth Goddesses. They also collect juice from different trees such as Sago-palm (*salap*), Date-palm (*tadi*) and palm (*tala*) and gather edible roots, tubers (*tasa*), *lac*, *jhuna* (*tadili*), tamarind (*nedi*) from the forest (*gosa*). Therefore, the Kandha consider forest as their treasure. They go for hunting when they are not busy with agricultural work. Now as hunting is being prohibited, they only go on hunting during rituals. Fishing is an occasional pursuit. The Kandhas are also working as daily wage labourers and doing business to maintain their livelihood at present.

## Food habits:

Watered rice is their staple food. Generally they take meals thrice in a day. In the morning (*diesi*) they take watered rice (*pakali eju/basi eju*). After ploughing land they take boiled rice (*tila bela eju*) during the day. In the evening they take meal

(*benda eju*) with curry (*kusa*) and in dinner, they take boiled rice (*nadang eju*) or (*pala*) with curry (*kusa*). They eat seasonal cereals, pulses and vegetables like mustard (*sarsa*), maize (*jayalaka*), Kandul (*kanga*), Jhudunga (*jhudangakasa*), Beans (*sainga*) green leaves (*kusa*), mushrooms (*kutka*) etc. which are cooked and eaten. Sometimes they eat non-veg items like fish curry (*minka- kusa*), chicken (*kajunga*), mutton (*ada unga*), and the flesh of wild pig (*braha kusa*). They are very fond of different liquors (*kalu*) such as *mahua* liquor (*irpi kalu*) and juice from sago-palm (*mada kalu/salap*) and date palm (*gajuri*). *Mahua* liquor (*irpi kalu* or *ago kalu*) is used as medicine and also as ritual offering to appease deities (*penu*) and ancestor (*pideri penu*) in different ritual and festive occasions. They also chew (*dua*) and smoke (*kaheli*) tobacco.

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The Kandha are very religious and believe in animism. Their belief system centres around the nature. They worship a number of gods, goddesses, spirits (*pideri*) and various natural objects. To appease Gods and spirits, they perform various magico-religious practices which include sacrifice of different animals.

In their settlements certain symbolic structures like wooden poles, stones with vermilion markings (*baddi*), leaf plates, bamboo baskets (*boga*) etc. are found representing their ritual objects. Each spot has its own supernatural significance because it provides shelter to spirits and deities of certain special power. The Earth Goddess (*Darni Penu*) is their supreme deity. Other deities namely *Saru Penu* (mountain god) *Suga Penu* (stream god), *Piju Penu* (rain god), *Naju Penu* (village deity), *Pideri Penu* (ancestor god) *Bela Penu* (sun god), *Pilanu Penu* (hunting god), *Jakeri Penu* (sister of earth god), *Jori Penu* (river god), *Burpi Penu* (first fruit god), *Ruju Juga Penu* (calamity god), *Sande Penu* (border god) and the village deities like *Budi Maa Thakurani*, *Baral Devi*, etc. are worshipped in different occasions and festivals.

Every village has its own magico-religious specialists namely *Jani*, *Jhankar*, *Dehuri*, *Bahaka*, *Mati Guru* who worship their deities. *Mati Guru* (priest) worships only the Earth Goddess (*Darni penu*). In his absence, *Jhankar* worships *Darni Penu*. In their magico-religious practices, there are some taboos for women. They are not allowed to touch the sacrificial food and pregnant women are not allowed to eat that food. Their magico-religious performance is associated with several types of sacrifices and observances. These are followed by dance, music and drinking. These occasions promote the unity and integrity of the village. During the observance of rituals necessary sacred articles like wine (*kalu*), *arua* rice (*pranga*), egg (*tola*), *jhuna* (*tadali*), turmeric (*singa*), gourd (*loka*), etc. are collected and kept by the villagers. Observance of Meria festival is considered as a symbol of Kandha cultural identity.

### AESTHETIC LIFE

The Kandha perform different dances like marriage dance, Dhangidi-dhangada dance etc. to grace their festive occasions by using horn trumpet (*singa*),

*dhhol (dhula), dola*, clarinet (*maheri*) and circular drum (*sangu*). At the time of *dhangadi-dhangada* dance, they wear their traditional costumes and young girls and boys dance together with small membrane drum (*kandra*), clapping and singing songs. It provides an opportunity for them to choose their life partners.

### SOCIAL VALUE AND WORLD VIEW

The Kandha are very straight forward and they express their feeling before the people whom they trust. Their intimate relationships emerge from the core of their heart. They are kind, open hearted, honest, bold, trustworthy and ready to sacrifice life for their true friends. They are emotionally attached to nature and natural resources like land, deities, spirit, mountain, river, forest etc. which are precious for them. They believe in work and worship and never disregard or misbehave anybody unless they are very seriously hurt. They dislike people who cheat and betray them and are afraid of evil spirits, black magic and taboo. They hate people who take bribe and exploit them by grabbing their land and by depriving them of their rights. They are very sympathetic and helpful at the time of crises. They give equal importance and respect to the women. The Kandha women consider their husband's elder brother's children as their own children.

### SOCIAL CONTROL

The Kandhas have simple political organization. In the past, during British rule, the administration in their area ran through *Sardar*, the village headman and his post was hereditary. The *Sardar's* responsibility was to maintain law and order in his area. He was presiding over the village council meetings and receiving guests at the time of village functions. He used to negotiate with the headmen of other villages when such occasion arises. *Bismajhi* - the revenue collector was responsible for revenue collection from different *muthas* and the *Chowkidar* was working as the watchman of the village in case of criminal violence. The *Barik* from Domb or Pano community was appointed as village messenger. He was an assistant of the *Bismajhi*. Cases like family dispute, adultery, theft etc. were being decided in the village council sitting at the seat of *Darni Penu*. But at present the *Ward Member* is acting as the head man of the village instead of *Sardar*. He is elected by the villagers.

Under the Influence of modernization now they follow the Panchayatraj system. So their traditional political system is gradually declining. The office bearers of the statutory Panchayatraj are elected representatives of the people such as *Ward Members, Sarpanch*, Chairman of Panchayat Samity and Zilla Parishad etc. They look after the planned development programmes undertaken in their villages.

### CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

The impact of modernization, introduction of planned development intervention by Government and Non-government agencies have brought

developments in the fields of health and sanitation, education, agriculture, communication and infrastructure. During last six decades Government has initiated various welfare measures to bring about socio-economic development of the Kandha. The Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) functioning at Phulbani and Balliguda of Kandhamal district and the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) of Kandhamal district have implemented various socio-economic development programmes for development and modernization of horticulture, agriculture communication and irrigation for the sustainable development of the Kandhas. So now they have gradually adopted modern agricultural practices, by using High Yielding Varieties of seeds, better irrigation facilities, and chemical fertilizers. Some of them have adopted horticulture, poultry and fishery schemes for their livelihood enhancement.

Since education is the most important input for the socio-economic development, the STs and SCs Development Department has run a number of educational institutions like EMRS (Ekalavya Model Residential School), Higher Secondary Schools, High Schools, Girl's High Schools, Ashram Schools, Secondary Teacher Training Schools, Residential Sevashram and Sevashram in their area. Many students including girl students are attending these institutions. It has brought noticeable changes in their life style, dress pattern and belief system.

In the past infant mortality rate was high in the Kandha society, as they had strong belief on their traditional healing system. But now due to awareness and establishment of hospitals the infant mortality rate is gradually declining.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) and ST and SC Development Department of Odisha are organizing Live Demonstration Programme of Art and Craft of different tribes including the Kandha tribe. By their participation in these events they are exhibiting their traditional skills in wood carving, painting and basketry works. The National Tribal Dance Festival and Annual Adivasi Mela being organized by SCSTRTI and ST and SC Development Department has also helped them to exhibit their traditional dances and songs and preserve their cultural identity.

The ST and SC Development Department under the aegis of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India has established a Museum of Tribal Arts and Artefacts in the premises of SCSTRTI, CRPF Square, Bhubaneswar for preservation of material culture of different tribes. The personal adornments and belongings, photographs, implements, weapons of offence and defence, agriculture and household objects, dance and musical instruments and *Dhokra* objects of Kandha tribe have been exhibited in different show cases in the Tribal Museum which reflect their colourful life style.

# THE KANDHA OF KANDHAMALS DURING BRITISH RAJ \*

*Sarat Chandra Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

In the wilderness of the undulating hills forests, plateaus and river valleys of the Eastern Ghats region lives a fascinating Kui-speaking tribe called, the Kandha who are numerically the largest among the 62 tribal communities of Orissa. They identify themselves as KUI, KUIGA, KUI ENJU, KUI LOKU or KUI LOK but their neighbours call them Kandha. The foreign rulers and ethnographers referred them as KOND, KHOND, KONDH etc. As far as their social organization and cultural pattern are concerned the tribesmen form a species by themselves. This tribe was famous for their customary practice of human sacrifice (Meriah).

Centuries ago i.e., in August 1836 this tribe for the first time featured very prominently for their heinous practices of female infanticide and human sacrifice in the report of Mr. Russell to the Madras Government. Thereafter papers and articles on various cultural aspects of the tribe were published in various magazines and journals. Acting upon this information the British Government appointed Colonel Campbell who was succeeded by Captain McPherson as assistant to the Collector of Ganjam to suppress such heinous practices.

The British Government was quite concerned to stamp out the barbarous practices and restore peace and order in the territory. At that time the entire region inhabited by the Kandha was in a state of insurrection, disorder and violence. The practical measure, which Mr. Russell proposed to the British Government for achieving the objective, was to revive the fairs, formerly held in different localities and to establish markets in other places. He thought that the Kandha would be attracted to such fairs and market centers where they would

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXVIII, No.1, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2008, pp.61-68

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar



easily get their coveted articles such as salt, salt fish, brass utensils, scarlet red woolen blankets and coarse cotton clothes at a lesser cost. They used to get these favourite articles solely from their lowland neighbours either through barter or at a high price. He further thought that the market centers would provide opportunities to the Kandha for seeing and desiring possession of many new articles of foreign merchandise. This would create conditions for the British officials to have close interaction with the tribesmen and influence them as to give up their horrible superstitious beliefs and practices without applying force.

After meeting the tribesmen the British officers understood well that a law condemning human sacrifice and female infanticide and giving punishment to the offenders would prove abortive and involve a compromise of character. Therefore, they tried to develop a friendly relationship with them and persuade them to refrain from the inhuman practices using conciliatory measures and moral force rather than use of power and force. Apart from reviving the fairs and market centers as suggested by Mr. Russell which were discontinued for some reason or the other, other steps taken by the British officers for influencing the Kandha were establishment of friendship with them through direct contact and by strictly interdicting the army and camp followers from entering their villages and meddling in any way with them or with their livestock. In fact, the British authorities like Campbell and McPherson who were entrusted with the responsibility of administering the territory and suppressing the custom of human sacrifice and female infanticide could stamp out such detestable superstitions by non-violent means to a larger extent with the least application of force. But under certain compelling circumstances, force had to be applied. Then Kandha being a bold mountainous folk rose in revolt against administration and there were several encounters between the troops and the rebel tribals. Finally the situation was brought under control. To supplement the measures taken by the British Government, the Maharaja of Jeypore Zamindari to which the Kandha of Koraput belonged, introduced a new festival called, *Jura-parab* during the festival of *Meria* (human) sacrifice. This measure succeeded largely in replacing the human beings with the buffaloes for sacrifice during the festival.

After the human sacrifice stopped, the human being was replaced by a buffalo and with it the name of the festival changed from *Meria* to *Kedu*. But other items of the rite such as the duration of the festivities, the solemnity with which the rite was being observed and the joyous congregation of people remained as before.

Thus tribe became known to the administrative as-well as academic world for its superstitious beliefs and practices. But the thorns and thickets of the wilderness and the unhealthy climate of the Kandha country which was notorious for malaria deterred free access to the area and getting first hand knowledge about the tribe. However, with passage of time and development of road communication entry into the area and contact with the tribe became

possible. In those days scholars like Dalton, Risley, Thurston, Russell and Hiralal have left behind a few pages of ethnographic accounts about the tribe in their published works. Later many books, articles and notes on the tribe have come up in the census reports and research journals.

### **Population & Distribution**

Numerically, the Kandha constitute the largest tribe among the tribes of Orissa. In this regard it is not only a major tribe of Orissa state but also one of the major tribes of the country. According to the Census of 2001 the total population of the Kandha is 13 95 643 (6 88 402 males and 7 07 241 females). Though their population is unevenly spread throughout the State, their main concentration is in southern Orissa. Geographically, their stronghold lies in the central region (Boud-Kandhamal district), Rayagada region (Rayagada district) and south-western part (erstwhile Kasipur and Mahulpatna areas) of Eastern Ghats Region.

The decadal growth rate of Kandha population between 1991 and 2001 is 22.38 percent. In 2001, their sex ratio is 1027 females per 1000 males and their level of literacy, 31.87 percent as against 37.37 percent and 63.08 percent of that of the State's total tribal population and total population respectively.

### **The Kandha Country:**

In the recent past, i.e. in British India, the country of the Kandhas was situated in the region northwards, terminating on the edge of the valley of the Mahanadi and turning due east widens out into a large elevated plateau that slopes down to the plains of Ganjam on the south-east, and more abruptly to the valley of the Mahanadi in the Boud State on the north. Geographically this traditional Kandha country called Kandhmals is not homogeneous. The western part of the Kandhamals, which is the loftiest portion of the plateau, is intersected in all directions by the numerous lateral ramifications of the Ghats which break up the surface of the country into small depressions of comparatively small fertility. The eastern half of the Kandhamals contain larger and more open and fertile valleys. The ethnographical features of this Kandha country were in keeping with its geographical variations. The western portions of the Kandhamals were inhabited by the wilder and more primitive groups who, with the exception of a few headmen, who speak no language but their own, and whose women went about with only a piece of cloth round the lions, leaving the breast uncovered.

### **Nomenclature:**

The nomenclature of the tribe as recorded by the ethnographers, historians, British officers as well in several literatures, the govt records and the ST list of Orissa is KONND, KHOND, KONDDH, KANDHA etc. These are the names the non tribal people have given them.

Their non tribal neighbours called them KANDHA, probably because they are hill dwellers and as such, they live on roots and tubers they collect from the hills and jungles. In Telugu the hill is termed 'KONDA' and the Oriya word meaning roots and tubers is 'KANDA'. Though the origin of the name KANDHA is still obscure, it might have originated from KONDA or KANDA. But the foreign and Indian officers and writers have spelled the name as KOND, KHOND, KONDH.

"The Kandha tribe is variously known. They are called the Khond or the Kandha or the Kond, according to the usage of the term in vogue in different places in which they live. But whatever be the terminology used, it refers to the same tribe. The people of that class call themselves the Kandha as a result of their contact with the Oriyas...This nomenclature is believed to have come from the Telugu language in which the word '*Konda*' means a small hill as well as the hill-men. The territory in which the Kandha reside in large concentration is called, the Kandhamal, '*mal*' in Oriya signifying a hill tract. The other name of Phulbani district is Boud-Kandhamal, and the northern portion of the Ganjam district, which adjoins the Kandhamal, is called, the Kandha Maliah, meaning the hill tract inhabited by the Kandha." (Patnaik et al, 2006)

According to Thurston (1908) "The Telugu people call them Kotuvandlu. The origin of the name Khond is doubtful, but Macpherson is, I think, right in deriving it from Telugu '*Konda*', a hill. There is a tribe in Vizagapatam called Konda Dora or Konda Kapu, and these people are also frequently called Kotuvandlu. All these names are derivatives of the root Ko and Ku, a mountain."

Famous British Linguist, G.A. Grierson wrote, "The tribe is commonly known under the name of Khond. The Oriyas call them 'Kandhs' and the Telugu people, 'Gonds' or 'Kods'. The name which they use themselves is 'Ku' and their language should accordingly be denominated as 'Kui'."

In course of time, though the tribesmen have accepted the name KOND, KHOND, KONDH, KANDHA as bestowed upon them by the non KANDHAS, they identify themselves as KUI, KUIINGA, KUI ENJU, KUI LOKU or KUI LOK.

T.J. Maltby (Madras Civil Service) reported in *The Ganjam District Manual* (1882) & (rpt. Ed. G.D. Leman, 1918) that in origin the name of Kond in Telugu was 'Kodu Vandulu', in Oriya 'KONDHO LOKO' and the Khonds call themselves 'Kui' in plural 'Kuinga'.

Rise1y (1891) wrote "The Kondhs call themselves as 'Kui loka' or 'Kui-enju'. The synonyms of the Kandh are Kondh, Khond, Kui loka, Kui-enju.

Russel & Lal (1916) opined "The tribe call themselves *Kui loku* or *Kui enju* which may possibly be derived from *Ko* or *Ku*, a Telugu word for a mountain."

"*Kuvinga* or *Kuinga* are the words Konds use to refer to themselves. 'Kond' is an anglicized form of the Oriya name for them- *Kondo*, *Khondo*, *Kondho* or *Kandha* which Konds also often used. 19<sup>th</sup> Century sources mostly call them *Khonds* or *Kondhs*." (Padel, 2000)

"The people who speak the Kui language are generally known as Konds, Khonds or Kandhs, though they call themselves Kuinga." (Winfield, 1928)

"The tribe call themselves *Kui loka* or *Kui enju*. Kui is a Kondh word meaning above. The tribal name (Kondh/Kui) therefore signifies the people of the highlands." (Mukherjee, 1964)

In a literature of the British period it has been reported "The Kandhas, however, always speak of themselves as *Kui Loku*, i.e. the Kui speaking people, and of their language as the *Kui Kata* i.e. the Kui language. The name *Kandha* is said to be given to them and their language by their neighbours. *Kui* is a *Kandha* word meaning above or aloft; the tribal name therefore, literally means the lofty or lordly people – the superior race or the masters of the high country."

The Kandhas have a great many family titles suffixed to their names of which the most common are *Malika*, *Kahanra*, *Padhan*, *Majhi*, *Naika* and *Ghatal*; besides these, the names *Jhankar* (from *Jakeri*), *Jani*, *Dehuri* and *Bahauk* are applied to those who perform priestly functions or assist at rituals and sacrifices. *Malika*, *Kahanra*, *Jhankar* and *Jani* are purely *Kandha* titles, and the rest appear to have been borrowed from outsiders. *Padhan* is a common title of the *Sundis*, while *Majhi*, *Naika* and *Dehuri* are found in the *Sudha* caste, while *Majhi*, *Naika* and *Dehuri* are found in the *Sudha* caste, and *Bahauk* among the *Kewats*. The majority of the people bear the names of *Malika* and *Kahanra*; the former, which means head or chief, is supposed to be the title of the older settler, while *Kahanra* is said to be a corruption of *Kagari*, meaning in *Kandha* small or inferior. In one part of the country, the people call themselves *Jimdars*, a title said to have been conferred upon their ancestors by the *Raja* of *Boud*. *Jimdar* is a corruption of *zamidar*, which in these parts means simply a land owning cultivator. The cultivators being a respectable class of people, it was thought the new name would put the *Kandhas* on equality with the local *Oriyas* and ensure better treatment for them.

## Language

The *Kandha* speak a language of their own. It is a Dravidian language which has two regional variations such as '*Kuvi*' spoken by a majority of the *Kandha* of undivided *Koraput*, *Kalahandi* and *Bolangir* districts and '*Kui*', spoken by the *Kandha* who live in the *Phulbani* (*Kandhmal*) district. *Kuvi* appears to have original structural composition while *Kui*, an acculturated and transformed form of *Kuvi* language. Besides the *Kandha* of *Koraput*, other tribal communities as *Kandha-Paraja*, *Konda-Paraja*, *Penga-Paraja*, *Jatapu Dora* and

Konda Dora who have close affinity with the Kandha also speak Kuvi with a little admixture of Telugu.

### **Origin of the Tribe:**

No reliable information regarding the origin of the tribe is available. Some say that they came from the Central Provinces. Others state that they were driven back from the plains of the Ganjam district, and so account for the similarity between their language and Telegu. According to an early ethnographer Mr. Friend Pereira, there is vague tradition that they were driven away by a stronger race from the tract that constitutes the modern Gaya district in northern India and gradually found their way through Chota Nagpur and the Gondwana to the hills that form their present home. The old men of the tribe relate a story that they formerly lived at a place called Srambuli Dimbuli adjoining a high range of hills named Derhsaru somewhere in Ganjam or the Central Provinces. Pushed back from the fertile lands below, they at last summoned up courage to climb the hills, which has hitherto appeared to them to be the end of the world, and saw before them far away in the distance a large tract of apparently uninhabited jungle country. They were not slow in making up their minds to occupy the area. They promptly scaled the hills, and driving before them the less warlike inhabitants of the country, took possession of the Kandhamals and the surrounding tracts. It is evident that they migrated in large numbers, for they very soon completely ousted the former occupants, who now exist in scattered hamlets in Daspalla and other neighbouring areas, while not of them one is to be seen within the Kandhamals, the stronghold of the Kandhas. These people, who are known as the Kurmus, are a scattered race given to cultivation and other peaceful employments, and some say that it was from them that the Kandhas learnt to till the soil. One story has it that the Kurmus gave up their holdings peaceably to the Kandhas and disappeared from the country by ascending into the clouds. They are remembered with feelings of gratitude and reverence by the Kandhas, who claim them as elder brothers, calling them the first-born, and themselves the youngest born of Jamo Penu, the Creator, and invoke their blessing at the annual sacrifices. The Kurmus are known to have smoked tobacco or hemp out of small earthen *hookahs* and to have used steel axes like the Kandhas; these axes are sometimes turned up by the plough at old village sites.

### **Tribal organization:**

The Kandhas are divided into a number of exogamous divisions having a common ancestor occupying distinct locations. Each of these local divisions is called a *mutha*, and has a separate name and a separate head. In some cases the members of one sept have spread themselves over two or more *muthas* and intermarriage is prohibited within the whole group, though in other respects the people consider themselves to be quite distinct from one another. On the other hand, people of different families who happen to settle in different villages

within the same *mutha* freely intermarry with their neighbours. One such *mutha* (Aragirkia) containing 12 different families is to be found in the Kandhamals; and groups of as many as 18 and 11 *muthas* are known, e.g. the Athara Mutha Kandhas of Ganjam and the Egara Mutha Kandhas of the Kandhamals.

The Kandhas do not usually speak of their *mutha* but of their *klambu*, *gassi* or *gassi-bida* (literally, their lineage), which is an abbreviated form of the name of the founder of the sept. The word *gando* (body) suffixed to the founder's name gives the full name of the sept and *mutha*. Mendi is another suffix, meaning a ram, which has been applied in ridicule to those Kandhas who fled, in a battle with the Hadgarh people, with their arms shouldered, like the horns of a ram, which are curved backwards.

There are also three functional groups - the Kumhars or potters (Kumarenga), the Lohars or blacksmiths (Tezinaru) and the Gauras or cowherds (Gatianga), who, though Kandhas by descent are held to have sunk in the social scale for having whether from choice or from necessity, departed from the Kandhas' hereditary occupations of cultivation and hunting to other kinds of vocations which are considered menial. Among these three groups, the Kumhar has the highest position, for he is permitted to join in the village feasts, while the other two are debarred from all intercourse whatever, though they are not considered unclean like the Pans and Haris (Domenga and Gahenga). The latter are debarred from drawing water from the village well, and must live apart in a settlement of their own at a little distance from the main village. This is not the case in the Ganjam Malias, where the Pans and Kandhas live side by side. In a great part of the Kandhamals, the Pan's presence or touch is not considered polluting and he may enter a house or touch a Kandha without committing offence.

Among the Kandhas themselves, there are no prohibitions regarding social intercourse and eating and drinking together, but as a result of their intercourse with the non-Kandhas, a gradual change is now observable in the abandonment of certain old customs and the acquisition of new ones quite foreign to the tribe. In the eastern localities, where there has been a large influx of foreigners, the Kandhas abstain from beef and pork, wear imported cloths discarding coarse home-made stuffs, crop their hair and in addition to their Kandha oaths, swear on and read the Haribansa Pothi or Hindu religious books; while the women have given up tattooing their faces and abstain from liquor. These are the people who call themselves Jimdars. Many of them have forgotten their language and others make pretence of not knowing it. Oriya has, in fact, ousted Kui as their mother tongue. They have formed themselves into a caste, and look with great aversion on the Pans and Haris, going so far as to say that their touch and shadow are contaminating. They are now known to their more barbarous kinsmen as Sassi Kandhas (Sassi from *salba*, to go or depart, meaning foreigner), or Bagra (mixed), while those who still observe their ancestral

customs are called Aria Kandhas. Intercourse with these aborigines has similarly left its mark upon the Oriya settlers, for buffaloes are freely offered and slain at their annual sacrifices; wild pigs are caught and reared for their marriage feasts, and *sambar* and fowls are eaten without loss of caste. The Boud Kandhas seek their wives only from among the Sassi Kandhas and not from the Arias, with whom they have ceased to have any social intercourse. The Sassis of the Kandhamals prefer to get wives from Sassi families, but do not go so far as to deny hospitality to their Aria brethren.

Marriage with any of the functional groups is forbidden, and intercourse with them is looked upon as discreditable, although it does not entail excommunication from the tribe. All the members of the tribe are considered equal and one sept is as good as another. Their pride forbids them acknowledging a better or having any intercourse with an inferior, with the result that no section considers itself too good to take a wife from another or imagines it to be an act of condescension to give a girl in return. Marriages with outsiders are never heard of, though there have been cases of members of the tribe consenting to live with foreigners. Any intercourse with members of an unclean caste entails perpetual excommunication. But if any one desires to live with a member of a clean caste, his choice is tacitly consented. A Kandha, however, prefers a Kandha wife, as he does not care about a woman who can not understand his feelings and scoffs at his religion. Within each sept or *mutha* the ancient patriarchal form of government still flourishes with great vigour. The head of each group is the old *aba* (father) – the Mutha Malika or Kahanra as he is called. Every village has, in the same way, its own *aba* or headman. The offices are hereditary and contingent on the good behaviour and fitness of the holders. Children are completely under the sway of their parents and do not separate during their life time. But all of them, with their wives and children, form a single family under the control of the grand father. The people of the village and even settlers are called father or mother or brother and sister, according to the relationship in which they stand to one another. Disputes are referred to a traditional council of elders; this council is appealed to by all classes and its decisions are very rarely disputed.

### **Village Organization and Territorial Rights:**

In those days, the Kandhas held their land directly from Government. They had no other landlord and claimed permanent rights in the soil. They themselves, however, attained the position of petty landlords by the grant of a portion of their land to outsiders or to their poorer relatives. Under tenants were never supposed to acquire any permanent right of occupancy in their holdings, and were expected to acknowledge the claims of their landlords by the yearly gift (*mutha*-rent) of some rice, a goat and some liquor. Their tenure depended solely on the good will and prosperity of their landlords, and they may be ejected simply by being told to leave. They had no right to alienate their land nor were

they ever permitted to sacrifice to the earth-goddess upon their holdings, a rite indicating permanent ownership, which no one but the owner of the land may perform. Produce rents were sometimes demanded one-third or a half of the yield being the usual quantity given. The custom was still in its infancy, though the Kandhas have much land that they could profitably lay out in this way. Some of them owning extensive holdings threw open the high lands to their landless brethren, neither seeking nor getting any *mutha* rent from them.

They were not under any landlord until the *Mustajari* or *Muthari* system was introduced. Even after these intermediaries came into power the Kandha continued to hold land as if they were the landlords. The villages where the Kandha resided were grouped into several *Muthas*, and each *Mutha* was homogenous in clan composition. In earlier days there was more land in relation to population and the Kandha were in possession of large holdings.

When a man dies without a male issue, his land passes to his nearest male relations and is divided equally among them. They must support the widow and the daughters, if any, and get the latter married when they grow up. Women in Kandha society cannot hold land. But they can claim maintenance. As stated earlier the joint community system prevails amongst the hill Kandha with regard to the ownership of land. The people of each village, on a larger scale, and those of a *Mutha* own them jointly. Outsiders cannot possess land within a *Mutha*. Each *Mutha* is generally composed of a single sept or clan, and therefore, an outsider who does not belong to that particular sept and is not a bonafide member of the *Mutha* has no right to acquisition of land in the *Mutha*. More over, an outsider who is not related by blood to the people of the *Mutha* is looked upon as an interloper, and, in no case, he is allowed to acquire any permanent right of occupancy in their holdings.

In the traditional Kondh society of the past, their customs and traditions governed their social interactions and reigned supreme to regulate the behavior of the tribesmen for ensuring social control and conformity. But in these days with the onslaught of the forces of culture contact, planned progress and modernization, their traditional social institutions are declining. However, the Kandhas who consider themselves to be one group of people being the Kui Loku i.e. the Kui speaking people and the children of one Earth Goddess the Darni Penu, still continue to try to retain the best of their traditional society with the objective of maintaining their separate cultural identity.



### *References*

- |                 |         |  |
|-----------------|---------|--|
| Bailey, F.G.    | 1960    | Tribe, Caste and Nation, Oxford University Press, London   |
| Dalton, E.T.    | 1960    | Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta   |
| Debi, Kiranbala | 1963-64 | Kondh, Adibasi, Vol.-V, No. 3, p. 69-74, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.   |
| Duff, Rev. A.   | 1848    | Lieutenant Macpherson's Report on the Kondh of the Districts of Ganjam and Cuttack, Calcutta Review-Vol.- VI, p. 45-108, Calcutta. |
| Frowde, H.      | 1908    | The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XV, P. 280-288, Oxford.  |
| Mohanty, P.C.   | 1971    | Handbook on the Kandhas of G. Udayagiri (Unpublished), Report No. 48, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.  |
| Patnaik, U. Ch. | 1945    | The Kandhas of the Hills - one Century of British Rule (1836 to 1936), Mod. - Rev. Vol. - LXXVIII-1945, pp. - 214-218.             |
| Patnaik, N.     | 1957-58 | Orissara Bivinna Prakara Kandhaa (Oriya), Adibasi, Vol.-II, No. 4, P. 26-31, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.                                   |
| Patnaik, U.N.   | 1964-65 | Reminiscences of an Administrative Officer in Kandh Hills, Adibasi, Vol. VI, No.2, P. 29-36, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.                   |
| Raman, Leela V. | 1957    | The Kandhas of Phulbani, Adibasi, Vol.-II, No. 1, P. 35-39, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.  |
| Risely, H.H.    | 1891    | <i>Tribes and Castes of Bengal</i> , Vol.1. Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Press.  |
| Russel, R.V.    | 1975    | Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. III, P. - 446-481, Cosmo Publications, Delhi.                            |
| Sherring, M.A.  | 1974    | Hindu Tribes and Castes - Vol.- III, Cosmo Publication, Delhi.   |

# RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES, ORDEALS AND A LEGEND ABOUT ORIYA INFILTRATION IN KONDH HILLS \*

*U. N. Pattanaik* <sup>1</sup>

The Kondh believes that the illness or disease of any member of his family is due to the wrath of the Gods if such illness does not disappear as a result of the efforts of the village "Guru" or "Tlomba" or "Koota Gatanju" to drive away the spirits which might have cast their evil eyes on the person ailing. The head of the family takes a vow that he would perform 'Kedu' to propitiate the Gods and the manes of the ancestors. This propitiation is done after the recovery of the person ailing. Such a vow is taken on the advice of the Tlomba, or the Koota Gatanju. Thus the "Kedu Laka" has an individualistic origin but is observed as a communistic ceremony as can be seen from the following.

The Kedu Laka is the buffalo sacrifice. It is done in the month of Chaitra (generally the month of March) and on the full moon day. It so happens that there are more than one such vows to be redeemed in a village and there are many such in the same *mutha*. A *mutha* generally represents the habitation of a sub-tribe (Klambu). In case the sick person dies, the vow need not be redeemed but otherwise it has to be redeemed at any cost. The village Chatia (Chaukidar) goes about the entire *mutha* and informs every village of the intended performance of the Laka. He advises the headmen to get ready with their buffaloes and liquor etc. This is done about 15 days before the date fixed.

On receipt of the intimation the villagers get ready with their rice and Mohua liquor and the men and women get ready their best apparel. The clothes are boiled in a solution of ash in huge big pots. The girls give an extra polish to their brass and aluminum ornaments. The distillation of liquor whether in the village or near a jungle stream in the thick jungle starts and everyone looks with anticipation to the day of the 'Laka' (Sacrifice).

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XI, No.4, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1970, pp.76-84

<sup>1</sup> Member of Orissa State Civil Service

On the day so fixed, 4 or 5 young men put on fresh washed clothes and follow the "Tlomba" (hereditary priest) who wears a new clothes and ties another such round his head as turban. The Tlomba is a hereditary functionary and it is generally believed that every Tlomba possesses super natural powers. The group takes their bath at any spring on their way to the forest. They move on with their wet clothes in search of the Kedu post.

The sacrificial post has to be selected by the Tlomba. It should be a healthy tree without any hallow or deformity and in diameter. No birds should have built their nests on it. On locating such a tree, the Tlomba gives 3 handful of raw rice as offering to the tree and addresses it "O" tree be sound. Wholesome and auspicious if the vow of so was good (meaning the man who took the vow). After this request to the tree, the Tlomba gives the first stroke and the other follow suit. The tree is felled and a length of about 7 feet is cut there from and the bark peeled off at the spot. The piece is then sized with 4 edges. The four companions of the Tlomba carry the log in a *bhar* to the village by about noon. The piece of wood is then sized by "Barsi" (Hammer and chisel combined).

The *puja* then begins. The Tlomba gives an offering or liquor and water to the ancestors of the particular family doing the *puja* and then gives some of the offering to the husband and the wife. The wife of the vower gives some cooked rice to the Tlomba who offers it to the Gods and gives a portion to the husband and the wife to eat. The couple would be fasting, till then. The youths who had brought the piece of wood eat at the vower's house. The Tlomba goes to his house and serves out the cooked rice his wife and he eats himself. If the Tlomba or his wife commit any mistake in this one of the pet animals of the Tlomba is sure to die. It is about sunset by the time the Tlomba takes his food. The vower comes and fetches him to his house where the near the piece of sacrificial wood.

The man who is the Tlomba needs some describing. He is the hereditary sorcerer of the village and the priest and he is associated with the possession of supernatural powers. He is either a Kondh or a Kondh Kumbhar and is either of the same "Klambu" or tribe as the villagers or adopted by it. He is held in esteem by the villagers. He is also the village doctor and "Maatras" and propitiations are the first part of the treatment.

The next morning the celebrations start in the village. Men and women go about in the village dancing and drinking as time passes on (It may be remembered that a Kondh village is generally 2 parallel rows of between and the total number of house with the "Raha" road in between and the total number of house on the average is 15). Drinking and eating progresses but the Tlomba his wife, the vower, and his wife remain fasting.

The girls are dressed in their best with their bead necklaces (*potheka*), necklaces of silver rupee coins and 8 *anna* bits Kekoka on the forehead (silver ornament to run along the margin of the hair on the forehead), 'Balang' (silver solid

bracelets), aluminum 'pakanga' (hair pins on the head) and Gogoloka (anklets). Wild flowers deck their hair or are thrust in the arch of the head and ear. The girls dance in groups of 4 or 5, by making time with the Gogoloka beating one against the other, while young men with '*Khanjani*' sing songs. The elders dance, the matrons just marking time and the middle-aged males with a brandished Tangi or a wooden axe mark time.

At noon the Tlomba marks a spot in front of the vower's house and digs a big hole. Others present assist him. He throws three handfuls of rice into the pit scarifying the pit and mentally requesting the pit and co-operation of the earth God (Tana Penu) in the successful performance of the sacrifice. The post is carried to the hole by the Tlomba and others and is planted in the hole. Earlier in the morning the Tlomba and the vower go to the forest after bath and fetch green fibre. The planted fibre is used in tying the sacrificial buffalo to the post.

The Tlomba then throws rice thrice on the head and thrice on the back of the animal and calls upon the spirits of the ancestors of the vower particularly the spirit of the particular ancestor whom he has seen in a vision as having caused the illness, to come and receive the sacrifice, being offered in propitiation. He then addresses a general prayer to the ancestors of the tribe and enjoins them not to cause illness to anyone in the village. He begs of them to safeguard the interests of the tribe, to vouchsafe good crops. He then gives a cut at the neck of the animal with an axe. All the men join in backing at the animal and it falls down struggling. The people cut slices from the body of the animal and some blood and run to their Dharnis or places of tribal worship in the respective villages of the same tribe. At the village Dharni, the village Tlomba would be sitting expecting the sacrificial flesh blood. On getting it, he sprinkles rice on the Dharni thrice and pours the blood on the Dharni.

After the sacrifice the villagers divide the remaining portions of the sacrificed animal and go to their respective homes. While food is being cooked dancing and merry-making is kept up by the young folk late into the night.

The Kedu post is left to decay and rot.

Tribal by Ordeal in the Khend Hills (1947)

Disputes are common over the ownership of Sago plant trees. These trees are planted by individuals and even though they take about 40 years to mature their original planter is often alive to drink the juice of the tree. No one lays any claim in such a case as the planter is alive. The interval between the planting and the maturity of the tree is so long that not unusually there are several claims to the ownership of a tree. The contesting parties invite the elders of the village near the tree and the claimant touches the leaf of the tree in its unopened state and very solemnly utters the following words "It may ancestor planted this, the wine will overflow otherwise it will dry up". The next morning the elders and the contestants go to verify and if the juice has not stopped flowing the issue is decided in favour of the claimant. If the juice has not collected in the pot overnight it is decided that the claim was a false one.

There is nothing of an ordeal in this and the working of the sub-conscious find with all the fervour and sincerity of an honest Adibasi probably calls forth the soul force behind it, and this causes the flow of the juice or its cessation. There are several instances quoted of the Adibasis supernatural powers in the manifestation of his will power even today. It is a current theory that a Kondh is able to transform himself into a tiger or a python according to his will.

There are not instances of trial by battle although there are quarrels between individuals which end in murder. A form of trial by ordeal is the "SEERU MOONJA". Here the two contestants go to particular tank or deep pool in the bed of a stream. One such place is jargy Bhatta (in Barakhama Mutha). Another is an Udu Bolangir-A-third is at Dodkingia (Pusangia Mutha) yet another is near G. Udayagiri. At each of these places the people believe there are powerful deities or spirits which assist actively in bringing the right to light.

The contesting parties go with the village elders to the spots offer Puja of raw rice and cow's milk. The offering is given to Darma Penu (Dharma) to Sapandara and Vacendare (Moon and Sun) Jagjapunja and Kukurpunja (two groups of stars) as well as two other groups of such stars known as AshaDadae and Mdehagadae. After these offerings the local names of the high hills nearby are also uttered. The remains of the Puja offerings are given to the contesting parties. The Pujari who does the Puja cuts two trees either Sal or Bamboo and takes them to the water. In the water they are planted two cubits apart and are held by the two contestants. The Pujari stands between the two Saplings.

The Panchyatdars then ask the contestants. "Are you bent on the Praman" the contestant then reply yea. The Pujari then asks them to dive in the water. They go into the water and the Pujari pours some milk on their heads saying 'Let the innocent remain under water long and the guilty come up quick'. The popular belief is that the milk poured by the Pujari over the heads of the contestant finds a way, through the intervention of the deities into the nose and ears of the guilty who is forced by unseen powers to rise up after a short interval. The innocent remains so long after the guilty comes up that the Pujari has to lift him up practically. Thus the supernatural powers of the Pujari are believed to have invoked the assistance of Gods in deciding which of the contestants is in the wrong.

The village head or the Mutha head presides over such functions, and he gives a written certificate that the successful contestant is not guilty. The official who presides this is paid Rs. 5 and this payment is known as 'Sarada Puja' meaning pig for the Praman.

The Panchyatdars who witness the trial are paid Rs.5 and the amount is spent on a feast at which Panchyatdars of both the parties join. The description of the money paid to the village or feudal heads indicate that originally such heads were Adibasis and were prizing a pig more than money. The fact that Panchyatdars of both the sides join at the time of Praman they carry no personal animosity and abide by the decision as one coming with the divine aid.

The secret of the Praman seems to be quite simple. The man who is guilty and has no faith in his own cause is in a way mesmerized when the Pujari drops milk on his head and his subconscious mind is so much impressed that he is unconsciously lifted up. It is thus influence of the subconscious that makes him feel as if the milk enters his nose and ears. To their unsophisticated simplicity and sincerity and with their belief that the Gods would intervene directly the contesting Kondhs surrender themselves to the influences of the subconscious entirely. The result is simple and easily explainable by modern psychology.

The next trial by ordeal which was in vogue till about 30 years back was the Gropa Saradae as it is called. The place of this ordeal was at Pusangia in Balliguda Taulk and the Patro of Pusangia who worships the LokaPenu of the Khend was presiding at this ceremony. People all over Balliguda Taluk used to obtain a oral decree over disputes about 30 years back there was a Deputy Tahasildar by name, Shri Apparao who got this mode of trial prohibited.

There is even now a very big Sal tree at Pusangia which is believed to be the abode of the deity Loja Penu. The contesting parties would come to the Patro and affirm before him that they would go through the Sarada or Praman. The complaint or challenger gets one egg and about half a seer of raw rice. These are offered to Loha Penu. The Khend who is the subordinate worshipper of Loha Penu fetches water from the stream nearby. A fireplace is prepared and fire is lighted. He gets a small quantity of a black cow's dung and adds it to the water. The water boils both parties are standing close to the pot and they throw a few grains of raw rice into the boiling water calling upon Dharma Penu to witness the contests and to adjudicate. The innocent man's rice goes down into the boiling water which the rice thrown by the wrong causes the boiling water to rise up. After this the man who denies the challenge would dip his fore arm up to his elbow in the boiling water. The hand is however immediately pulled up. The challenger then dips his hand in a similar manner. After this all the people there leave the place. The hands of the contestants are examined the next day by the Patro in presence of the panchayat. The innocent man's hand is normal while other man has blisters on his hand. This decides the issue and both parties accept the divine judgement.

The blisters would disappear two days and the hand would be all right within a week.

Kakalabaki is a place near G. Udaygiri about 100 yards from the G.Udayagiri farm. In the bed of a Nala there huge sheep rocks, there are some small shrubs nearby and there is a deep place in the bed of the Nala about 4' in deep. It is to this that the Kondhs of G. Udayagiri Taluk go for a Proman (Seeru Moonja). It is believed that underneath the stone live two huge lizards each 8' long with a dazzling precious stone on their heads. They reflected to be having large fangs and protruding tongues and that whoever sees the creatures does not live for more than a week thereafter.

### **A legend about Odiya infiltration into the Baliguda agency of Ganjam district**

Mahasingi is a Mutha (collection of villages) over which there is a headman of a semi-feudal nature, namely the Patra of Mahasingi. He is an Odiya and claims to be a Khetriya. The following is the legend which describes the manner in which his first ancestor came to Mahasingi and began reigning as the overlord of that area.

The story is that about 25 generations back the *adibasis* of Mahasingi Mutha prominent among whom were the Nagbura and Kanbura committed innumerable offences and thus the land was split out of the wrath of Goddess Patkhanda. Patkhanda means the chief sword or the best sword and the name of the deity suggests that she was worshipped because her sword was the best or her power to smite was as deadly as the best sword. As a result of this divine wrath that year everything went barren, the animals and the human being did not bear off spring, the crops failed, the fruit yielding trees did not yield the fruit and even the streams dried up. The Goddess Patkhanda appeared in vision in a dream and conveyed to all the tribal elders that she was displeased with their unclean mode of life and their irreligious manners and was therefore punishing them. There were propitiations and devout offerings to the Goddess as usual with local people.

In reply to their prayers and imploring to disclose the manner in which they would again get the things restored to them the Goddess in dream told that she would not be displeased if they were to get a man who would be able to please her by his clean ways of living and offerings and worship of the purest form.

Then the elders implored her again at the time of worship and sacrifice to suggest the name of the person who would thus be able to please her. The Goddess indicated to them in the dreams that they should tie a piece of black yarn to an arrow and a piece of yellow yarn to another arrow and to shoot these 2 high into the air, and follow them up. Where these two arrows would fall there would be a man and he was to be brought and made their king. The leading Kondhs who were Nagbura and Kanbura (meaning man with hairy ears and man with hairy nose) carried out the instructions in the vision, shoot the arrows and ran after them. The arrows went and struck the ground near a spring in Jorasingi, where a man named Madan Singh was bathing. The Nagbura and Kanbura pounced upon him and carried him off bodily to Mahasingi. There he was given all royal honours but kept under guard lest he might escape and was put to some tests by the tribesmen.

The following were the tests:-

He was shown a big clump of bamboos and asked to cut it. Madan Singh did not attempt cutting over the ground but started cutting at the roots in such a manner that by cutting a few of the roots, the whole clump toppled over being out-placed by the weight of bamboos overhead. This was taken by the aborigines as a feat because it would have meant them a weeks' time to do what M. Singh did in about 1 Ghadi.

The next test was, he was given 6 earthen plates and asked to keep one over the other and then to urinate on the topmost, the idea being that if he was a real strong and voile man, his urine would appear on the bottom-most plate. M.Singh came out successful even in this test.

The tribals then declared him to be their chief priest though not kind. They built a house for him, provided lands for him, gave him food for immediate use and asked him to make himself comfortable. He was honoured to be the head priest on all occasions and naturally on account of his proness and intelligence he was asked to maintain law and order within the Mutha and to guide and govern the people.

He was designated Patra or probably he designated himself as such and his descendant even today continue to be the lords of Borakhama and Mahasingi Muthas. The Kedulaka is performed on the Akhaya trutia in the month of Baisakh. Even today it appears like tribal worship of the names of ancestors.

The Patras and Kondhs in spite of the advance of times looked upon each other as the Rulers and the Ruled to some extent. The chief Malik of the Mutha who is probably a descendant of the Nagbura and Kambura rules the Matha in all tribal matters and is the head of the tribe Panchayat covering over a number of villagers. It is he who invests the Patra with a Sadhi when he first assumes the charge of Patra and on all subsequent years once annually.

The annual Sadhi Investiture Ceremony even till the recent past was the following :-

On the date of investiture of the Sadhi all Kondhs in the mutha go in a body with their respective Maliks and Chief Malik. Drums beating, music playing and in the peculiar dress of the adibasis, the body proceeds to the headquarters of the Patra in a procession. The Patra comes out from his house and receives them on the way in the village.

They are then led to a place near the Patra's house where the Sadhi Investiture Ceremony takes place. The Patra seats himself and the Chief Malik ties a piece of new cloth round his head repeating the following formula in Qui Language "We were unclean, our land went barren. Patakhanda directed us to get Madan Singh from Jorasingi. We brought him and made him our chief. We did not know the foreigner's language which he knew and he was our leading light. He managed our affairs and looked to our wellbeing. We make you our chief. Communicate our grievances to the Sarkar and tell us the orders of the Sarkar. Look to our welfare as you would look to your children and take *mamools* from us".

After this ceremony the Patra gives them a goat and some rations and the aborigines go to the nearest spring to have a feast. As the time of this Investiture Ceremony each Malik pays Re. 1/- as Bheti to the Patra.



The tie created by this ceremony is so strong that even today the Patra's seeds have the sanction of law in his area and the mutual belief is that if any party plays the other false he would be punished by death preceded by vomiting blood.

It is seen from this legend that originally the Kondhs alone were the inhabitants of the Mal areas of Ganjam. The Nagbura and Kanbura might be suggestive of a species of wild men who had hairy faces. It may be that the illusion is to the ape man. Whatever it is, it is clear that the *adibasis* felt the need of having a man intelligence as their leader and went to the extent of kidnapping one such.

The story of Patkhanda of beast sword indicates that once upon a time the *adibasis* felt that their tribal Gods were inefficient and that there was a Goddess as powerful as the best sword who was able to bring natural calamities in the wake of her wrath. Both the words Pat and Khanda are Oriya terms and therefore, it suggests that the aborigines who did not know the use of Khanda had by then felt the weight of the sword. This may mean that they were subject to any invasion and were controlled by Oriya chiefs on the border areas.

The story about the tests of the process of a man are common in all ancient countries. The superior man was to be the leader and he who was to be the leader and he who was superior in possession was to be found out so as to be the defender of the country in time of needs. The tests are rather peculiar but probably at the *adibasi* level about 25 generations back this was the best that could be conceived. The manner in which the Oriyas were brought into the Kondh land as the chief priest and ultimately became the Patra is very suggestive. The word Patra is a Odiya term and it stands for the Chief Executive Officer of a King. This word in Kui Language is Patrenju, and the use of this word by the aborigines 25 generations ago suggests that there were Oriya kings in the neighborhood who had Chief Executive Officers. The aborigines who were then probably confined entirely to the hills never saw a kind of a neighboring Oriya country but only saw his Patra or felt his Patra's weight of arms.

Form the post of chief priest Madan Singh, the first Patra of Mahasingi or his subsequent descendants came to be the Patrenju and the formula repeated at the time of Sadhi investiture suggests that his help as Liaison Officer between the British forces and the aborigines was of more recent origin.

The term Mamool stands for an *awbwab* and is degenerated from friendly good will offerings to compulsory in the present day. They probably meant good will acts, such as tilling the land of the Patra, repairing his house giving him some rice, etc., to do ceremonials and such other things which are now being looked upon as legal dues by the descendants of the Patras. The State of Orissa decided to do away with the Mamools.

## REMINISCENCES OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER IN THE KANDHA HILLS \*

*U. N. Pattanaik*<sup>1</sup>

Balliguda Taluk is a compact area of about 800 sq. miles in the Boudh-Phulbani district. It touches Koraput district and Ganjam scheduled areas on the south, Kalahandi on the west, Bolangir and Boudh on the north and Khondmals and G. Udayagiri on the east. The Tel, the Khadug, the Boda, the Sapua are the major streams flowing through this area. The area is very rich in *sal* although it is not of the best species. Sisu, Piasal, etc. valuable timbers just grow wild. The flora and fauna are interesting and abundant. The majority of the population is Kondh and he is of the pure stock. Meriah sacrifices were being indulged in by the population as late as the thirties of the last century. The population was of a wild stock and a contingent of the Ganjam hill police used to be stationed at Balliguda. Reservation of forests in the area was undertaken in the twenties of this century. There was no exploitation and extraction to any appreciable extent. The virgin forests continued to be unmolested and the land remained mostly a habitat of wild animals with herds of wild elephants roaming about. The population is sparse and the people (Adibasis) live in sublime indifference of what is going on in the world around them. Schools are fairly numerous but the school-masters are themselves truants in most cases. The Adibasi finds no charm or use in education. His children are just domestic or field hands and by their going to school, he would have to think of supplementary field hands to assist him and domestic hands to assist the housewife in collecting the edible roots in winter, the green eatable leaves in summer, the *mohua* and mango in summer and the bamboo shoots during rains. Most important is fetching of water which invariably lies at not less than a furlong from the village. Paddy has to be thrashed, mango kernel and tamarind seeds have to be pounded and treated. Who is to attend to all these, if the girls and boys go out for education? The system of education is outlandish. For children of nature the drab four walls of a school under a teacher who either does not know the language or knows it indifferently, is most unwelcome, if not repulsive. The lessons taught are far above the I.Q. of an Adibasi child. The subject-matter is of no interest to the child he

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. VI, No.2, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1964-65, pp.29-35

<sup>1</sup> Member of Orissa State Civil Service

would follow it with interest, if the lessons and teachings had some relations with the conditions in the hills. Wild animals, birds, trees would be within easy reach of a child there. Stories from Ramayana topics or words in vogue in the Plains area are foreign. The songs taught do not have anything common with the tribal child. The counting numerical, arithmetic's, etc., need be taught by the direct nature's method. The child, if compelled or coaxed, goes to school, reads for a few years and leaves it to forget immediately all that had been taught. The child relapses straight into nature which had always been calling him in silent tones, even when the teacher teaches. He gives up or rather throws to the winds all the teachings of teaching. What is the good of this method of teaching, of the curriculum adopted, of the subject-matters taught, if it does not succeed in rousing the interest of the taught ?

The model curriculum should be one according to the present principles of basic education. The Adibasis should be taught numbers with trees with models, arithmetic should be taught with illustration from the animal kingdom. Moral lessons should be taught with reference to the animal kingdom and the Adibasis themselves living in the area. Rama, son of Dasaratha, Shivaji the great Maharatta, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, the Mahamahopadhyay and the other great men of the world will not rouse any interest in the Adibasis, stories of the railway of the steam engine and the like which we see in the text-books 30 would be far beyond the I. Q. of the Adibasi children and should not be taken to them. Play and past-times should be invented basing on the Adibasi life and land so that the children could follow them quickly. Arts and handicrafts taught should not aim at making the Adibasis expert carpenters or finished tailors. Weaving which the Adibasis understand would be a better substitute. Pottery which is in the hands of a few could be usefully taught. Smithy and brass and silver works would provide better employment. Manufacture of glass beads in spite of the cost of transport of raw materials would provide very lucrative employment.

If the development of Adibasi areas is seriously contemplated, the method as well as the subject taught should undergo a drastic change, the Adibasi child should know his cult first before he is made to improve upon it. Our object should never be to give him the education which will qualify him to the degree class ultimately. It should not also be to give him immediately an idea of the modern world He is in the infancy of what we call civilization and we should give him a change to get up into childhood before we can hope that he will be able to understand, digest and assimilate what is taught to him.

Many would call this a retrograde step. It would indeed appear to anyone who does not know the working of the mind of the Adibasi child. The child psychology with reference to learning an outlandish cult and civilization are hard to be beaten into an infantile Adibasi mind to all orthodox educationalists to ponder over the problem The Adivasi should first know what he possesses before he can understand what he can attain. This is a request to all orthodox educationalists to ponder over the problem.

Now coming to the shortcomings that are in the personnel who are in charge of education in the scheduled areas, one has to make very painful and embarrassing observations. Apologies are due to the very few honest, sincere and dutiful teachers and educational officers who in spite of the heavy odds against them, are shouldering all the work of spreading education through the system in force. Their number is very small and if they have been discharging their duties it is for the love of the labour.

The teachers in the Adibasi areas are recruited from the adjacent plain areas down the hills and from among the Oriya settlers within the hills. The former class is generally composed of young men who failing to find employment in the plains seek their fortune in the hills in the Education Department as Primary School teachers. They come to the hills alone. Few of them take pains to learn the tribal language and all of them look down upon the Adibasi, with contempt as unclean and uneducated breed. They carry their superiority complex to such an extent that they cannot even sit with an Adibasi even if it is absolutely necessary. No day passes without the teacher telling a boy or two that they are beasts born to animals. The boys are called Kondh Sala or Saora more than once a day. Such abuse brings about similar contempt towards the Plains teacher, if not hatred. The teacher has his family or lands down the hills and he is compelled to go often to see to them. Once he is at home, it is difficult for him to return quickly. He is posted with the tour programme of Inspecting Officers and takes a long time to make up his mind to go back to his post in the hills. He freely utilizes the services of the children in carrying his things when he returns from the nearest shopping centre. The children collect his fuel and sometimes fetch his water. There are other bad practices resorted to by some teachers and it is desirable to pass them over. After a service of 10 to 12 years, the teacher begins to take some materialistic interest in the area. He is called to the Village Panchayats, takes part in village politics, till on reaching the peak of importance, he attracts the notice of the Inspecting Officers and is transferred.

The second type is again divisible into two classes-the Adivasi teacher including the Pano and the teacher from the Oriya settlers. Both these classes in general terms are not men of any great intelligence. They are men with low degree of imagination and understanding. In many cases they repeat the lessons without fully understanding the principles. Even though they could make the lessons interesting to the Adivasi child, they never try to do it. In olden days, this class of teachers was making sincere attempts to discharge its duties. Their absence from the schools was less frequent, of shorter duration and because of their localities, they found it more convenient to stay at the schools. Of late with the penetration of political parties, etc., this class is now more important in the eyes of the foreigners and the teachers are gradually losing interest in the schools. There is a tendency among them to work into the good graces of the persons referred to above. There is also less disciplinary control over them because of their usefulness to persons and parties. The schools managed by this class are showing signs of deterioration.

There is a sharp difference between the Oriya settler and the Adivasi and Pano teacher. The Adivasi teacher is more dull but good natured. He is sometimes over-sensitive about his own importance as an Adivasi teacher. This sense of importance is not, however, manifested in any superiority complex and is, therefore, tolerated on all hands. It is treated as a harmless and pardonable failing.

Then comes the Pano teacher. He is generally a non-resident and closes his school oftener than the Oriya settler or the Adivasi teacher. He, however, is so intelligent and calculating that he is rarely caught in his absence. He teaches what is in the syllabus and nothing more. He realises that he is working for his bread and bread alone and is purely formal. Almost all these teacher know the Adivasi language and the Adivasi but they never try to improve him. They are vain and suffer from a superiority complex as they know full well that they are more intelligent than the Adivasi. They look down upon the Adivasi and Oriya children with contempt but on account of their superior intelligence manage to remain unexposed. Very often they dabble in trade not unsuccessfully. They work themselves into the confidence of the Adivasi and wherever there is any litigation, they are bound to have a direct or indirect hand in it.

It is this class which can be utilized successfully in giving the Adivasi the proper education. The Pano teacher understands the psychology of the Adivasi and his language. He can follow the change if introduced and he alone can make himself perfectly understood. It is persons of this class who can help in drawing up a syllabus and curriculum for the Adivasi child. It has, however, to be kept in mind that he needs close and strict supervision. He is by nature a shirker and if the best out of him is required, he should be kept under control. Being intelligent he chafes at strict control and so the control has to be fitful and elastic. Another point about him is that his guidance should be cautiously taken. His superiority complex and his contempt for the Adivasi sometimes make him vindictive and cruel.

It would only be proper to close this note with a few words about the Inspecting Officer. They are all officers capable and competent. They come to the hills to do their duty thoroughly. They always start in right earnest but as time passes on, the monotony of the place, the long and lonely distances, the frequent attacks of malaria damp their spirits. The inconvenience of undertaking tours with only one Peon, the lack of other amenities, the thoroughly inadequate agency allowance are factors which would depress anyone. In spite of these drawbacks the Inspecting Officers have been carrying on bravely. It is time that their condition attracts Government notice.

### **Marriage among the Kuvi Kondhs**

The Kuvi Kondhs have customs which are different from those observed by their brethren further north. The Kuvi Kondhs have three forms of marriage, the first when cupid is the negotiator, the second where the parents bring about the match and lastly the primitive type of kidnapping. The Kuvi Kondhs almost follow

the Oriyas. The marriage negotiation starts with some villagers including the brother or uncle of the groom going to the village where they have heard that there is an eligible girl. This news is brought by the people visiting a market or by the relatives who belong to the bride's village. The group goes to the village and thrusts an arrow iron end first into the roof of the bride's house just about the entrance. They depart hurriedly. If the bride's people do not favour the match and see the groom's people thrusting the arrow they would very likely assault them. It is for this reason that they leave in a hurry instead of waiting to see the effect. The group comes in silence and departs in silence.

This custom seems to be a remnant of the primitive way of winning, a bride by sheer prowess and fight. The arrow is practically the only weapon which the Kondh knows and his proficiency in its use secures him food, saves him from wild animals and secures him a place in society and in the tribe, The arrow of the family to which the groom belongs is in question and not the individual.

On the third day the party again goes to the village to see what has been done to the arrow. The party goes silently and sits on the verandah of the bride for a while and then returns. The superiority of the male is thus maintained. He makes overtures but does not pursue them. He does not make himself appear anxious about winning the girl but rather the behaviour is to suggest that he is available and so suitable that the first move should come from the bride's side.

The bride's people see their coming see them while sitting but there no exchange of greetings or words between them. If, however, the bride's people do not approve of the match, they throw away the arrow towards the groom's party while it is leaving saying "We don't give our girl". Sometimes the girl throws away the arrow herself. This is not taken as a final refusal because the match makers argue--"Where will the girl go if her parents give her to us ?" If the parents of the girl throw the arrow the match is finally given up.

If the arrow is not pulled out, the party returns again on the third day. The members sit on the verandah. There is no talk and the party returns after a while. If the arrow is not pulled out, even then, it is taken for granted that the proposed match is accepted.

The next year in the month of Magh, the groom's party visits the bride's house. They sit on the verandah and the talks start. The bride's people raise the question of the marriage Mamool. This Mamool or bride price is decided as in so many Khenda. The usual Khenda or lot is cattle three heads, big bell-metal plates two, bell-metal dishes six (*kansa*), one he-buffalo and one heifer. This is the Khenda for affluent persons. If the groom's family is poor, the Khenda is reduced in volume and it is composed of cattle three heads, bell-metal *thali* one, bell-metal *kansa* four, bullock one and heifer one. In either case, the three heads of cattle are for the marriage feast. The former is known as Doso Khenda and the latter as Attu Khenda.

When the parties come to an agreement about the Khenda, it is confirmed by a bout of drink. After this the groom's party returns home the same evening

In the month of Magh following or in Falgun before Purnima, the Khenda is taken to the bride's house. If the Khenda cannot be delivered by these days, time is taken till Jyestha or Ashadha following.

After the Khenda is delivered, the bride's people go within a week on a visit. As is usual with the Adivasi, they carry with them rice and vegetables. They are welcomed warmly and stay at the groom's house for four or five days eating and drinking and joining their hosts in their daily work. The party consists of men and women but the bride is not in the party they leave after some days the groom's party returns the visit. They carry the usual rice and vegetables and stay there as long as they are pressed to the arrow is then returned to the groom's people and the date of marriage is fixed. There is a feast at the bride's house and the relatives of the parties are invited. The feast is of one meal only and there is plenty of Solap juice to drink. The relatives of the groom do not, on this occasion, bring with them the usual rice and vegetables. After this feast two men of the bride's party come to the place of the groom and give the final date of marriage and return after a drink.

The marriage feast is a big affair. The menu is rice, dal, *ambila* and the beef curry is optional. The bride and her people numbering about 20 to 40 come. No music plays. No Chemundia made near the house. The girl is delivered at the house of the groom. The bride's people join the feast and leave after the feast. The bride is left with two young girls of her village. These two young girls leave the next day.

The bride does not speak to anyone for three or four days. Her husband sleeps at another's house for a fortnight or a month. During this period, the husband and wife do not talk with each other but contrive to meet clandestinely near the brook or in the hills or after work. After a sufficient number of such meetings the man builds a house for himself and the couple sleeps in this house during the nights. They continue messing with the family. Most unostentatiously they use the new house more frequently continuing the appearances of living in the old family house. A child is born and usually quarrels start. The man and woman with their child go finally to live in their house

A girl is not prohibited from making love to a young man even in the presence of her parents. The parents just do not care what the young people do. If there is sexual intercourse and the girl gets into the family way, she is questioned about the seducer. The seducer is then forced at a caste panchayat to take the girl after giving two heads of cattle as compensation. This form of marriage is not considered as an honourable form. The Kondh girls avoid stranger and intrigues with non-Kondhs is rare.

### **Trial by Ordeal in the Khond Hills**

Disputes are common over the ownership of Sago Palm trees. These trees are planted by individuals and even though they take about forty years to mature their original planter is often alive to drink the juice from the tree. The interval between the planting and the maturity of the tree is so long that unusually there are rival claims to the ownership. The contesting parties invite the elders of the village near the tree and the claimant touches the tree or the leaves in its unopened state and very solemnly utters the following words "If my ancestor planted this, the wine will overflow; otherwise, it will dry up". The next morning the elders and the contestants go to verify and if the juice has not stopped flowing the issue is decided in favour of the claimant. If the juice has not collected in the pot overnight, it is decided that the claim was a false one.

There is nothing of an ordeal in this and the working of the subconscious mind with all the fervour and sincerity of a simple but honest Adivasi probably calls forth the soul force behind it and this causes the flow of the juice or brings about its cessation. There are several instances quoted of the Adivasis' supernatural powers in the manifestation of his will power. Even today it is a current theory that a Khond is able to transform himself into a tiger or a python according to his will. This I shall deal with later because for the present I am dealing with disputes and their adjudication.

There are no instances of trial by battle although there are quarrels between individuals which end in murder. The only form of trial by ordeal is the "SEERU MOONJA". Here the two contestants go to particular tanks or deep spots in the bed of streams. One such place is Jargi Bhatta (in Barakhama Mutha). Another is at Udu-Bolangir. A third is at Dodkingia (Rusangia Mutha). Yet another is near G. Udayagiri. At each of these places the people believe there are powerful deities or spirits which assist actively in bringing the right to the light.

The contesting parties go with the village elders to the spot, offer Puja with raw rice and cow's milk. The offerings are given to DarmaPenu (Dharma) to Sapondara and Vacendara (Moon and Sun) Jagjapunja, and Kukurpunja (two groups of stars) as well as two other groups of such stars known as Asha Gadae and Mdehagadae. After these offerings the local names of the high hills nearby are also uttered. The remnant of the puja offering is given to the contesting parties. The Pujari who does the Puja cuts two trees either *sal* or bamboo and takes them to the water. In the water they are planted two cubits apart and are held by the two contestants. The Pujari stands between the contestants.

The Panchayatdars then ask the contestants 'Are you bent on the Proman'. The contestants then reply 'Yes'. The Pujari then asks them to dive into water. They go into the water and the Pujari pours some milk on their heads saying 'Let the innocent dive long and the guilty come up quick'. The popular belief is that the milk poured by the Pujari over the heads of the contestants finds a way, through the



intervention of the deities into the nose and ears of the guilty and he is forced by unseen powers to rise up after a short interval. The innocent remain so long after the guilty comes up that the Pujari has to lift him up practically. Thus the supernatural powers of the Pujari are believed to have invoked the assistance of God in deciding which of the contestants is in the wrong.

The village head or the feudal head who presides over such function gives a written certificate that the successful contestant is not guilty. He is paid Rs. 5 and this payment is known as 'Sarada Pati' meaning pig for the Praman. The Panchayatdars who witness the trial are paid Rs. 5 and the amount is spent over a feast in which Panchayatdars of both sides join. The description of the money paid to the village or feudal head indicates that originally such heads were Adivasis and were a prizing a pig more than money. The fact that Panchayatdars of both the sides join at the feast indicates that even though they are partisans at the time of Praman, they carry no personal animosity and abide by the decision as one with the divine aid.

The secret of the Praman seems to be quite simple. The man who is quiet and has no faith in his own cause is in a way mesmerized. When the Pujari drops milk on his head his subconscious mind is so much impressed that he is unconsciously lifted up. It is this influence of the sub-conscious that makes him feel as if the milk enters his nose and ears. In their unsophisticated simplicity and sincerity and with their belief that the Gods would intervene directly the contesting Khonds surrender themselves to the influences of the subconscious entirely. The result is simple and is easily explained by modern psychology

The next trial by ordeal called Grope Saradae was in vogue till about thirty years back. The place of this ordeal was at Pusangia in Balliguda Taluk and the patro of Pusangia who worships the Patkhanda of the Khonds was presiding at this ceremony. People from all over Balliguda Taluk used to come for this trial by ordeal to obtain decrees over disputes. About 30 years back there was a Deputy Tahasildar by name Shri Apparao who got this mode of trial prohibited.

There is even now a very big *sal* tree at Pusangia which is believed to be the abode of the deity Loha Penu. The contesting parties would come to the Patro and offer before him that they would go through the Sarada or Praman. The complaint or challenger gets one egg and about half a seer of raw rice. These are offered to the Loha Penu. The Khond who is the subordinate worshipper of Loha Penu fetches water from the stream nearby. A fire place is prepared and fire is lighted. He adds a small quantity of black cows dung to the water. The water boils, both parties are standing close to the pot. They throw a few grains of raw rice into the boiling water calling upon Dharma Penu to witness the contest and to adjudicate. The innocent man's rice goes down into the boiling water while the rice thrown by the wrong doer causes the boiling water to rise up. After this the man who denies and throws the challenge would dip his hand up to his elbow in the boiling water. The hand is, however, immediately pulled up, The challenger then dips his hand in a similar manner. After this all the people there leave the place. The

hands of the contestants are examined the next day by the Patro in presence of the Panchayats. The innocent men's hand is normal while the other man has blisters on his hand. This decides the issue and both parties accept the divine judgment.

The blisters would disappear in two days and the hand would be all right within a week. Kakalabaki is a place near G. Udayagiri about 100 yards from the G. Udayagiri Farm. In the bed of a Nala there about a four feet deep place and huge sheet rocks. There are some small shrubs nearby. It is so this that the Khonds of low intelligence quotient go for a Praman (Seeru Moonju). It is believed that underneath the stones live two huge lizards each 8feet long with a dazzling precious stone on their heads. They are reported to be having large fans and protruding tongues and that whoever sees the creatures does not live for more than a week thereafter.

It is in the supposed presence of these Sraska Penu or Serpent Gods that the divine ordeal is undertaken in the manner described above.

### KUINGA

The Kondh calls himself "Kuen-tenu" —I am a Kui. When he speaks this in his own language he speaks this in an unconsciously superior manner. There is no tinge of humility in it and nothing to denote any inferiority complex. When asked in Oriya he calls himself 'Kondho Loko' and there is a sign of humility and a note of inferiority complex in it. The reason is not far too seek and is very simple.

The word 'Kondh' is not of recent origin. It seems to have been brought into use since a long time. It is also not attached to any locality. Baudh, Phulbani, Daspalla, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Rairakhole. Athmallik, Nayagarh, Ganjam and Koraput have varying Kondh population and everywhere the Kondh is known as a Kondh. There are two sub-tribes among them whose dialects are different. Even with this difference the two are known to the outside world as Kondhs. Thus the name given to the race by the Oriya neighbors has a longer origin than we imagine. The word Kondh or Kondho is descriptive of the race because no other genesis can be attributed to it. It may mean that they were given this name because they live upon Konda or Kondo (roots). This cannot be connected because when a man comes out of his domain he does not carry his Konda nor does he refuse to eat better food available outside. Kondo Mulo is not grown widely in the area and the Kondh is not fond of it. So the root cannot lie there. It is true that edible roots are consumed as his staple food for three months in a year. But even this is not his only dish nor is it cooked singly by itself. The Kondh has been raising and eating rice, a variety of millets, a number of vegetables and no one is, therefore, justified that the race is known as Kondh because it lives on Konda or roots or tuberous roots.

If we stretch our imagination a bit we will discover that five to six centuries ago the Oriya language was slightly of archaic nature. Kondoro meaning mountain caves and cliffs was used by all the poets and in all descriptions of nature we find the words Giri Kondoro. 'Kondoro' is, therefore, a word of frequent use. Because the

habitat of the Kondhs has always been the hills or rather beyond the hills, they might have been described as 'Kondoro Loko', which in course of time became 'Kondo Loko'. Now in Oriya the ending and beginning consonants are heavy. So Kondo Loko seems to have been adopted in place of Kondoro Loko. In course of time also the second word was considered as unnecessary and dropped out.

In Telugu there are two ways of describing the Kondho—one is Kodulu and the other, Koya Vallu. Kodulu is the plural and singular is 'kodu'. Kodu seems to be an adaptation for the Oriya Kond or Kondh. Apparently this has not been adopted in *toto* because Kanda in Telugu means a root and confusion arose when it was to denote a Kondh. It was given a lighter sound and was adopted as Kodu.

The next word Koya is easier to explain. It is just the word in Kui or Kuvi slightly adopted. The plural of Kuvi is Kuvrianga and quickly pronounced it reads Kuvniyanga. This abbreviated word has come to be used as Koya. These two ways of explaining the root of the word Kond seem to be the only possible explanations. Now let us come to the reason why the Kondh calls himself Kuienju.

Kui in the Kondh language means upper high. The Kondhs have been having their habitat only in the hills, which along the Eastern Ghats lie at a height of not less than 1,000 feet, above the sea level. From their mountain fastnesses the race used to look down into the plains below and it was not difficult for them to realize that they were people high up. Thus they called themselves as the people high up or as the high-landers. Even in their hills, the Kondhs never live in depressions. They select mountain tops or small open spaces at the foot of the mountains.

The Kondha calls himself a Kui with a tone of pride and arrogance when he would so described himself. This tone is not assumed when he calls himself Kondh Loko in Oriya. On the former occasion he is self-conscious as one of the race to which the land belonged as the son of the soil. The Kondha in Phulbani, Boudh, etc., call themselves Zamindar or Zamindars. The head of a village or of a Mutha is known as Malik. The surname of the Kondhs of original Malik's family is Malik and every Kondh in Athara Mutha and Baro Mutha is a Malik. Thus this affords ample evidence to come to the conclusion that the Kondh is the original owner of land and as such he is justified in saying with pride that he is a Kondh.

When he speaks in Oriya, he is subconsciously reminded of his lost possessions, of his hospitality to the Oriyas, of their treachery and subsequent hospitality and his present condition. These grievances have got ingrained in his system and have taken possession of his subconscious mind. When he describes himself in Oriya all the subconscious impressions are recalled and his tone is suggestive of an inferiority complex.

# KUI KONDHS : OBSERVATIONS OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER IN THE KONDH HILLS IN THE EARLY FORTIES \*

*U. N. Patnaik* <sup>1</sup>

## **Kondh Village:**

It will be in the fitness of things to describe a Kondh village to start with. Except for a few major villages a Kondh village is generally a small unit consisting of 8 to 10 houses. The small villages grow in size as new comments come to take shelter with the original residents. They are usually related to the latter and come to the new site on their invitation. Non-tribals also come and mingle with the population with the permission of the older resident. These new comers construct their houses either continuous to the existing houses or detached, according to availability of space.

The village site is usually selected with reference to some geographical advantages. In almost all cases the site is located close to a small hillock which is not frequented by carnivorous animals and which is useful as a fuel reserve and serves the Adivasis in many other ways. He collects fuel from such hillocks whenever he runs short of his stock of fuel. He collects *siali* leaves also for his domestic purposes. Edible leaves, flowers, roots etc., are also collected by the children of the Kondh.

The level of the site is usually tapering towards the paddy loads of the village. Paddy lands are located in the valley between two hillocks or two areas of high lands. Between the valley proper and the hillocks there is scrub jungle of thorny bushes and creepers and close to it a few fruit bearing trees are also to be seen. This vegetation keeps the village cool during summer months. Mango, Jack-

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXIV, Nos.1&2, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, 1984, pp.1-29

<sup>1</sup> Member of Orissa State Civil Service

fruit are also there in the close vicinity of the village and are generally common property. There are a few sago palm trees also in the outskirts of the village.

#### **Drainage System :**

The site is also chosen with reference to the course of the rain drainage in order to avoid direct rain drainage which flows in torrents during rains. There is no drainage system in the street proper and rain drainage flows down the gentle slope that is to be seen in the street. Once therefore finds that there are no rain gullies formed by the rain drainage which flows with great velocity.

The next important factor in selecting a village site is its proximity to a perennial spring. There are no wells in the area and the people depend upon the spring for drinking water and for washing etc., purposes. The spring, therefore is a necessity and it is maintained properly by community labour of the village. The spring is usually below the foot of a tree like mango, fig etc.

Another important factor in selecting a village site seems to be its proximity to land capable of growing paddy. As mentioned above the paddy lands of the village lie very close to it. These paddy lands were originally a small group of fields but in course of time due to land hunger of the tribals, he has added many more fields to the originally small group by scooping the sides. From the other side of the village the dry lands begin and end with the foot-hills. On this land Jawar, Turmeric, Ragi, Ginger, Rape, Kulthi, etc., are grown. This patch of cultivation extends up to the Podu area on the hill slopes or the hill sides.

#### **Names of Villages :**

The names of the villages are peculiar in their own way. The endings of the village names are of different types. Some villages have their ending in the word '*Gando*', some other have '*Kuppa*' and some others have endings with the word '*Guda*'. As an ending the word '*Nazu*' means a street. Thus in the main village *Kalingando* (or *Kalinga* in Oriya) there are many streets which are named as *Maddi Naju*, *Bade Naju*, *Brodi Naju* etc. These streets are named with reference to topographical landmarks. The names are derived from the location of the street also such as *Madi naju*, *Sendo naju* which mean the middle street and the upper street. *Brodi Naju* is the name of a street which had a Bahada Tree (*Terminilis*), *Mahanaju* got its name from a big mango tree which was existing when the street squatted originally or is at present alive. To refer to a village as *Naju* is not very correct because almost every major village has several streets with common names indicated by the topographical details. If asked as to which village he belongs, the Kondh replies that he belongs to *Kalingando* and to such and such street therein.

The names of the major villages are after the names of remote ancestors who first came to stay in the area. Thus the village which first was occupied by *Kali Malik* or *Padhan* came to be known as *Kalingando*. It is the residence of a sub-clan which was first selected by one *Kali* probably a century ago. Similarly in the

case of *Raiskando*, *Bakingando*, *Jeemangando* the original ancestors were Raike, Bake, Zime, respectively. The names of some villages have the ending in the word 'Kuppa' such as *Kumbar Kuppa*, *Adas Kuppa* etc. Some other villages have the endings with name of *guda* i.e. *Kutiguda*, *Baliguda*, *Nediguda* etc.

### **Lay Out of a Village :**

Usually the village headmen or Mallik constructs his house on crest of a mound and his agnates and others have their houses on the slope towards the spring or taper in other directions. There are certain castes which have been adopted in to Kondh society by reason of some remote inter-caste marriage. These families live in separate houses along with other Kondhas. There adopted Kondhs are the Kondh potter, Kondh Sundhi, Kondh Blacksmith, Kondh Gouda. The Panos who are more or less part of the Kondh society live in the same street as the Kondhs. In some villages there are non-Kondh Oriya settlers and in some cases there are Gends also. These sections of people live in adjacent houses in the village. They retain their own customs and habits although they generally join the Kondh worship and rituals.

The houses in the Kondh village are in parallel rows with contiguity of location. In some villages there are detached houses also when new comers settle in the village. Besides the main street, a few rows take off from the main street at right angles or are situated behind it.

### **House of a Kondh :**

Description of a Kondh house is necessary. It indicates the level of mental development of a Kondh in those early days. Communications were very bad. Seasons were very cruel and generally the poverty of the Kondh was such that he had to think of these things when constructing his house. Kondhs are living in plank houses which are even now the case among the poorer sections in the remote areas. It was easier for a Kondh to use timber and planks for building his house. Fetching water from the spring, preparing mud also requires more than one person and there is no such person available. The Kondh therefore prefers to construct his house with handmade planks. Sawing was out of question because in Ganjam agency by 1938 there was only one group of sawers. A Kondh cuts down Sal, Peasal and even Sishu trees for using as walls of his house. These planks are 10' to 12' long about 2" thick and about 12" to 14" broad. They are placed one over another on the narrow edges of the planks and held together by vertical *balhas* on either side to hold them in position. These *balhas* in their turn are held together by means of wooden bolts prepared by the Kondh himself. There are no carpenters in the area except quite a few Kondhs who have learnt the art. Therefore the Kondh has to do this type of carpentry by himself.

The house is generally 10' X 20', made of planks; its height is usually 6' to 8'. The crevices between the planks are filled with mud to keep out the wind and insects from getting into the house. The door way of the house is the only opening

to it. There is no window to the house. The door is a single leaf one, it is of generally Sal or Mango planks and hand hewn and hand sized.

There are two three steps leading to the door way. There are verandahs on either side 2' to 3' in height and made of mud. These verandahs are kept very clean by mud plaster and sometimes with hand designs done by the girls. The locking arrangement of the door is a contrivance, which can be operated both from inside and outside. There is no fear of house theft and this locking arrangement is only to get the door shut when the people go out in the day or go in to sleep in the night. Usually there is a small garden enclosed by split bamboo on either side of the house on which tobacco or brinjal is grown. There is no back-yard to the house and in order to keep his piggery safe from prowling wild animals the Kondh has a small enclosure close to his backyard. This is made of *balahs* fixed into the ground and inter twined with split bamboo. He has a small compartment made vertically on the side of the verandah which is closed with a trap door during night. In this, his fowls are kept during night. If the fowls are few, they are kept along with the goats in the main living room.

In the front of the house there is bench like contrivance about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ft. high. It consists of a plank 2" thick about 5' long and 8" to 10" broad which is fixed on the top of 2 posts sunk into the ground. This is known as *Dodadpa* or *dapa*. It is used for unloading the brass or earthen pots filled with water placed one over the other and fetched by the women from the village spring. Water posts full with water placed one over the other cannot be taken into the house through the doorway and therefore they are unloaded there. Cleaned utensils are also fetched from the spring and kept on this *dadpa* before they are taken in. the males use this *dadpa* as a bench where they sit and smoke their *kahalis* in the afternoon when at leisure.

The superstructure of the house is of split and seasoned bamboo with roofing of paddy thatch or sabal grass. Paddy thatch is very scale and generally the Kondh collects grass from the hills at the beginning of summer. Split bamboos are used for refers and the beams are of upsized timber. In front of the house of the Mallik or *Tlomba* the *Dharani Penu* is located and the Deity is propitiated from time to time according to the Kondh custom.

On the opposite side of the tobacco plot the Kondh has his fuel stock. He does not collect fuel during winter because wild animals are then active in the forest. It is impossible to collect fuel in the Rainy season because of heavy and prolonged rains. The Kondh, therefore, collects fuel and stocks. It to last during the adverse seasons. He piles the fuel collected by him whether green or dry in a crude receptacle. A parallel row of poles is fixed on the ground. The fuel logs are kept one over the other up to a height of 8 to 10 ft. in this enclosure. These logs are cut in to pieces 8 to 10 fit to store them in the above manner.

Acculturation has appeared in the area and is moving on with rapid and long strides. Naturally as everything starts at home the pattern of house building is also undergoing a change. *Panos* who frequent the plain area and Oriya settlers in Mutha headquarters have their houses built of wattle and daubs and the more affluent of them have walls of earth. The Kondh has started changing the pattern of his house. Moreover, with rapid de-forestation timber is becoming more and more scarce as the trees are cut and exported. Broad planks are a very great scarcity. Carrying water from spring to the house site, preparing mud was a problem but now a days the Kondh is able to get help from among his neighbors on a very small remuneration. There is no regular labour class in the hill for such purposes. Thus the house of planks is rapidly disappearing and houses of mud walls are coming up. This change is noticeable in the suburbs or Oriya villages and small towns such as G. Udayagiri. Takabali etc. In this mud house there is a back door and back yard. There is a small verandah at the back of the house. The back yard is used as an open air kitchen during the non-rainy days. Roof height of the house has also been changed. The door frames are not rough and are made as smooth as possible with hand axe. Single leaf doors are being replaced by double leaf doors. Separate cattle sheds are also being constructed near the house wherever possible. These cattle sheds are also used as the goat pen or as piggery pen. During the last 40 years there has been quite a good deal of change in the pattern, design etc., of the houses that are being constructed. Furniture like wooden cots, almirahs and even chairs and tables are now a days being kept in the house. Boxes of wood are used for keeping jewellery and boxes of zinc sheets have of late come into use replacing the bamboo receptacles.

The house of an average Kondh who has no paddy land and who does not fetch enough jungle products the surplus of which he sells and makes money has been described. The more prosperous have houses of mud walls.

The house of the Kondh is divided into two compartments one is 12' long and the other 8'. The breadth of house is 8' to 10'. The partition wall between these two compartments is either of plank or of small logs. There is a small opening on the rear end of the room to reach the kitchen proper. This is a smaller compartment. The kitchen space is only about 8' X 8' and there is a fire place in the kitchen which is of the traditional type close to the fire place there is a platform of planks fixed to 4 posts. The plat-form is used to keep water pots for daily use. Along with the water pots, a few utensils made of German silver or bell metal are kept. Brass pots of the family are also kept on the platform. The quality and size of these utensils depend upon the affluence of the family. The utensils are washed and cleaned at the village spring by the girls or house wives of the family in the morning. On the top of the fire place of the kitchen there is an attic on which new earthen pots are kept for future use. During rains earthen pots are not available in the locality. Therefore the Kondh house-wives keep a number of new pots seasoning them with the juice of *Anacardium* seeds to save them from easy breakage. Pots on the attic are also seasoned by the pots last longer. Near the water



pots is a small basket of split bamboo in which the treasured clothes of the Kondh are kept. In this receptacle the family ornaments of silver, German silver and bras are also kept. Gold ornaments and cash in rupee coins are usually buried underground in the kitchen space. In the kitchen space the Loka (ladle) either of Gourd or metal used for stirring the gruel is kept.

The living room of the Kondh needs description. It is like the Arc of Noah and contains all the necessities of the Kondh. It is small compact and cramped. It is so used that all the earthly possessions of the Kondh and his daily necessities are kept in it. The flooring of the room is of mud and it is well plastered. In the centre of the room there is a depression, a cup like stone is put in it. The stone cup is used for husking paddy. De-husking is done by means of a wooden appliance resembling a long club. Girls do the dehusking by beating the paddy with this implement. This appliance is called 'Ukull'.

The sides of the roof are used in every possible manner as bracket. Dry maize is hung in the form of garlands from one end of the room to the other. Green *siali* leaf cups which the house wives generally prepare during spare hours are hung in garlands in hundreds. The maize and cups get seasoned by the smoke of the kitchen and assume a dark brown colour. Musical instruments like Dhekka, Khanjani, Flute, Changu, etc., are also hung from the roof or walls. Ripe pumpkins of the smaller size are also hung from the rafters. These pumpkins are for domestic consumption when the season of fresh pumpkins is over. Generally the Kondh does not have enough of this vegetable in unripe stage for consumption in the kitchen. If there is any surplus beyond his requirements, it is stored for future consumption after selling the surplus, if any, in the market. At different places in the roof sloping on either side the bow and arrows of the Kondh are tucked. The match lock if he has one is hung from the roof by a string of fiber and by its side the powder flask of gourd is hung. The cheap jewellery of the house hold, generally beads of seeds weeds and glass are kept in a small bamboo box and hung from the roof. Braided paddy stalks with paddy are also hung from the roof. Due to smoke of the kitchen throughout the whole day, the *siali* leaf cups, maize and all other things in the living room get coloured and assume a bronze colour.

A large number of the non-edible gourds are hung from the roof for future use. All the agricultural implements like Godi, goble etc., the axe, the sickle, the javelin, the Tangia and other implements are also normally tucked into the roof in their selected places.

The living room provides accommodation for the parents and smaller children of the house. The grown up boys and girls would sleep in the youth lodges and maid lodges at night, as there is no space in the house for them to sleep in the night for obvious reasons. Small cots 4' X 2' woven with jungle fiber are used by the family whenever one is able to have his luxury. In the absence of these cots the family sleeps on mats made of date leaves soft reeds etc.

At the end of the room there is a small mud platform about 8' high which runs throughout breadth of the room and is about 18' in breadth. In the centre of this small platform there is a fire place which is kept burning day and night during rainy and winter months to keep the house warm. The fire is very necessary for the Kondh during winter months when it is very cold and he has no warm clothing. During nights he sleeps with feet towards the fire place. One or two goats of the family and its fowls, if few, are kept near this fire place over night.

### **Food & food habits :**

A description of the food and food habits of a Kondh is given here. Rice is called Pala and very few Kondhs have rice diet for more than two months. In the absence of a pure rice diet they use rice sparingly mixing it with some cereals or millets. Edible leaves and roots are also mixed with this rice. Whenever the Kondh runs short of rice only cereals or millets are cooked in the gruel form and eaten. Very few Kondhs have bell metal dishes and use siali leaf cups as utensils. Salt is served out separately on a leaf and very rarely a Kondh has a separate curry of miller, edible leaves etc. Maize, Runner beans, Pumpkin, Green papaya. Green plantains are cooked as curry or are mixed with a handful of rice to make a sort of porridge. During fasting months (from February to August) the Kondh lives on the porridge described above. Powder of Sago palm heart wood, powdered mango kernels, edible roots and leaves are the common food of the Kondh, during the lean months. Fish is a luxury and fishing is a sort of communal activity. The entire village goes to the fishing ground which is a big *nala* or a minor river. Fishing goes on from day to day for 3 to 4 days, the party staying in the camp. The fish caught are partly consumed on the spot and the larger portion is left drying on the flat sheet rocks nearby. At the end of the hunting, the party leaves for its village with dry fish to be consumed in future.

Meat is a scarcity and generally goats are not butchered. Pigs are killed and eaten. Every family gets a small share of the venison after a hunt. The share of the family is sliced and hung on a string of fire and exposed to the sun. When the slices are completely dry they are kept in leaf bags for future use. During the lean months the dehydrated meet slices are boiled in water and taken as curry or boiled in the porridge. During a feast a buffalo is killed and the meat is served along with rice. The Kondh house wife prepares cakes also out of maize powder and they are taken as food or snacks. The cakes are baked in fire; seeds of the beans are fried and eaten as snacks. Tamarind seeds are fried and powdered and the power is used in the gruel with dry *mahua* flowers mixed with it.

The first meal and breakfast is between 8 to 9 A.M and the second between 2 to 4 P.M when the Kondh returns from field work. Thereafter there is no other meal and the Kondh goes to bed by 6 P.M. if the Kondh has to go to his turmeric field or to his *bogodo* he leaves his home in the early morning by about sun rise and his breakfast is taken to the field by his wife or daughter.

For seasoning curry *mahua* oil is used. The condiments are turmeric, chilly, and mustard. The use of spices is being copied of late. Eggs are used as food and are used only for propitiating the Gods. The Kondh does not take milk. He feels nauseate to the smell of boiling milk. The cows in the area not usually milked and are used as bullocks in the field.

During the mango season and jackfruit season the Kondhs live practically on ripe mango and the jackfruit. This is for about 2 months in a year. There is a variety of mango which ripens in the month of Ashada and this is known as *Ashada Maha*. The ripe mango juice is dried in the sun spread on winnows (Kula). The juice on drying takes the shape of a thick sheet. The children of Kondh take this with pleasure and the rest is exported to the plains. There is a peculiar preparation from the half-ripe mangoes. The skin is removed by means of a mother-of-pearl-shell bored in the middle with the edges of the hole very sharp. The mango is cut with a short pen knife into continuous slicing. The slices are not separated from one another and if stretched take the shape of a garland. This is sun dried and consumed as it is or made into curry. Most stones are collected during and after the mango season and kept by the side of the house. During the lean months the stone is split and the Kernel is washed. This is then rubbed into paste on a slab stone near the spring. The paste is dried up in the form of a thick cake. It is called 'Beesa'. It is mixed in the gruel and consumed. The sago palm has a great food value for the Kondh during summer, when a sago palm bamboo tree is cut the Kondh collects the heart of it which is fibrous. The fibre is beaten into dust, served crudely and is used as food either as gruel or mixed with some millets. Green jackfruits are not a favourite food of the Kondh, because of the flue that comes out of the fruit when cut. Moreover it is a labourious process. The ripe jackfruits are eaten leaving the seeds aside. These seeds are eaten in the curry or are sold in the market. Dry Mahua flowers are preserved and cooked with millets or with rice if available. Tamarind seeds are fried and powdered and the powder is mixed with millets or rice and eaten as porridge.

Seeds of asparagus beans and all varieties of beans are fried and are eaten as snacks. Paddy, maize, *jawar* are fried and the Kondh adults and children relish these as snacks. The jackfruit seeds are baked in the embers and eaten with relish.

### **Drinking habit :**

The drinking habit of the Kondh needs perhaps a description. He drinks *solpo* juice, Mahua arrack as well as rice arrack. *Ganja* and *Bhang* have not penetrated into the area although it is said the Britishers planted *Ganja* in Tikabali area about 40 years back. There are a few Date trees in the area which are also being tapped for *toddy*. The most common drink is *solpo* juice. The *solpo* trees are planted by the Kondhs are in a few cases they grow wild from the seeds that are strewn on the ground while the trees are being cut. These *solpo* trees are planted in the foot hills and sometimes in the vicinity of a village. The *solpo* tree is just like a coconut or Areca nut tree, it grows to a diameter of 4' to 6' and to a height of 20' to

25' when mature. The branches are long like that of a coconut tree and are more like those of an Arecanut tree. The leaves are bigger and broader than those of the other two palms. The tree takes about 4 years to mature and yield today.

As soon as the flowering takes place the tree is tapped in the same manner as a palm tree or a date tree is tapped. The liquor oozing out from the tree is held in small earthen pots in which a few paddy roots and 'Kondhan' roots are placed. This is to secure quick fermentation and to neutralize the bad effects of the juice. It is said that in the absence of these substances the drink is poisonous and causes dysentery. The pot of juice is brought down by means of a ladder of a very long bamboo, the shoots of which on either side serve as steps while climbing up or getting down. If the tree is short and yields juice, agile young men climb the tree with hands feet, and fetch the pot tied to the waist.

This drink like any other intoxicating drink is never enjoyed if taken alone. A group squats on the ground near the tree and the drinking begins first by offering it to "*addebhy*", "*Kulmenju*" who are believed to be the first ancestors of the Kondh. The juice is taken out of the pot into the drinking gourd (*loka*) of a bigger size. There is the small *loka* of a bigger size. There is the small *loka* in which few drops are taken out from the bigger one and dropped on the ground while uttering the names of the two ancestors. The gourd then is handed over to the oldest man or the *Mallick* who first partakes of the juice. It is then handed over by him to a man next to him in rank or status. It passes from person to person in this manner. The gourd is about 9' to 1' long and has its bulb cut in a circle, and the narrow end is pierced through. The juice is taken out from the bigger gourd through this opening in the bulb and it is poured into the mouth by the thin end of the *loka* from a distance of 2' to 4'. It is not sipped but is swallowed as it enters into the mount. The juice is very similar to bear in effect but it is sweet in taste.

In the winter and early summer when the juice secretes profusely the Kondh drinks it five times in 24 hours. The first occasion is at the cocks crow i.e. about 4.00 A.M the second fought is at sun-rise, the third at noon, the fourth in the evening and the last at about 8.00 P.M. During winter and early summer the Kondhs covering themselves with their '*Matho*' come to the tree to catch the first extraction of the juice. One of them carries a lighted fire brand to light them in the darkness and to keep off wild animals. On reaching the tree a fire is lighted and with this starts drinking the '*Koju*', '*Klapa*', '*Kallu*' which means the drink at cooks crow. The middle aged Kondh or the elder ones habituated to drink solpo juice collects a group of people of his like, who go in a body to the tree or trees are the group starts drinking. After the first drink they light '*Kahalis*' and engage themselves in gossiping. After three hours or so the second installment of *Kallu* is brought down when the sun rises. This is known as a '*Vela Srohnikallu*'. Again at noon a third installment of the juice is taken and two more installments at the times mentioned above.

In the case of older men given to drinking they do not stay at their respective homes but stay at the 'solpo' tree and during the rest of the night lie down round the fire that they light. If anyone feels hungry he takes a handful of the rice like substance which is secreted along with the juice, which further intoxicates keeps the Kondh out of hunger and he falls asleep. On being asked as to whether there are no dangers from wild animals the Kondh replies that if a Royal Bengal Tiger or a bear or a python approaches then they would throw a handful of the rice like extract from the *solpo* tree towards them and the animals on eating the same doze to sleep at a distance and would not harm them. It appears that in some instances the Kondhs keep on drinking and sleeping near the trees for days together forgetting their homes.

The Mahua arrack is prepared by the local Sundhi and he usually does it on a very large scale out in the deep forest where there is a perennial spring flowing. He establishes his distillery near the flowing water. He has his boiling pot which holds about 30 to 40 gallons of water. He has the "wash" and fermented rice and Mahua in several pots nearby. He has a smaller pot and a retort of bamboo and mud which he fixes to the boiling pot. The smaller receiving pot is placed on the stream to convert the vapour in to distilled arrack. The *mahua* required is either from his own stock or purchased from the local Mahajan. In a few cases where arrack is prepared on an order from an official, ripe guava or ripe jackfruit pulps are boiled with the Mahua and distilled. This addition is said to give a very good flavor to the drunk. The Sundhi is engaged in this work for a day or two but he returns home in the evening. The *mahua* arrack is said to be very strong. It is served liberally at all feasts. The intoxication caused by this drink lasts for over 24 hours if taken heavily. The Kondh is permitted to distil *mahua* arrack but he has to take a permit from the Inspector of Excise.

#### **Education : (1937-40)**

According to the rules in force the Special Assistant Agent to the Governor is the manager of all primary schools. He is the appointing authority of the teachers and the drawing and disbursing officer of their salaries. Needless to say that he is the general supervisor of the educational system in the area. On the technical sides there is a Deputy Inspector of Schools under the District Inspector of Schools, Ganjam. There is a Teachers' training school at Russelkonda (now Bhanjanagar) and the teachers appointed in the hills are recruited from the school.

The Deputy Tahasildar in the area is the direct subordinate of the Special Assistant Agent, and he has also some indirect responsibilities in the running of the schools. The schools are all housed in thatched buildings with dwarf walls around and with a mud plastered flooring. The maintenance of these buildings and the teachers' quarters rests with the Deputy Tahasildars who are given funds under "Civil Agency Works". Mainly maintenance work is being done with these funds and paid for under the *vetty* system. Teachers of the elementary and primary schools have to live in Kondh houses on rent basis or in the Teacher's room. There

are few middle schools in the area and the rest are primary and elementary schools. Except in the middle schools there are no teachers quarters in the other categories of schools. The middle schools and even the lower schools have good vegetable gardens and the products of these gardens go to the teachers' houses. The school children have to do manual labour in maintaining the gardens, because gardening is part of the curriculum. The Drumhead cabbages and the *Cauliflowers* and the *Knolkhol* grown in the schools are of a prize variety growing to a magnum size on account of the soil, the climate and the up keep by the school children.

The teachers in those schools are recruited from the Teachers Training Schools at Russelkonda and at Berhampur. They are of the following castes.

- 1) Kondh Teachers.
- 2) Pono Teachers.
- 3) Convert Christian Teachers.
- 4) Gond Teachers.
- 5) Teachers from among the non-Tribal settler classes in the hills.
- 6) Teachers coming from the plains.

The Gond and Kondh teachers are very few in number. They are residents of the area and when the school is at a place other than one's own village the teacher has to take residence either in the teacher's room in the school or in a Kondh's house. This is applicable to the Pano teacher, the convert Christian teacher and the teachers of the non-Tribal settler classes. The teachers coming from the plains take residence in the school office room.

The Gond and Kondh teachers are sincere in their work and do not dabble in other people's affairs. So also the teachers from the non-tribal settler classes. This class of teachers is not as sincere and honest as the Kondh and Gond teachers. The Pano and convert Christian teachers are of the tribal area and are more village touts than school masters. They remain absent from the schools for long periods and during such periods they take parties to Courts in connection with troubles fermented by their own ingenuity. They run errands for the missionaries, for the *Mahajanas* and the *mutta* heads. They also take a leading part in the village Panchayat. They are also of assistance to *mutta* heads during *mamool* collection and they attend on the officers visiting the area in course of their duties. In every possible way they try to make some money. The teachers from among the non-tribal settlers are of a different type. Generally, they would not venture out of village to look to other people's affairs. In their own way they discharge their duties not with intelligence but in a sort of mundane and routine manner.

The teachers from the plains are at present a veritable problem to the educational system in the area. They have their own affairs in the plains to attend and to look after their families living in the plains. Their going home frequently is therefore a necessity. They do not miss a short vacation even. They generally go without taking formal leave, leaving the school in charge of a co-worker. The

Head-master of the school connives at it. The School Deputy Inspector generally closes his eye to the unauthorized leave. This goes on by turns by another teacher going home to the plains on the return of the teacher who had gone earlier. Thus by rotation they shuttle between their schools and homes.

The tribal who is not very anxious to send his children to school does not mind the frequent absence of the teachers. Moreover if at all he complains he would complain he would complain to the Deputy Inspector of Schools who generally ignores such complaints. The net result of such complaints is that the children of the Kondh get harsh treatment from the teachers.

Only the three "R"s (reading, writing and arithmetic are being taught in the elementary schools. The Special Assistant Agent during his tour visits these schools and examines the proficiency of the children in three "R"s. He brings with him slates, pencils, class books and garments for the children and distributes them ceremoniously.

The Kondh parents are not very anxious to send their children to school because a child is very useful for the family. The children, boy or girl, do baby-sitting which relieves the mother to a great extent. This baby sitting starts practically from the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the child. As the child grows he or she is used in the house in the following domestic works.

- 1) Sweeping the house and the front yard.
- 2) Washing the utensils at the village spring.
- 3) Fetching water from the spring.
- 4) Boiling and washing clothes.
- 5) Collecting edible leaves etc.,
- 6) Dehusking paddy if any the house.
- 7) Collecting mangoes, *mahua* fruits & flowers etc.,
- 8) Joining the mother in preparing leaf platters and cups.
- 9) Carrying breakfast of father or brother to the *bagodo* or field.
- 10) And above all taking care of a younger brother or sister.

The Kondh housewife is running the house single handed because her husband is out of doors either drinking *solpo* juice or working in the fields, and the work the children do is a great relief to her. The children do not continue in school till they complete education. After one or two year they are unable to stand the school discipline and discontinue on the least opportunity they get.

In spite of these adverse conditions attempts are being made by Government to popularize education in the tribal areas. The medium of teaching is Oriya because "Kondh" is only a spoken language. But while explaining the teachers use Oriya word and expressions. Almost all the teachers know the *Kui* language. The text books prescribed are approved by the Education Department and practically are the same as in the non-tribal areas. The IQ of the Kondh

children being very low they find it difficult to follow the teaching. The Baptist Mission has a M.E .School at Gudrupori near G. Udayagiri and it is one of the very few schools that is running on proper lines in the area.

In the primary and elementary schools in the interiors the teachers receive their daily rations from the villagers by turns. The children also assist the teacher in his kitchen and wash his clothes whenever necessary. All educational institutions are closed during the rains for about 2 months in the year because of heavy rains.

There are two good teachers so far know in the area. One is Simhadri Panigrahi of Paralakhemandi who worked in the Paralakhemandi agency for a long time before being posted to Gutingia. He is very popular, honest and sincere and is respected by Kondhs and non-Kondhs. The next teacher of outstanding merit is Sri Jaganath Nayak a convert Christian of G. Udayagiri town. The former knows *Soara* very well and has valuable manuscripts on the *Soara* written by himself. The latter is probably the first matriculate among the tribals. The salary of the teachers is sent by the office of the S.S.A by money order. Some of teachers work as Extra Department Post Masters. The teacher does not take much interest in the work because the children are truants and the parents are not interested in educating their children. The teachers are always anxious to get transferred to schools nearer their homes.

### **Disputes:**

The disputes are generally over landed property, over jackfruit or mango trees which are personal properties. There are also disputes regarding the ownership of Salpo (sago palm) trees. These disputes are taken to the village panchayat and the panchayat after hearing the sides and the witnesses gives its decision. If the Panchayat is not capable to decide or its decision is not acceptable to the parties the matter goes with the request of the parties to the higher or *Mutha* Panchayat. If the parties so desire the matter is decided by a *Praman* (Sarada).

At the *Praman* the Panchayat and the elders are present and the challenger and the challenged seek the aid of supernatural powers to give a decision in the dispute. If the parties do not abide by the decision of the Panchayat and if they do not seek redressal by supernatural means the matter goes to a Court of Law.

The trial by ordeal that was in vogue about 30 years back was called the Gropa Sarada. The place of this ordeal was at Pusangia in Balliguda Taluk and the Patro of Pusangia who worships the 'Loha Penu' of the Kondh used to preside at this ceremony. People all over Balliguda Taluk used to come for this event to obtain a divine decree over the dispute. About 30 years back there was a Deputy Tahasildar at Balliguda by name Shri Apparao who prohibited this mode of trial.

There is even now a very big *sal* tree at Pusangia which is believed to be the abode of the deity 'Loha Penu'. The contesting parties would come to the Patro and affirm before him that they would go through the Sarada or *Praman*.



The complaint or challenger gets an egg and about half a seer of raw rice. These are offered to *Loha Penu* and the Kondh *Janni* or *Jhakar* who is the subordinate worshipper of Loha Penu fetches water from the stream nearby. A fire is lighted. He gets a small quantity of a black cow's dung and adds it to the water. The water boils; both parties standing close to the pot throw a few grains or raw rice into the boiling water calling upon 'Dharma Penu' to witness the contest and to adjudicate. The truthful man's rice goes down into the boiling water while the rice thrown by the man with a false claim rises up. After this the man who denies the challenge would dip his forearm up to his elbow in the boiling water. The Challenger dips his hand in a similar manner. After this all the people there leave the place. The hands of the contestants are examined the next day by the Patro in presence of the Panchayat. The innocent man's forearm is normal while the other man has blisters on it. This decides the issue and both parties accept the divine judgment as they believe it to be.

'Kakalbaki' is a Nala near G. Udayagiri Taluk where people go for a *Praman* (*Seeru Moonja*). It is believed that underneath the stones live two huge lizards each 8' long with dazzling precious stones on their hoods. They are said to be having large fangs and protruding tongues and that whoever sees the creatures does not live for more than a week thereafter.

The contesting parties go with the village elders to the spots; offer a Puja of raw rice and cow's milk. The offerings are given to 'Darma Penu' (Dharma) to 'Sapandara' and 'Vacendare' (Moon and Sun), 'Jagiapunja' and 'Kukurpunja' (two groups of stars) as well as to other groups of such stars known as 'Asha Dadae' and Madhogadae. After these offerings the local names of the high hills nearby are also uttered. The remains of the Puja offerings are given to the contesting parties. The Pujari who does the Puja cuts two trees either Sal or Bamboo and takes them to the water. In the water they are planted two cubits apart and are held by the two contestants. The Pujari stands between the two Saplings.

The Panchayatdars then ask the contestants. "Are you bent on the *Praman*"? The contestants then reply "yea". The Pujari then asks them to dive in the water. They go into the water and the Pujari pours some milk on their heads saying "Let the innocent remain under water, long and the guilty come up quick". The popular belief is that the milk poured by the Pujari over the heads of the contestants finds a way, through the intervention of the deities into the nose and ears of the guilty who is forced by unseen powers to rise up early. The innocent remains so long after the guilty comes up that the Pujari has to lift him up practically. Thus the supernatural powers of the Pujari are believed to have invoked the assistance of Gods in deciding as to which of the contestants is in the wrong side.

The village head or the Mutha head presides over such functions and he gives a written certificate that the successful is not guilty. He is paid Rs. 5 and this payment is known as *Sarada Paji* meaning pig for the *Praman*. The description of

the money paid to the village or feudal head indicates that originally such heads were *adibasis* and were prizing a pig more than money.

The Panchayatdars of both the parties who witness the trial are paid Rs. 5 and the amount is spent on their drinks. The fact that Panchayatdars of both the sides join at the time of *Praman* show that they carry no personal animosity and abide by the decision as one coming through Divine Agency.

Another method of invoking supernatural interventions is very old and is being discarded now. This was carrying in the hand a piece of earth and a small quantity of salt solemnly declaring that if 'My contention is false my home and hearth would be lost'. It was believed that by sticking to a wrong claim while repeating these words the Kondh would lose both his home and hearth.

Another *Praman* was carrying aloft a piece of Royal Bengal Tiger's tail. While uttering his claim the claimant would say that if his claim be false he would kill him and eat him. It appears that in the past such a thing had happened on some occasions and the Kondh believes that if he makes a false claim he would suffer the same fate. This oath is administered in the Courts also some times.

The oldest type of *Praman* was carrying of a leper. It seems the challenged person would carry a leper saying loudly that if his contention is false he might be struck with this disease. This type of oath has become obsolete.

### Language :

The *Kui* language is a vocal language. Attempts are being made by the Baptist and Catholic missionaries since more than half a century to give the Roman script to the language, but it has not proved successful.

It is a primitive language and does not permit a grammatical structure. The language is spoken in Ghumusur, Sanokhedi, Badogodo etc., in 'mal' areas and in Phulbani sub-division. It is the language of the Kondhs living in the Baud Kondh areas. It is also spoken in the Kondh concentrations along the foot hill regions of the Eastern *ghats*, abutting on the plains areas of Ghumsur and Berhampur sub-divisions of Ganjam district. The language has a different dialect in the South Ganjam agency, in the South Western region of Phulbani District, in the South Western area of Puri District and in the Northern regions of Koraput District. This dialect is known as 'Kuvi'.

It is an undeveloped Dravidian language and has in many cases, roots of Tamil and Telugu origin. The language has borrowed amply from Oriya also. The Oriya influence on the language dates back to about a century when the salt merchants of the plains visited the Kondh land carrying salt by pack bullocks. About the same time the Oriya chieftains came into the area as deputies of the neighboring Oriya Rajas or on the invitation of the Kondhs. The original language underwent modification on account of this Oriya influence. But the fact remains

that it has some roots in Tamil and Telugu. One is the environmental influence and the other parental. Somehow the contact with these two Dravidian languages had declined very early and the acculturation in progress has made the Kondh to lean more towards Oriya. Even now about 5% of the Kondhs living in urban and semi-urban areas can speak and understand Oriya. The Panos and Oriya settlers and the shopkeepers are almost all of them bilingual and do speak both Oriya and Kui fluently. In course of time as acculturation marches rapidly the Kui language would be confined to the remote interiors and the urban and semi-urban areas will become entirely bilingual.

A Kondh who has had his education in the schools speaks Oriya. The subordinate officials of all departments have to learn the language to enable them to perform their duties. The higher officials are assisted by their class IV subordinates who serve as interpreters and unless one is a linguist he does not bother to learn the language sincerely. Even the Kondh colloquial test held by Government which carries a reward in its wake, does not encourage an official to learn the language.

The missionaries have a correct approach to the language problem. Their only work is to move among the people and this they can do only if they know the language. The scriptures are being written in *Kui* in the Oriya script and while conducting services they have to address the congregation in Kui alone. They are compelled, therefore, to learn the language before they are given independent charge of a parish.

To revert to the Kui languages, some of its outstanding characteristics need mention. Words expressing high philosophical thought are absent in the language. There is no word corresponding to abstract ideas like divinity, Divine glory, sacred, holy etc.

In Kui language one does not find words corresponding to expressions denoting higher mental qualities such as wise judicious, shrewd, intelligent etc. Words expressing physical qualities like strength boldness, valour and courage etc., are also absent in the language. When the need arises to use such an expression, the language resorts to circumlocution, and this is naturally often strained, tortuous, and indirect. It is possible that the Oriya settler and the trader, from the plains when he would express himself by circumlocution, taught the Kondh to do likewise, instead of allowing the Kondh to borrow these expressions from Oriya for the finer Physical and Philosophical thoughts.

There is yet another peculiarity in the language. Its vocabulary is not ample and a single word has numerous meanings. The word 'Elu' means intelligence, memory, wisdom reason etc. The context in which the word is used gives the intended meaning. There is another peculiarity in the language. Some nouns denoting the names of living beings do not have any inherent signs of gender. A boy is called "Apo Meeda" and a girl is called "Asa Meeda". "Taddi" is

added to the description of female animal such as Taddi Pajji to denote a female pig, Taddi Mio to denote a she cat etc.

Many Oriya words have been adopted and most of them undergo a change in the pronunciation. The aspirate in Oriya 'Cha' is pronounced as 'Sa'; Example: - Chaliba in Oriya is pronounced as 'Salba', Chokora as Sokora, Chari as Sari etc. The aspirate 'H' used in the middle of a word is invariably followed by the Sound 'a' Example : - *Raha, Baha, Uha, Tuha, Viha* etc.

In the language Telugu Oriya and Tamil influences can be seen from the following:

English	Kui	Tamil	Telugu	Oriya
Come	Va, Vamu	Va	Ra	
Sit	Kokumu	Ukkaro	Koocho	
Eat	Tin		Tinu	
House	Idu	Veedu	Illu	
Father	Aba	Appa	Abba	Bapa
Mother	Tadi	Talli	Talli	
Brother	Ambesa	Tambi	Tammudu	
Sister	Aangi	Akka	Akka	
Milk	Paadu	Pal	Palu	
Tree	Mrahan	Mano	Mranu	
Hand	Kajju	Kayi	Cheyi	
Head	Tlau	Thala	Tala	
Eye	Kanka	Kann	Kannu	
Leg	Kadu	Kal	Kalu	
To Walk	Salba			Chaliba
Sun, Time	Vela	Vel	Vela	Belo
Stand	Nilu	Nil	Nilapadu	
Fire	Nani	Nirupu	Nippu	Nian
Work	Kama			Kamo
Old	Pradera		Paatha	Puruna
Boy	Apo			Puo
Pair, Two	Jodeka			Jodae
Long	Lamba			Lombo
To Jump	Dega			Dian

The words borrowed from Oriya and Sanskrit are environmental while those borrowed from Telugu and Tamil appear to be parental.

The names of almost all the metals have been adopted from Oriya, which may be explained by saying that the Oriyas taught the use of the metals to the Kondh or that the Kondh learnt the same during his depredations into the plains for plunder. The Loha Penu, the Dharani Penu - the Kondh deities are the Iron God and Earth Goddess respectively and they are derived from Sanskrit or Oriya.

In the numerals used by the Kondh the parental and environmental influence is also clear. In the numbers 1 and 2 the parental influence is seen while in the rest of the numerals the environmental influence is clear. It may be inferred that at a very early period in his history, the Kondh got separated from his parental influence. While examining the roots of the language one would see that in the case of family ties and in the physiology the parental influence is apparent.

English	Kui	Tamil	Telugu	Oriya
One	Rondi	Onnu	Okati	Eka
Two	Ro, Reendi	Rend	Rendu	Dui
Three	Tini			Tini
Four	Sari			Chari
Five	Penso			Pancha
Six	So			Chha
Seven	Sato			Sata
Eight	Aato			Atha
Nine	No			Na
Ten	Doso			Dasa
Eleven	Egaro			Egara

From 3 onwards to 10, the environmental influence is apparent. From 10 onwards up to 20 the Oriya form of counting is done and from 20 to 100 the counting is by twenties as one twenty, two twenty so on. After 20 single digits are added and the counting proceeds so upto 100.

In the language as it is, a good many letters or sounds corresponding to Oriya sounds are absent. For example the sounds *Kha*, *Gha*, *Cha*, *Chha*, *Jha*, *Dha*, *Tha*, are absent from Kondhs vocabulary. Some sounds as 'Va' are present which is to be seen in the Dravidian languages of Telugu and Tamil. The sound 'O' is not the direct 'O' of Oriya but is pronounced as between ୨ and ୩ of Oriya.

#### **Sartorial :**

The Kondh uses a short dhoti about 7' X 3' with narrow borders. It is of the count of 11 to 20. It is woven by the local Pano weaver with mill yarn from the market. The Kondh does not use any clothing for the upper part of his body When going out doors he ties a turban or a smaller piece of cloth round his head. The youngsters are using a locally made or imported banyans purchased from the

market. In the village and out in the fields, the Kondh uses this dress. When he goes to the market or to the town he puts on a half shirt or a cast off coat which he has purchased by barter from the Pano. The more affluent Kondh when he goes to town dressed himself well with the same wearing apparel but of a better quality. On Ceremonial occasions the Kondh puts on a silk turban round his head. In the more remote areas even today indoors or out-doors males wear one long napkin which is also wound round the waist.

To ward off cold he uses a sheet 7' X 3' joined to another piece of the same measurement in middle. It is of count – II and it is called the *matho*. This is used as a cotton blanket during the winter. Mill made bed sheets being sold in the market now-a-days are replacing rapidly this covering cloth.

The traditional cloth is called *Gajjisi da* which is about 15' long and 1' broad with embroidery in coloured yarn at both the ends. This cloth is tied round and round the waist and over the *genitals* from front to back. This cloth was being used by the bridegroom when he would go in a procession to the bride's house. It used to be worn also when the Kondh would go to a battle field. This cloth has gone out of use and is now stored in the house as a souvenir.

The women wear saris about 7' long and 3' broad. These are locally woven and have attractive borders. The dyes are locally made by the weaver by indigenous herbs and roots. The process of manufacturing these dyes and the materials used are the secret of the Pano weavers. The saris are of the count 10 to 20 and are unbleached. Mill made saris are coming to the area rapidly and in course of time will replace the traditional ones. The average Kondh women do not use a petticoat and a blouse. Sophistication is in rapid progress and the women folk when they go to the town or to the market have been using petticoats and blouses which are available at the cloth shops at G. Udayagiri, Tikabali and Balliguda.

At home the average Kondh women use the customary clothing consisting of a napkin, short cloth  $4' \times 2\frac{1}{2}'$  round her waist. She puts on a smaller piece of cloth diagonally across the upper part of the body so as to cover the breasts and a portion of the back. This clothing is used at home and out in the fields.

Boys and girls up to the age of about 4 years go naked. After the age of four years the girls wear a napkin till they approach maturity. The boys go about naked and of late they are using small pieces of cloth tied like a dhoti or use a half pant. The girls from about four years wear napkin and a small piece of cloth round the waist. The body is bare. They do not use an upper cloth till they approach maturity. A grown up girl uses a towel or a small piece of cloth to cover the upper portion of the body as described above, in many cases marriage does not make a difference in the clothing of the women but married women with purchasing capacity are using saris now a days. The Pano and the convert Christian are

marching with the times. They use mill made clothes both indoors and outdoors and use petty-coats and blouses also. The males are well dressed outdoors.

### **Laundry :**

The dirty clothes of the house are boiled in ash and caustic earth near the spring by the housewives and the girls of the house. Generally the clothes of a few families are washed at a time, each family boiling its clothes in earthen pots separately. They are beaten well on slabs of stone near the spring, dried in the sun and taken home in the evening. There is no caste like the washerman. Those who have come to the area from the plains for a living reside in the small towns.

### **Wedding & Marriage :**

Marriage in the Kondh hills is more by mutual choice than parental interference. When the young men and women meet in the weekly market the wooing starts. There is exchange *Pan* and pleasantries. After a few such meetings formal proposals of marriage are put before the parents of the girl by the Pano of the village of the future groom. Thereafter regular negotiations start and if both sides agree the marriage is fixed.

Young men and women frequent mass festivals in the neighborhood which are known as *Jatra*. In these congregations mutual attraction separates a particular Youngman and a girl from the groups in which they come to the festival. They move about in the festival hand in hand. Later they manage to meet in the forest or at the village spring. Ultimately when they decide to marry, the proposal is put up by the young man to his parents. The negotiations are started by the Pano of groom's village. He ascertains the wishes of the parents of the girl regarding the proposal. Thereafter, the groom's father accompanied by some elders of the village and the village Pano proceeds to the bride's house. They are well received and treated with drink. The negotiation is over the number of *gati* (*gati*) which the bridegroom's people should give. The 'gati' or bride price are counted by 20s and consist of articles of daily use and finery. After a good deal of wrangling the parties come to an agreement over the number of 'gati' that would go to the girl's house and the date of marriage is fixed. If the marriage proposal is not favoured by the parents of the girl there is elopement and such cases are not very rare. The youngsters run away into the forest and stay there for a day or two. The parents of the girl relent and the father or brother of the girl invites them both to the house, and thereafter formal marriage negotiations starts.

Marriage within a clan is taboo and one within the village is permitted if the parties belong to different clans. Love affairs between a tribal and a non-tribal are discouraged from the very start by the parents of the girl. Whenever a tribal girl elopes with a non-tribal the girl is disowned by her parents. There is no marriage in such a case but the girl lives in the lovers house as his wife.

### **Panchayat & Litigation:**

Every village has a Panchayat. It is not an elected body but one that is in a way selected. The Mallick or village head convenes the Panchayat at the request of the parties or on the complaint of a particular person. He is the president of the Panchayat, and the village Pradhans are selected as members. The Digal (Pano messenger) informs the members of the date and time of the Panchayat at the bidding of the village Mallick. This is held in the evening and extends late into the night. The venue is near the village '*baredi*' (Place of God) or at the Mallick's place if it is a rainy day. Generally, the whole village is present at the spot during the proceedings of the Panchayat.

Complaints of civil and criminal nature as well as instances of breach of communal harmony and social offences are heard and decided by the Panchayat. The complainant poses his case and names his witnesses. The witnesses are asked to say what they know of the dispute. Then the accused or defendant denies the accusation and names his witness to be examined. There is no cross examination but there are frequent interruptions from either side while refuting the whole or part or a statement made by the principals or their witness.

After hearing both sides and the witnesses, the Panchayat when necessary examines witnesses on its own to clear any doubt, arising in the proceedings. The Mallick and Pradhans confer on the spot and give their verdict. The complainant if his case is proved, gets his damages. At the conclusion of the Panchayat both parties pay a substantial amount towards the drink money of the Mallick, the members of the Panchayat and the digal.

If the parties or one of them refuses to abide by the decision of the Panchayat, the matter is referred to the higher Panchayat namely the Mutha Panchayat. In some cases the parties prefer to have the dispute decided by a Praman and the Praman is conducted in the manner already described. If all these methods of redress fail the complainant approaches the Court at the Taluk Headquarters. In all such cases where matters go to Court the village Pano or the school master of the village goes to lawyer at Russel konda or Aska or Berhampur. The Pano is the spokesman and hearing his version the lawyer agrees to appear in the case. It is fixed up and the lawyer attends the Court to file his complain. He is paid heavily to cover his professional fees and his travelling allowances. He is very well looked after by the party during the case at the Court Headquarters. Litigation proceeds and in the meanwhile the other party engages another lawyer in the same manner and gets him to the Court to fight out his case. During the adjournments of the case in the Court, a number of villagers accompany the parties to town. They are fed by the respective parties in the hotels.

After one or two hearings the parties feel the pinch of litigation and think of an amicable settlement. The Pano adviser would discourage the Kondh from backing out for very obvious reason and would call it a prestige issue.



This process continues and the Kondhs are put to heavy expenditure on account of the lawyers' fees, the commission of the Pano, feeding charges of the witness and the villagers, the bribes at the Court and the exaggerated fees of the copyist etc. A Kondh after spending his ready cash unearths the gold and silver he has buried underground and thereafter. If the litigation continuous he approaches the Sowocar or Mahajan for a loan on compound interest. Ultimately by the time the litigation is finished both parties are run down to pauperism. The Sowcar or Mahajan gets an opportunity now to get the best paddy land of the Kondh because the Kondh is unable to pay the principal borrowed with double compound interest. The victorious party is not a great gainer. If he wins his case because the miscellaneous expenditure incurred by him while fighting his case is more than what he has fought for and got.

### **Tiger Kills :**

Tiger kills account for about 50% of the total unnatural deaths in the P.S. (Police Station) records. The other 50% of the deaths are due to snake bite, mauling by a bear, injuries or accidents. Common cases of tiger kills are described below.:

Very often it happens that a tiger is hiding in the scrub Jungle near the turmeric field of the Kondh. While the Kondh is taking breakfast the tiger jumps at the child who's its mother had left him sleeping in the shade of a tree. The tiger runs with the child. The Kondh gives chase with his axe and on coming up with the tiger, hacks at it with his axe. If the man is lucky the tiger is injured and runs away giving loud roars and the Kondh picks up the dead child and returns weeping. If the man is unlucky the tiger drops the child and attacks and kills him.

There are instances when the Kondh while moving in the forest in search of fuel or edible roots comes across a tiger squatting on the path. The Kondh climbs the nearest tree and stays there till the tiger goes way. If he is not quick enough he is caught and carried away by the tiger.

There are instances when a Kondh turning a curve in the path comes face to face with a tiger squatting on the ground and there is no trees nearby to climb upon. He realizes that he should kill the tiger or get killed. Before the tiger makes the fatal jump at him, he rushes head long and strikes a blow on the head of the tiger with his axe. If he is lucky the animal falls dead at the spot. If not lucky and he only injures the tiger which pounces on him and carries him away half dead.

There are instances when females and girls returning from forest with fibre or Slali leaves are way laid by a tiger, and before they realize it one of them is carried away. There are man-eating leopards also. These are very cunning creatures and go after a Kondh, so to say stalking him. At a convenient spot and from convenient distance the leopard pounces on him and kills him.

When the Kondhs go for the early morning drink of Solpa juice the party is way laid by a tiger. If the group is alert and catches the scent of the tiger the

young men shout and brandishing the fire brand they drive away the tiger. If not the tiger pounces on a man and runs with the man carried between his leg and chest into the forest. When the water source or spring is at a distance and there is a scrub jungle between it and the village, the women go in groups escorted by some young men. The path is narrow and there is scrub jungle on either side. The tiger snatches away one of the party before the men start to scare the animal away.

### **Weapons :**

The bow is of strong bamboo and well-seasoned by oil and fire. It is 4' to 5' long. During the seasoning it is slightly bent and sometimes stones of sufficient weight are tied to the ends to bend it so. At one end, the bow string is tied and the string is of thin split leather or a thin split bamboo. This string is mounted on a finely cut piece of bamboo and tied to the bow. The string also undergoes seasoning. The other end of the bow is kept free with a loop of eri cocoon rope or a string of leather and when the bow is bent the loop of the string is pushed over the tapering end of the bow.

The arrow heads of the arrows are of various designs and are made by the Kondh black smith. The arrows shafts are made by the Kondh himself. They are usually cane or of thick reeds. The sides of the arrows are decked with close clipped feathers of birds. Poisoned arrows are not used.

The axe of the Kondh has a blade 3" to 5" long. The loop at the striking end is usually thick with some brass ornamentation embedded in the iron. It is made by the Kondh blacksmith. It is so tempered that the blade stands even cutting of hard wood. The handle is made by the Kondh from a species of hard wood. It is seasoned by oil and fire. This axe is carried poised on the right shoulder with the handle trailing behind. When going out doors to his field or forest the axe is the Kondh's inseparable companion which is used as a weapon of offence as well as defense.

The spear is mostly used during the hunt. It is a piece of wood or bamboo 4' to 5' long and well-seasoned. The spear head is made by the blacksmith. There are a few ancient spears of iron in the area which have, at the non-striking end, a ball of hollow iron probably to give it proper poise. The shaft is of solid iron.

There are match locks also in the area. They are used when the Kondh sits on a *machan* waiting for a tiger which he expects over a 'kill'. The match lock is locally made but the place of manufacture is kept a secret. The match lock is also used at the funeral of a well-to-do man in the village. It is fired into the air when the corpse is taken out to the cremation ground. The powder and shot are made by Kondh himself. The powder and shot are made by Kondh himself. The match lock is so crude that it gives a strong and violent kick which fells the man. It is only the strong man that can fire the match lock.

### **Indebtedness :**

Indebtedness of the Kondh is proverbial. He is not in want but he has nothing in plenty. Nature supplies all his needs which are very simple and meager. In spite of these facts, a Kondh needs money to defray the marriage expenses if he goes to court and the expenses required while conducting religious ceremonies and propitiations which are not few. He spends the ready money if he has any. Then he spends the gold and money, if he has any, secretly buried underground. When all these resources are exhausted he approaches the *Mahajan* or the *Sowkar* for money. The interest he is to pay is exorbitant and in course of a few years it is more than the principal he has borrowed. The loan is generally on usufructuary mortgages one or two fields but the produce of the land is not according to the calculation of the money lender, sufficient to cover even the interest. The balance due is carried over to the principal and this process goes on for some time. The money tender suggests to the Kondh that instead of allowing the loan to multiply in this manner it is better to dispose of one or two fields of his. Thus one or two good fields of the Kondh go out of his possession. This is not a secret transaction but is done before the village elders. The Kondh is driven to penury and very often he does not recover from it. Most of the paddy lands belonging to non-Adivasis in the area have gone to them in this manner. Government has enacted the "Agency Land Transfer Act", but evasions are many and also the Kondh is not anxious to get back his lands because the *Sowkar* has helped him at the time when he needed money most. If the money was borrowed by his father and the *Sowkar* has taken some lands in lieu of the loan, he does not have the mind to go back on his deceased father action. The Kondh sometimes scoops out a field or two by hard labour to make up the loss of his ancestral fields. He concentrates on Podu cultivation. If he is unable to scoop out paddy land and if he fails to get a good return from the *bogodo* he becomes desperate and takes shelter of drink to forget his misery.

### **Clothing :**

The scant clothing of the Kondh is not entirely due to poverty and want. It is due to the following reasons.

1. The ideas of modesty are primitive and garments of bigger and better dimensions are not felt a necessary.
2. The man, women and children spend almost the entire day outdoors and the nature of work they do is such that bigger and better clothes would hamper their free movement.
3. In winter and on chilly days and nights the fire place in the living room keeps a Kondh warm.
4. There is no need for the Kondhs to go to the town and market frequently and the scant clothing they have is enough to cover their nakedness.
5. The average Kondh does not have the capacity to purchase more and better clothes. Even if one were to purchase he has no place to keep them.

The Pano who is the weaver and the miscellaneous man of the locality does not do whole time weaving. He does not therefore manufacture more clothes or better ones.

In this connection it may be mentioned that long ago cotton was being grown in the area. It was of the short staple variety. It was being ginned or carded by hand. These processes and spinning was done by the women folk. Spinning was done by means of a crudely made wooden spindle which was rotated on a piece of broken pottery. The yarn produced was usually of counts 10 to 20. The Pano weaver used to weave the cloth on his age old loom and brushes brought by him from the plains. At Present '*Dhoties*' and '*Saries*' women by him have borders and particularly the borders of the saries are of bright colours and of different designs. The Pano uses certain dyes prepared by him from indigenous herbs and roots. The Pano woman is very good at embroidery and the borders of the saries are sometimes embroidered. Better cotton cloths in large quantities are not being woven by the Panos because there is no demand for it. Now-a-days, a Pano is using mill yarn and uses dyes which are available in the market. In 1939, looms of the improved type and improved brushes were introduced into the area.

#### **Vetty Labour :**

There is no labour class in the hills and all Government works are mainly done by the Revenue Department which organizes labour by the age-old *vetty* system. According to this system portions of roads and of buildings are allotted to particular villages and the villagers divide house wise the works to be done. Minors and the disabled are exempted and the rest of the village have to do the work. Payment is made in lump sum on rough calculation and this is shared among the villagers. Persons who evade this *vetty* labour are pulled out from their hiding places by Revenue Peons and are given good beating. Persons who dissuade the villagers from going to work on the *vetty* system are tortured. The work is supervised by an overseer who is known as Agency Overseer. By this labour the Revenue buildings which are of thatch, the school buildings, the medical officers' quarters, the dispensaries, the health inspectors quarters and the quarters of all Government servants of all Departments are maintained by the Revenue Department. Bamboo thatch and the required fiber are also apportioned among the villagers and are supplied by them on nominal payment.

All the roads are earthen roads and the unfrequented ones are termed as bridle paths. All these roads are maintained by the *vetty* system. There were culverts and bridges of wooden posts and rough deckings. In 1939 the abutments of the bridges and culverts were made *pucca* with stone and lime and the decking were made of sawn timber. The first metalled road in the Ganjam agency was the Udayagiri, Gutingia road and it was metalled in the year 1939. Ghat sections on the different roads were many and some of them were realigned or improved during the same year. There are Revenue rest sheds, one at every 8 and 9 miles

and these are maintained by *vetty* labour. The payment for the labour is village wise and the whole amount granted to a village is apportioned among the villagers by the *mallick* or *mutta* head.

The P.W.D has a sub-division at Phulbani and a section at Balliguda and another at Kalinga. The works of the P.W.D is confined to the main road from Bhanjanagar to Phulbani and from Bhanjanagar to Baliguda. The P.W.D has its gangs of labourers. Contractors are also engaged by the P.W.D to look after the bridges on the roads and the *pucca* buildings like the Magistrate's Office and quarter's, Sub-Jail, Circuit House etc.

The *vetty* labour is used otherwise also. Dak is carried by the *vetty* system whenever necessary. Every touring Officer is given the required number of coolies to carry the luggage. The labourers are paid at *vetty* rates. At the residences of the Tahasildar and at the I.Bs in the interior watchmen are provided under the *vetty* system which the *mutha* head arranges by rotation from among the villagers.

#### **Muthaheads :**

In G. Udayagiri Taluk there are two *mutha* heads namely of *Karada* and *Ranaba*, who call themselves Rajas. They exact *mamuls* as the Patros of Baliguda. There are a few Bisois in Chokapad and near about Tikabali and there are many other non-tribal heads at Paburia, Lingagada and Guttingia. They do not exact *mamuls* like the Patros of Baliguda. The rest of the Mutha heads in G.Udayagiri Taluk are tribals among whom there are one or two Gond Mutha heads. There in Baliguda Taluk the Patro or Mutha head is entitled to several *mamuls* because he has to maintain a retinue of sub-ordinates. He has ample *mamuls* recorded in his favour in the Taylor's memoirs. Because of the status he maintains, he has to exact *mamuls* and he is unscrupulous while exacting such. The *mutha* heads in G. Udayagiri Taluk do not have many *mamuls* and they do not exact *mamuls* as the Mutha heads of Balliguda Taluk.

#### **Mamuls:**

The origin of *mamuls* the nature of *mamuls*, the extent of *mamuls* and the method of collecting and exacting the same have been described in the report on "Agency Mamuls Enquiry" published by Government. The payment of *mamuls* is enforced in the courts. The *mamuls* are exorbitant and the tribals resent it. The late Thakkara bapa as Chairman of the Partially Excluded Areas Committee toured the area in 1938 to see the condition of the tribals.

#### **Arrowroot :**

Arrowroot or *Palua* is not a cultivated crop in the hills. It grows in damp and shady places near the big trees like jackfruit mango etc. At the beginning of summer before the plants die a natural death the tribals go in a group to the place and dig the tubers. Sometimes women also are in the groups. They dig the tubers

which are washed in the stream hear by. Then they are rubbed into a paste on the sheet rock in the vicinity. This paste is mixed in bowls of bell metal, and the mixture is allowed to stand so till the fine particles of arrowroot settle down as sediment. The sediment is taken out and left to dry on the sheet rocks. When dried completely it is scraped and taken to the village. It is mostly exported to the plains because the tribal does not relish it.

#### **Eri :**

Eri cocoons are not reared in the area. They are found in a wild condition in the forest areas of *Linepada Mutha* and in *Korodmutha*, where the Sal forest is dense and thick. The non-Kondh Harijans go into the forests in groups they observe certain rites. They do not partake of non-vegetable food, onions, garlic etc., and do not tie their long hair so long they are in the forest. These cocoons are not boiled but exported as such to the plains. These find a market at Berhampur where they are boiled and processed for spinning.

#### **Hides :**

Cattle mortality is very heavy in the area as they are not fed in the house and fodder is out of the reach of the animals because of the wild animal menace. The cattle die early. The dead animals are skinned by the Pano. He treats the hides with salt which he purchases from the hide merchant and dries them in the sun. after this crude curing the hides are kept in heaps on the veranda for some time. The hide merchant comes from Tikabali on convenient market days and purchases the hides so stored. These hides are exported to Russel konda and Berhampur by bullock carts or by trucks to the tanneries at these two places, where a second curing is done and the hides are exported to Madras.

#### **Hunting :**

Hunting is not merely a past time of the Kondh. It gets him food also. The hunting season begins with summer and ends with the rainy season. It is a community affair and all males in the village excluding the aged and children join. A hunt starts in the morning during the summer months and the hunters gather at the house of the village Mallick after breakfast. Each one is armed with the bow and arrows, the axe or the Javelin. Some even have long *lathis*. There are the drummers with the change, and some even carry bison horn bugles. Most of them have two or three *sal* leaf pipes tucked in the angle of the ear or in the turban. They are bare bodied except for a small dhoti and a turban on the head. One or two persons carry a burning fire brand which serves as the match box of the party while lighting the leaf pipes. Every village has a number of stray dogs and individuals also have their own pet dogs. The party with dogs reach the house of the head man and proceed to the abode of the village goddess where some oblations of milk and raw rice are offered.

The dogs of the village run ahead sniffing the ground for the trails of animals. The hunters follow the dogs towards the forest. The dogs on getting near the quarry drive it towards the Nala or the deep rewind if any. If there is a tiger or a bear that is roused by the dogs, it is allowed to pass and chase is given to the smaller game. When the hunters close up, the animal is killed by the arrow javelin or by the axe. If the animal escapes it jumps into the Nala or runs into the ravine where it is easy to attack and kill it.

If no animal is tracked by the dogs the party sits down at the foot of a tree. It is decided to have a beat and the locality is fixed up. The hunters spread out in a semicircle near the selected spot. The more agile and strong take up positions at the ends of the semicircle and the rest post themselves in the base of the semicircle. Loud noises are made by the *changu*, the bugles and by shouting. The hunted animals are roused and while trying to escape are caught in the semicircle, and killed by the arrow, the Javelin or the Axe.

After bagging one or two animals, the beat is closed by about 3 PM, and the hunters return home with the dead animals. If the bag is good there is jubilation and there is singing and dancing during the homeward march. There is something like a thanks giving, ceremony at the village deity. The animal is skinned there and the venison is apportioned house wise. The disabled and lone widows are given their shares although they have not joined the hunt. The village Digal is given the skin of the animal along with his share of the meat.

Snares are used to catch birds which are good to eat. Wild fowl, Gurandi, Snipes, Pheasants are snared and caught. There is a big trap, to entrap the Gurandi. It is long and has a broad opening at an end. It is made of wattle woven together in the shape of a long funnel. After fixing the trap the Kondh hoots out like the male bird and in response to the call the female birds collect, proceed into the trap and are caught. The snaring and trapping are individual ventures and the community tinge is absent. Other birds are caught by the net spread on the ground with some bait strewn beneath it. Decoy birds are not used.

When a tiger or a leopard causes havoc in a locality by killing or maiming a large number of cattle or goats or by killing human beings also, the villagers join together and construct trap at the end of the village and close to the foot hills. There was one such trap in the village Paddangi near Guttingia and this was carefully maintained for over two years. This is a cage like contrivance constructed by the people. It is about 15' long and 8' broad. The sides of this cage are of Sal poles fixed close to each other without leaving much of an opening between them. The height of the poles is 12' to 14' over ground. This enclosure is divided into two compartments one smaller than the other.

The partition between these compartments is made of poles fixed deep into the ground and a reinforcement of split bamboo is added to prevent a head long rush by the trapped animal. The bigger compartment has a trap door of the

same material which is held aloft by a rope. There is an opening of about 4 from the floor when the trap door is lifted up and held in position by a rope tied to the partition wall. This holding rope is so tied to the dividing partition that if an animal gropes along the partition wall to reach the bait the rope would snap and down would come the trap door and the animal is held a captive. The bait is a goat or a pig which is tied in the smaller compartment. After completing these arrangements by evening the villagers go for food and rest. Between 7 and 9 P.M the killer arrives catching scent of the bait. It walks round and round the trap and gets through the trap door which is open and gropes along the partition wall to get at the bait. In this process the rope holding the trap door snaps and it comes down with a bang. The trapped animal whether the tiger or the leopard roars and whines while trying to escape from the trap by jumping over or breaking through the wall of the trap to the glee of the villagers all through the night. In the morning the villagers come and spear the animal to earth, and that is the end of the nuisance in the area for some time. The trap is not dismantled immediately but allowed to stand for one or two years to be used if the menace re-appears.

#### **Dalli hunt :**

The Dalli hunt as it is called was introduced into the area by the Oriya *mutha* heads in the early part of the last century. Dalli is an Oriya term (Dal) and means generally a curry of dal, of vegetables mixed with it. This method of hunting is a very weird one. After nightfall in the dark fortnight a group of young men get ready for the hunt. They have a screen of split bamboo about 5' X 4' which is carried on the shoulders by two men by means of a bamboo pole tied across. It is about 3 from the ground. The screen is painted crudely in colours and the effigy painted is that of God or Goddess according to Oriya concept. In the open space between the ground and the bottom of the screen a blazing fire is kept up in a brazier carried by two persons. The persons carrying the screen wear jingling anklets which make a noise as the procession moves. Behind the brazier the hunters move armed with spears, *lathis* axe etc. The procession winds through the scrub jungle at the foot hills and proceeds to the jungle at the foot hills and proceeds to the jungle beyond. The sound made by the anklets, and the fire with the screen above attracts the wild animals towards it. As they approach the screen and gape at the fire and effigy above it they are killed by the axe or *lathi* or Javelin. The bagged animal if small is handed over to the men in the rear and the procession moves forward. This hunting is kept up for two or three hours. The animals killed are mostly hares, boars and the deer also. The Oriya inhabitants generally take to this hunting with some Kondhs, following. The major share of the meat therefore goes to the Oriyas.

Rathakhendi is a sub-member (*mutha*) of Keonjhar where sugar cane is grown. Towards the flowering a large number of birds of various colours and of the size of a lemon come to the sugar cane field. These birds are known as the *Baromasi Chodhei*. They are caught by sticks smeared with gum acacia which tied



to the sugar cane plants. The birds get entangled in the gum either by the legs or wings and are caught. They are put in small bamboo cages and sold in the market. The birds die within one year and hence are called *Baromasi Chodhei*.

### **Agriculture:**

The paddy lands situated in the valley close to the village are formed by two highlands or two hillocks on either side of this land. It is raised with paddy either transplanted or broadcast. As in the plains seedlings are raised in a corner of the field and transplanted. The transplantation is not by the single seedling method which the tribal considers laborious and time taking. The valley being of a sloping nature, side drains are provided to save the fields from the hill drainage which flows with velocity. Paddy Transplantation is a sort of communal activity where the women and girls of the village gather on the invitation of the owner of the land. They are given rice and curry by about noon. Similarly the harvesting of the paddy is done by the village men and women and they are also fed in the field. The valley is terraced into fields with a good deal of ingenuity and every field has a drainage channel which joins the main drainage channel. These are reined lands since minor irrigation has not been taken up in the area. After the first crop of paddy is harvested, green gram as well as black gram are broadcast in the fields.

On either side of the valley there are uplands which are used for growing kueri ( a millet), horse gram, hill gram, black gram, Ragi, redgram, jowar, sweet potato etc. These are purely Rabi crops and are planted just at the close of the rains. Turmeric is grown further up close to the foothills and in some place ginger is grown near the paddy area where there is greater humidity in this soil. Both ginger and turmeric are commercial crops and the entire ginger grown is exported to the plains. A small fraction of the turmeric crop is used locally and the major portion exported to the plains through the weekly markets. Turmeric is boiled rubbed and seasoned by the '*tahanlo*' or the Gond before its marketing. Turmeric needs a special soil. The soil is generally more loamy than sandy. If the black cotton soil is there mixed in it, it is very suitable for growing turmeric. The manuring of turmeric is peculiar. Small *sal* branches with very tender leaves are spread on the turmeric after it is planted in the soil. The leaves get sun burnt and get mixed up in the soil by the heavy rains in the month of June. The green leaves give some humidity to the turmeric that is planted and then the rains convert the leaves into leaf manure.

In the space between the foothills and the village, fruit bearing trees are planted. The backyard cultivation is not very much favoured by the tribal because practically he has none of it. Moreover, he is well engaged in the *podu* cultivation and has no time for backyard cultivation. In his diet, kitchen green vegetables do not find place and this is another reason why he does not grow vegetables in whatever space there is in his backyard. Only plants like Papaya plantain and sometimes cotton are grown in the backyard crown the land adjacent to it.

Wedding and hoeing of the crops grown on the up lands is done by the communal system of labour and as usual the villagers who join in these operations are fed by the owner of the land.

### **Podu Cultivation:**

The Podu cultivation is on the hill tops or hill slopes. It is shifting cultivation and the site of the cultivation is charged every 3 or 4 years and the land or hill slope at the end of this period, is left fallow. *Sabai* grass and other varieties of grass and scrub jungle grow on this land and after a period of 3 to 4 years the shrubbery is cut, left to dry and then burnt. After enough of ash is collected on the land the tribal starts his *podu* cultivation once again. While burning the grass etc. the Kondh is careful to see that fruit bearing trees if any standing in the area are not damaged. The soil with the ash on it remains sunbaked for about a month. Before the seeds are planted some rough dressing of the land is done by the filling small depressions on the land. The sowing of the *podu* or *bagodo* begins just before the monsoon break up. The tribal knows in advance that the rains are coming and after offering rice and milk to the deity or *Soru Penu* he starts planting his *podu*. He uses a drill which is a piece of wood about 3 in length and 1 in diameter at the end of which there is an iron spike. Small holes are bored in rows with the help of this implement and the Kondh plants the seeds one or two in each hole. The spacing is customary and big boulders which are on the *podu* are circumvented.

The Jowar and other millets and the runner vegetables are planted similarly allotting separate areas to the different varieties of plants. Small depressions near the big boulders are planted with gourds, pumpkins, plantains etc. Wherever the land is more even small patches of it are utilized to grow 'kueri'. Within a week or 10 days from the date of sowing the first rains appear and the seeds sprout up. There is usually a short gap between the first showers and the regular rains. After the plants are about a month old the first wedding is done as usual with community help and the process is repeated after the plants are 1' to 18' high. The wedding is done very scrupulously and not even a blade of grass is to be seen near the plants after the second wedding. An instrument of the type of hoe known as 'Goddik' is used. It is a hand instrument and can be easily wielded from a sitting posture. The plants thereafter are left to thrive by themselves. The Kondh trains the creepers on to a boulder or small shrub which he cuts and fixes on the ground near the runners. The local runner beans are trained on to small trees standing on the *podu*. The beans are plucked by hand as long they are within reach after which they are left to dry on the trees. When the beans are ripe the tree itself is cut bringing down the creeper with its fruits. There is a special species of bean which when green is consumed in the gruel, in its unripe condition. The ripe pumpkins are preserved for the lean months. The ash pumpkin is consumed in the kitchen in its green stage and the ripe ones are sold in the market. Castor and Papaya are also planted on the *podu*. The *jowar* seed is used in the gruel and a portion of the crop is used fried and made into balls with boiling *jaggery*. The hill

gram which is grown on the *podu* is utilized as a principal item in the gruel in its green stage. When it dries up it is sold in the market. The horse gram and black gram are sold in the local market. Ragi is locally consumed. Gourds of different varieties are grown on the *podu* land and it is boiled in the gruel and eaten. The non-edible variety of gourd is a multipurpose one. It is used as part of a musical instrument known as Dhekka and the smaller ones are used as spoons in the kitchen. The gourd is also used to preserve oil, salt etc, and the still smaller ones are used as drinking glasses to drink *solpo* juice. The large sized gourd is also used as a pitcher for fetching water. The gourd of the medium size is used for storing seed grains and vegetable seeds for the coming year.

Drainage of the rain water is a problem in the *podu* area because it rushes down with great velocity damaging the plants in its way. The Kondh with great ingenuity trains the rain drainage so that it does not interfere with his cultivation. There is a sort of terracing the hill slope in this process.

### **Mango:**

Mango is a cultivated crop and the Kondh plants one or two mango trees. They are his own property. Where mango grows wild by castaway stones the trees are common property. There is another variety of mango which grows on hill tops and hill slopes. This is of a very small size, the skin is very thin and the stone is a big one. The entire juice of this mango is only a few teaspoonfuls. This is a very late variety and the mangoes ripen during *Jyestha* or *Asadha* (June or July).

The mango is eaten ripe and a major portion of the crop is used in preparing dried mango juice in the shape of rolls. The liquid juice is well mixed by a bamboo churning rod and it is smeared layer after layer on a bamboo mat or on winnow. When a layer dries in the sun another layer is put on it. The dehydrated mango juice is partly consumed by the family but the major portion is sold in the plains. This is in Oriya called *Ambasoda*. The mango planks are used for door leaves, doorposts etc. The mango stone is heaped in a corner and allowed to dry after which it is used for food purposes. There are three peculiar varieties of mango one at Lingagada, it grows to a magnum size each weighing about one pound. There is another variety in the Rikola hills which grows to the size of an Areca nut which ripens in *Asadh*. There is another variety of mango which is dark red in colour when ripe. There is a tree of this variety on the hill saddle opposite to Doongi village. The seeds of better variety of mangoes are usually imported from the plains area. There is no graft mango tree in the area so far. The Kondh does not believe in grafting.

### **Jack Fruit :**

The jack fruit also ripens late in the area and grown in clusters. The green jack fruit is rarely used for culinary purpose, because of the gum in which the fruit abounds and the difficulty of cutting the same into small pieces. Ripe jackfruit is

eaten with pleasure by the Kondhs. It is rarely sold in markets. The seed of the jackfruit are preserved in the house and are cooked into a curry. The surplus of the seeds is sold in the local market on the barter system.

#### **Mohua :**

Mohua is a very important tree in the hills because of the drink which the Kondh prepared from it. The flowers are dried and preserved for being cooked in the gruel. Oil is extracted from the Mohua seeds and this is the only oil available to the average Kondh for use as seasoner of curry. The *mohua* oil is used also for application to the head and body. The *mohua* planks are also used wherever necessary. Mohua trees are not planted and they grow in open dry fields or waste lands. When the flowering of the trees starts children of the village go to pick up the fallen flowers. These are partly used at home as food and the surplus is sold to the village Sundhi or in the local market.

#### **Tamarind :**

The next important tree of the area is the tamarind. Its branches are used as fuel whenever they are cut and its fruits when ripe are collected and sold by the Kondh after the hard skin is beaten. The seeds are removed from the tamarind and eaten as snacks. The fried seeds are made into powder by the crude *chakki* and this powder is mixed with the gruel of the family.

#### **Silk Cotton :**

The tree next in importance is the silk cotton (*buro* in Oriya). Its planks and balls are used for building purposes and its fruits are plucked and sold in the market for use in pillows etc.

#### **Sal:**

Sal is a very important tree and serves many purposes. It has timber and fuel value. The bark of these trees is cut at two or three places and from these cuts a gelatinous substance oozes out. When dry this juice solidifies and it is the "Jhuna" which is sold in the market. The smoke of the burning Jhuna is a disinfectant and keeps off insects etc, in the house. Sal leaves are used in the leaf plate known as Khalli. The leaves when green serve as wrappers for commodities sold by the Mahajan. The leaves are used as leaf cups also.

#### **Siali :**

Siali is a creeper which is in very common use in the Kondh land. The leaves are stitched into cups, dishes and receptacles with a capacity of an average basket in which seed paddy etc are kept. The Pano who comes to the plains with turmeric or ginger for sale, carries his commodities in these big receptacles. The fibre of the *siali* cropper is useful for many purposes. It serves as a twined rope and for tying cattle and ploughs etc. The fibre is also used as strings in weaving the

cots, which Kondh uses. The *siali* is a wild plant and it grows from its own seeds strewn in the area by the wind.

**Triphala :**

Triphala is a very important minor forest produce of the area. It consists of Harida (Myrabolam), Anla (Phyllanthus) and Bahada (Terminalia). The first is used while tanning hides and for Ayurvedic medicinal purpose. The next is used mostly for Ayurvedic medicinal purposes and Bahada is also used for the above purpose. There is practically no use for these fruits in the hills and the entire produce collected is exported to the plains.

**Sunari:**

The next important plant is Rella or Sunari in Oriya. The bark of this tree is scraped out, dried in the sun and exported into the plains, where it is used in tanning hides.

**Mats:**

There is a type of mat prepared at – Khomonkhol about 20 miles north of Balliguda. The grass used is of larger size than that grown in Midnapur and mats are therefore coarse and rough.

**Broom:**

The most export commodity is the broom stick. It is prepared from a grass growing in the hill slopes. The flowering stalks of this weed are tied together by *siali* fibre in a very firm manner and it give a good grip to the hand. The broom sticks have a good market in and outside Orissa. This is an important cottage industry run by the women of the house. The Kondh used these brooms sticks but they are shorter in length so as to enable the women folk to sweep the room in the squatting position.

# IN SEARCH OF A FORGOTTEN COMMUNITY: THE BENNIAH KANDHAS OF ORISSA \*

*Anuja Mohan Pradhan*<sup>1</sup>

## I

The state of Orissa allures to all researchers and academicians who pursue a study on tribals. Orissa, with its exotic natural forests and hills has been home of 62 Scheduled Tribes and numerous sub-tribes or groups. As per 2001 census, tribal population of Orissa is 81, 45,081 and constitutes 22.1% of the state's population. About 10.38% of India's Scheduled Tribe population live in Orissa, the third in terms of tribal concentration only next to Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Nearly 94.5% of tribal population live in villages and 90% of the same is dependent on agriculture, out of which 50.70 % are cultivators and 38.30% are agricultural labourers. The tribes, with their rich tradition and culture have contributed towards formation of picturesque mosaic of Orissan culture manifested in art, craft, folk literature and religion.

A 'tribe' is described as a social group, usually within a definite area and having a common language, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organisation<sup>2</sup>. It may also include several sub groups. According to Mujumdar (2006) "a tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language, and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligation".

In the pre-colonial period there were no social groups called 'tribes'. Such ethnic groups, which had distinct local and regional nomenclatures, were

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 49, No.1, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2009, pp.86-91

<sup>1</sup> National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jamshedpur-831007, e-mail: [anuj@nmlindia.org](mailto:anuj@nmlindia.org),  
Mob: 09334646125.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribes of Orissa* by SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar.

not categorized together under the general category of tribe. In the ancient Indian literatures these groups were termed as *adivasi*, *adim jati*, *janajati*, *vanyajati*, etc. The great Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, administrative documents of emperor Ashoka's period and many other ancient literatures refer the tribal people as jungle folks. The colonial rulers categorised them as "Tribes". However, in the Indian context the diversities of the large number of communities loosely called as "tribes" defies any precise definition of the term. Various authorities have attempted to define the term but an acceptable proposition is yet to emerge.

Among the 62 Scheduled Tribes of Orissa the KANDHA is numerically the largest and territorially widespread tribe in Orissa. In this regard it is not only a major tribe of the Orissa state and but also one of the major tribes of the country. According to the Census of 2001 the total population of the Kandha is 13 95 643 (6 88 402 males and 7 07 241 females) out of the State's total tribal population of 81 45 081. Though their population is unevenly spread throughout the State in all the 30 districts, their main concentration is in southern Orissa covering districts like Rayagada, Kondhmal, Kalahandi and Koraput. Geographically, their stronghold lies in the central region (Boud-Kandhamal district), Rayagada region (Rayagada district) and south-western part (erstwhile Kasipur and Mahulpatna areas) of Eastern Ghats Region.

As such they are territorially and socio-culturally divided into a number of segments/sections bearing different names and exhibiting diversity as well as commonness of cultural traits among themselves. The names of many of these sections have found place in the ST list of Orissa. The spatio-temporal drift has put them at different parts of the state and placed them at the neighbourhood of different cultures. This proximity to other cultures and gradual mutual dependence has influenced them to a certain extent. The sub groups /sub tribes of the greater Kandhas are many and researchers differ about their number. Various sub groups have come into forefront at different phases of time and are specifically or randomly has caught the attention of the researchers. The present article attempts to point out the existence of the Benniah Kandhas – a forgotten sub-tribe of the Kandha as referred by various researchers and administrators. This paper will also be discussing few pertinent questions a researcher faces while venturing into an uncharted area for study of a tribe or a sub-tribe.

## II

Centuries ago i.e., in August 1836 the Kandha tribe for the first time featured very prominently for their heinous practices of female infanticide and human sacrifice in the report of Mr. Russell to the Madras Government. Thereafter papers and articles on various cultural aspects of the tribe were published in various magazines and journals. Thus tribe became known to the administrative as-well as academic world for its superstitious beliefs and

practices. Acting upon this information the British Government appointed Colonel Campbell who was succeeded by Captain Macpherson as the Collector of Ganjam to suppress such heinous practices.

The *Original Report*<sup>3</sup> by Captain Samuel Charter Macpherson, the then Collector of Ganjam District of Orissa under British rule (1846) happens to be the first report written in which this sub tribe the Benniah Kandha has been mentioned. Capt. Macpherson had authored the report basing on his personal visit to the Kandha hills lying west of Ganjam district. In his report he states about three types of Kandhas, namely Malliah Kandhas, Benniah Kandhas and Bettiah Kandhas. The Malliah Kandhas resided in the Eastern Ghats and Kutia Kandhas resided further west to them. The Benniah Kandhas, who were in close proximity of the Oriya speaking people of Ganjam were some sort of bulwark. The leaders of Benniah Kandhas worked as a link between the Oriya speaking Hindu kings and the Kandhas of the Agency area.

Later the Benniah Kandha appeared in the writing of Major-General John Campbell. In his narrative<sup>4</sup> *"OPERATIONS IN THE HILL TRACTS OF ORISSA; THE SUPPRESSION OF HUMAN SACRIFICES AND FEMALE INFANTICIDE"*, he describes his encounters and experiences with the Benniah Kandha in an interesting episode. The episode goes as the following:

Whilst examining some magisterial cases, I observed a crowd approaching with two women in front, guarded by three or four armed men. In due time they were brought before me, and charged by a Beniah Khond, (one of a tribe of Khonds inhabiting the slopes of the mountains) with having transformed themselves into tigers killing and carrying off his son. His story was : –

"I went in the evening to the jungle near my village accompanied by my son, to gather fire-wood. We were engaged in doing so when a tiger sprung upon my son and carried him off. I pursued, shouting and making as much noise as I could, when suddenly on turning the shoulder of a rock I saw there two women standing on the top of it. The thing was now clear, the "Pulta Bag," alarmed at my shouts and close pursuit, concealed the body of my son and resumed their original (human) shape. I took them prisoners to my village, where they confessed to what I now charge them with, here they are, ask them."

I did ask them, and to my surprise both women acknowledged that the Beniah Khond's story was true, they had killed his son, and had

---

<sup>3</sup> *Calcutta Review* , 1846a

<sup>4</sup> Major-General John Campbell, C.B. Chapter-II of *His Operations in the Hill Tracts of Orissa: The Suppression of Human Sacrifices and Female Infanticide*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1861



power to transform themselves into tigers. Determined to undeceive the people as to this extraordinary belief, I told the women that I would release them on condition of their transforming themselves into tigers in my presence, which, to the horror of my people, they agreed to do if taken to a neighboring jungle. This I ordered to be done; when seeing no mode of escape, they threw themselves on the ground, imploring mercy and pardon, and confessing the imposture. They stated that they were poor, and lived by imposing on the credulity of the villagers, who supplied them with food and clothing whenever they chose to ask for it, to secure themselves and cattle from their depredations in the form of a "Pulta Bag." Some were convinced of the imposture, but the majority were disappointed that the supposed witches were not burned or drowned.

Dalton (1872) and Rowney (1992) have acknowledged the existence of the Benniah Kandha in their descriptive ethnographic reports published afterwards. E.T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, (1872: 293) has endorsed Macpherson's three fold division of the Kandha tribe as 'Betiah', 'Beniah' and 'Maliah'. "...Betiah a servile class, who worked for hire or held lands on conditions of labour: Beniah who occupied skirts of hills and paid rent for their lands or held them on a more honourable description of service: and Maliah or highlanders who were virtually independent, though they performed homage to the chief on his accession, and, if well disposed to his service, occasionally took the field at his bidding."

Then Risley also wrote about the Benniah Kandha in his book *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, (1891, Vol-I, p-397).

**"Kandh, Kondh, Kond, Kui Loka, Kui-Enju"** a Dravidian tribe, inhabiting that part of the territory of the Raja of Boad (Boud), one of the tributary states of Orissa, known as Kandhmals, a hilly tract of country 40 mile in length, and extreme breadth 24 miles, with an area of 800 square miles. These Kandhs call themselves Maliah Kandhs as distinguished from the Beniah Kandhs, who inhabit Gumsur in Madras." " The Kandhs of Orissa Kandhmals, with whom alone we are now concerned, are supposed to have entered the Kandhmals from the South about 250 years ago, driving out the feeble unwarlike Kurums or Kurmis who appear to have been the original occupants of these tracts. They are divided into two classes- (1) Uriya Kandh, (2) Malua or Arria Kandh. The former are Kandhs who from social intercourse with the Uriyas have abandoned many Kandh usages and adopted Hindu customs in their place; while the Malua or hill Kandhs still adhere strictly to the original observances of the tribe. Within the limits of the Kandhmals these two groups have not yet become strictly endogamous, and owing perhaps to the sparseness of the population of these tracts,

intermarriages still take place between them. But the Malua Kandhs already refuse to intermarry with the Uriya Kandhs of Bod (Boud) proper and Gumsur, whom they regard as having lowered themselves by taking to Hindu practices; and it seems probable that in course of time an equally complete separation will be brought about between the Uriya and Malua Kandhs of the Kandhmals." (Ibid, Vol-I, p-398)

Another most important literature on Kandhas emerged from the studies by Mrs. Barbara Boal. Her studies with Capt. Macpherson's report in the background further threw light into socio-religious and cultural aspects of Kandhas' life along with their non-tribal neighbours. Boal, in her work "*Kandhas and The Religious Change*"<sup>5</sup> has studied the myths on the origin of Kond (Kuinga) tribe and their predominantly non-tribal neighbours- Panos (Domanga). Capt. Macpherson, though states about three types of Kandhas is silent about their mythological source of origin. Verrier Elwyin mentions the "Sapangada" myth regarding the origin of Kandhas. This myth is also silent about the types of Kandhas as well as the Domanga. Barbara Boal, in her work mentions the Nagala- Bondela myth. This myth speaks about the origin of Kuinga i.e. the Kandhas and the Domanga i.e. Pano as written by English and Oriya writers. In brief, from the elder brother, Kulo, the active one, took birth seventeen sons and equally from the younger brother, Dohu, the lazy one, seventeen sons were born. The sons of Kulo and Dohu, as per the myth, become the fountain heads of seventeen Kui and seventeen Doma clans respectively. Boal, during her study came across 14 Kond clans and seventeen Dom clans. They are as follows:

Kond: 1) Saora Kond 2) Nepal Kond 3) Naga Kond 4) Mundari Kond 5) Santal Konds 6) Mikri Kond 7) Kutia Kond 8) Makar Kond 9) Meria Kond 10) Jomidar Kond 11) Sola Kond 12) Benia Kond 13) Siko Kond 14) Bono Saora Kond 15) I do not Know the other three.

Doms: 1) the goldsmith Doms, 2) the flying squirrel Doms, (Diu) 3) The naked Doms, 4) Duhuria Doms, 5) the Kusola Doms, 6) the seven sister Doms, 7) the Porpoti Doms, 8) the horse drawn cart Doms, 9) Ogda Doms, 10) the distiller Doms, 11) the Pan making Doms, 12) the tiger/leopard Doms, 16) Gundia Doms, 17) the potter Doms.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 2002 No.10 of 2003 (notified in Gazette of India, Extra Ordinary, Vol: No.10 Dated January 8, 2003) the Part -II Section 1 orders at (k) in Part XII- Orissa (xiii) in entry 31, at the end insert "Kondh, Kui, Buda Kondh, Bura Kondha, Desia

---

<sup>5</sup> *The Khonds and the Religious Change* by Barabara M. Boal, Modern Book Depot Bhubaneswar, (1984)

Kondha, Dunguria Kandha, Kandha Gauda, Muli Kondh, Malua Kondh, Pengo Kandh, Raja Kondh, Raj Kandha”;

The missing three of Boal's list can be looked in the presidential order. However, it is a paradox that the names of Kond sub tribes are not limited to the list. In Orissa, all the divisions of the Kandhas are yet to be fully identified through scientific study.

### III

The tribe Kandha is a conglomeration of many sub-tribes with distinct linguistic and religious bearing. Many of the sub-tribes with their totemic identity speak Kui language with regional variations. However, the sub-groups such as Sitha Kandha and Kutia Kondh, Dongria Kandhas and Raja Kandhas have very rare similarities. The mythical origin from Sapangada does not necessarily bind all the sub tribes of Kandha tribe.

The Benniah Kandhas or Benia Kandhas were said to be existing during the tenure of Macpherson and Campbell i.e. between 1830s and 1850s. As reported by Capt. Macpherson, the Benniah Kandhas resided in the areas between the lands of hill Kandhas and Oriya speaking Hindu people. Boal made her study in 1950s to 1960s. As quoted by Boal “...secondly, along the rugged, forested lower slopes of the mountain chain, the Benniah Kandhas kept their freedom through sheer physical advantage of their locality. By 1836 their descendants had been accepted as free subjects of the Hindu Oriya speaking Rajah of Goomsur.” Further, they have everywhere tended- and the process goes on daily by the most curious steps- to become assimilated to their conquerors in manners and religion; and the Kandhas, in particular, have formed, by intermixture with later, new castes, many of which hold a respectable place within the pale of Hindu society.

However, in none of the Government of Orissa literature on Kandhas, especially the District Gazetteers<sup>6</sup>, the existence of Benniah Kandhas is mentioned. It may be under the logic that all sub tribes belong to the tribe and the tribe Kandha means and includes all its sub-tribes. The sub-tribes like Raja Kandha, Sita Kandha etc. also are not specifically mentioned but the Presidential Order has sanctified their place in the tribe.

Hence, the Benniah Kandhas have utterly been passed into oblivion and attracted no attention as a sub-tribe even for research or academic purpose. The pertinent questions, arising thereof are:

1. Are the Benniahs still existing with their distinct identity or perished ?

---

<sup>6</sup> The District Gazetteers of Ganjam, Boud-Kandhamal, Puri have no mention of the Benniah Kondhs.

2. Does the word "Kond" means and includes Benniah Kandhas and other Kandha sub groups not mentioned in the order?
3. If existing, does a Benniah Kandha wants to retain his sub-group identity and is the same acceptable to existing revenue administration?
4. What is their world view in the rapid transition experiencing push and pull of two unsimilar cultures?

#### IV

Research, as an extension of study curriculum calls for an extra bit of interest, effort and energy. In the present context the challenges that lay ahead are somewhat peculiar and need special attention. Briefly, these can be summed up as follows:

The Benniah Kandhas living in the proximity of the Oriya speaking castes were more exposed to the influence of the latter in comparison to other sub-tribes of the Kandha tribe. Over the passage of time most of the Benniah Kandhas have shun their tribal identity. They, as on date do not speak Kui, the language of Kandhas of Kandhamal and has adopted the social practices of Oriya speaking castes. Their rituals and customs observed during child birth, marriage and death which bring the people of an ethnic group together must have gone a sea-change. For example, in Kui society the groom pays the bride price but does not demand any dowry from bride's side. The system of *solbanga kalu*, *site kalu* <sup>7</sup> etc. are to be traced if still in practice. The change in the social practices makes the task of reconstruction of past rituals of the tribe more difficult.

The government of Orissa since independence has taken no study on the Benniah Kandhas so far. The other primitive sub tribes viz. Kutia Kandhas and Dongria Kandhas, have received much attention from the government and special development projects have been started for their all round development. On the other hand, the study on Benniah Kandhas would have revealed the effects of sanskritization of a tribe and the socio-cultural changes when a tribe is integrates into the main stream of the society. The Government till date does not recognise the existence of the Benniah Kandha subtribe and the same is not listed in the Schedule of the Tribes in Orissa. The sub-tribe which figured in the first ever literature on Kandhas i.e. *Original Report* of Capt. Macpherson is pushed into oblivion where as sub-tribes like Buda Kondh, Bura Kandha, Muli Kondh, Pengo Kandha, Nanguli Kandha, Sitha Kandha, Raja Kandha and Kandha Gouda etc whose existence was not reported during British rule in the past centuries have gained prominence by finding place in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Orissa.

---

<sup>7</sup> Fee or gift of wine by the groom side, *solbanga kalu* for entry into bride's house and *site kalu* on acceptance of the marriage proposal.

A researcher ventures into an uncharted area with hope of meeting the people who can give some account about the target population. The researcher himself would try to make first hand observation of the living and practices of the targeted people. The task of locating and identifying a forgotten tribe becomes tougher where the members of the tribe itself want to shun their identity for one reason or other and are mixed with other higher class of people.

In the existing administrative system the base level revenue functionaries are entrusted with the task of inquiry of one's caste or tribe status. The issue of Benniah Kandhas, however, calls for a more systematic and elaborate study of the remnants of a sub-tribe. The task is somewhat more akin to reconstruct an edifice from the rumbles. The Benniah Kandhas whom Campbell describes as "living on the slopes of the mountains" are to be traced in the areas of erstwhile state of Ghumusar which was spread over present districts of Ganjam, Kandhamal and Nayagarh. The Benniah Kandhas have once served as the tribal army of the Bhanja kings of Ghumusar and fought the British under the charismatic leadership of Dora Bissoyee and Chakra Bissoyee, the great heroes of the Benniah Kandhas and adored freedom fighters of Orissa. Hence, a study on the Benniah Kandhas will bring a sub-tribe with rich history into limelight and serve cultural, administrative and academic interest.

## Bibliography

1. SCSTRTI : *Tribes of Orissa* , Bhubaneswar.2004
2. Padel, Felix: *Sacrifice of Human Being*. Oxfor University Press, 1995
3. Boal, Barabara M. : *Human Sacrifice and Rreligious Change : The Kandhas*. Modern Book Depot, Bhubaneshwar,1984
4. Macpherson, William. ed. *Memorials of Service in India*, 1865
5. Campbell, Major-General John. C.B. of *His Operations The Hill Tracts of Orissa: The Suppression of Human Sacrifices and Female Infanticide*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1861.
6. Orissa District Gazetteers: Boudh-Kandhamal, Orissa Government Press.1983
7. Orissa District Gazetteers: Ganjam., Orissa Government Press.1995
8. Orissa District Gazetteers: Dhenkanal, Orissa Government Press.1972.
9. Risley, H.H.: *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vol-I, p-397, 1891
10. Dalton, E.T. *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, p. 293, 187

# MYTH AND MIGRATION: A REVISIT TO HISTORIOGRAPHY OF KUIDINA<sup>1\*</sup>

*Anuja Mohan Pradhan*<sup>2</sup>

## **Abstract**

*Mobility is a dynamic factor of civilization whereas literature of an era is a still reflection in the array of time. Myths and migration are two factors in creating history of a culture. These factors, in context of Kuidina, call for a re-look much beyond the colonial perspective of meria, mohua and proselytization.*

The human race is always in search of better opportunities and amenities. Since the time of its origin the human race is proceeding on an endless journey in the course of which it has multiplied its identity into races, regions and nations. In this journey of civilization, the ages identical with their material position has been named as Palaeolithic, Bronze, Iron and Copper are nothing but phases of socio-cultural and economic evolution. The human conditions rather than the genetics have labelled a particular race as a tribe, civilized or modern community based on prevalent occupation, manners and beliefs.

India as an ancient nation has witnessed almost all the phases in the evolution of civilization and in its connotation beyond its current political boundary became more modern and civilized by the invading of Aryan people. This invasion played the role of a carom striker that pushed the non-Aryan people of Indus valley to move in different directions, mostly towards the south. The updated history which is yet to describe the state of pre-Indus valley India is a witness to the shattered journey of non-Aryans towards the south till they met

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 53, Nos.1&2, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2013, pp.112-21

<sup>1</sup> Kuidina is what the Kui speaking people call their land. It is a cultural identity much broader than political boundaries of Kandhmal.

<sup>2</sup> National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jamshedpur-831007 [anuj@nmlindia.org](mailto:anuj@nmlindia.org),  
[anujmpnml@gmail.com](mailto:anujmpnml@gmail.com)

the southern seas. Perhaps, the journey from Indus valley to Indian Ocean gave them the full meaning of “Jambu dweep<sup>3</sup>”. The land that has snowy mountains in the north and oceans in the south also called “Bharat”. The migration from Indus to the Indian oceans could fix the boundaries of this land mass.

The pace of migration is dependent on the means of movement. In ancient times the migration took hundreds of years. Each stop became a settlement unless it was pushed forward by the successive migrants as they had exhausted resources or the place could not bear the burden of settlement. The migration caused by invasion by military expeditions was rapid and originally not intended for settling down in the conquered land permanently. The examples can be Greek and Mongol invasions and early Muslim invasions to India. However, the invasion by the Mughals proved to be a migration for their permanent settlement in the conquered land. While creating the history of the migration, historiography considers referred geographical landmarks dotting the literature, both oral and written, developed in course of the journey. Another most cognitive factor is the linguistic links that complete the sketch of migration and possible date line. This historiography super imposed on the current socio-economic and demographic profile of the land gives an account of the migration of the people to this land.

The table-land above the Kalinga Ghats is named “Kandhamal” by the outsiders since British times and its natives call it “Kuidina”<sup>4</sup>. Among its inhabitants, the tribe Kandha are the numerically major. The other major groups include “Domanga<sup>5</sup>” or the people officially recorded as “Pano”. These people inhabit the land since the ancient times. As a thumb rule of historiography the literary sources play a defined role besides the archaeological and tangible evidences. Kandhas as the early settlers, who identify themselves as Kui Loku or Kuienju (Kui People) claim to be the “lords of the land”. Others communities such as Domanga, Kumbhar, Lohar etc. are officially branded as the migrants who came there from the surrounding plains about five hundred years ago. Some sources quote the Panos as the people who have migrated from plains and do not have a language of their own. They are stated to be not having a share in Kui culture.

The emergence of jargons like “sons of the soil”, “mool adivasi”, “indigenous people”, “PTG” are hyped and used with different connotations. The research on the inhabitants is mostly based on the views of British administrators. The rites of human sacrifice and the aim of annihilation of local

---

<sup>3</sup> A wonder That was India, A L Bhasam

<sup>4</sup> Kuidina is the land of Kui culture which is much beyond the political boundary of current Kandhamal district.

<sup>5</sup> The Government records do not mention the nomenclature of Domanga. Domanga has been recorded as Panos. The Panos of other district has no cultural link with that of Domanga. Non recognition of domanga as caste has denied special status to this people of Kuidina.

rulers of the native kingdoms was the main motive behind civilizing the wild tribes of the said Khond hills<sup>6</sup>. The writings on the people of Khond hills developed during last two centuries. In view of recent unrest in Kandhamal the need of the time has been to encourage the adoption of certain attitudes and theories about its past which are now becoming increasingly irrelevant. The time has come to free the researchers from the necessary polemics of the history writing of the colonial period. We should re-examine the age old myths that have been made the corner stone of administrative research. We should acquire the confidence of critically assessing our own culture and history. This paper is a modest attempt to relook into:

1. Myths of creation versus historical trends
2. Places of origin versus migration of people
3. Review of literary sources

### **Myths of Creation versus Historical Trends**

Among the tribal myths, regarding origin of Khonds the Sapaghana myth<sup>7</sup> and Nagala-Bondela myth are most popular. The myths are being reproduced in its English version, as recorded by Verrier Elwin and Barbara M. Boal respectively.

#### **THE SAPHAGANNA MYTH**

*In the beginning there was nothing but water. Nirantali- Kapantali emerged to the earth's surface at Saphaganna. After her, came the other gods and the first human, who were later referred to as the Kondhs. But how could humans live in all the water? They went to Nirantali and begged her for help. Eventually, the water sank down and rock emerged, but there still was no earth, until Nirantali produced it. Some say she got it from her hair, some say she was angry and spat and her spit turned into white ants which excreted the earth, and others say she sent the Konds to search for earth, and when they could not find it, in despair, they besought a mountain of rock and scratched it with their nails, like bears, until it took pity on them and they could excavate the earth. They took four handfuls of earth, -black, white, red and yellow- which Nirantali told them to throw in four directions. Now the earth was spread over the rock, but it still was not firm- when they stepped on it, their feet went through. So they setup a bamboo pole and sacrificed a cow, a buffalo and pig before it and the earth became hard and dry. The bones of these sacrificed victims became rocks and the hair became trees and grass. Nirantali created other creatures and plants from beeswax and the dirt of her body.*

---

<sup>6</sup> Khond Hills, Kandhamal and Kuidina are synonymous. Khondmal is more often used in Govt. records, Khond hill is a popular usage of missionaries and Kuidina is what the Kui speaking people call this land. Kui is very often used as a prefix viz. kuiloku, kuikussa, Kui Kumarenju etc.

<sup>7</sup> *Myths of Orissa* (1954, PP-549-50) Verrier Elwin

<sup>7</sup> *Myths of Orissa* (1954) Verrier Elwin



## THE STORY OF NAGALA BONDELA<sup>7</sup>

*"There were two Dravidian men-Nagala and Bondela by name on the banks of the Sindhu River in Northern India. When the Aryan people came to India, these two men moved off to a different place, dwelt in caves because of their fear for them. Their food was simply jungle tubers. Nagala's and Bondels's sons were Prohti and Prohera. The exact names of Prohti's and Prohera's sons were Kulo and Dohu. Kulo said to Dohu: "(You) Domua!" therefore Dohu remained lying down, his descendents became "Domenga". Dohu called Kulo: "Tuber-digger!" (that is Dondha Khoulou on Oriya). And according to his means of subsistence, his descendants became "Konds"(Kandha in Odia).*

*Kulo's wife was "Sanjuli" and Dohu's wife was "Binjuli". From them 17 clans have descended and 17 Dom clans similarly. The Kond ones are: 1) Saora Konds; 2) Nepal Konds; 3) Naga Konds; 4) Mundari Konds; 5) Santal Konds; 6) Mikri Konds; 7) Kutia Konds; 8) Makar Konds; 9) Meriah Konds; 10) Jomidar Konds; 11) Sola Konds; 12) Benia Konds; 13) Siko Konds; 14) Bono Saora Konds; 15) The names of other three are difficult to trace from the history of their origin.*

*The Dom clans are: 1) The Goldsmith Doms; 2) The Flying Squirrel Doms (Diu); 3) The Naked Doms; 4) The Duhuria Doms (Duguria- ádditional'); 5) The Kusola Doms; 6) The Seven Elder Sister Doms; 7) The Porpoti Doms; 8) The Horse-drawn Cart Doms; 9) Mogda Doms; 10) The Distiller Doms; 11) The Pan-making Doms; 12) The Tiger/ Leopard Doms; 16) The Gundia Doms (Button-maker Doms); 17) The Potter Doms.*

Besides the above two, one more myth collected by Verrier Elwin which deserves mention. The Khond myth No. 10 in chapter XIX<sup>8</sup>, there is hints on how siblings of same parents divided into different castes. The myth is as follows:-

*There was once a Kond who lived with his sister. One day this Kond took one measure of bullets and another measure of gunpowder and sat under an irpi<sup>9</sup> tree. A barking-deer came to eat the irpi flowers and the Kond raised his gun to shoot it. The deer said, 'Don't kill me. I have something to tell you.' The man lowered his gun and listened. The deer said, "Hollow out the trunk of a bombax tree and get into it, for tomorrow the world will sink below the waters and all living creatures will die.' The Kond went home and took his sister and they hollowed out the tree and went in. They took seeds and animals and covered the opening with wax. Next day the world sank down and everything was covered under water. But the bombax tree floated on the surface, blown here and there by the wind.*

*After some time, seven Suns and seven Moons came from Honigarh and all the water dried up. When it had dried, the Moons thought, it is the fault of these seven Suns that all living creatures have been killed. And they plotted to destroy all but one of the Suns.*

<sup>8</sup> *Myths of Orissa* (1954) Verrier Elwin

<sup>9</sup> Mohua tree (*Madhuca Indica*)

*Then the Moon came to earth and brought the brother and sister out of the bombax tree and they lived as man and wife. They had seven sons and seven daughters and they married each other. Then the parents sent Dakpaji and Sujamajenja-the two elder brothers, who collected some irpi flowers. When Dakpaji picked up the irpi flowers, he found they were gold and silver. But when Sujamajenja picked them up, he found only irpi flowers. When they got home, the parents made Dakpaji a Raja and Sujamajenja a Kond and the other brothers, Paiks and Doms. They then lived separately and divided into different castes.*

Myths have been a major genre of any folklore. Almost all the tribes or the clans within the same tribes claim to have a special myth of their creation. The totems adored by the clans or tribes are mostly attributed to the myth. For example, GunaKui clan believe that they were originated from the egg of Guna bird. This is a sparrow sized bird in the wild which is green in colour and has two long feathers in its tale which distinguishes it from others. The much deliberated Sapaghana myth describes how the Khonds, the first man on the earth was born. Not only Khonds, other tribes like Gadabas also claimed that the first man created by God was a Gadaba. The Nagala-Bondala myth starts with the backdrop of Sindhu i.e. Indus valley civilization and culminates with seventeen Khond clans and seventeen Domanga clans who are resident of Kuidina. Such clans, in the words of Boal, "This story appears to be an attempt both to classify the many groups and peoples whom they have met or of whom they have heard in the course of their journeys and perhaps of their education, and also to align this information about their knowledge of the wide social difference between Khonds and Pans as they experience it in everyday life in the hills. Their close interaction with the Khonds could make some kind of definition which is basically much more necessary to them than would their relationship with the other groups of settlers, whose roles are quite clearly defined."<sup>10</sup>

Which journey Boal underlines in her analysis? Does it begin from Sapaghana or Indus valley? The Nagala-Bondala myths also have some sequel. Late Dayanidhi Malik of village Betikola, who was a learned man (School Teacher and Odisha Sahitya Academy Award winner), has been accredited with design of alphabet for theKui language of the Khonds. On personal discussion with this author Late Malik once told that Nagala migrated to Nagaland and Prohti to Punjab.

Myths are myths. Crediting someone's origin purely to myth makes the origin more mysterious. Verrier Elwin, the pioneer of tribal myths in Orissa and Central India mentions the shortcomings. "The Kond stories, infact are in a great muddle and it is impossible to derive any logical or coherent account from them. They reflected the cultural confusion into which this large and scattered tribe has fallen; a very similar situation exists among the Gonds."<sup>11</sup> " In contrast to mythical

---

<sup>10</sup>The Khonds- *Human Sacrifice and Religious Change*, Barbara M. Boal (1954) pp-4

<sup>11</sup>Tribal Myths of Orissa, Verrier Elwin Page-44

explanation to origin of tribes especially of Dravidian origin it is quite pertinent that the people must have travelled to this land at a time beyond the retrievable memory. Zeroing on the Khond people of Kuidina, the geographical landmass which was beyond the knowledge of outer world till the British invasion and the Ghumsur war of 1835-1837. If the land was so untouched, what is the possible answer to the Buddhist remains of Dungi? There was no mention of human sacrifice. Captain Mac Pherson describing the role of native rulers says that the Khonds paid tribute to the Bhanja kings who in return sent two Paiks with Guns to the festivity of human sacrifice to shoot rounds as an approval from the nobility. Keeping aside the shortcomings of considering myths as historical dateless diaries, it is undoubtedly verified that Khonds and the Domanga existed since the mythical ages as two sides of the same coin supplementing each other socially, culturally and economically.

### **Mobility of Khonds and migration of other people**

Khond hills have unique geographical features of a table land. These hills form the part of Eastern Ghats. From all the fronts one has to ascend to reach the land. It has elevation of 2000-2400 feet MSL. Kalinga Ghat, Korada Ghat, Madhopur Ghat, Ranipathar Ghat, Bonda Pipili and Brahmini Gaon Ghat are the entry points to this land. Since, time immemorial, people used these routes for coming to this land. The Kalingaghat in the eastern side had Andharkot garh was a hide out of the Bhanja Kings. Through Andhar kotgarh a route was connecting Doda hill via Kurmingia. Following the last Bhanja King in refuge, the British forces passed Kalinga *ghat* and the historical battle was fought in the outskirts of Kurminiga village. The people led by Bhangu Malik fought with British forces. This event is still referred as “Pathan Kala” in the locality. The point is, the British forces did not make the route rather they used it for the first time. Another approach to this land was through village Dakpala. Dakpala is a village about 12 kms from G. Udaygiri. In British times there was a rest house or Bungalow in the midst of Mango trees planted in a semi-circle. People from Koroda had to carry the British officers in Palanquins up to Dakpala and people of Dakpala had to carry their lap to village Lingagarh. In 1860's the Spanish missionaries used the Brahminigaon route to reach Kadhmal. In the western front near Belghar is a small hamlet named Sapaganda which is believed to be the place of origin of the Khonds. If the myth is to be believed, *ceteris paribus* there would have been a west to east migration of Khonds with increase in their number. The Gonds- the largest tribe of India are credited to their origin in Gondwana Land of Madhya Pradesh. In the Gond dominated villages such as Chanchedi, Malerimaha, G. Udaygiri, Bondhogarh etc there is worship of Barala Devi done in a distinct language that establishes a migration link from Bastar to Khond hills through western passage of Belghar and Bonda Pipili.

In the western foothills of Dodamountain there are two villages, Rambha and Baibali. In the Ganjam district Rambha is a small township on the shores of Chilikalake. Baibali is a village near Indragarh in Soroda block. It is said that the people of Kandhmal's Baibali has ancestral links in Ganjam district, from where

they had borrowed these names. Another case is about the village Kadespata in the Daringbadi block of Kandhmal district. This author had a chance to chat with ShriJaninga Pradhan<sup>12</sup>, an elderly person of the village. During the brief discussion his response was worth mentioning.

Author: *How your village is named Kadespata?*

J P: There was no settlement in this place and it was filled with the forest. A buffalo was missing and the owner was in search of the buffalo. The buffalo had a long log tied to its neck<sup>13</sup>. Tracking the dragging marks the owner spotted his buffalo in a pool of mud near a water source in the dry summer. Finding a new source of water he, along with his relations shifted to this place and named the new settlement as *Kadespata* derived from *kades*-the mud.

Author: *Did your father or grandfather come to this place?*

J P: It was before that. We are the off-springs of original inhabitants from Ganja and Huma.

Author: *These names are similar to places Ganja and Huma in Ganjam district!*

J P: Our ancestors came from those places but I can not tell you their names. I remember my father saying that the person who migrated from there had two grandsons and they were named after their place of origin, Ganja and Huma.

During or prior to British period the people had to face invasions from other groups which Campbell described as “tribal feuds”. A fertile cultivable piece of land was a prized possession and was often targeted. There were bloodsheds for occupying the land. This author had a discussion with Shri Kole Pradhan and Shri Bansidhar Pradhan of village Kalinga in G. Udayagiri Block and here are few excerpts.

Author: *How came this name Kalinga to this village? Was it after the name of Kalinga kingdom?*

Kole Pradhan: It is like this. Our forefathers were at Golagando<sup>14</sup>. When our forefathers came to this place, Kali Malika was the owner of the whole land. He had already lost his father and was the only son living with his mother. At that time only source of water was near Mundamalanga (i.e. a place about two Kms from the present Kalinga square). The new entrants had a plan to kill Kali Malika for which he always carried his axe. What they did, they

---

<sup>12</sup> An elderly man is in his eighties. He is well known for his Kui songs especially the ploughing songs and memoirs of the past.

<sup>13</sup> In Kui it is called Kaadaa. The village has in the eastern side miles long flat rocks, thickly covered by moss and other vegetation. In Kui the flat rocks are called Paata or say Paataanga in plural.

<sup>14</sup> It is a place in the forest near Kalinga which is not habited now.

explanation to origin of tribes especially of Dravidian origin it is quite pertinent that the people must have travelled to this land at a time beyond the retrievable memory. Zeroing on the Khond people of Kuidina, the geographical landmass which was beyond the knowledge of outer world till the British invasion and the Ghumsur war of 1835-1837. If the land was so untouched, what is the possible answer to the Buddhist remains of Dungi? There was no mention of human sacrifice. Captain Mac Pherson describing the role of native rulers says that the Khonds paid tribute to the Bhanja kings who in return sent two Paiks with Guns to the festivity of human sacrifice to shoot rounds as an approval from the nobility. Keeping aside the shortcomings of considering myths as historical dateless diaries, it is undoubtedly verified that Khonds and the Domanga existed since the mythical ages as two sides of the same coin supplementing each other socially, culturally and economically.

### **Mobility of Khonds and migration of other people**

Khond hills have unique geographical features of a table land. These hills form the part of Eastern Ghats. From all the fronts one has to ascend to reach the land. It has elevation of 2000-2400 feet MSL. Kalinga Ghat, Korada Ghat, Madhopur Ghat, Ranipathar Ghat, Bonda Pipili and Brahmini Gaon Ghat are the entry points to this land. Since, time immemorial, people used these routes for coming to this land. The Kalingaghat in the eastern side had Andharkot garh was a hide out of the Bhanja Kings. Through Andhar kotgarh a route was connecting Doda hill via Kurmingia. Following the last Bhanja King in refuge, the British forces passed Kalinga *ghat* and the historical battle was fought in the outskirts of Kurminiga village. The people led by Bhangu Malik fought with British forces. This event is still referred as “Pathan Kala” in the locality. The point is, the British forces did not make the route rather they used it for the first time. Another approach to this land was through village Dakpala. Dakpala is a village about 12 kms from G. Udaygiri. In British times there was a rest house or Bungalow in the midst of Mango trees planted in a semi-circle. People from Koroda had to carry the British officers in Palanquins up to Dakpala and people of Dakpala had to carry their lap to village Lingagarh. In 1860's the Spanish missionaries used the Brahminigaon route to reach Kadhmal. In the western front near Belghar is a small hamlet named Sapaganda which is believed to be the place of origin of the Khonds. If the myth is to be believed, *ceteris paribus* there would have been a west to east migration of Khonds with increase in their number. The Gonds- the largest tribe of India are credited to their origin in Gondwana Land of Madhya Pradesh. In the Gond dominated villages such as Chanchedi, Malerimaha, G. Udaygiri, Bondhogarhetc there is worship of Barala Devi done in a distinct language that establishes a migration link from Bastar to Khond hills through western passage of Belghar and BondaPipili.

In the western foothills of Dodamountain there are two villages, Rambha and Baibali. In the Ganjam district Rambha is a small township on the shores of Chilikalake. Baibali is a village near Indragarh in Soroda block. It is said that the people of Kandhmal'sBaibali has ancestral links in Ganjam district, from where

- 2) Soliciting the presence or addressing the gods with the place of their residence (Dondo Dobbo)
- 3) Invoking the ancestors by name or in a group (*pideri pita*)
- 4) Prayers for well-being, good crops, health of people and cattle, blessings to a new born and wedding couple etc.

While invoking the Gods by the name of their places, a priest gives a clear view of local geography that one can think of. It consists of different hills, streams, sacred groves and forests. The extensive coverage of such places by a priest gives him a higher rank. This author, while recording ritual hymn in the village Kondbadi came to know the names like Jhilimili, Godaraka, Birikot etc. On enquiry, the priest could not locate the location of Jhilimili and Godaraka. The point is how an illiterate and ignorant man who never travelled that far could invoke the places as seats of Gods without a proper name? Kondbadi till date does not have a road to be accessible by a motor bike. People have to walk about 15 Kilometres to get their PDS rice. The priest himself has never travelled that far. He had inherited the hymns by learning through listening to his father in line of the *Smritis*. In the time beyond the retrievable memory, the places have been the places worshiped by these people, the Khonds. The people moving from one settlement to other have revered those places and carry the sacred legacy till date. Had it been a case of adoption, these hymns must have incorporated God's like Jagannath, Vishnu, Ganesh and other Hindu deities.

Linguistically Kui is a language of the Dravidian group that have close affinity to Telugu than Odia which come under the Indo-Aryan family of languages. The following comparison of few words of Kui with Telugu and Odia languages has been made in the following statement.

Kui	Telugu	Oriya	Meaning in English
Aaba	Abba/Nana	Bapa	Father
Aaja	Amma	Maa	Mother
Siru	Nilu	Pani	Water
Idu	Illu	Ghar	House
Aate	Aipendi	Hela	Done
Naai	Naa/Naadi	Moro	My

What is the cause of this affinity? What it means to be a group of language? The simple answer is, perhaps the same ancestral links. The linguistic affinity of the Vedas and Zinda Vesta could establish the link of Indian Aryans and European Aryans separated through migration. The links of Indian Banjaras is established through study of language of Cheze Republic and other nomadic (Hippy) tribes of Europe. The same has happened in the case of Kui. The Kui speaking people formed the part of Dravidians, migrating from North-West to South through ages. There never has been in any record of migration from south to north except through war. Hence, to conclude, there is no need for reiteration that Kui speaking people were part of the contingent of Dravidians from

the North than ascribing the origin fixed to a place and mythical claim of first man on the earth.

### Conclusion:

Every nation, upon examination, turns out to have been a more or less successful melting pot. In the Indian context, tribes and professional groups when converted into Jatis were given a Varna status, a *jati* rank and if necessary assigned a *gotra*<sup>19</sup>. This constant shifting of races and peoples has given the mosaic of cultural assimilation to Kuidina. As in history, people speaking language of Sanskrit base has followed the Dravidians like the Khonds settled as traders, Government officials and administrators in the habitat of the latter. But they have never adopted the language, customs and panel of gods and goddesses of Kui speaking people. On the other hand the lateral migrants have become catalysts of Sanskritisation or Hinduization as the case may be. The cultural or civilized state of interaction over period of time has influenced the Kui speaking people, who have social, economic and political dominance in Kuidina. Events like Viswakarma Puja, Satsang of Anukul Chandra, Laxmi Puja, performance of *yajna* and immersion of mortal remains (*asthi*) in sea at Puri or in the Ganges, ten days of mortuary pollution on death and annual *sraddha* rites etc. can be attributed to these factors. It is seen that the successful invaders have been more effective to drive out the indigenous people. Even in some places, they have reduced the original inhabitants to minority. As His Holiness Dalai Lama sarcastically remarks "Tibetans has become tourist attractions" in the Chinese occupied Tibet<sup>20</sup>.

Most of the sociological and anthropological researches on Kui speaking people have been that of Meria, Mohua and proselytization. There has been a lot said about the savagery of human sacrifice of the Khonds. But their distinguishing socio-cultural traits like mass mourning (*maada*), the liberty given to women to say "no" to a prospective groom in open meeting if she does not like him, mutual participation of people in hunting, festivity and settling social and customary issues has never been given due importance. The recent policy of segregation in the context of security is ridiculous. The present day research shall look into the socio-cultural history of the people of Kuidina, rising above the colonial view point. The objective of research shall be discovery of truth for a peaceful and harmonious development of people of Kuidina and their integration with the national mainstream in a footing of equality while retaining their cultural identity.

---

<sup>19</sup> *The Past and Prejudice* (1972), Romila Thapar, pp 39

<sup>20</sup> *Freedom in Exile- An autobiography of Dalai Lama*.

## References

1. *A Wonder That was India*, A L Bhasam
2. District Gazetteer: Kandhmal
3. *Myths of Orissa* (1954, PP-549-50) Verrier Elwin, Oxford University Press, Bombay
4. *Influences of Geographic Environment*, Ellen Churchil Semple
5. *The past and Prejudice*, Romila Thapar, 1975, National Book Trust
6. Letter of S.C. Mohanty, Research Officer, SCSTRTI to Tribal Advisory Committee.
7. *The Church in the Kond Hills : An encounter with Animism*, Barbara M Boal 1966, London, Butterworth.
8. *A Personal Narrative of 13 years of service among the wild tribes of Khondistan, for suppression of human sacrifice*, 1864, London
9. *Migration and the Marginal Man*, Robert E Park, American Journal of Sociology, Vol.33 No.6 (May 1928)
10. Dirbin Lise, Peter K. Austin, & David Nathan, 2007: Dying to be Counted: the commodification of endangered Languages in documentary linguistics. In Peter K Austin, Oliver Bond & David Nathan (eds) *Proceedings of Conference on Language Documentation and Linguistic Theory*, London : SOAS



# HOW AND WHAT THE KUVI KONDHS ADORN\*

*Bharati Devi*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In the year 1965-66, I had the opportunity to stay and work among the Kuvi Kondhs of Kuttinga, a village in Koraput subdivision and district in Orissa, India, in connection with the collection of data on the reproductive life of their females. I, however, could collect some additional information about their dress and ornaments. The data were collected partly by interviewing and partly by direct observation method.

## The Data

The dress of the Kondhs, both men and women is simple. The womenfolk of course are more inclined to adorn themselves than their male folk. Since they do not weave they depend upon other caste people for their wearing apparel.

The infants remain naked. It is only at the age of 3-4 years when they start wearing a loin cloth.

The general dress of an adult male is also a loin cloth and nothing on the upper portion of the body during the summer. But during winter, in addition to the loin cloth they also use wrappers, but not any stitched cloth. But of late, the use of readymade shirts and pants and 'Lungis' are in vogue among the younger generation.

The dress of female is divisible into twoparts, an upper garment (*punhendra*) and a lower garment (*uchahendra*) respectively. Both are unstitched. The lower garment again consists of two pieces a loin cloth first and then pieces of hand-woven cloth with two borders worn round the waist. This piece fully encircles the waist but does not cover the entire thigh region, though extended up to the knee. The upper garment, another piece of hand woven cloth or a 'lungi' (newly introduced) covers the breasts. Its loose ends are tied behind at the neck. The back

---

\* Published in ADIBASI. Vol. XIV, No.1, TRB, 1972, pp.21-26

<sup>1</sup> Senior Technical Assistant, ASI, 27, Chowrangi Road, Calcutta-13

remains entirely bare. Stitched garments, like blouse, have not yet found way into their society. It is important to note that seasonal change in dress amongst the male are more marked than the females.

Absence of any type of headgear and footwear among these people is noteworthy.

Women, especially young women, deck themselves with various kinds of ornaments worn on different parts of their persons such as neck, ear, nose, hand, finger, waist and ankle.

Silver necklace is known as 'Kaguri' (Fig I.I). Two types of silver necklaces are found. First one is solid, simple and round. The other type is of stringed coins (Fig.I.I.I). Besides the metallic ones, a kind of head necklace known as 'Mahani' is also found in use. The beads are small in size and a bunch of stringed beads are worn at a time.

Piercing of earlobe is practiced by both the sexes. Piercing is done at an early age. In case of females, the upper part of the *pinna* is also pierced besides the earlobe. The ornaments for the ears are either of brass, silver or gold depending upon the economic condition of the persons. The ornaments are very simple in design. A plain simple ring, small in size, is used for earlobe. It is known as Jambli (Fig. 1.2), whereas the ornament of the *pinna* is not simple but slightly twisted and known as Fansia.

Like ear piercing of nose is also practised by both the sexes. Generally the right ala is pierced among the male. Both the alae and septum of the female are pierced at very early age. The ornaments of nose are generally made of gold, because brass ornaments sometimes causes ulcer. The ornaments of the ala are nothing but simple ring known as Murca (Fig. 1.3). The ornament of septum is known as Mutli (Fig. 1.3). It may be the same nature or slightly decorated.

Women use ornaments on forearm only. The upper arm remains completely bare. Solid bangles of silver, brass or even aluminum are used depending upon the economic condition of a person concerned. The brass bangles and aluminum bangles are known as Pitlapaza and Ragipaza respectively (Fig. 1.4). Bangles may be used in both hand or in one hand according to the convenience of a user and the number varies from 1-10. Besides these, I have also seen using them plastic bangles known as Pazu. Women of younger age i.e. below thirty generally use the plastic bangles.

Male folk often use a single silver bangle in one hand i.e. right hand, slightly different in construction from that of the female.

Silver rings are worn on the left hand by the female folk only. Insertion of coin is prevalent although a few other designs are also noticed (Fig.1.5.1. & 1.5.2.).

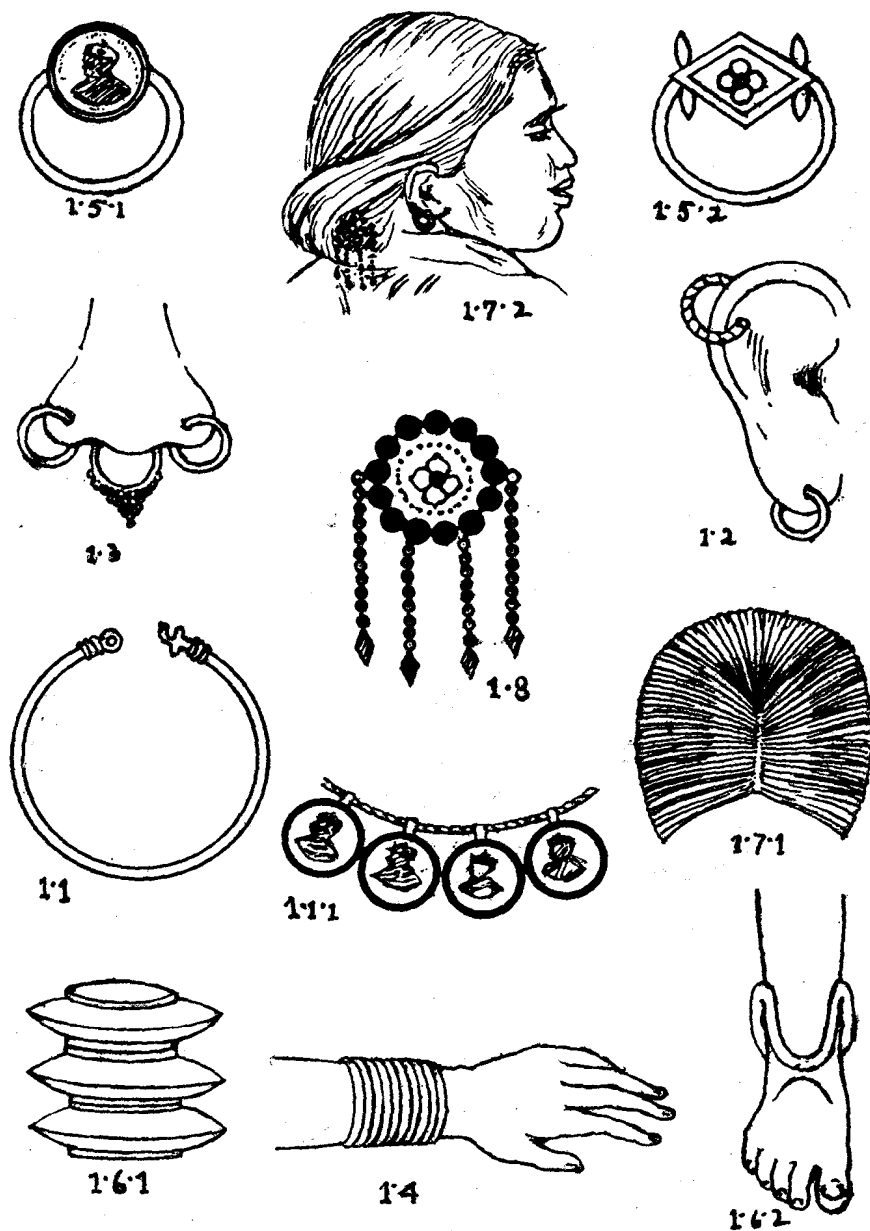


Figure 1. Hairdo and Ornaments of the Kuvi-Khond Women

Children and women, both young and old, may use ornaments on the waist. Children generally use head ornament round the waist irrespective of sexes. Sometimes they also use black string with a few tinkling bells. The silver one, known as Tellimera is worn by female folk only.

The ornaments worn at the ankle is known as Andu. It is made of brass. There are two varieties of Andu. One type resembles a bangle (Fig. 1.6.1.). Its inner side is plain and rounded while the outer surface has a curved ridge. More than one Andu of this type may be worn at a time. The other type is worn singly (Fig.1.6.2.). Two curves are present in this type. Andu is worn only by adult females. Children wear small tinkling bells strung by a thread known as Muia. The plastic ornaments are sold at the doorstep of the people by the hawkers and they purchase it either by cash or by barter. But for the gold and silver ornaments they are to depend on the smiths of the adjacent region. Brass ornaments are purchased from weekly markets or fairs.

### **Personal Adornments**

(1) **Hair-** The people are in habit of shaving heads of their young ones irrespective of sex during the first menstruation period of the mothers after the child birth. From this time onwards complete shaving is not done. Only the frontal portion of the head is shaved while the hair at the backside remains untouched. Shaving is done with a sharp iron instrument similar to razor. The mother herself or a woman of the neighborhood shaves the head of a child. There is no prescribed age for keeping the hair after the fashion of grownups. Parts having continues until the child is quite grownup, i.e. the boy goes out with cartel or girl fetches water. Kusum oil (a kind of locally made oil) is used for lubricating the hair. A kind of locally available soil is used as detergent for cleaning the hair.

The traditional hair-do of the adult Kondh male is not shaving but tying the bunch of the hair into a knot on the back. The young ones have changed their outlook. They shave their hair like other caste people.

Kondh women comb their hair with wooden combs. They part their hair in the middle (Fig. 1.7.1.), comb it closely backwards and gather into a graceful chignon (Fig.1.7.2.) with twisters of false hair on the left side. The twists of false hair are prepared by themselves from their waste hair. Metal pin known as Tirmadera is struck to the chignon so that the twist may not come out. Tirmadera is made of silver (Fig.1.8). A long pin is fitted at the center of a decorated disc. Besides this four small chains hang from the periphery of the disc.

The use of flowers on special occasions such as dancing or marriage ceremony is also noticed.

The old women do not take care of their hair. The hair simple hang as it is on the back or tied in a plain knot.

(2) **Tattooing-** Tattooing is very popular among the tribe. It is especially popular among young women, who consider it as a part of ornamentation.

Tattooing is done profusely on the face and hands. The use of dots, straight and curved lines, and spherical figures are prevalent. The most common design on the forehead resembles a trident. The common designs on different parts of the body are shown in figure 2.

Tattooing is a painful operation but the young women voluntarily submit to the ordeal. A design is chosen by the woman who intends to get her body tattooed. The body is pricked with the help of needles on soot designs. The soot for this purpose is collected from the under surface of earthenware which are used for cooking. The whole thing is then covered with a layer of saliva. The entire process is repeated twice or thrice to make the tattoo marks permanent.

There is no special class of tattoos in Kondh society. Women of the household or neighborhood help each other.

Application of any colour on the body or chipping of teeth etc. is not in practice among the Kondh.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Systematic and intensive data on the dress and ornaments of the different tribes of India are yet to be compiled. However a comparison is made here with the help of existing literature. The Kuvi Kondh, a Dravidian speaking tribe under investigation shares a few traits with the Mundari speaking tribes also. For example the principal dress of an adult male is loin cloth among the Kuvi Kondh, the Asurs (Leuva, 1963), Hos (Dalton, 1872), Kharias (Roy and Roy, 1937), Korwas (Dalton, 1872), Mundas (Roy, 1912) and the Oraons (Dalton, 1872). Of course with the advancement of time and contact with outsiders there is rapid change in traditional dress. For example stitched clothes have recently been introduced.

The Kharia (Roy and Roy, 1937) females use two pieces of loincloth for covering their body. A Kondh woman (present study) also uses two pieces of clothes for covering her body. But they use a piece of loin cloth as undergarment for the lower part of the body. The Hos (Majumdar, 1950) too, use a loin cloth under the 'Sari'.

In case of ornaments, necklace of stringed coins is found to be used by both Dravidian and Mundari speaking tribes such as the Asurs (Leuva, 1963), Kondhs (present study), Oraons (Roy, 1915) and Santals (Mukherjee, 1962). Its distribution is also to be found even among the Gallongs, (Srivastava, 1962) of NEFA.

Again, rings in which coins are fitted are found to be used by both the Kondhs (present study) and Santals (Mukherjee, 1962) of Santal Paragana and Mayurbhanj.

The anklet is known by a common term Andu among the Hos (Mukharejee, 1950), Kondhs (present study) and Mundas (Roy, 1912).

The hair-do of the females of different tribes presents an interesting feature. The hair combed hair gathered as a chignon on one side of the back of the head either right or left is found to occur among the Asurs (Leuva, 1963). Hos (Dalton, 1872). Kharias (Roy and Roy, 1937). Kondhs (present study) and the Santals (Dalton, 1872). It also occurs among the Irulas (Luiz, 1961) a far away Dravidian speaking tribe of Kerala. This style may be of Dravidian origin as the Irulas (Luiz, 1961) of Kerala are also found to follow the same pattern. And it is well known that the Mundari speaking tribes are entirely absent in South India.

Recent changes among the Hos (Majumdar, 1950) or the Santals (Mukharejee, 1962) is that the hair is not worn into one side chignon but at the center of the back of the head.

Tattooing is extensively practiced by the Ho (Majumdar, 1950), Juang (Dalton, 1872), Kharia (Dalton, 1872), Kondh (present study), Maler (Dalton, 1872), Munda (Roy, 1912) and Oraon (Dalton, 1872) (Roy, 1915) women though the motif varies from tribe to tribe. Though practiced by a few Dravidian tribes, Dalton (1872) is of the opinion that the trait is Kolarian in origin and the Dravidian tribes including the present one borrowed trait from their Mundari speaking people.

In fine, it may be said that from this little study it is not possible to say convincingly who are the originators or the borrowers of the traits discussed except in the case of hair-do and tattooing.

### **Acknowledgement**

The author acknowledges her gratefulness to late Dr. D.K. Sen, formerly Director, Anthropological Survey of India for allowing her to carry out the research project. She also wishes to record her indebtedness to Shri M.P. Basu for his valuable suggestions, to Shri B.N. Bagchi for the drawing and to Smt. Sriparna Roy (Chakroborty) for allowing her to utilize some of her research material.

## CASTE COMPOSITON IN A KONDH AREA\*

*U. N. Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

This is an attempt to describe the different castes living in the tribal areas. The Kondh has already been described as belonging to a classless society. He has also no caste system. But in his land and along with him live different artisans and others, necessary for the society. They are described below:

### **Lohar**

The blacksmith of the areas called 'Loharenju' is not a tribal but as the name indicates seems to have been originally an Oriya who came to the area from the adjoining plains either along with the Kondh or immediately in his wake. The Lohar is a caste which deals with 'Loha' or iron. The caste seems to have been inducted into the hills and has been staying in the area either compelled by the Kondh or by his own choice. They have no concentration and practically there is one family in a big village or in a group of villages. They live side by side with the Kondh but there is no inter-marriage and inter-dining between the two peoples. The Lohar has his relatives spread all over the area specially in all the important villages. Although he has copied the Kondh customs to a great degree he retains his traditions and lives, so to say, all by himself. He takes cooked food from the Kondh but not the *vice versa* although he is not treated as an outcaste by the latter. He is continuing to live as a vassal of the Kondh. He worships the Kondh Gods and joins all the religious and social functions of the Kondh. He does not eat buffalo meat or beef but he joins the Kondh in drinking. His smithy is just like one of his counterparts of the plains. All the implements he has seem to have been imported from the plains. It is not known as to whether he got his first supply of raw materials in the hills. Probably such materials were imported into the area by the pack bullock traders. The Lohar or the blacksmith manufactures all household articles required by the women folk and all agricultural and other implements, weapons, etc. required by the Kondh. The axe is prepared with embossing of brass

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXIV, Nos.3&4, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1984-85, pp.97-98

<sup>1</sup> Former Member of Orissa State Civil Service

done all by himself. He prepares the very popular axe which every Kondh household invariably possesses. The axe is a multipurpose article of the Kondh which is used in hunting, cutting logs etc. Sickle, plough iron and all other agricultural implements and arrow heads are manufactured by the Lohar. The Lohar procures his charcoal himself by burning *sal* logs. He is usually assisted by his son or by a relative boy who works on the bellows.

There is no barber caste in the hills and the Kondhs shave each other whenever beards are sufficiently grown. The razors are also prepared by the Lohar. He somehow seems to have learnt the art of tempering the steel and the blades work well for a long time.

In this connection, I may mention that there is a village near Taptapani known as Lohagudi. Just about a quarter of a mile from the village there is a valley which is full of molten iron or pig iron. The village seems to have got its name from this valley or pig iron. There is no evidence as to the furnace which was used by the people and there is no trace of the tribe which did this job long ago. The Lohar of the hill is also a good locksmith and his locks are burglar proof and are of different design and finish. The Lohar vary rarely owns land. If he has any, it is to a small extent which he can work by himself. He is paid by barter, cash and sometimes by annual payments in paddy. This caste as well as some of the other castes in the hills required a detailed study.

#### **Potter :**

The next caste which seems to have come into the highlands along with the Kondh or immediately after him, is the potter. As is natural he practically feeds Kondh people after the tribals started eating cooked food. He plies his trade with the customary wheel as in the adjacent plain areas. In place of jute ropes by which the wheel is rotated he uses fibre ropes. The techniques of manufacturing pots etc, is the same as it is elsewhere; the firing is done as in the plains. Mud is prepared out of suitable soil selected by the potter and pudding is done by hands and feet.

Cooking pots and water pots of different sizes, liquor pots, earthen lamps, terracotta and effigies of animals are manufactured by the potter. The pots are carried to tribal villages where they are sold by barter or by cash payment. Nowadays a potter sells his wares at the weekly markets and with the money realized he purchases his weekly necessities from the market.

The pots as mentioned are seasoned with anna cardium juice and the smoke and soot of the kitchen. This seasoning reduces the chances of easy breakage.

#### **Sitara**

It is the next caste living in the hills. The caste is not found in the plains. The caste is a scheduled caste and lives on bamboo basket weaving and by



weaving winnowing fans. The winnow is a very useful article and besides winnowing grains it was necessary in the long past as a receptacle in which rice was given to the elephants of the *sahibs*. The Sitaraa weaves *doli* in which paddy and other grains are stocked by the tribals. The Sitara also weaves the bamboo door leaves which have later been substituted by the wooden planks. He also weaves bamboo receptacles required to carry cow dung from the cattle shed and small bamboo boxes in which the Kondh keeps his finery and jewelery. His services are also required for the funeral ceremony of the Kondh. He distributes oil to all the agnates of the deceased. Besides the bamboo work he does, he is the silversmith of the area. He manufactures the brass and silver waist chains, silver head dress, ear rings and hair pins used by the Kondh women. He manufactures Dorbo (part of the dowry of the bride). This Dorbo consists of models of different animals and birds and by peculiar embossing the Sitara makes them very attractive. Lotas with embossing upon them are also done by him.

### **Ghasi**

The next caste is Ghasi. This caste has a small population and the people are spread out. They live in very small concentrations. They are not agriculturists but live on business. They live on collecting and selling hides and are drummers. They manufacture and repair the drums of tribals. The Ghasi is a non-believer of tribal deities but he and his drum are in necessity at major festivals of the Kondh. He lives like the tribals, partakes of buffalo meat and beef. The Ghasis men and women dress like non-tribals and they follow non-tribal ceremonies. Although they join in major festivals and funeral ceremonies, the Ghasis have a definite function to play.

Certain other non-tribal Oriya castes live in the area. They are 1) the Tonhola, 2) the Kulta, 3) the Sudha, 4) the Sundhi, 5) the Hill chiefs like Patros and Bisois. There are Hodadars and Palks. There is another tribe namely the Gond who live in a small concentration. If no studies have been made on these non-tribal Oriya castes a detailed study seems to be necessary with particular reference to the nature of relationship which they have with the Kondh.

## POSITION OF WOMEN IN KONDH SOCIETY \*

*U. N. Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

### **Service is the art of Ruling**

The positions of women in Kondh society is unique. She controls the whole house in a very peculiar manner. She has full control over her husband and she obtains full obedience from the other members of the house. We shall see how she has come to maintain this position in the house and we have to trace this from her early childhood. As a child of 3 years she starts her work for the family as a baby sitter. She keeps her younger brother and sister all day long either playing with the baby or carrying the baby in a piece of cloth slung from the neck down. As the baby grows older and begins to play by itself the girl reduces its duty of baby sitting and joins her mother in household work. She carries water from the spring in a small vessel along with her mother. She sweeps the house and keeps it clean. She runs after her mother when the latter goes to the springs either to wash the utensils or clothes. In her small way she helps the mother in washing the family clothes and utensils. As she grows older she along with other children of her age goes out to pick mangoes, *mohua* flowers, etc. She goes along with her mother to dig edible roots and to collect edible leaves, flowers, etc. As she grows older she dehusks paddy, plasters the doors and veranda of the house. She feeds the pet animals, etc. of the house and keeps the piggery and the resting place of the fowls neat and clean. Till ten years of age she does all the household duties along with her mother. Thereafter, she does all the things herself. From after the tenth year she gets little bit more of freedom from household duties. She joins the girls of her age and spends the night in the spinster's dormitory with girls of her own age or older girls. She comes back from the dormitory in the morning and does all the household duties which she was doing previously with her mother. She along with other girls of her age go about merry making. They go to the market and

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVI No.4, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1986, pp.40-41

<sup>1</sup> Former Member of Orissa State Civil Service

make purchase of finery. She goes to the festivals nearby (*jatra*). She does all these things by herself from the training which she had from her mother in her earlier days. From the age of 15 onwards she gets more and more freedom of movement in her spare time. When she grows to full womanhood she in a way controls her mother and behaves like a small master in the house. She washes the family cloth, boiling them at home. She cleans family utensils and keeps the house clean. She is a great relief to her mother and relieves her of the routine duties in the house. Now she cooks the food for the family herself and serves the food for the members of the family three times a day. Thus, by the time she attains womanhood she does all the things in the house herself but in her own willful way.

After marriage she goes to live with her husband. There she keeps the house herself and by the training she has had from her mother she runs the house in a masterly manner. She controls her husband and the children also. By her service to the family she is a full master of the house and obtains from her husband sullen obedience and controls him in every way.

In her own house she cooks food herself and serves it. She does all the duties which she was doing in her parent house as a grown up girl.

Now as a housewife she on account of her service, is able to control her husband. She joins the men at the Panchayat. She is able to make purchase and sell small quantities of jungle produce at the market. Whenever heavy articles like ginger, turmeric, etc., are sold at the house by the husband she fixes the price and watches the measurement properly. She makes all weekly purchase at the market and sells at the market things she can carry. She fixes the bride price of her daughter and controls the marriage ceremony herself. She has a hand in the sale or mortgage of the land and in the latter case she fixes the rate of interest. The family jewellery of gold and silver is always in her charge. Thus she holds a paramount position in the family and that is because she serves the family in every possible manner. There is no question of love or affection in her towards the members of the family. It's strict discipline and obedience that gives her position in the family. Ruling is due to service and because of her service to the family she is able to rule the house.

# TRADITION AND CUSTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH PREGNANCY AND CHILD BIRTH AMONG KONDHS OF PHULBANI \*

*Saraswati Swain<sup>1</sup>*

Orissa has the highest concentration of tribal population in the country, only next to Madhya Pradesh. These are 62 tribes consisting of the total population of 59,15,067 (Census 1981) which is more than 22 per cent of the entire population of the State.

They are the most deprived segment of the population, live in abject poverty, in very hostile environment, under most insanitary conditions. Houses are tiny little hutments, the same room being used by human beings along with their pets. The overall growth rate of the tribal population is stated to be 16.68 per 1,000 as against the State's general average of 19.72 per 1,000 (Census 1971-81).

The tribal community does not constitute a standard homogenous group. They are culture, region and tribe specific and the socio-cultural pattern varies both in between and among the tribes. They believe in supernatural powers, who guide their lives and in case of offence or breach of taboo the mystical power punish them through death, disease or disaster. Jani, or the village priest is the mediator between the tribal people and the God. He worships and prays for the welfare, health of the people through various rituals including animal sacrifice and alcoholic drinks, which are offered to the God for their appeasement.

In spite of the industrialization and consequential urbanization, the tribal community has been able to maintain their age-old traditions, which perhaps, has been helpful not to allow them to be swept away of their feet.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXIX, Nos.3&4, THRTL, Bhubaneswar 1989, pp.16-20

<sup>1</sup> General Secretary, National Institute of Applied Human Research and Development, Kalyani Nagar, Cuttack-13.

The present study was conducted in one of the tribal districts of the State (Phulbani) which is inhabited by mostly Kondhs who constitute numerically the highest tribal population of the State.

#### **Parental Care:**

Pregnancy is kept strictly confidential, lest the foetus would be aborted due to the evil eye of the bad spirit. Antenatal care is not advocated, more so by the health workers, even when they are available. If the condition becomes serious, the Jani is called into offer magico-religious remedies. At times when the mother does not feel comfortable, the local T.B.A. is requested to come and correct the position of the foetus.

Drugs supplied by the Health Workers are not used and in some cases are thrown away. They have a firm belief that, the child would become very big due to the effect to the drugs and naturally labour would be difficult and delayed.

Food taboos, though exists are not very rigid. The expectant mother is instructed to eat potato, Arhar dal, and chicken as they are good for health. But black gram, horse gram, pumpkin, mutton, green drumstick, plantain, jackfruits are prohibited since they lead to constipation. These restrictions are to be followed from the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester. Some other restrictions include prohibition of onion, garlic, arum, puffed rice, fish etc. the reasons offered are as follows:

- (a) Onion and Garlic encourage the spirit to enter the womb and the child would suffer from rash.
- (b) Consumption on fried grain – The slimy portion of grain gets stuck to the body of the child and adversely affect its health.
- (c) Eating of Rohu fish (a special type of fish) causes ulcer in the umbilical region of the child, who might also suffer rash.
- (d) Arum – Due to its effect the child suffers from fever.
- (e) Boar meat – Child would suffer from tuberculosis.
- (f) Puffed rice – Child suffers from various diseases.

Heavy physical exercise like husking of paddy, carrying head load are restricted during the first and third trimester of pregnancy though allowed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester. It is considered necessary for easy delivery and to keep the mother fit. She is instructed not to lie flat and not to press the abdomen against the floor.

The expectant mother is not allowed to go out alone during mid-noon and in the evening. These transitional periods are extremely important, though inauspicious, when she is likely to be attacked by evil spirits, who usually take shelter in lonely places and have a special fascination to cause harm to pregnant women if they find them alone.

The place of delivery is selected by the elder members of the family. Since the tribal houses mostly consist of one roomed huts, one of the corners is cleaned

and prepared for the ensuing delivery. They do not like to go to the hospital as it is expensive, lonely, culturally unacceptable and do not allow visit of villagers, while in the tribal community the birth, death or illness are a community affair. This gregarious behavior is necessary for their survival. Where nature is very averse and unkind, unity is necessary to fight and cope with it. Hence, there is a need of a close community life and mutual assistance.

### Delivery Process

Delivery is usually conducted by the mother-in-law or any elderly woman of the village who is conversant with the job. At times the husband also assists in the process. The health worker or hospital people are not approached unless there are very serious complications.

Delivery is conducted mostly in squatting position. The mother is asked to hold firmly a pillar or a hanging rope (Sika specially installed for the purpose) during the process of bearing down. A binder is applied above the fundus which the person, assisting in delivery, holds back, lest the child would move upward.

The mother is surrounded by old ladies of the village who encourage her for a safe delivery. She is given hot water, warm rice water to drink. Ordinary cold water is never allowed. This is necessary to prevent collapse.

Some birth attendants smear their palms with oil and massage abdomen from top to downwards. Some oil also is poured in the birth canal for lubrication

To reduce delay in delivery the following methods are applied which are both person and area specific :-

1. The delay might be due to evil eye of the ancestors or some evil spirit. Hence the witch doctor is called in for giving 'Katapani' or to adopt any other method to hasten up delivery.
2. A paste of Ahir root is prepared. A portion of it is applied over the forehead of the expectant mother and the other half is given her to eat. Child is immediately delivered after this method.
3. A piece of the root of Basanga tree (Adha toda Vasica) is tied with thread which the women is given to wear around her waist.
4. Akanabindhi root (Cissampelospareira) and Apamaranga roots (Boerhavia diffusa) are boiled in water. Hot fomentation is given over vulva and umbilical region with this water.

The umbilical cord is not cut until the placenta is delivered. The instruments used are mostly blades, bamboo stick, broken earthen ware pot and *chilalkand* (pointed end of an arrow). In majority of cases the cord is not tied with any thread following their tradition.

The placenta is buried either in one corner of the room or outside the house just below the roof.

**In case of delay in the delivery of placenta: -**

1. The bark of Mahua tree (*Madhuca Indica*) [special type, where all the flower must have dropped before sun rise] is collected; a paste is prepared with this and applied over the forehead of the mother.
2. Baula flower (*Mimus poselengi*) is placed over the head of the mother after which placenta is immediately delivered.
3. Bitter-guard seed, scales of snakeskin and white mustard are put on fire and the smoke is blown towards vulva which hastens the delivery of placenta.
4. A naked boy is instructed to collect Murgh root (*Sanserieriaroxburghiana*). A paste is prepared with this and *tika* applied over mother's forehead after which the placenta is expelled immediately.

**Relief after Pains**

1. Mixture of long pepper or dried ginger powder is given with hot tea or hot water.
2. Kusum oil (*Carthanu stinctorius*) with Rangajada (*Ricinus Commuris*) leaf is applied over abdomen. The leaf is dried over fire before it is placed over abdomen.

**Prevention of Collapse**

Juice of Karanja bark (*Pongamia glabra*) is extracted, a piece of hot lion is placed in it and the mother is given it to drink.

**Declaring the Child dead**

If the child does not cry immediately after birth, then a brass plate is bitten hard near its ear and even then if the child does not respond, it is considered to be dead.

After the delivery of the placenta, the *vernix caseosa* is removed by applying soft husk or a special type of mud. The baby is given bath in warm water by applying turmeric paste.

**Breast feeding Practice**

The child is not breast-fed for some time. Breast-feeding is not given in some areas until the umbilicus is dropped. The mother is untouchable during this period and hence should not breast-feed the child. Some believe that mother's milk is mixed with blood during this period and hence is unsuitable as baby food. In other areas the child is put to breast after 24-36 hours. But there is variation in this procedure.

Before the child is put to breast the milk is first expressed, collected in mothers' *pallu* and is washed in running stream. It is never washed in well or pond water. The Water God (Jala Mauli) lives in the stream and when the expressed

milk is washed in the stream it would help in free flow of milk from mother's breast which is necessary for the health of the child.

In some places the child is not fed anything until it is put to breast. Even water is also not allowed. In other places boiled water or honey water is given. Honey water is believed to clean the stomach and protect the child from cold.

### **Delay in dropping of the Cord**

The umbilicus is dried by application of warm castor oil and it usually dries and drops off in 3-4 days. In case of delay the following procedures are adopted : -

- (1) Goat dung is burnt, made into a paste with castor oil and applied over the umbilicus.
- (2) The dirt of the cot is collected and applied over the umbilicus.
- (3) The first stool of the child is burnt and the ash is applied over umbilicus.
- (4) The leaf of Bahada is burnt and applied over the umbilicus.

When umbilicus drops off, it is collected and buried in a hole made on the wall of the house. This is necessary to ward off evil spirit.

They also have a firm belief that the umbilicus will dry off very quickly, if the fat of the animal, scarified at the altar of the deity, is boiled and applied over the umbilicus. There is no need to use it repeatedly like castor oil. Only one application of this holy oil is enough.

### **Postnatal Care**

No other types of green leafy vegetables are allowed to the mother except drum stick leaves. The other leaves are harmful and would produce rash on the body of the child.

The mother is allowed to take dried rice, fried brinjal, mustard oil and garlic for 21 days. But water rice and sour rice are totally prohibited. She is usually allowed one meal only during this period. Long pepper and dried ginger are given to dry up her body soon.

Both father and mother are declared untouchable for 21 days after the birth of the child (This period varies from area to area and also in case of male and female child). The first Pollution period is for 7-9 days, next one for 12 days and final one is for 21 days.

The father fetches water, food which he and his wife eat. No other family member is allowed to share food with them. They are also not allowed to touch the village well. They dig a hole in the river bed and use the collected water.

After the umbilicus drops off the old earthen wear pot is removed from house, mother cleans her clothes and rice is cooked in a new pot. After 12 days the



same process is repeated though now a bigger vessel is used to cook. This time the food is extended to young children of the village, but not to others. The renewable things are replaced to show and prove purity. The non-renewable things are washed and cleaned.

Mother is not allowed to move out for 21 days. Since she is impure during this period she is likely to be overpowered by evil spirits which would adversely affect her and her newly born child.

The final ceremony is called “Big Vessel” function. On this day turmeric powder is mixed in water. The elderly members of the house recollecting the names of the ancestors drop one raw rice each time in this water. When, a rice floats in water after utterance of a particular name, he is considered to have appeared. According to them the ancestor has reborn as the child and hence ceases to be an ancestor. The fundamental belief is that life and death are cyclical and continuous process. Death is not the end. He is worshipped with wine. It is believed that the child would grow well due to his blessings and no other evil spirit would be able to enter the house.

After this rice is cooked in the “Big Vessel” specially procured and all share the food and bless the child. Meat and wine are served on this occasion. The Pollution period is over from this day and mother is allowed to touch the well and other belongings of the house. She is allowed to cook the family food.

The remembrance of names of ancestors varies in different places and also according to the sex of the child. If the child is a girl, 7 ancestors of grandmother and in case of a male child, 7 ancestors of grandfather are remembered. They consider the child to be one belonging to any of the 7 generations of either side.

Tribals do not discriminate between boys and girls. Rather a girl is more acceptable since she is an economic asset both for physical labour and also in the marriage market.

The customs and traditions of any area have traditionally been categorized as Beneficial, Neutral and Harmful ones.

The beneficial practices belonging to this community could be enumerated as follows:

- (1) Death and diseases are a community affair and so also the process of delivery. The support and encouragement provided by the women of the village to the expectant mother are a great source of psychological support and extremely comforting. Additional hands are also made available in case of need.
- (2) Conducting delivery in squatting position was considered to be harmful, but of late, have been accepted as a scientific and useful tradition. The pillars do provide support during bearing down.

- (3) Declaring both father and mother untouchable for 21 days not only ensures rest but allows them to come closer to the child which is extremely important from psychological point of view. Further the traditional practice of requiring father to cook the food for his wife increases his involvement in the welfare of the wife and also in management of domestic affairs.
- (4) The restrictions and untouchability period are the best methods to prevent cross infection.
- (5) The various functions relating to cooking, encourages gradual mixing with the neighbours and also ensures their participation. These are only few of the practices existing in the tribal community.

However, the major objective of this article is to bring out the harmful methods which have been considered to be adversely affecting the health of the mother and the child.

- (1) The various dietary restrictions are not only meaningless but positively harmful specially among the poorest section.
- (2) The child-hood diseases ascribed to the diet of the mother are due to wrong belief and should not be encouraged.
- (3) Restrictions imposed on pre-natal care and uses of drugs are also harmful which need immediate attention.
- (4) Further, restricting the diet of the expectant mother and subjecting her heavy physical exercise adversely affect her health which has a bad effect on the fetus also
- (5) The customs of using *chialkanda* or broken earthen ware pots in cutting the cord are definitely harmful. Again putting dirt and dung over the umbilicus are one of the most dangerous practices and both have been considered to be important causes of neonatal tetanus.
- (6) Similarly the Practice of not tying the cord might lead to infant deaths due to constant oozing of blood.
- (7) Delay in breast feeding the child and not allowing it even water is also harmful, it is responsible for drying and peeling off of the skin which at times ulcerates due to secondary infection.

This article is just an overview, of some of the traditional practice existing among one of the tribal communities in Phulbani, Situations would be different elsewhere.

The tribal people are extremely simple and have tremendous faith on the supernatural powers, whom they believe, to be regulating their lives. Their culture has helped them to sustain themselves against all odds, gives direction to all their activities. It acts as a defense mechanism against the onslaught of modernization.

In spite of this some of their cultural practices have been found to be extremely harmful. It would be desirable to encourage the beneficial practices,

ignore the neutral ones and discourage the harmful ones. This could be possible through continuous and sustained health educational activities. The nature worship and superstition of the tribal community have an utilitarian value. When they would receive the benefits they would not hesitate to give up their belief. Hence it would not be very difficult to educate and change their beliefs. In fact this trait of theirs' has been used by outsiders to exploit them.

Further, being very simple they need to see and observe things to be convinced. Hence along with educational methods demonstration would also be useful and desirable.

A corollary of any of this would be that the hospital and health centre workers need a change in their commercial attitude. They also need training to be able to work in tribal Society.

Finally it could be concluded that education of the providers and consumers are necessary to bring in a welcome change in any traditional society.

# RITUALS ASSOCIATED WITH CHILD-BIRTH AMONG KONDHS \*

*Manoranjan Acharya<sup>1</sup>*

It is a common phenomenon that marriage, family and kinship are linked together centering round child-birth, child care and childrearing. Therefore, fertility and conception are regarded as important events not only in advanced societies but in primitive societies well. The study of child rearing in recent times has brought epoch-making revolution in the field of social anthropology. It has challenged the traditional ideas and opened up new vistas in the realm of psychological investigation. The purpose of this article is to high light the rituals associated with child-birth among the Kondhs of Phulbani district in Orissa in particular.

## **Ritual at the first conception**

As soon as the first conception is realized the 'TLAMBA' (priest) of the daughter-in-law's village is invited to the son-in-law's village for conducting the ritual to sacrifice a goat (Boda). The message is usually sent by the husband or by any of his relatives after three months of the conception, to his affinalkins. This sacrificial offering is known as 'SIRUKI BAKAD'. All members of both the families remain present in this Puja. It can be held on any day except the Saturday and the Thursday. Usually it is held outside the village. They seem to make this offering only to bring about harmony and amity between the deities of both the families. The belief is that if these family deities are not propitiated, they may bring some harm to the unborn child.

## **Ritual for being blessed with a child**

In Kondh society, the women without children usually pray to the God Saru Penu (Hill God) for being blessed with children. The author saw such a woman in the village Rajghara in Nuagaon Block of Phulbani district. After seven years of marriage she had no issue. When the author asked her about it, she told in despair that 'Dangaru Devta' (Hill God) was not kind enough to bless her with a child.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVI, No.2, THRTI, Bhubaneswar 1986, pp.15-17

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer in Anthropology, B.J.B. College, Bhubaneswar

The barren woman sometimes seeks the help of the 'Kutakatanju' (magician) with a hope to become fertile. The magician gives her a thread to tie around her neck. If it is found ineffective, the magician is further consulted to ascertain the reason and depth of her barrenness. This time he somehow gets at the root cause of the barrenness and discloses the name of the God who is to be appeased by a goat-sacrifice to get rid of barrenness.

#### **Ritual associated with frequent abortions**

Abortion is known as 'PITATUSTE'. If it occurs after every conception, the cases are reported to the 'Tlamba' seeking his advice on an auspicious day. The 'Tlamba' performs rituals with sacrificial offering to the Hill Gods (Danga Dangi) to overcome such danger. If it produces no result, the Kondhs immediately approach the magician again. The magician usually forecasts that Rahu (Patu) is on the forehead of that woman. If the woman has abortion for two times then the 'Rahu' is said to be branched off into two branches on the forehead. The magician then tries to dispel 'Rahu' by his teeth from the forehead of the woman by means of a ritual. He sprinkles the blood of a sacrificed rock on the forehead of the woman and thereafter she is believed to regain the power to conceive.

#### **Ritual associated with abnormal delivery**

In the Kondh society all types of misfortunes and harms are believed to be due to the annoyance of various Gods and spirits. When severe pains is felt during delivery, it is believed that certain Gods only can extricate the woman from the pain and so they sacrifice either cocks or goats or pigs in favour of the respective Gods and spirits. But it is only the Kutakatanju who can tell the names of these malevolent deities. On such occasion, he is invited and entertained with 'SALAP' (liquor) before obtaining a thread from him for tying round the waist of the parturient women. If it still creates inconvenience, they take further steps for smooth delivery.

#### **Ritual practice**

The husband takes some rice on his hand and touches it on the hands of the wife who is going to deliver the child. Then he comes to the magician who then applies the power of magic for knowing the identity of the spirit creating the difficulty. He would bring some rice out of that by means of two fingers and count the number. If the number is odd it would mean that no God or spirit is angry with the patient. If on the other hand, it is an even number then he comes to the conclusion that some God or spirit is definitely angry with the patient. He would then blow the rice for three times and bring some more rice with two fingers again as before by conceiving the name of one of the Gods. If there is even number of grains in the rice picked, that particular God would be believed to be responsible for it. If there is odd number of grains in the name of all Gods, then it would be thought that the ancestral spirits are responsible.

If it is 'LingaPenu' (Household Deity) then the kitchen is smeared with a paste of cow-dung and water. The magician then keeps a handful of rice before cock to eat. The belief is that if the cock eats the rice, the family deity is pleased and so there would be no difficulty for an easy delivery. Then the magician cuts one new thread and dips it in turmeric water. The nail of the cock is tied to that string and the patient's head is got touched with it. Then the string is tied around her neck. The cock is then set free and is reared up in the name of the House God. Later, on being sacrificed, its blood is given in offering to the family God. They prepare curry out of the flesh which is shared by them and their relatives as well. The Kutakatanju gets half Tambi ( $2\frac{1}{2}$  kg) of rice and Rs. 2/- as remuneration for his services.

If, on the other hand, the cock eats no rice, then it is believed that the God is not satisfied with the animal for being small in size. They would then offer a bigger animal, usually a goat or a pig. Kutakatanju takes that pig or goat to the kitchen and beheads the animal with knife and then offers the blood before Linga Penu. The flesh is thereafter cooked for the family members and their relatives including the Kutakatanju. He is customarily given Re. 1/- a small piece of cloth and some quantity of rice for rendering the ritual service.

If the God is Dharma Penu (Sun God), a different ritual practice is followed. The Kutakatanju would take one small goat and promise before the God Dharma Penu that if the patient is relieved soon, he would offer that animal to him after it is sufficiently grown up. When it is fully grown up, the Kutakatanju is called very early in the morning to offer the blood to the Sun God. Furthermore, in a plate cooked rice and meat are kept for offering to the same Sun God. Then all eat in the family and some of these are distributed among the relatives and the neighbours of their tribal origin.

If it is Dangaru Penu (Mountain God) then the father and brother of the parturient women are called for. Along with the Kutakatanju, her husband, father, brother and several old men of the village go to the mountain. They sit near the place where the Dangaru Penu resides. They carry some powdered items like turmeric, rice, charcoal, etc. in leaf plates. With these, the magician draws a circle in the middle. He draws another circle around that circle and makes a ring and keeps some rice grains inside the space in between the two circles. Then he invokes the God (Mountain God) to appear by means of his excellent magical power. When Dangaru Penu's appearance is felt, the Kutakatanju offers the blood and the head of the goat which had been earlier beheaded as a sacrificial offering. Then he keeps a big earthen pot near that circle. The God is believed to have remained inside that pot. After performing the ritual, they all come back with the sacrificial flesh. It is cooked and eaten at a holy place by the members attending the ritual.

If the god's name is composed of odd number of letters it is believed to be the ancestral spirits, i.e. PIDERIPITA, who cause difficulties in delivering the child, in each and every household there is one big wooden pillar, which is believed to be

the abode of ancestral spirits. They are believed to protect the house from any danger. In every seventh year a buffalo is sacrificed before it to please the ancestors. If they know from the magician that difficulty in delivery arises due to the displeasure of the ancestors, they promise before them to offer a buffalo when they would be economically better off. The reason is that the buffalo sacrifice is not an easy thing for a poor Kondh as it involves a lot of money. The Kutakatanju comes and gives a thread dipped in turmeric power to the woman to tie around her neck. The other domestic ritual chores are attended to by the family members. One of the family members takes an aluminum pot and covers its mouth by leaves. The said pot is kept hanging for the ancestors. The headman of the family takes a vow to offer a buffalo to the ancestors on a later date when his financial condition improves. But he never plays false to his pledge. On a suitable day later, the pledge is redeemed and the buffalo sacrifice is made. Then again for this offering there are so many formalities to be observed. All the rooms of the house are to be washed with cow dung and water first. All the used clothes of the family members are to be washed in the stream. Then the young boys of the village would go to bring a log of wood. Then the old pillar would be removed and replaced by the new one. Then they would keep on it seven Siali leaves. They would bring some hair from the tail of the buffalo and give these to the magician who would keep the same on the leaves. Then the buffalo would be tied to the pillar by means of a rope and the magician would perform Puja. After the termination of the Puja, the buffalo would be released from the pillar and killed elsewhere. A piece of flesh would be kept on the leaves over the pillar. The horns would be tied on the pillar. Half of that flesh would be cooked by the grown up girls of the village in his house and the other half would be distributed among the villagers. All the villagers are to be invited to take rice and cooked meat. Those who do not take the meat would be given rice and dal. The magician would take Rs. 3/- and one Tambi of rice as remuneration for his service.

From the above discussions, the following conclusions can be made

- (i) A lot of social and religious importance is given to fertility rites and the rites connected with child-birth by the Kondhs.
- (ii) Some amount of divine link is sought to be established in the observance of these rites. Good or bad results follow from the pleasure or displeasure of the Gods.
- (iii) There is a feeling of communality in observance of these rites. Not only the family members but also the kinsmen, neighbours, etc. partake the offerings
- (iv) With paramount and unflinching faith in the gods, the Kondhs never go back on the pledges made before them.

# DIFFERENTIAL GROWTH PATTERN BETWEEN PARENTAL AND FILIAL GENERATION IN A TRIBAL POPULATION \*

*R. P. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction :**

There are as many as 62 different tribal communities belonging to a variety of racial elements in Orissa. Of these 62 tribal communities, there are 12 major tribes, namely Kondh, Gond, Santal, Saora, Kolha, Munda, Paraja, Bhuinya, Kisan, Oraon, Koya and Gadaba numbering 1 lakh each, who are still found to be far away from the mainstream even after four decades of India's Independence.

The Kondhs, one of the primitive and numerically the largest among all the tribal communities of Orissa, mostly live in the densely wooded hills and hill slopes on the Eastern Ghat of India along the Bay of Bengal in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. The Kondh with 9,89,342 population (according to 1981 Census) occupies the top most position in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Orissa. Though its main concentration is in South Orissa (Koraput, Kalahandi, Phulbani & Ganjam), they are scattered by fits and starts throughout the State. The territory in which these people reside in deep concentration is known as Kondhmals.

In course of time of Orissan Kondhs have formed themselves into separate endogamous groups and have economic diversity. Broadly they are divided into the following 3 categories-

1. Kutia Kondh – This is the weakest section leading in an isolated life of poverty.
2. Dongria Kondh – This section is comparatively less primitive and is skilled in horticulture.
3. Desia Kondh – Konds who have settled at foot hills and depend mostly on cultivation.

This large ethnic community irrespective of its subdivision has been suffering from many deadly diseases like Malnutrition, Malaria, etc., since time immemorial. During the British period the Kondhs were in no way helped either

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXXIX Nos.3&4, THRTI, Bhubaneswar 1989, pp.57-61

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar



through any eradication programmes of these diseases or any developmental programmes for their socio-economic upliftment. But on the other hand they were often discriminated and were looked down upon as barbaric and uncivilized people by the Britishers. Anyhow, though some eradication and developmental programmes have been implemented since the end of the second decade of India's Independence no remarkable impact has yet been felt as a result of which many Kondh people are also still seen to have been suffering from the above-mentioned diseases and are leading a very poor and miserable life.

Under the Raj system, they were very daring soldiers of the land and they once revolted against the British rule. But economically and in technological level they were very poor. They had a bad reputation of human sacrifice in religious matter, which however was stopped by the foreign rulers.

Now-a-days the Kondh habitat is also marked to have been severely disturbed due to change in forest eco-system which occurred through long practice of shifting cultivation, cutting of firewood and timbers, interference of the forest contractors and brokers, shortage of rainfall, etc. This deforestation directly influence soil, plants and animals of the jungle and the tribal people who depend on the forest for their daily need are also affected severely. It makes a deficiency to subsistence economy of these people as they mostly maintain their livelihood through collection of fruits, seeds, roots, tubers, leaves and hunting of wild animals. Besides forest produces like honey, wax, resin etc, are also collected by them for cash economy. But due to the deforestation the forest have been destroyed as a result of which forest based food stuff cannot be obtained therefrom. Hence, the tribal people are being forced to lead a very miserable life and this situation ultimately creates an economic pressure on these people.

Kondh are forced to migrate to distant areas of Assam and Bengal to work in the tea gardens and coal mines. Those who manage to stay back, use their traditional method to exploit the environment.

Keeping all these views in mind, this study was carried out during November - December, 1986.

### **Area of Study**

For this study 11 (Eleven) Desia Kondh villages, namely, (1) Kanja mendi, (2) Rajaghara, (3) Gohingia, (4) Siritiguda, (5) Gajipadar, (6) Podasahi, (7) Kudupakai, (8) Gosukai, (9) Bonduda, (10) Taparakia, and (11) Salapajodi were selected at random around the Nuagaon Block of Phulbani District of Orissa.

### **Food Habit**

Generally the Desia Kondhs eat three times a day. Rice, Maize, Millet, etc, are their staple food. They are fond of dried fish but the quantity consumed in lunch and supper is very less.

Various cereals like Kandula, Janha, etc. are the substitutional staple food for rice, maize and millet. Various roots like Mulakuna, Dakutkuna, Kandakuna, Kuarkuria, Sembikuna are mainly consumed during Bhadrab-Vaisakh due to lack of rice or other staple food. Green leaves and mushrooms, though consumed in good quantity, it is totally seasonal. As the geographical condition does not allow pisci culture, consumption of fish is very less and occasional.

Rice is not washed before it is cooked and the boiled rice water is not thrown out as it is consumed very often. Turmeric, chilli, mustard and till oil are the main ingredients for preparing curry.

Tobacco plant is grown in their kitchen garden and almost all the Kondhs are fond of smoking. They are very much addicted to drinking of Salap juice (*maedekalu*) date palm juice (*kujurikalu*) and Mahuli (*Inpikalu*) which is sometimes cooked with Manelia and Janha.

The Kondhs relish chicken, mutton, buffalo meat, pork and beef but these items are mainly consumed in festive occasions and marriage ceremonies. Animals like rabbit (*madu*), wild pig (*barha*), etc. are the main preys from the nearby forests.

The main purpose behind this key study is to assess the variation of growth pattern in some metric measurements between two generations, i.e. between parental and filial (father & son) generation or in other words the purpose of this study is to compare various linear, areal and ponderal growth in two generations.

It was generally believed that there is a secular trend in stature, i.e. the filial generation is taller than the parental generation in stature. But some of the workers in India like Dr. P. Ganguly and others had recently shown that stature in the filial generation in some population have become less. In order to verify the secular trend of growth, the best method is to compare measurements of individuals of different generations, the best group for comparison is father and son and mother and daughter.

### Items of Measurement

20 anthropometric measurements have been taken in total out of which 13 are somato-metric and the rest are cephalo-metric. The somato-metric measurements include (1) Height vertex, (2) Height tragus, (3) Height acromion, (4) Height illiocrystale, (5) Height dactilion, (6) Sitting height (7) Biacromial breadth, (8) Bicrystale breadth, (9) Transverse chest breadth, (10) Chest girth, (11) Foot length, (12) Footbreadth and (13) Weight of the body and the cephalometric measurements include (1) Maximum head length, (2) Maximum head breadth, (3) Facial length, (4) Facial breadth, (5) Bigonial breadth, (6) Total head height, (7) Horizontal circumference of head.

**TABLE 1**  
**Variation in some Metric Characters between Parental and Filial Generation**

Sl No	Measurement items (Somotometric)	Mean Parental Gen	Mean Filial Gen	'T'Value	Signft (*) Insight(O)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.	Ht. Vertex	159.31	159.71	+ 0.304	O
2.	Ht. Tragus	145.86	146.05	+ 0.159	O
3.	Ht. Acromion	133.88	131.88	- 1.092	O
4.	Ht. Dactilon	57.04	57.46	+ 0.543	O
5.	Ht. Iliocrystale	96.88	96.36	- 0.737	O
6.	Sitting Height	79.74	81.60	+ 1.032	O
7.	Biacromial Breadth	34.48	33.73	- 1.332	O
8.	Bicrystale Breadth	26.40	25.10	- 3.707	*
9.	Transverse Chest Breadth	27.40	26.54	- 2.283	*
10.	Chest Girth	85.05	81.20	- 4.363	*
11.	Foot Length	24.94	25.10	+ 0.898	O
12.	Foot Breadth	10.03	10.64	+ 6.746	*
13.	Weight of the Body	48.09	46.88	- 1.161	O
14.	Maximum Head Length	18.70	17.91	- 1.990	*
15.	Maximum Head Breadth	14.12	13.94	- 2.189	*
16.	Facial Length	11.6	10.78	-2.202	*
17.	Facial Breadth	12.97	13.76	+ 8.710	*
18.	Bigonial Breadth	9.97	9.75	- 0.876	O
19.	Total head Height	21.51	20.38	- 6.029	*
20.	Horizontal Circumference of Head	53.89	54.33	+ 1.175	O

#### **Analysis, Discussion and Probable cause of variation**

In item Nos. 1,2,5,6,11,12,17 and 20 the growth has increased and in the rest of the items it has decreased in case of the filial generation. This means that the parental generation has increased its growth in these items which have been decreased in filial generation. It may also be said that the parental generation has ceased its growth particularly in those items which have been gained by the filial generation at an earlier age than the later generation.

Though there is deserved fluctuation in all items, only 9 characters are found to be significantly differing. These are in 4 somato metric and the rest 5 are in cephalometric measurements. The somatometric measurements are (1) Bicrystale Breadth, (2) Transverse Chest Breadth and the cephalometric measurements are (1) Maximum Head Length, (2) Maximum Head Breadth, (3) Facial Length, (4) Facial Breadth and (5) Total Head Height.

As it has been mentioned earlier, these significant variations between these two generations might have occurred due to suffering from long term diseases, deforestation or bad natural condition or effect, lack of good nutrition, mental retardation which is a continuous process or due to any other causes which is not yet known due to very few studies carried out particularly in this problem.

However, a study by Mahanta (1978) on Koya (a primitive tribe of Koraput) revealed that the total growth in Height Vertex has reduced in case of the filial generation. This generation has also less growth in Chest Girth and Head Length. The reason, though not explicitly known, he assigned it mainly to environmental deterioration because the Koya habitat had been encroached and the eco-system had severely been disturbed mainly by the refugees of East Pakistan before about two decades of the research was carried out.

As such there is no apparent disturbance in the eco-system by such encroachers in the Nuagaon area but the Kondh people themselves and other agents, as it has been mentioned earlier have been changing the eco-system of the area in a slow and continuous process which may be concluded as the same cause mentioned for the variation in growth pattern in two generation among the Koya people of the said area. The only difference between these two causes meant for these two different tribal communities is that the encroacher of the Koya habitat might have a direct or indirect interference or impact on the economic life of the Koya people which has not occurred in the Kondh habitat of Nuagaon area as there are no such encroachers. It should be mentioned that other ethnic groups except the Kondhs of the Nuagaon area might have a same type of interference in the economic life of tribal group as the encroachers have in the economic life of the Koya people. But neither immigrant groups are found to have been settled down in the Kondh habitat nor any other major or minor ethnic communities are found to have been a part of the habitation except the Kondh village Kanjamendi. But the communities like Christian Pana with a very minor population and the Block officials who reside near this village have not any remarkable impact on the economic life of the local Kondhs which would cause a continuous and long term mental retardation.

In all, a slow deprivation has started which is worsening day by day. The Kondh farmers cannot increase their productivity which was previously partly compensated by cultivation in the uplands. Upland cultivation has been considerably decreased. There is a short fall in primary food production. Also, the low lands are gradually losing productivity. There is also acute shortage of water for cultivation. Considering all these factors, it can be summarized that there is evident deterioration of food both quantitatively and qualitatively in last two decades. From our preliminary observation on food this has been substantiated. Though the off springs have not decreased in height, they have decreased in girth and width of the trunk.

P.V. Tobias has taken the stature of the adults in Southern Africa and compared with some previous studies conducted by various physical anthropologists in the different parts of South Africa. He has examined here the role that anthropometry can play in finding out the state of environmental adequacy or insufficiency in any community. His study is mainly based on the following questions –

- (a) To what extent the study of adult stature alone provide some kind of indicator of the degree of environmental adequacy.
- (b) To what extent the secular trend towards increasing adult stature, a reflection of improving environmental circumference is possible.
- (c) Can variation in the degree of sexual dimorphism or stature in various human populations be used as a gauge of environmental adequacy ?

He finds that the increase in the adult mean stature of the samples of San people over the last sixty and more years would seem to remain as the only fairly clear cut example of the secular trend towards increased adult stature in Africa and the environment plays a great role in it.

This study basically differs from the study of Tobias or Ganguly in terms that the hereditary factors are constant. In view of the complicated nature of heredity of the studied anthropometric characters it is better to keep the hereditarily aspect as constant for both the comparing generations. Due to practical inconvenience of measuring women especially young adult girls who are mostly married in other village, this study has been kept limited to the male side. It would have been better to note any difference among the other sex.

### **Conclusion**

Though at least one revelation has come out that there has been marked difference between the two generations in nearly about 50 per cent of the characters, no substantial explanation except the impact of environmental factor, economic factor, nutritional factor, hygiene factor, etc. can be offered for this deviation without further enquiry. Also a larger body of data of different regions is necessary to highlight the difference.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am grateful to the P.G. Department of Anthropology, Utkal University for giving me scope to carry out this research work. Specially, I am indebted to Dr. S.K. Ghoshmaulik, Reader of Anthropology for his noble guidance in bringing out this Report.

# THE KANDHS OF NAYAGARH \*

*D. K. Samantaray*<sup>1</sup>

One of the well-known aboriginal tribes of Orissa, the Kandhs were once infamous for their practice of human sacrifice. About a century ago, the Kandhs who lived on hills were considered to be as fierce as they were formidable. The primitive Kandhs were as inexplicably mysterious as nature herself. They inherited nature's naivety as well as her fierceness. The Kandhs of today, however, do not inherit the fierceness of their ancestors though they continue to be as naïve and ingenious as their forbears.

A number of scholars, Indian as well as European, have evinced profound interest in the study of the social and economic life of the Kandhs and other aboriginals of this country, so much so that we have a spate of helpful research articles written on the tribesmen of our country. If we dig into the pages of the books and journals written on the aboriginals of India, we can get many interesting bits of information in regard to the peculiar customs which are prevalent in different tribal communities. For instance, referring to the Christening of a six month old Kandh child J.A.R. Steven son writes 'Six months after birth, on a fixed day they make 'Gadathava' the ceremony of naming the child. On that day killing a dog and procuring liquor, they make *baji*. They wash the feet of the child.....' So it continue and a series of rituals are performed until the child is christened. Such a custom is only prevalent among the Kandhs of Ghumsur though the Kandhs in neighbouring places such as Nayagarh or Daspalla have little knowledge of it. It is, therefore, difficult to make a general observation on the rites and customs of the Kandhs since they vary so widely from place to place.

From the title of this article it is evident that I have circumscribed the scope of my study for the sake of accuracy. According to the census of 1961, the total Kandh population in Orissa is 8,18,84. The total Kandh population in Puri district is 31,845. This number must have increased by now since population is increasing at a rapid rate all over the country. A great majority of the Kandhs of

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XII, Nos.1-4, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1970-71, pp.22-26

<sup>1</sup> Reader in English, B.J.B. College, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

the Puri district live in the sub-division of Nayagarh. There are three malasin Nayagarh which are inhabited by Kandhs. These are Korada mala. Guni mala and Betanti mala. The rites and customs observed by the Kandhs living in these malas are similar. There are instances of Kandhs living in Betanati mala who have established matrimonial relationship with Kandhs living either in Korada mala or in Guni mala. A Kandh of Nayagarh does not want to give his daughter in marriage with a Kandh of Bolangir or Kalahandi or Koraput partly because of his dread of the distance and partly because of the different social customs prevalent among the Kandhs at different places of the State. This however, does not mean that the Kandhs are circumvented by caste barriers. As a matter of fact, one heartening feature of the Kandh community is that it is above the narrow bounds of caste prejudices.

In every Kandh village, there are leading men who hold different designations. The Padhan is considered to be the head of the village so far as the village administration is concerned. During the days of the ancient rulers of the ex-State of Nayagarh the Padhan was entrusted with the duty of collecting land revenue. Thus, he was the counterpart of the Saravarakar of a big village. Even today the Padhan assists the Revenue officials in matters of administration. The Jani is an important man of the village because he performs the duty of a priest. He is the *de facto* head of the village, because he is consulted in all matters other than those of administration. The Behera and the Malik are the leaders of the community. They occupy more important positions than the Padhan, One *mala* consists of thirty-two Kandh villages. While the Padhan is the head of a village from the administrative point of view, the Malik and the Behera are considered to be the most important men in the entire mala. It naturally follows that they enjoy more power and greater social status than the Padhan. If an inhabitant of a Kandh village is found to be guilty of an offence it is the duty of the Padhan of that village to apprise the delinquent in question. Then the Malik, the Behera and the Padhan will sit in conference with the elderly members of the village before they make a decision to punish the offender.

The Kandhs are fond of taking active part in their festivals though they have relatively fewer festivals than the Hindus. The Kandhs do not observe the Hindu festivals. Jantal is the greatest festivals of the Kandhs. It comes off in the month of Chaitra (round about March). The Kandhs celebrate the Jantal with as much grandeur as they are capable of. It is celebrated for a day only. A communal offering is made to the deity on this occasion. In the olden days, the Kandhs of Nayagarh used to sacrifice a buffalo on the occasion of Jantal. But this custom was abrogated as the slaughter of buffaloes was prohibited by law when Satar Khan was the regent of Nayagarh. At present, the Kandhs sacrifice a billy-goat in place of the buffalo on the occasion of the Jantal. Apart from the communal offering which is made to the deity on the occasion, there are opportunities for individual ablation. Most of the Kandhs believe that natural calamities and personal miseries

are caused due to the alienation of the goddess. The propitiation of the goddess is possible only through the sacrifice of a cock or abilly-goat. A feast is arranged on a mass scale in every village on the occasion of the Jantal. The participants who rejoice on this occasion are from both sexes. Men and women do not sing and dance in company. This is looked down upon by the Kandhs of Nayagarh though in Daspalla and Boudh the Kandhs enjoy singing and dancing with their women folk.

Sinajana is another important festival of the Kandhs which takes place in the month of either November or December. Beans tamarind, etc., are first offered to the deity on this day before they are consumed by the villagers. The Kandhs have a superstition that if anybody will touch these beans or tamarind before they are offered to the deity, it will infuriate the deity who will appear in the form of a tiger and suck his blood to death. The Kandhs also celebrate the Dashahara festival, but they do not worship Durga on this occasion as the Hindus do. Since the Dashahara is an annual festival of the Kandhs, all the male inhabitants of a particular Mala area assemble before the deity known as Bagdebi in Korada mala or Hatiganda in Guni mala, or Betal-khali in Betanati and make a communal worship. The women folk do not take part in the Dashahara festival though they participate in all the village festivals.

Magha puda is a well-known festival of the Kandhs. It corresponds to Agipoda which takes place on the day of Magha Purnima. This festival is celebrated to bid farewell to the winter. The Kandhs make a bonfire and rejoice on the night of Magha Purnima. The bitterness of the cold of winter is felt very keenly by these people as they live in jungles. Besides, they do not have warmclothes to protect themselves from the shivering cold. This is perhaps the reason why they rejoice when the winter comes to an end. Mandapitha is supposed to be one of the favourite delicacies of the Kandhs and it is usually made in almost every Kandh household on all festive occasions.

Much has been said about the hospitality of the Kandhs. There are numerous stories to evince the cordiality and the generosity with which the Kandhs receive their guests in their houses. It is hard to give credence to all these stories, but the fact remains that the Kandhs are hospitable by nature. In a number of villages in Nayagarh the Kandhs are hospitable by nature. In a number of villages in Nayagarh the Kandhs have collective funds for treating the guests who do not belong to their community.

It is interesting to note how a marriage ceremony takes place in a Kandh family. A proposal of marriage is initiated by the bridegroom's father. If the father is dead, the proposal in that case is brought by the eldest patriarch of the bridegroom's family. Under no circumstances a young man is permitted to marry a woman of his choice. The bridegroom's father or uncle or elder brother will first



visit the bride's house in order to see the bride and open a negotiation for marriage. Then the bride's father and other elderly relations will pay a visit to the bridegroom's house. Both parties discuss the proposal at large and if it is acceptable to the bride's father, the proposal is accepted then and there. The Kandh women do not play any role in the marriage negotiation. According to convention, the bride and the bridegroom are not permitted to see each other until the wedding day. The Kandhs do not usually observe marriage *tithis*, as the Hindus do. The date of marriage is fixed according to the convenience of both parties.

The bridegroom comes to the bride's house for marriage. The Kandhs do not get priest to solemnize the marriage. The bride groom is made to sit on an altar which is specially made for the purpose of wedding. A peculiarity of the Kandh wedding is that no male member, except the bride groom, is supposed to be present near the altar when the wedding takes place.

The women folk take active role in the solemnizing of the wedding. The bride's relations sing nuptial songs at the time of wedding. The bride and the bridegroom take oaths of conjugal fidelity in the names of their respective deities. Soon after the wedding ceremony they go to the deity in the bride's village for worship and for obtaining blessings. Then they return to the bride's house where all the guests are entertained by the bride's father at a wedding feast. The groom spends the night with the bride in her house. On the next day, the bride's relations accompany the bridegroom's party to the groom's house.

The Kandhs of Nayagarh do not usually insist on dowry. The bride's father, however, voluntarily gives dowry to his daughter in the form of golden ornaments, rice, cattle, etc. There are different *gotras* in the Kandh community such as Ranakhia, Sarakhia, etc. and the custom is that there can be no marriage between a man and a woman who belong to the same *gotra*. Marriage with a cousin is strictly forbidden. An aggrieved husband or a wife can seek permission for divorce when all efforts for a rapprochement fail. No written document is maintained in the event of a divorce. A man can divorce his wife in the presence of the elderly people of the village. There is provision for remarriage both for the husband and for the wife.

Agriculture is the main source of income for the Kandhs of Nayagarh. As most of them are illiterate they prefer cultivation to service or business. Some of the Kandhs understand the importance of education and encourage their children to read. It is heartening to note that a number of Kandh boys from Nayagarh have passed, their Matriculation examination and some of them are studying in colleges. After their primary education the Kandh boys are generally sent to the field for cultivation. Most of the Kandhs own land for cultivation though a few of them possess more than ten acres of good cultivable land.

The Kandhs have little interest in political affairs. In most of the Kandh villages people are ignorant of current political events and it is very surprising that hardly a newspaper comes to the village. There is no post office in the neighborhood of nearly five or six miles, as a result of which people have little occasion either to receive or post letters.

The Kandhs of Nayagarh are very indigent and they continue to live in an appallingly underdevelopment condition. They are most hard hit in times of drought. They cannot afford to buy rice. Thus, they are constrained to eat *solop* powder which is not only inedible but positively deleterious to health. Sometimes they eat Tole, Chernga, Karaba and Sala seeds in order to appease their hunger.

# PHYSIONOMETRIC AND NUTRITIONAL SURVEY OF KONDHS OF PHIRINGIA GRAMPANCHAYAT OF PHULBANI DISTRICT \*

*Sipra Routray*<sup>1</sup>

*Kabita Patnaik*<sup>2</sup>

The Kondhs are generally known as 'hill-men' and the name has its origin from the root word Ko/Ku which signifies the mountain. They are numerically the largest among all the 62 tribes of Orissa. They are mainly concentrated in Koraput, Phulbani and Kalahandi districts of Orissa. To distinguish the tribe from other tribes the following physical features catch our eyes:-

Complexion – varies from light brown to brown.

Hair – colour is dark brown and not very profuse in quantity.

The males have less mustaches.

They are dolichocephalism.

Their eyebrows are medium and thick.

Their lips are medium and thick.

Their Nasal Index varies from platyrrhine to mesorrhine.

They are of medium status.

This study was conducted in Phiringia Grampanchayat of Phulbani district having 43 villages and centres round the Kondh boys belonging to the age group of 16 to 20 who have had school education upto class V and above. As per Universal Bench Mark Survey of the Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training institute, one hundred and five (105) such boys inhabit this area out of which 100 boys were measured for this purpose.

This article is concerned with the recruitment of the Kondh boys to the army on the basis of their physionometric measurements. Martin and Ashley Montagu's methodology was adopted while locating the landmarks and taking the

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXIV, Nos.3&4, THRTI, Bhubaneswar 1984-85, pp. 31-38

<sup>1</sup> Research Assistant, THRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Laboratory Assistant, THRTI, Bhubaneswar

measurements. Firsthand data were collected by taking measurement of (1) stature. (2) weight and (3) chest. The stature is regarded as the height of the subject from floor to vortex which is taken by using an anthrop meter. The weight is measure with the help of a weighing machine. The chest is measured by using a tape. The lower border of the tape should be above the upper border of the nipple. The boy should not hold breath or strain his muscles. The difference between normal and expanded chest measurement should be 5cm. A boy is considered fit, if measurements of his height, weight and chest are 160cm, 48kg and 77-82cm, respectively as ascertained from the Military Board at the Branch Recruiting Office, Cuttack. The physical study was also correlated with the nutritional status of the Kondh males which was conducted on the above mentioned area by applying the interview and observation method.

**TABLE - I**  
**Physical fitness of Kondh males according to Education and Age group (16-20)**

	Education						Age				
	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	16	17	18	19	20
Height	2	2	2	11	14	21	19	16	11	4	2
Height & Weight	2	2	1	8	11	15	11	12	11	3	2
Height, Weight & Chest	1	1	0	2	1	2	0	1	4	1	1

### RESULT

The distribution of tribal boys according to different measurements such as (1) height (2) height and weight (3) height, weight and chest is represented in Table - 1. This is also correlated with the educational standard and the age group of the boys. Taking the factor of height into consideration 21,14,11,2,2 and 2 boys belong to class X,IX,VIII,VII, VI and V respectively. Taking both height and weight into consideration 15,11,8,1,2 and 2 boys belong to class X,IX,VIII,VII,VI and V respectively. Taking all the criteria, that is, height, weight and chest into consideration 2,1,2,0 and 1 boy (s) belong to class X, IX, VIII, VII, VI and V respectively.

Similarly, taking 'height' as a factor of measurement 19, 16, 11, 4 and 2 boys are aged 11,17, 18, 19 and 20 years respectively. Taking height and weight as factors 11, 12, 11, 3 and 2 boys are aged 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 years respectively. Lastly, taking at the criteria that is, 'height, weight and chest' into consideration 0, 1, 4, 1 and 1 boy(s) are of the age of 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 years respectively.

It is seen from the above Table that 'class-X' and 'age 16' account for the maximum number of fitness in height and 'age 20' and 'classes VII, VI and V' account for the minimum Likewise, 'class X' and 'age 17' account for the maximum number of fitness I 'height and weight' and class VIII' and age 20' account for the minimum. Taking all factors into consideration, the number of fit

boys is maximum, that is 4, in 'age 18' and 2 each in 'Class-X' and 'class VIII'. In total, 7 boys are found fit for recruitment to the army.

**TABLE - II**  
**Physical fitness according to physionometric measurements**

Measurement	Number of Kondh Males found fit	Percentage of fitness of Kondh Males
According to Height	52	52%
According to Ht. & Wt.	39	39%
According to Ht. Wt& Chest	7	7%

Table - II is self-explanatory. It shows that 52% of Kondh boys are fit in 'height' and 39% of the boys are fit in both 'height and weight'. Only 7% of the boys are fulfilling all the criteria, that is, 'height, weight and chest' which is negligible. These seven boys are actually to be recruited to the army. But if 1000 boys are taken into consideration, the number of fit boys will be 70.

Nutrition Survey diet study was also conducted during this work to assess the prevalence of malnutrition in the study area. The Kondhs have very irregular food habits and so it is very difficult to ascertain their nutritional status. They have no fixed timing in eating. They eat whenever food is available to them. So, staple food articles taken by them vary with different seasons and the diet of the Kondh is based on the availability of food stuff.

The staple foods taken by the Kondh are rice, maize, 'kuri', *ragi* etc. varying from season to season depending on their availability. In summer season mango and jack-fruit being plentifully available are consumed as staple food for that season.

The intake of milk and milk products is totally absent. They keep goat to sacrifice in rituals and also for exchange of goods.

The pulses like 'Kulthi' (horse gram), 'Jhudang' (black gram) and 'Kalka' (one type of black gram) are mostly taken by the Kondhs but the intake is less in quantity and also very rare.

Usually the green leaves are the main curry of the Kondhs. They take more of it in the rainy season because of its abundant availability. They take the leaves like 'Khera' leaves. Pumpkin leaves sweet potato leaves etc.,

The Kondhs take fruits like mango, jackfruit, banana, papaya etc. Though they have planted banana and papaya in their kitchen-gardens they consume these casually. Most of the produce are sold in the market. They take different types of roots and tubers which they collect from the nearby jungle.

They eat vegetable like potato, beans, brinjal, sweet potato, ground potato etc., depending upon their availability during various seasons.

Intake of meat is occasional among the Kondhs. They take meat during the ceremonial occasions like birth, marriage, death and other festivities. In some ceremonies ritual sacrifice of animals is done and the meat of the sacrificed animal is equally shared by all the villagers as a sacred item. They usually take chicken, pork, mutton and fish. The quantity of meat taken per adult per day is 14.29gm, vide item (7) of Table-III.

Consumption of oil by the Kondhs is infrequent. They use oil extracted from *mohua* and mustard seeds.

They use condiments like turmeric, mustard, onion, garlic, dry as well as green chili and salt. Salt is taken according to taste.

**TABLE - III**  
**Food value (Nutrients composition) of different items daily per adult unit**

Sl. No	Average daily intake of different food items per adult unit		Quantity of food value consumed per day adult unit (in grams)				
	Food stuff	Quantity in grams	Moisture	Protein	Fat	Fibre	Carbo-hydrate
1.	Rice	557.82	68.05	47.41	3.35	3.25	431.75
2.	Dal(Field bean)	15.55	1.45	3.87	0.12	0.22	9.34
3.	Green leaves	25.94	19.45	1.74	0.44	0.23	3.48
4.	Mushroom	9.85	7.40	0.46	0.08	0.04	0.39
5.	Jack-fruit	14.28	7.44	0.27	0.01	0.16	2.70
6.	Potato	3.28	2.45	0.05	0.003	0.01	0.76
7.	Meat (Mutton)	14.29	-	2.65	1.90	-	-
8.	Onion (Raw)	1.07	1.27	0.02	0.001	0.01	0.17
9.	Mustard Oil	0.41	0.03	0.09	0.16	0.01	0.10
10.	Chilly	1.57	1.91	0.05	0.01	0.64	0.10
11.	Turmeric	0.04	0.01	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.24
12.	<b>Total</b>	<b>644.1</b>	<b>109.46</b>	<b>56.61</b>	<b>6.08</b>	<b>4.67</b>	<b>449.02</b>

The nutritive value of different food items consumed per day per adult is presented in Table-III. The items consumed are rice, dal (field bean) green leaves, mushroom, jackfruit, potato, meat, raw onion, mustard oil, chilly and turmeric. One adult consumes 557.82 gm. of rice, 15.55 gm. of dal (field bean), 25.94 gm. of green leaves, 9.85 gm. of mushroom, 14.29 gm of meat, 1.07 gm, of raw onion, 0.41 gm. of mustard oil, 1.57gm. of chilly, 0.04gm. of turmeric. The quantity of most of the items is less than the recommended ICMR value. The total quantity of food items taken by one adult is 644.1gm per day which consists of 109.46gm. of moisture, 56.61gm, more than the ICMR value, 6.08gm. of fat which is 43.92gm less than the ICMR value, 4.67gm. of fiber, 449.02gm. of carbohydrate which is 9.02gm, more than the ICMR value, 3.19gm of calcium which is 2.69 gm. more than the ICMR value, 2.54gm, of phosphorus which is 1.14gm. more than the ICMR value,

18.54mg. of iron which is 1.46mg. less than the ICMR value. 2075.37kcal. of calories which is 424.63 kcal. less than the ICMR value, 1811.01 mg of carotene, 1.33mg. of thiamine which is 0.67mg less than the ICMR value 15.22mg of niacin, 1.27mg of riboflavin which is 0.93mg less than the ICMR value and 61.64 mg of ascorbic acid which is 11.64mg more than the ICMR value. Liquor was found to have been consumed by five households out of ten surveyed households during a week. These five households having 14 adults, on an average, consumed 3 liters of liquor daily which works out to 214 ml. per adult per day.

TABLE - III Food value (Contd.)

Sl. No	Calcium	Phosphorus	Iron	Calories	Carotene	Thiamine	Niacin	Riboflavin	Ascorbic acid
	gm	gm	mg	K. Cal	mg	mg	mg	mg	mg
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	0.06	0.95	15.62	1946.79	22.31	1.17	13.39	0.89	-
2	0.01	0.07	0.31	53.91	-	0.08	0.28	0.03	-
3	0.11	0.2	1.82	24.90	1758.73	0.02	0.21	0.01	57.07
4	0.59	1.49	0.17	4.23	-	0.01	0.23	0.02	0.68
5	0.80	0.004	0.07	11.10	24.99	0.01	0.06	0.27	1.43
6	0.33	0.003	0.02	3.25	0.79	0.003	0.04	0.0003	0.56
7	1.29	-	0.36	27.72	-	0.03	0.97	0.04	-
8	0.002	0.001	0.01	0.49	0.22	0.001	0.004	0.0001	0.16
9	0.002	0.002	0.07	2.22	1.11	-	0.02	0.0002	-
10	0.0004	0.001	0.02	0.64	2.75	0.003	0.01	0.004	1.74
11	-	0.001	0.07	0.12	0.11	-	0.001	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.19</b>	<b>2.54</b>	<b>18.54</b>	<b>2075.37</b>	<b>1811.01</b>	<b>1.33</b>	<b>15.22</b>	<b>1.27</b>	<b>61.64</b>

TABLE -IV  
Monthly Calendar of Seasonal Activities

Month	Male		Female	
	Main	Subsidiary	Main	Subsidiary
Jan-Feb.	Wage-earning	Collection of fire wood & minor forest products.	Wage-earning	Selling of fuel wood & household work.
Feb-Mar.	-Do-	Thatching of house	-Do-	Collection of tamarind & domestic work
Mar-Apr.	Ploughing in dry lands	Collection of <i>mohua</i> flower.	Collection of <i>mohua</i> flower	Collection of fire wood & domestic work.
Apr-May	Ploughing in dry lands. Collection of mango, Jack-fruit	Clearing of forest	Collection of <i>mohua</i> flower, mango, jack-fruit & other forest products	Collection of wood and domestic work

May-June	-Do-	-Do-	Collection of mango, jack-fruit.	-Do-
June-July.	Transplantation of paddy	Collection of forest products	Transplantation of paddy	Collection of mushroom and household work
July-August	-Do-	-Do-	-Do-	-Do-
Aug-Sept	Harvesting of "Kuiiri"	Watching the kitchen garden	Helping in harvesting.	-Do-
Sept-Oct.	Harvesting of ragi, maize	-Do-	-Do-	Household work and leaf plate making
Oct-Nov,	Harvesting of paddy, maize.	Watching the crops and kitchen garden	-Do-	-Do-
Nov-Dec.	Harvesting of paddy, and mustard	-Do-	-Do-	Household work & taking care of kitchen garden
Dec-Jan	Harvesting of turmeric, <i>mung</i> , <i>biri</i> etc.	Repairing of houses, watching the kitchen garden	-Do-	-Do-

Monthly calendar of main as well as subsidiary activities of Kondh males and females are given in table -IV. Generally the males and females both work hard for the whole day, but the males do heavier work than the females. It reveals from the above Table that the Kondhs exert themselves more when the harvesting is done. The work load during the summer season is less than that of the other seasons due to absence of vigorous agricultural activities. Wage-earning is very common and is done by both the sexes.

### Conclusion :

From the analysis of data made earlier, it is seen that the number of Kondh boys fit to be taken into the army is quite negligible compared to others. Many factors like their culture, living conditions, daily activities, food consumption, unscientific sanitary habits, low level of literacy etc. are responsible for making them unfit. Their ecology demands arduous work in order to exploit the natural resources and the environmental conditions compel them to undergo hardship to earn their living which is incongruous with their generally found low calorie intake. By correlating food intake with activities, it would be seen that the calorific value required for the activities of the Kondh is not available to him for which he



has a weak body. Some of the boys though possess healthy bodies having good stature, height and weight are unable to expand their chest. Perhaps this is due to their lack of knowledge of physical exercise. So they need proper training and pre-military coaching on chest expansion. If this is done, 39% of the boys will be fit for recruitment to the army. An adult requires 2500\* calories per day, but the average intake of an adult Kondh is 2075.37 calories as per data collected from the survey. The calorific value of the Kondh is less by 424.63kcal, than the recommended ICMR value of 2500kcal. This indicates that the Kondhs suffer from under or malnutrition so far as their standard diet is concerned.

**References :**

1. Mc. Divitt, M.E. - 1969 Human Nutrition Principles & Application in India
2. Patnaik, N. - 1982 The Kondh of Orissa  
Das Patnaik, P.S.
3. Richards, A.I - 1951 Land, labour& diet in Northern Rhodesia.
4. Sharma, Krishan - 1979 The Kondhs of Orissa
5. Swaminathan, M. - 1977 Handbook of Food & Nutrition.

# THE KONDH PANTHEON AND THEIR SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE \*

*J. Swain*<sup>1</sup>

The Kondhs are numerically the largest Scheduled Tribe in the State of Orissa who were once notorious for Meriah (human) sacrifice. They number 8,18,847 accordingly to the Census of 1961. The Kands are divided into several sub-tribes. Though they are distributed in all the districts their main concentration is in Phulbani, Ganjam, Koraput, Kalahandi, Sambalpur and Bolangiri. They worship the whole year a number of Gods and Goddesses to gain some material or social advantages. Here is described their pantheon, co-relation of major and minor deities, role or religious functionaries and common man and the social significance of these religious rites on the basis of the observation in the village Kanjamendi in Phulbani district.

It is indeed difficult to enlist the numerous names of the Kondh Gods and Goddesses presiding over the field, forest, village and home. The Kondhs believe that the various deities can be appeased through rituals like prayer, offerings, sacrifices and feasts accompanied by singing and drinking. Although the way of approach for behavior of super empirical approach varies from community to community the goal is same, i.e., to control the supernatural powers. They worship eighty - four deities at the time of sowing, harvesting and other ceremonial occasions. But their Chief or High deity is 'Darani' the Tadapenu. Long ago Human sacrifice was practiced by Kondhs and the blood was offered to 'Tadapenu' or 'Burapenu'. The most potent motivation was to provide a magical fertilizer for the soil to secure a plentiful harvest. "The main three purposes of Human sacrifice were (1) to enhance the fertility of the soil, (2) to secure firm foundation of a building and (3) to secure god water supply from a well or pond"\*. The Meriah sacrifice of the Kondh became so notorious that General Campbell and Captain Mac Pherson had to take special pains to stamp it out during British rule.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. X, Nos.3& 4, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1968-69, pp.33-39

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar in Anthropology

Now-a-days Kondh practise buffalo sacrifice instead of human sacrifice which is called as 'Kedu'. But Kudutuli and Nuagaon Mutha of Phulbani district where I studied their custom is exception in this respect. 'Kedu' festival is observed in the months of March and April in order to worship their ancestral deity 'Dumadahani'. It is nothing but secondary mortuary ritual. This festival is celebrated for seven days having different rites on different days. On this occasion buffalo and pig meat, eggs and wine, etc., are offered to 'Darani' in communal basis. They believe that the soul will horn in another form in the upper world. For some years, the dead persons remain as "Duma" or ghost. But after that they are treated as ancestral deity. Kondhs have an idea that by offering buffalo meat to their 'Dumadahani' and its blood to 'Darani' the earth goddess, they would not face any calamity and their land will yield more. The Kondh word for god is "Penu" irrespective of sex. They locate their gods in the village, sky earth and under world. But under the Hindu influence these beliefs are changing.

Kondhs believe that a supreme goddess rules over all the gods, i.e., 'Darani' the symbol of which consists of a stone. Pig and fowl are sacrificed before 'Darani' along with the first fruits (Raw rice, nuakhai materials like 'Kandul' and Amba (Mango) Salap (Wine) and flour of rice are offered to the deity.

The Kondhs believe that 'Darani' is the creator of the whole Universe. In each and every Kondh *raha* (street) and Oriya *raha* there is 'Darani'. The worshipper of 'Darani' is known as *tlamba*, the priest. Generally 'Darani' is placed just below the verandah or on the verandah. There are four 'Darani' *tlambas*, and two 'Kedut *lambas*' in the village Kanjamendi. The *tlamba* must be a Kondh or an Oriya. There are fifteen *rahas* (streets) and twenty-two 'Daranis' in that village.

Generally, 'Darani' is established accordingly to Raha. Even people of same 'Gasi' (Lineage) can establish a 'Darani' if they are living in a separate 'raha'. Apart from that different 'Gasi' people establish different 'Daranis' though they remain in the same Raha. 'Darani' can be established in the month of Chaitra, i.e., March and April, just before the 'Kedu' festival. The 'Gosi' people will sit together and select a faithful man to keep 'Darani' in his verandah.

On the appointed day the *tlamba* comes and brings a stone. He usually wears a purified cloth and observes fasting to perform the Puja. He establishes 'Darani' and worships with some rice to four goddesses, namely, Tadapenu, 'Daranipenu', Burapenu, and Sarmbuli, 'Dimbuli. On that day the Gasi people have to sacrifice a pig or fowl before 'Darani'. The *Tlamba* keeps the lever and blood on 'Darani'. All the male *gasi* members contribute some rice and participate in the feast. The women are not allowed to take the meat which was offered to 'Darani'. The people also offer rice, pig, wine and egg to 'Darani' while they establish 'Darani' newly.

They worship Darani in order to be save from the wild animals like tiger and bear as well as for the betterment of their domestic animals. They also worship

in other occasions such as in death rituals, in Kedu festivals, in 'Sadrangi' and in 'Marangalaka'. Except these they also worship 'Darani' if a lady saw 'Darani' during her menstruation period. While worshipping 'Darani' the *tlamba* wears a good cloth and observes feasting till he finishes the Puja. At the time of sacrifice he keeps there 'Siali' leaves near 'Darani'. Then he keeps the rice on it. After that he kills the pig or fowl and adds on that rice uttering some mantras in Kui language for different purposes. From the above facts we can conclude that 'Darani' is the centre of Konth social organization because 'Darani' is worshipped in each festival and in their social life like marriage, birth and death in which all the Gasi members unite together and arrange a feast 'Darani' or 'Tadapenu' is the chief diety among the Kondh, deities. She has six sisters like 'Burapenu', 'Badipenu' 'Dimbuli', 'Sarmbuli', 'Kokali, and 'Bekali' and they are for different purposes. In any sort of festivals or rituals they are worshiped with blood and meat of lever portion. Apart from this 'Darani' is worshipped in sever allocations like 'Budeli', 'Kedu', 'Marangi', etc. The Kondhs believe that "Darani" -the earth Goddess presides over all the minor deities and stands as surety and security in their lives. They are very particular to worship 'Darani' on all occasions while worshipping the other deities.

#### **Forest God (Luhapenu) :**

This deity is worshipped by a special "Tlamba" at an interval of 7 years. In this festival villagers of Kanjamendi, Rajagara, Jurukupada, Dedimaha, Dimisingia, Sritiguda, Dudi-Pakia, Dagma, Lanjurama, Mundargaon, Jamba, Kudutuli, Join. As the 'tlamba' carries an iron rod symbolizing the god with him while going to perform the puja, the name of god is 'Luhapenu'. This puja is celebrated in the month of Baisakha (April and May) with a goat sacrifice and done in anticipation of safety from natural calamities.

Previously, the 'Tlamba' and his wife were remaining there for 7 days but now they are giving 7 clay vessels for each day to that hill and finally they worship. All the villagers gather there and dance merrily singing songs and beating drums. At first, the villagers of Kanjamendi settle a day and inform other villagers. This puja is observed at intervals when 'Luhapenu' attacks anybody.

#### **Raingod (Sashipenu)**

Kondhs worship 'Sashipenu' in order to get showers of rains they required. This deity is established by tribal's but worshiped by an Oriya from which the name is derived (Sashi- Oriya,Penu-god). They worship a 'Sal' tree as the symbol of 'Sashipenu' in every 7 years through a special *tlamba*.

#### **Fountain God (Sirupenu)**

The following fountains they worship at the time of Kedu festival, namely, 'Nabajirichua', 'Siselichua' and 'Bagalbanda chua'. They worship this fountain god with an egg in order to get pure water and to console the fountain god throughout

the whole year. Besides this, they also worship in certain death rituals like 'Aras Puja' (when aman killed by tiger) and in other ceremonies like marriage.

### **Field God (Gamberu penu or Patkhanda Devata)**

This festival is celebrated in the month of Chaitra. The Darani *tlamba* performs this puja as a puritan. Every year the Tlamba worships with some Arua rice and an egg. Except this if a person suffers due to 'Gamberupenu' then one goat or fowl is sacrificed. Previously, this God was in a thatched cottage but now no such house is there. I was told by my informants that many people are cured by propitiating this deity.

### **Household Gods (Dumadahani)**

This Kondhs have a strong belief that like other gods and goddesses the household gods are very powerful and require offerings. The deity is the ancestral god of Kondhs who is always associated with numerous spirits who acts like agents and keeps eye over the progress and prosperity of the family members of each house. During illness the house owner immediately performs the puja by offering rice and wine, etc.

*Salapenu* - The deity is worshipped in the month of Jaistha by the family elder. Fowl is sacrificed. 'Salapenu' is represented by 'Lingalipenu' which is the idols of yoke, buffalo, man, snake, elephant, etc. The deity brings different diseases to cattle.

*Sirpenu* - The Siripenu is the deity of kitchen room. Fowl is sacrificed along with rice and wine in the month of May and June in order to be saved from dangers. Old clay vessels of the kitchen are changed and the Kondhs add new vessels to their kitchen.

*Budelipenu*- This deity is worshipped in the month of Margsir (November - December ) by the 'Darani Tlamba'. The Gasi members unite and worship before cutting the paddy and other crops from the wet land. They perform 'Budeli Puja' to get good and sufficient crops. Pig is sacrificed with rice, wine, etc. The deity is re-presented by a stone and is placed in an open field under a jack tree.

*Nadiapenu*- In the month of 'Kartik', they worship 'Nadiapenu' the idol of Radha and Krishna, Rama, Siba, etc., to get more crops under the influence of Hindu tradition. Rice plantain and coconuts are offered near the Tulsi temple.

### **Malevolent Deities :**

*Burapenu*- This god is always angry with the people. He destroys the crops. The Daranitlamba worships this deity, sacrificing fowl and pig.

*Kubapenu* - 'Kubapenu' means the drought God. He is worshiped once in a year by the 'Darani Tlamba' in order to bring rain Fowl is sacrificed.

*Ajapanu* – This deity causes small-pox and is worshiped far away from the village. The Kedutlamba's mother worships it by sacrificing fowl or goat before this deity.

*Danda Penu* – This god causes pain in the belly, headache and muscular pains. Fowl, rice and wine are offered to this god by a 'Kutagatanju' - the shaman.

*Hadbai Penu* – This god destroys the whole dynasty if not properly propitiated. It is symbolized by a copper paise and a silver rupee. Goat and fowl are sacrificed before this god in order to please Him.

*Maulipenu* – Maulipenu is worshiped by an Oriya to save the family members. This type of puja is generally done at night in secret by sacrificing fowl and pig. The puja is performed for a sick person by offering pig, fowl, egg, wine, Arua rice, vermillion, ghee, turmeric – powder and a new clay vessel. The male members may either arrange a feast with the sacrificed animal or throw it away.

### **Religious Functionaries :**

Unlike the Hindus the Kondh functionaries from their own community worship in several occasions. Their posts are hereditary. The Kondhs believe that by worshipping benevolent deities there will be peace, progress, and prosperity not only to the individual but also to the entire community as a whole. They follow certain rites and rituals to appease the supernatural force to avert evil spell. Persons given these special nature of duties are called functionaries who enjoy high ranks in the society. They are of four kinds of such functionaries, viz (1) tlamba (the worshipper) the master of ritual and go-between of man and god. (2) Kutagatanju (the magician and Shaman). (3) Kutagatali (lady shaman) who cures the epidemic diseases by enjoying the intimate relationship with Gods. 4. Budda (the oldest man of the family) who worships home deities. There are 3 categories of 'tlambas' like 'Darani tlamba' who worships 'Darani', 'Kedu tlamba' who worships in 'Kedu' only and other 'tlambas' who worship deities like Luhapenu, Sasipenu, etc. All of them observe certain taboos throughout the year and also at the time of worshipping.

Previously, they were supplied with land instead of remuneration. But now-a-days they are all supplied with rice, wine, cloth and rupee accordingly to their nature of performance in various ceremonial occasions and rituals.

In all sorts of religious rites and rituals the concerned men contribute their amount and enjoy that day by singing and dancing, finally the functionaries take part in eating and drinking.

### **Economy of a Kondh Festival :**

I had an opportunity of witnessing the 'Salangilaka' of the Kondhs of Kanjamendi. The Kondhs are divided into many groups. They are distinguished from each other in their customs, tradition, languages and practices. Here the exact economic connotation of one of the ceremonies of the Kondhs is given below. It is

needless to point out that even in the twentieth century their customs and traditions remained as usual. Sometime their religion governs their economic life and is the cause of their misery and indebtedness. Some of them are converted in to Christianity leaving their traditions and some of them are on the way of Hinduisation. In fact the Kondh religion is in flux now.

I observed the “Salangilaka” of Manjiri Malik and Getua Pradhan of village Kanjamendi, the economy of which is mentioned below. Its purpose is to be free from all sorts of dangers. Fowl, wine and eggs are offered and Budda the old man of the family worships it.

Name of the festivals	Cost of animals	Cost of the food grains	Cost of wine	Miscellaneous	Total
“Salangilaka” Guhali Puja of Shri Manjiri Malik	Fowl 2 Rs. 4.50	Paddy, rice & cooked rice Rs. 7.00	Salap wine Rs.1.00	Eggs 2 Rs. 0.20 clay vessel Rs. 2.25	Rs. 14.95
Salangi Laka of Shri Getu Pradhan	Fowl 2 Rs. 4.00	Paddy, rice & cooked rice Rs. 5.75	Salap wine Rs. 1.50	Eggs 2 Rs. 0.20 clay vessel Rs. 2.50	Rs.13.75

#### **Salangilaka :**

It is observed twice in a year. The oldest man of the family worships it instead of a *tlamba* (Priest). They change their cooking vessel. One fowl is offered along with egg and wine near Salapenu the God of the cowshed. The worshipper observes fasting. The sacrificed meat is only taken by the males but the females are tabooed. Some people call their lineage (gasi) members to participate in the feast. While worshipping they keep ‘Darab’ the idols of buffalo, horse, elephant, snake, yoke and a plough man. Fowl, egg, wine, Siali leaves, Bahada (fruit) and raw rice are also required.

Purpose – Their main purpose is that no danger will come to them, the wild animals would not attack their cattle and the ancestors would not cause any disease when they are properly propitiated. Another fowl is sacrificed in the kitchen to the ancestors and the meat is taken by the females only. This puja is called “Takingalaka”. On that day they are tabooed to do any sort of work.

#### **Social Significance :**

Each of these Kondh deities has got certain important social significance for which these religious festivals and rituals are observed. The Kondhs have a strong belief that the ancestral estate on which rice is grown, the ploughing, sowing, transplanting and harvesting of the crop, the basket in which paddy is stored and the measures used for measuring paddy all require ritual attention. It

may be recalled that the Kondh continues to take an interest in his family affairs even after his death on which the prosperity and happiness of the family and indirectly of the total society depends. At the time of harvesting, they celebrate "Budelipuja" which is followed by a collective sacrifice and dinner of the entire 'Gasi' members.

On the last day of their harvesting the 'Gasi' members celebrate "Ketalaka Puja" expressing a desire for plenty. According to R.Firth "Life in a community means organization of the interest of individuals regulations of their behavior towards one another and grouping of them together for common action. The relationship thus created between them can be seen to have some kind of plan or system which may be called the social structure".

It goes without saying that religion binds them together in several occasions like 'Salangilaka', Nuakhai festival, marriage and death, and finally in 'Sashipenu' and Adajala puja, in family, Gasi, village and Mutha level. So religion is binding force amongst individuals and it contributes to the existence of society as an ordered and continuing system of relationships amongst human beings.

Hence it is seen practically that religion binds them together in various festivals and rituals as a force of social control in family, Gasi, village and Mutha level. "In brief we can conclude that in all ages men have hoped that by the proper performance of religious action or observances they would obtain some specific benefit, health and long life, children to carry on their line, material well-being, success in hunting rain, the growth of crops and the multiplication of cattle, victory in war, admission of their souls after death to a paradise, or inversely release by the extinction of personality from the round of reincarnation". (The Henery Myers lecture, 1945)\*

### Literature Cited

1. Anthropology on the March. 344-45
2. The Henery Myers Lecture, 1945
3. Economy of a Saora ceremony by N. Das & B. Choudhury Vanyajati, Vol. XII, No. 1, January, 1964.
4. Religion and society among the Coorgs of South India by M. N. Srinivas.



# A TRIBAL DASSARAH IN ORISSA \*

*B. B. Moharana*<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction :**

This paper is the product of my empirical field data collected through interview and participant observation. In spite of the chances of socio-cultural mobility due to direct influence of Hindu and Christian religious life in its neighborhood, the people of Balakupa which constitutes predominantly the Kondhs, in the Phulbani P.S. of Boudh -Kondhmal district, have still preserved their traditional religious life unaffected by such external forces. In the present discussion, it is intended to touch upon the socio-religious significance of the deity Barala Devi in connection with the welfare of the people during crises and natural calamities through animal sacrifice during *dassarah* each year.

Alike civilized people, these Kondhs also realize that there is a superior power which always directs human life and course of nature. It is supernatural and beyond human control. So a submission, devotion and reverence are made towards such power. All such beliefs, faiths and practices relating to this absolute power on which humans depend constitute their religion. The propitiation of the deity Barala Devi, an incarnation of Durga, by sacrificing animals during *dassarh* each year, is a Hindu social rite which aims at restoring peace and good social life. This deity was first installed by then king of Boudh, but the Kondhs, in course of time, started propitiating Her as their local deity, following their traditional religious practices and procedures on the ninth lunar day in the bright fortnight of Ashwin (Sept - Oct.) each year.

Its history provides interesting and curious information regarding the placement of this deity.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVI No.2, THRTI, Bhubaneswar 1986, pp.11-14

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer in Anthropology, Dharanidhar College, Keonjhar, Orissa.

## History

This deity was brought by Gandhamardan Deb, the then king of Boudh Feudatory State who, according to Completion Report of the Boudh Settlement of 1907, continued on throne from 403 to 470*sakabda*, i.e. about 481 to 548 A.D. The whole of present Boudh-Kondhmal district excepting the Balliguda subdivision, and some parts of Puri, Ganjam, and Dhenkanal districts were under the direct control of the Boudh State. The king Gandhamardan Deb wanted to place the deity, which was originally placed in Khemundi State, at present in Ganjam district, in his own State. So he declared war against the king of Khemundi but was defeated. It was a great shock to him and so he ultimately prayed to that deity for days together to favour him when his resources failed him. Finally he dreamt that the deity would accompany him on condition that human sacrifice would be provided every year. Out of joy and pleasure, the king solemnly accepted the demand of the deity. Thus he declared another war and this time the king of Khemundi was defeated. The king of Boudh then returned with the deity. On the way in order to satisfy himself that the supernatural power was following him he halted at Bandhaguda village and made an experiment.

He prepared frame work of a sheep by means of iron rods and sacrificed that sheep by a piece to straw. But he was surprised to see that natural blood flowed down as if a live-sheep was sacrificed. Now he satisfied himself and developed belief in the said power. While returning to his State, the deity was first kept in the village Baikupa, 4 to 5 miles from Balaskupa. One day the king made a hunting expedition with his faithful dog. On the threshold of the village Balaskupa there was a small hill from which a rabbit came forward and attacked the dog. This incident discouraged the king to proceed further on hunting and ultimately an impression came to his mind that probably this soil was more fertile and it might have some supernatural effect. So he made a shrine for the deity at Balaskupa and the duty of worshipping was assigned to a Brahman. But the deity was not satisfied with the Brahman priest's worship and so the king appointed a Mali from Dasapalla who also fled away with the sacred sword of the king kept by the side of the deity and handed it over to the king of Dasapalla. However, that sword was not brought back and the duty of worshipping the deity was then assigned to the Dehury, a local Kondh with allocation of some land towards his services. This post of Dehury became a hereditary one.

In each year human sacrifices, at least one head, were made before the deity, arranged by the successive kings. In 1845, the Act for Suppression of Meriah Sacrifices in the hill tracts of Orissa being Act XI of 1845 was passed whereby Boudh, Dasapalla, and some other feudatory States were placed under the direct charge of the Agent appointed by the Governor-General-in-Council for the suppression of human sacrifices prevailing at the time. In spite of enforcement of the Act in 1845, this inhuman practice continued to prevail till 1852 and in 1853 or 1854, while the above agency was still at work, one Chakra Besoi raised a rebellion in Ghumsur (Ganjam) in the interest of the deposed Raja family there, and upon its

suppression he took shelter with Kondhs in the southern hill tracts of Boudh. From his safe and inaccessible retreat in the Kondhmals, he continued to commit depredation in the adjoining Ghumsur State and also in some parts of Dasapalla and Nayagarh. However in the year 1855, the Boudh State was replaced in charge of the Tributary Mahals of Orissa and Mr. Samuells was appointed as the first superintendent. During that period, the practice of human sacrifice was completely abandoned and instead, the practices of sacrifice of animals like buffaloes, pigs, goats, fowls, etc., has been continued till the present date.

### Structure

The structure of this area, because of its significance, precedes a study of its organization. The site is marked by a thatched hall opening in three sides and stationed a little above the ground at the centre of the village, completely encircled by a number of mango and jackfruit trees. Inside the house, in one corner, the deity is seated on a plain, rectangular, cemented altar. At the foot of house and in front of the deity is a small square platform bounded by a cemented compound wall which encloses a sacred wooden pole, called Chhata khuntia that suspends from out of the soil. This pole represents the image of the deity and its function is more significant during *dassarah*. Attached to this bounded platform, towards its right, another space of about 1,000 square feet is protected by concrete fencing in which the ritual sacrifices are made during *dassarah*. A number of wooden poles also stand on this area where the to be scarified animals are kept tied down till the sacrifices are over.

### Organisation

Animal sacrifice is the usual practice that makes the temple conspicuous by its frequency and the long term process which is undertaken in order to render the animals worthy of sacrifices. Such a sacrifice can be made any day but the buffalo sacrifice is made on the day before fortnight of Ashwin (Sep-Oct.). This is observed once in a year when 8 to 10 buffaloes are sacrificed at a time. The various stages of religious practices in honour of deity Barala Devi that precede the actual performance of sacrifice are curious.

The persons who desire to offer buffaloes, purchase young and immature buffaloes and domesticate them for 3 to 4 years. At the outset the buffaloes are made to drink a drop of holy water from the deity so that they would be tamed and shorn off their aggressiveness and ferociousness. Thus these buffaloes are being treated not as ordinary buffaloes but as the representative of the deity, and so the supply of food and shelter is provided without any kind of torture either by the master or by the fellow villagers. Besides, these buffaloes are also considered to be aware of being destined to be sacrificed by the said supernatural power.

The year in which the buffaloes are to be sacrificed is decided by their masters and accordingly the masters from different villages intimate the priest, i.e. Dehury, on the day of first eating ceremony, i.e. *nuakhai*. Now a list of such

persons with their villages is prepared by the priest and instructions are given to the Goudas (local milkmen who are assigned the duty of bringing the buffaloes from the intending persons to the spot) to fetch the buffaloes to the spot before the day of sacrifice. There are eight such Goudas in the village whose posts are hereditary.

### **Religious procedure**

The religious procedures, associated with the performance of the sacrifices, are very extended and it is painful to witness the occasion.

The buffaloes are placed before the deity on the morning of Navami with their masters. Each buffalo is decorated with a piece of red cloth at its trunk region and a garland around its neck. Soon after the buffaloes reach the spot, the priest starts worshipping the deity in order to make Her aware of the fact. In the evening, at about 6 P.M another Puja starts at the Chhatakhunta in presence of the persons assigned with the duty of slaughtering the animals, who are called Bahuka. They belong to one family the members of which associate together to perform the duty, and their posts are hereditary. When the Puja starts, the Bahukas stand attentively raising their right hands up with their axes. The Puja continues for thirty minutes and the Puja materials are mainly vermilion and incense sticks. All these are completed by 7 P.M and then the final part of the ritual, buffalo sacrifice, starts.

All the buffaloes are tied down by ropes in separate wooden poles inside the enclosed space meant for them. Then the two Bahukas with their axes, the priest, the masters of the buffaloes, two village elite who carry the petromax light to make the area lighted, four local musicians and two or three policemen enter into the space. The spectators stand outside the space and witness the scene. The area is enchanted by the melodious and shivering sounds produced by the beating of drums and *changu*. When a buffalo is ready to be scarified, the music gathers momentum and the priest utters some religious mantras. Now the rope of the buffalo is lied down tightly and the buffalo is kept in such a position that the fore-limbs and hind-limbs are in a half-bent position. Then a red cotton thread is joined between the horn of the buffalo and the Chhatakhunta. The Bahukas stand on opposite sides of the animal's head with their axes raised. When the duty of the priest is over, the two Bahukas start slaughtering the head and within no time the head of the animal is sliced off the body. The use of the cotton thread has some religious significance in the sense that the tread acts as a medium through which the deity receives the blood of the sacrificed animal. In this manner all the buffaloes are sacrificed one after another.

### **Socio-religious significance**

After the abolition of the practice of human sacrifice, these sacrifices are arranged voluntarily accordingly to the choice of the people who desire to offer sacrifices. Usually offers of animal sacrifice in the name of the deity are declared when anybody suffers from crises and calamities, with a view to getting relief

from them by the grace of the deity. When a person realizes the divine power of the deity in the dream, then only he comes forward and informs the priest to offer an animal to be sacrificed.

This socio-religious occasion also introduces an element of social-tie; the people link together not only within the same village but also between one village and another, and moreover social solidarity is enhanced as a result of such ritual activities. As a vast number of people gather from different villages, it serves as a get together in which people meet and exchange words with one another. No doubt, it is an inter-ethnic function but the tribal influence is more active and the tribal visitors are more in number. Even though the religious part ends by 9 P.M, the ceremony continues till morning. Males and females of different villages get chance to spend a free and pleasant night, and moreover, it sometimes serves as a centre of selection of marriage partners.

### Conclusion

Animal sacrifice, as a common practice of offering to Durga during *dassarah*, is found everywhere in the Hindu temples. This tradition has also been continuing among these Kondhs. That whether the tribals have borrowed the practice of animal sacrifice from the Hindus or vice versa is not the point of relevance for this paper. But what is significant is that it is a practice which is common to both tribal and non-tribal communities and it is through such commonalities an intimate understanding among various diverse groups of people is established for mutual benefit and emotional integration with one another.

### References

- |                  |      |   |
|------------------|------|---|
| Das, A           | 1969 | <i>Meriah</i>   |
| Horton, H.F      | 1960 | <i>A Definition of Religion and its Uses</i> , Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute         |
| Seymour, S. (ed) | 1980 | <i>The Transformation of a Sacred Town</i> ;;, Bhubaneswar, India, Colorado, West View Press Inc. |
| Turner, V.W      | 1977 | <i>The Ritual Process : Structure and Anti-Structure</i> , Aldine Chicago Press                   |
| Wallace, F.C     | 1966 | <i>Religion : An Anthropological View</i> , New York : Random House.                              |
| Govt. of Orissa  | 1964 | Completion Report of The Boudh Settlement of 1907   |

# TRIBAL DUSSERA IN KANDHAMAL \*

*Trilochan Sahoo*<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract:**

*A gigantic gathering of tribal and non-tribal people in Kandhamal, the habitat of the Kandha tribe, celebrate Dussera festival at select places in traditional joviality and universality. In the past the king being the chief patron of the cultic practice induced the tribal denizens of his kingdom to observe it for the wellbeing of the people and the kingdom. At the same time, the administration in the past, through these ritual means, was being facilitated in the kingdom. The Kandhas of six mutha of Kandhamal play a pivotal role in the celebration of the grand ritual of Durga puja following the tribal tradition over generations. The mode of worship of Baral Devi, the main deity of the locality, bears a tribal motif involving large scale animal sacrifice blended with semi-Vedic tradition wherein the religious functionaries from six mutha act as the main priest. The historical installation of Durga in iconic form at Balaskumpa and other places of Kandhamal by the king and the fixing of Chhat khamba, resembling the Stambeswari or Khambeswari as insignia of Goddess Durga at different Kandha villages confirm the acceptance of each other's ritual elements. The paper is based on empirical observation of Dussera festival at Balaskumpa, Phulbani Sahi and adjoining Kandha villages in and around Phulbani town during October 2002. This is a tailored transformation of my article entitled "Dussera in Tribal Orissa: State's Representation in Enlivening Local Traditions" which was published in Banaja, 2007, ATDC/now ATLC, Bhubaneswar.*

## **Tribal Dussera in Orissa:**

The tribal communities like Bagata, Banjara, Bathudi, Bhotoda, Binjhia, Birhor, Chuktia Bhunjia, Gadaba, Hill Kharia, Kavar, Kisan, Kol lohara, Konda Dora, Kandha, Kora, Koya, Mankirdia and Munda observe Dussera in their own ways. During the festivals they mostly worship their respective village deities and sacrifice animals and birds to please the supernatural. Exceptionally, the Banjara tribe only invites the Brahmin priest for conducting the worship during Dussera.

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXVIII, No.2, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2008, pp.55-61

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

The other tribes do the priestly job themselves. The Chuktia Bhunjia of Sonabera Plateau in Nuapada district and the Kandha of Kandhamal district have a tribal tradition of elaborate Dussera Puja, wherein the pure Vedic rites are conspicuous by absence. In the other words the areas where the tribals are found scattered, the caste Hindus organize and observe universal Dussera festival in pure Vedic form and the Hinduised local tribals participate in it with devotion for the Mother Goddess and obligations to their Hindu neighbours. In Jeypore, the city of victory (in Koraput district) and the Kandhamal district- the mountainous habitat of the Kandhas, the tribals observe the Dussera festival in their own distinct tribal religious traditions. There, the rituals significantly symbolize the past politico-religious affinity between the kings and the tribals.

Jeypore town continues to be the center of tribal Dussera in Southern Orissa. The tribal chiefs and the priests belonging to the tribes like, Omanatya, Bhotara, Bhumiya, Bonda, Didayi, Durua, Gadaba, Gond, Kandha, Koya, Paraja, Saora, etc. who inhabit different localities of the erstwhile Jeypore kingdom used to carry scores of holy bamboo clubs, '*Lathis*' and materials, like rice, *dal*, ghee, vegetables, honey as a gift to the king and arrive at Jeypore palace within the sound of traditional ceremonial music playing *toories*, *birkahali*, *nagara* and tribal dances to pay obeisance to Goddess Durga on *Astami* day of Dussera and to pay respect and show allegiance to the king. In the past the tribal chiefs and village headmen were being ceremonially honoured by the king during Dussera by way of tying headgears (*saris/pagadis*). After abolition of princely states, remembering the past tradition, now the District Administration as well as the *Puja* Committees play host to tribal priests and chiefs of the region and felicitate them with headgears and costumes. From the palace Goddess Kanank Durga is carried in a grand procession known as *patuara*. The tribal musicians, dancers, tribal chiefs and priests in their traditional attire holding '*Lathis*' (bamboo clubs as representatives of village Goddesses) gather on the ground near the Banko Matha. Arrangements are made to keep their holy '*Lathis*' at one special pandal till the rituals are complete. The rituals continue the whole night along with the archery competition and tribal dances. It is believed by the tribals that the holy '*Lathis*' are the incarnation of the Goddess Durga and worshipping Her brings prosperity round the year. The unique tradition is being continued and a crowd of tribal devotees from different areas of Umerkote, Nabarangpur, Boipariguda, Kotpad, and Lamtaput come to Jeypore and offer special prayer to their sacred *Lathis*. They sacrifice a large number of animals to appease the deity. Of the two famous Dussera feasts in tribal Orissa, one at Kandhamal and another at Jaypore, the author had the opportunity to participate in the tribal Dussera at Balaskumpa in Kandhamal district during the year 2001, the observations of which are presented below.

#### **Tribal Dussera at Balaskumpa:**

Balaskumpa village is a famous place of historical, religious and tourist interest in the district of Kandhamal. It is 15 km away from the Phulbani town, the

Kandhamal district headquarters. Dussera festival at Balaskumpa is famous for all the people of Kandhamal. The Kandhas as well as other caste Hindus are worshipping Goddess Durga in the name of *Maa Baral Devi* here since time immemorial. Her old name was *Bada Raul*. In course of time the name was changed to *Baral Devi*. The etymological meaning of *Barali* is *Bara* (boon) and *Ali* (to beg). If any devotee asks the Mother to fulfill his/her desire, She grants the boon and therefore She is known as *Baral Devi*. She is the presiding deity of Kandhamal. The village Balaskumpa has no Kandha population but it has great historic and religious significance for the Kandha tribe as a whole.

Balaskumpa is situated at the holy confluence called Duimuhani of Sanjur and a small stream, which later form the river Pila-Salunki. There lies the abode of deity, *Baral Devi* and *Khambeswari*. The King of Boudh had a *garh* (fort) palace at Balaskumpa that is close to the bank of the confluence. Adjoining to the collapsed palace there is an open-air shrine of *Khambeswari* and *Maheswari* beneath a big banyan tree and a *jari* tree. Both the deities have been installed in shape of stone poles and worshiped on the eve of *Dussera*.

Legend says; long ago the territory of Kandhamal was under the king of Boudh. Then Boudh was the neighbouring kingdom of Khemundi, which included Saranggarh, Nuagaon, Balliguda and Mahasingh, and the latter was the capital of Khemundi state. *Bada Rauli Devi* was the presiding deity of Mahasingh. Both the kings fought each other for twelve years. The king of Boudh prayed *Bada Rauli Devi*, appeased Her and due to Her grace won the battle. The Kandha soldiers participated in the battle. In the aftermath of the victory of Mahasingh Garh of Khemundi, the Boudh king- Gandhamardan accompanied by his Kandha soldiers returned bringing the deity, *Bada Rauli Devi* with him. In course of his return journey the king and the Kandha soldiers made night halts at Balaskumpa, Purunakataka and at last, reached at Bandhagah. In all these places of their night halts, the deity was installed and worshipped by the King and the Kandhas.

The king of Boudh finally installed *Bada Rauli Devi* who was later known as *Baral Devi* at Balaskumpa after his victory of Khemundi because he found the place auspicious for the purpose. He made this decision after witnessing a queer incident at that place during his return journey. He noticed that a weak animal like hare chased a strong animal - a wild dog and drove it out from the place. Since then at Balaskumpa the deity was named as *Baral Devi* and is being worshipped by the Kandhas of Kandhamal. The Kandhas of six *mutha* had built *Gudighara* (the shrine of Baral Devi) at Balaskumpa village and had taken the management of the shrine and the worship of Devi since the time of Boudh King. Besides, the king had also installed his presiding deity *Stambeswari* in that place who was also called *Khambeswari* later.

*Baral Devi* temple is surrounded by shrines of *Khambeswari* in the west, *Bauri* in the east, *Pitabali* and *Naraghanta* in the north and *Sarupenu* (*Nagalkuda*) in the south. The *Baral Devi* temple premises are a complex of shrines like open air shrine



of *Khambeswari* and *Laxmi* in the front of the main temple and Shiva temple to its side. Besides, recently the construction of a new *Laxmi - Narayan* temple has been done after obtaining the consent of the Kandhas. As a matter of routine annual Dussera is observed on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Oriya month of Aswin (September/October) at Balaskumpa in the premises of *Baral Devi* temple. Observance of Dussera by the Kandhas centers round both the deities, *Baral Devi* and *Khambeswari*.

The specialty of Dussera *puja* at Balaskumpa is that goddess *Stambheswari*, in the form of a wooden pillar, is worshipped along with *Baral Devi* as Durga in the same temple premises as well as at the *Khambheswari* and *Maheeswari* shrines located near the configuration of the Pilasalunki river. They might have been worshipped separately for a long time but from a certain period onwards they are united and worshipped together. It is likely, though not certain, that this act of bringing these deities together has been worked out by some king due to politico-religious reasons (Tripathi: 1978:195). Since the time of Boudh king, the Kandhas of six *muthas* had been thatching the *Barala Devi* shrine (*Gudighar*), worshiping the deity and managing the rituals. About 25 years ago a new pucca temple replaced the old structure by public contribution and especially by the concerted efforts of the Kandhas of six *muthas*.

At present there are the images of *Khambeswari* and *Maheeswari* in the form of a small stone pole fixed to the ground in the arena. The *Khambeswari*'s open shrine is outside the *Baral Devi* temple premises at Balaskumpa whereas in the temple premises beneath the platform of the temple front stands a wooden pillar of about one meter high presiding over the giant posts meant for the buffalo sacrifices. The wooden pole retains its aboriginal character but the small stone poles represent the Aryanised form. In front of the *Pitabali* shrines at the nearby villages namely, Kaladi, Adapaju and Ghodapathar, the presence of *Khambeswari* resemble the form of *Khambeswari* in the *Baral Devi* temple complex. At all the places Goddess, *Khambeswari* has been kept in open space inside the stonewall boundary. The same is the pattern of the shrines of Kandha deities like *Pitabali*, *Basengi*, *Lachhama*, *Baral Devi*, *Turkipenu*, *Sarupenu* etc.

The image of *Baral Devi* seems to be a simple stone having a shape of disk like head and anthropomorphized by slightly carved nose, mouth, three eyes and a protruding tongue made of golden metal. Her face is painted red with a thick layer of vermilion paste. She is adorned with silk saree and flower garlands and ornaments. Her body and limbs are not seen. Her image gives the impression of Hindu goddess Durga. The temple structure resembles a Hindu temple in southern Orissa. The inner sidewalls of the temple have been painted with icons of Hindu gods and goddesses, like Nabagraha, Durga, Shiva, Krushna, Brahma, Bishnu, Shiva etc.

There is a tradition that during Dussera, i.e, on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the bright fortnight of Oriya month of Aswina every year, and in every Tuesday the goddess *Baral Devi* along with *Khambeswari* is worshipped by the Kandhas of six *muthas*. The

idol of *Baral Devi*, installed at Phulbanisahi and Ghodapathar village is also worshipped by the Kandhas on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> day respectively.

As the tradition goes, *prashad* and articles of worship for *Baral Devi* come from different parts of Kandhamal during Dussera festival. Resin from Gochhapada and Baindapada areas, earthen pots from Phulbani, milk, ghee, rice and bucks from Baitha and other areas come for the worship of *Baral Devi*. It is believed that if any devotee offers sacrifices and desires something, *Maa Baral Devi* grants the boon. So devotees from different parts of Kandhamal and even beyond the area offer sacrifice of bucks on Tuesday and on the eve of Dussera. Here people do not believe that animal sacrifice before *Baral Devi* is a superstition. *Devi* hears the prayer of the devotees and grants boon for safety from danger, cure from sickness and the like. Wine and animal sacrifices are two important items of *puja*. The other articles are rice, puffed paddy smeared with molasses, incense sticks, flowers, vermilion, turmeric powder, milk, resin, fruits like coconuts, oranges, apples, *bel* leaves etc. The non-tribal priest (*Dehuri*) of the deity is from the Sudha caste who is assisted by a *Dahuka* from Keuta caste. Here *puja* is performed according to the tribal custom.

As observed, the *Baral Devi* was not worshipped alone; her worship was immediately followed by the worship of deities like *Khambeswari*, *Laxmi* etc. Before the worship of *Baral Devi* the Kandha priest invoked the deities (*abahana*) of the surrounding areas. In the Bara, the day preceding the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Dussera, the Sudha *Dehuri* worshiped the swords inside the *Kamnakudi* and in the next day the swords were brought into the *Baral Devi* temple for the worship. The swords and pickaxe which were usually kept at the residence of the Sudha *Dehuri* and *Dahuka* were invited and brought on the priest's head to the temple in a procession of Sudha *Dehuri*, *Dahuka*, Kandha chiefs of six *muthas* and other people including the Kandhas and non-tribals. The *sankirtan mandali*, Pana drummers and other people played musical instruments like conch, *murdanga*, *jhanja*, *turi* and sang devotional songs amidst the Hindu holy chorus like *haribol* from male folk and *hulahuli* from female folk. The oilman carried oil lamp (kept burning uninterruptedly) ahead the *prashad* and battle-axe carriers. The cowherds played their club tricks. After the procession reached the temple the worship started in presence of the image of *Baral Devi* inside the temple. The deities were washed with water and milk (*snana*), clothed in new saree (*vastra*) and then adorned with vermilion paste (*sindura*), flowers (*puspa*), incense (*dhupa*), lamp (*deepa*), food (*naivedya/prashad*) etc. At last the *Dehuri* bowed before the deity (*vandana*) and uttered verses (*mantra*) to appease her. Other devotees, the Kandha, Sudha, Bahera etc. followed *Dehuri* to communicate the blessings of the deity. A giant lamp fortified with *karpura* was brought out of the *sanctum sanctorum* and its flame was offered to other devotees. The Panas played drums throughout the worship of the deities.

In both the *pujas* the Kandhas from six *muthas* were given priority to conduct the 1<sup>st</sup> *vandapana* of the deities. After that the animal sacrifice started on the ground in front of the temple. Like *vandapana* all the Kandhas of six *muthas*

performed the first animal sacrifice. It is a custom since king's time. As many as 19 goats were first scarified and the blood offered to the deity. Two *Dahuaks* sacrificed the animals using battle-axes. After each sacrifice the head and blood of the animal collected in big copper disk and leaf cup were brought to the *sanctum sanctorum* of *Baral Devi* and the beheaded bodies of all the sacrificed animals brought to the arena of *Khambeswari*. A *Dahuka* cut out the liver of each scarified animal put it in a cup and offered the same to the deity. In the past the kings were offering buffaloes for sacrifice before the deity. This practice has been stopped since 1999 and the Kandhas have accepted it. There was no sacrifice of buffaloes during Dussera in the year 2002 at Balaskumpa. The sacrifice offered to *Baral Devi* differs from the Vedic form of sacrifice. But there were animal sacrifices before the deity on the day after the worship on 9<sup>th</sup> day, which was not a Tuesday. This explains that regularity in the performance of ritual is much less important to Kandha religion than to Hinduism which was seen in the scarifices offered at times of need and at intervals near the symbol of deities.

Day after the ritual of sacrifices the sacrificed meat (*bhoga*) was distributed among the Kandhas of all the *muthas* in Kandhmal. Even the *bhoga* is now being distributed to different Government offices. People from all walks of life; Govt. service holders, businessmen, contractors etc. had contributed for the construction of *Baral Devi* temple at Balaskumpa. Besides, construction of *Laxminaryan* temple inside the temple premises of goddess *Baral Devi* has been completed with the financial contributions of the devotees, mainly the Hindus caste people. This shows that the elements of Hinduization and kingly elements have been incorporated into the aboriginal religious cult of Kandhas.

According to the custom, the Kandhas of the six *muthas* offer *Bhetis* (presentations) to their *Mutha Sardar* as a token of respect during Dussera. It is the duty of the *Mutha Sardar* that he should collect *dakhina* (money to be spent for worship of *Baral Devi*) from all the Kandha families and send the same to *Dalabehera*. Besides *Dehuri*, some other servitors who belong to Sudha caste are also appointed at the shrine, viz, *Bisoi* to cook the offerings, *Naik* to watch the shrine and *Dalabeheras* to summon the Kandha Sardars. The Kandhas are looked upon as the owner of the Baral Devi Temple. Thus the first offerings to the goddess are made by the Kandha Sardars of six *muthas*.

### **Tribal Dussera in Kandha villages:**

Thakurani *puja* at the Kandha countryside refers to worship of *Baral Devi* during the months of Magha (January–Feb) and Aswin (Sept.–Oct.) The object of the worship is to protect the human and domestic cattle population from the attack of wild animals and epidemics. The villagers sit together and decide the time for a two-day ritual of goddess *Baral Devi*. Day preceding the day of sacrifice is called *bara* and on that day *Chhatakhamba* (wooden pillar), the symbol of goddess Baral, is fixed on the sacrifice ground. There the *Dehuri* performs worship with the *bel*

leaves, smears turmeric and sprinkles *arua* rice. The villagers offer milk to the pillar goddess. The Panos, beat drums during the performance. Next day, *Bhoga*, fried rice smeared with molasses (*muan*) are offered to the deity and water is poured on the base of the pillar goddess. The ritual ends with sacrifice of two he goats and/or buffaloes. The *Dakua* executes the sacrifices. Here the *Chhatkhamba* resembles the *Stambheswari* or *Khambheswari* and regarded as the *Chalanti Devi* (the movable deity)

### **Renaissance of Religion of Kandha Tribe and Caste Hindus:**

There is a saying in Oriya, '*Rajanugata Dharma*' which means the citizen/subjects follow the king's religion. In the past the kings and *zamindars* ruled the territory of Kandhamal. Then the religious faiths and mode of worship had influenced to a great extent the people of Kandhamal in general and the numerically dominant Kandhas in particular. During the king's sway the Kandhas had compromised their religion with induction of ingredient of Hindu religion. With much reverence to their own religion they continued to assimilate the Hindu religious faiths. Therefore, now the religious tradition of the Kandhamal seems to be a renaissance of primitive, ancient, and modern religious beliefs.

"The Aryan invaders who had settled amidst the tribes in course of time adopted and worshipped these goddesses in order to enjoy the confidence and seek the co-operation of the latter in their settlements. So much so gradually these goddess were Aryanised and Hinduised being transformed from a formidable nomadic or tribal cult into *sakti* cult and worshipped both by the Aryan and the non-Aryan sections of the society" Stambeswari was originally a tribal deity. In the Kandhamal region the Hindu Kings adopted Stambeswari as the presiding deity for protection, safety and expansion of their kingdoms. They had done so on religio-political ground. The Kings of Bhanja dynasty in Khinjali Mandal (including Kandhamal) during 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century were the devotees of Stambeswari (Rath: 1918: 133-136). The historical records refer to Kandhas worshipping Stambeswari. In the western Orissa there is worship of wooden pillar goddess (Stambeswari). The Kandhas of Kalahandi, Sonepur and Boudh worshiped Stambha and Stambheswari (Sadananda: 1989:96).

The Aryan ruling dynasty started this process of transformation by establishing kingdom of their own over the tribals of Kandhamal. Further from the military point of view the services of the brave tribals were essential for the defence of the kingdom. Thus the Aryan kings always sought the support and loyalty of the Kandhas and kept them in good humor by a gradual process of inclusion of the Kandhas into the Hindu religious fold by adoption and absorption of some elements of Kandha religion. For example, they Aryanised and patronized the tribal goddesses as their family or tutelary deity which enabled them to sustain and stabilize their political power and its legitimization in the Kandhamal. In course of time, under the royal patronage, Stambeswari, the deity of Kandhas has been revered as the deity of Hindus. Being unanthropomatric, the wooden pillar goddess is the revelation of power and owes its name from Sanskrit as '*Stambheswari*' or

'Khambeswari.' Stambheswari is being worshipped in the tradition of *sakti* tantric cult. Thus Stambheswari is the ancient *sakta* cult deity of Orissa (Sahoo, 1977: 347).

### Conclusion:

In the course of history the Kandha kingdom was lost and the reign of king in Kandhamal superseded. But till today there, the *Rajanugata Dharma* stands intact and very much in practice. The observation of Dussera at Balaskumpa is an exemplary event. The Hindus consider every confluence of the rivers and streams as a holy place. Selection of the seat of *Baral Devi* shrine by the king at the bank of the confluence at Balaskumpa and the installation of the deity there and Her identification as Durga carry the great tradition of *Sakti* Cult. The *Shakti* Cult has been a significant aspect of religious beliefs of the people of Kandhamal, the tribals and the non-tribals alike. In addition to their own religious practices, the Kandha of Kandhamal have a strong devotional attachment to *Maa Baral Devi*. Generations together, the renaissance of religion of Kandha tribe and caste Hindus has been a solace for the peaceful life and living of the tribal and non-tribal in Kandhamal. May Maa Baral Devi's blessings help sustain the peaceful life for all in Kandhamal.

### References

1. Eschmann, A. 1978: "Hinduization of Tribal Deities in Orissa: the Sakta and Saiva Typology", *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, Manohar Publication, New Delhi, (ed. by A. Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathy), P- 81.
2. Eschmann, A., H. Kulke and G.C. Tripathy 1978: "The Formation of the Jagannath, Triad", *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, Manohar Publication, New Delhi, (ed. A. Eschmann, Kulke & Tripathy), P. 195.
3. Konhra, D. 1997: "Debeepeetha Balaskumpa", *Smaranika, Kandhamal Mahostaba* (in Oriya), pp.43, 44.
4. Mishra, A. C. 1997: "Kandhamalara Dharmika Parampara", *Smaranika, Kandhamal Mahosthaba* (in Oriya), pp.17, 19.
5. Mallik, K.C. 1997: "Prachina Itihasre Kandhamal", *Smaranika, Kandhamal Mahosthaba* (in Oriya), pp.1-10., (c.f T.C., Rath, 1918: *Utkal Sahitya*, 31<sup>st</sup> year, pp.133-136), p-10, (c.f., N.K. Sahu. 1977: *Oriya Jatira Itihas*, p.347.
6. Sahoo, T. 2007: "Dussera in Tribal Orissa: State's representation in Enlivening Local Traditions", Banaja 2007, ATDC, ST&SC Dept., Orissa, pp. 64-73.

# INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE OF SHIFTING CULTIVATION: OBSERVATIONS ON THREE PRIMITIVE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN ODISHA\*

*P. Samantray*<sup>1</sup>

*S. S. Mohanty*<sup>2</sup>

*P. Patel*<sup>3</sup>

*M. K. Jena*<sup>4</sup>

## Abstract

*Shifting cultivation in the traditional manner is highly diversified; it is more stable and reliable for the farmer than specialized cultivation. Economic self-sufficiency protects ecological integrity and viability in ways more important than simply maintaining diversity. The survival is contingent upon maintenance, rather than the exploitation of the larger community of which they know themselves to be only parts. In short traditional shifting cultivation is a system which is well adapted to the tropical forest environment; it helps maintain the biological diversity of the forest and often provides significant benefit to wildlife population. The maintenance of such system is of considerable importance to modern form of development.*

*The shifting cultivation is operative chiefly in the regions where more technologically advanced system of agriculture have not become economically or culturally possible*

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXXIII, Nos.1&2, SCSTRTI, 2013, pp.100-111

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Academy of Tribal Languages & Culture (pollyshreesam@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Research Scholar, Academy of Tribal Languages & Culture (ATLC)  
(sushree.s.mohanty@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Research Officer, Academy of Tribal Languages & Culture (atlcbsr\_08@yahoo.com)

<sup>4</sup> Manager, Foundation for Ecological Security, Gautam Nagar, Koraput  
(drmiirkumar@yahoo.co.in)

*or in regions where the land has not yet been appropriated by people with greater political or cultural power. It is destructive of natural resources when operated inefficiently and not inherently destructive than other systems of agriculture when these are operated inefficiently. It is also considered a residual system of agriculture largely replaced by other systems except where retention or practice is expedient.*

*The authors in this paper have made an attempt to explore the indigenous knowledge and traditional knowledge by trying to understand the community perceptions relating to shifting cultivation. The authors have analyzed the community perceptions on a conceptual and theoretical understanding of indigenous knowledge. In this attempt the authors have studied three Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs), namely, Dongaria Kondh (Bissam cuttack Block), Kutia Kondh (Tumudibandh Block) and Lanjia Saora (Gunupur Block) in southern Odisha for whom shifting cultivation is a way of life.*

**Key words:** Shifting cultivation, swiddening, indigenous knowledge, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

## **Introduction**

Odisha is home to 62 tribal communities who are at different levels of development yet possess unique repository of indigenous knowledge basing upon their age old practices for their survival needs. The indigenous practices of natural resource management as applicable to agriculture, forestry, human and animal health, soil conservation, water harvesting, and many other sectors has, in matter of fact, preserved grandeur of indigenous knowledge that can be suitably applied in present day context. Application of indigenous knowledge for rural development is an emerging paradigm especially for resource conservation and sustainable use. From the long experience of cultivation, the traditional communities have acquired enormous working knowledge in fields of classification, codification, accumulation and dispensation of knowledge on cultivation. Their understanding of environment and sustainable resource management is largely embedded in their socio-cultural life and manifested in their interactions with the socio-ecological complex they are part of. These knowledge systems reflect their perception of ecologically sensitive interactions with local ecosystems and the changing paradigms under the spell of modern technical knowledge and management practices.

Shifting cultivation is one such area of their interaction with the forest ecosystem which showcases age old wisdom in managing environment security and food security and disseminates treasures of indigenous knowledge systems. It is one

of the primary means of earning livelihoods for many tribal communities inhabiting mountainous regions of the state. It is synonymous with slash and burn cultivation, swiddening, *jhum*, fallow farming, *podu*, *nella* and many other local denominations. It is a flexible and highly adaptive means of production. In Odisha, as per an estimate, the extent of shifting cultivation has been spread over 118 Tribal Sub-Plan blocks of which 62 comes under shifting cultivation zone and 56 are partially covered.

On the basis of degree of dependence on swiddens, L. K. Mohapatra (1983, vol2, ix) comprehended four types of dependence on shifting cultivation; exclusive dependence, major dependence, contingent dependence and marginal dependence. With respect to each category of dependence he has analyzed the community-wise and individual-wise dependence on shifting cultivation portraying the situations at which the community or the individual may be categorized under the above said dependency categories. Most of the tribes in Odisha who take up shifting cultivation as a means of earning a livelihood fall under the category of exclusive dependence and major dependence as shifting cultivation connote a subsistence economy.

Because shifting cultivation in the traditional manner is highly diversified, it is more stable and reliable for the farmer than specialized cultivation. Economic self-sufficiency protects ecological integrity and viability in ways more important than simply maintaining diversity. The survival is contingent upon maintenance, rather than the exploitation of the larger community of which they know themselves to be only parts. In short, traditional shifting cultivation is a system which is well adapted to the tropical forest environment; it helps maintain the biological diversity of the forest and often provides significant benefit to the wildlife population. The maintenance of such system is of considerable importance to modern form of development.

The authors in this paper have made an attempt to explore the indigenous knowledge and traditional knowledge by trying to understand the community perceptions relating to shifting cultivation. The authors have analyzed the community perceptions on a conceptual and theoretical understanding of indigenous knowledge. In this attempt the authors have studied three Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs), namely, Dongaria Kondh (Bissamcuttack Block), Kutia Kondh (Tumudibandh Block) and Lanjia Saora (Gunupur Block) in southern Odisha for whom shifting cultivation is a way of life.

### **Understanding Indigenous Knowledge and its applicability**

Indigenous knowledge means that something is originating locally and performed by a community or society in this specific place. It emerges as peoples' perceptions and experience in an environment at a given time and is a continuous process of observation and interpretation in relation to the locally-acknowledged everyday rationalities and transcendental powers (Seeland, 2000). Although



‘indigenous knowledge’ and ‘traditional knowledge’ are used as synonyms, yet they vary conceptually and contextually in certain respects. Knowledge is to be said indigenous, if it is bound to local experiences and takes its local world perhaps not as the only existing, but as the most relevant of all. In other words, indigenous knowledge is location and culture-specific knowledge. Local knowledge in this connection may be understood as knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. Indigenous knowledge contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities and research institutions. Being influenced by global or western knowledge, one tends to forget that over the centuries human beings have been producing knowledge to keep a balanced relationship with their natural and social environment in order to survive. Indigenous knowledge refers to a large body of accumulated knowledge with which the people are able to manage their natural resources in order to subsist on a long-term basis. Some other relevant definitions of indigenous knowledge are:

...(It) is a cumulative body of knowledge and beliefs, handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment. Further, traditional ecological knowledge is an attribute of societies with historical continuity in resource use practices; by and large, these are non-industrial or less technologically advanced societies, many of them indigenous or tribal (Grenier, 1998).

... (It is) the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of men and women indigenous to a particular geographic area (Johnson, 1992).

... (It is) a body of knowledge built by a group of people through generations living in close contact with nature. It includes a system of classification, a set of empirical observations about the local environment, and a system of self-management that governs resource use (Studley, 1998).

... there is consensus amongst scientists using various terms that such knowledge: i) is linked to a specific place, culture or society; ii) is dynamic in nature; iii) belongs to groups of people who live in close contact with natural systems; and iv) contrasts with “modern” or “western formal scientific” knowledge.” (Warren, 1991)

Indigenous knowledge systems got a face-lift when International policy regime on nature and biodiversity conservation considered it as an instrument to achieve sustainability in biodiversity and bio-resources conservation, utilization and management. As a result of the World Conference on Science, organised by UNESCO and the International Council for Science (ICSU) in 1999 in Budapest, two principal documents - the ‘Declaration on Science and the Use of Scientific Knowledge’ and the ‘Science Agenda Framework for Action’ (1999) are not only further underscoring the valuable contribution of: ‘...traditional and local knowledge systems as dynamic expressions of perceiving and understanding the

world', but also point to the need: ...to preserve, protect, research and promote this cultural heritage and empirical knowledge.' A major impetus was given to an international understanding on Indigenous Knowledge through the conference on 'Building Bridges with Traditional Knowledge – International Summit Meeting on Issues Involving Indigenous Peoples, Conservation, Sustainable Development and Ethno science' that was held in Honolulu, Hawaii in June 2001.

### **Indigenous Knowledge in Shifting Cultivation and Scientific Opinions**

The basic features of shifting cultivation include clearing of fields primarily by felling, cutting, slashing and burning and using fire to dispose of vegetative debris after drying; human labour chiefly operative; labour pattern frequently co-operative; many different systems in crop planting including multiple cropping and specialized cropping; use of yields primarily for subsistence; use of vegetative cover, as soil conditioner and source of plant nutrient for cropping cycle; when efficiently operated soil erosion occurs to the least; soil depletion not more serious than that under other systems of agriculture. All the processes and systems are based on experience based understanding of the communities and the practitioners are masters of the art. The shifting cultivation is operative chiefly in the regions where more technologically advanced system of agriculture have not become economically or culturally possible or in regions where the land has not yet been appropriated by people with greater political or cultural power. It is destructive of natural resources when operated inefficiently and not inherently destructive than other systems of agriculture when these are operated inefficiently. It is also considered a residual system of agriculture largely replaced by other systems except where retention or practice is expedient.

The New Agriculturist on-line made a literature survey to comprehend different scientific observations from research and studies on shifting cultivation from ecological and livelihoods perspective as:

- Shifting cultivation is a style of forest-based land use around which myths and hostile assumptions have often clustered, especially among foresters. In fact, research studies on shifting cultivation in the tropics point, rather, to the strength and resilience of many of these systems, the high returns to labour they offer; and, as importantly, the species enrichment and biodiversity conservation they allow. (*Reporting DFN Mailing 21, ODI*)
- Migrants tend to use non-traditional and non-sustainable practices. Many are new to farming, without the benefit of indigenous knowledge about the land and vegetation, and they indiscriminately clear forest areas, leaving no tree stumps to regenerate. They often plant crops that are unsuited to the acid soils and the hot and humid climate. Migrant farmers continue to crop after grass weeds have established themselves, further exhausting the soil so that recovery time is lengthened, hindering forest regeneration. *Alternatives to Slash-and-Burn - A Global Initiative, ICRAF publication*

- Governments have not been successful in dealing with swidden systems nor in coming up with solutions. There is a need to empower local communities to participate more fully in problem diagnosis and in generating innovations for more sustainable agro-ecosystem productivity and ultimately to manage their own resource base. *IDRC, Comparative Analysis on Shifting Cultivation*
- Upland people practicing various types of shifting cultivation are also being forced to reduce traditionally maintained fallow periods and are clearing more forest lands to compensate for losses in food supply. While the plight of mountain people is unmistakably getting worse; it appears that development policies have been highly insensitive to mountain conditions and have also contributed to some of these problems. The need for sustainable solutions is urgent. Efforts are needed at different levels and with the growing partnership at different levels, important breakthroughs are being made in different areas. Most of these success stories are being produced by the mountain people themselves with a little bit of help from outside. The future of the mountains lies in ensuring that the maximum numbers of people are supported to help themselves. *The Hindu Kush-Himalayas: Finding Sustainable Solutions, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development*

Swidden has generally been seen as cultivation and not culture by those who are closely concerned with the 'degradation of environment'. To bring the concept of culture in their frame of reference is as essential as bringing the concept of environment in their domain of culture. Practitioners of shifting cultivation have always been viewed from the perspective of outsider who treated them either as a different and a closed social system or viewed them as a satellite system having deleterious effects on their society and surroundings. (*Atal & Bannagen, 1983:2*)

Considering the nature of economy and economy of nature in relation to shifting cultivation it can be said that it is not completely uneconomic or destructive to environment (*Jena, et.al. 2000*). Strangely enough some of the environment specialists took the stand that in the kind of environment in which this kind of cultivation is practiced, it is the most rational form of cultivation, as no other form of cultivation will be possible or economical ... the so called innocent people know enough about the environment as they take good care of those trees and plants that are regarded by them as useful. 'In traditional swiddens, agricultural tools are minimal, ploughs are not used and even the harvest is often reaped by hand without the use of a blade. Energy returns for energy inputs in traditional swiddens is quite high' (*Rappaport, 1972 cf. Jena, et.al. 2000*).

In ecological terms, swidden cultivation is characterized by its high degree of integration into the natural tropical forest ecosystem, whose characteristics it conserves to a considerable extent ... it is the ecologically viable agricultural strategy to have been developed thus far, on a large scale in tropical rain forests,

and attempts to apply intensive agricultural techniques brought from other regions have generally been dismal failures, resulting only in the destruction of the ecological balance of the natural rainforest (*Seymour-Smith, 1986*).

Shifting cultivation comprises a range of highly variable and site specific systems that have developed in response to local environmental and cultural conditions. The essentials are that fields are rotated rather than crops and that a forest fallow returns fertility to the soil. Sedentary swidden agriculturists have a strong interest in maintaining the fertility of the village territory and practise long term conservation measures which contribute to biological diversity (*Mc. Neely, 1989*).

### **Shifting cultivation by the Kondh and the Saora of Odisha**

The **Kuttia Kondh** have been shifting cultivators since times immemorial. This method of cultivation is part of their way of life and is remembered in the mythology of the tribe. The Kui terminology for the practice of shifting cultivation is *nellakama*, *bagada* (cleared hill for cultivation) or *dongar chasa* (hill cultivation). References are made to shifting cultivation in cosmogonic myth of the Kuttia Kondh. This mythological background is an important reason for the Kuttia Kondh to continue with shifting cultivation as a way of maintaining their culturally distinct lifestyle and identity in accordance with the traditions of their ancestors. The *Kui Gaani* describes some mythical views of shifting cultivation, although today, much of this myth can only be recalled by the elderly members of the tribe. They refer to the myth, *Kui Gaani*, as a means to justify their traditional cultivation practices.

The myth also alludes to the fact that the patches of forest selected for shifting cultivation should contain a *Dharnivali* and a bamboo bush. If bamboo bushes are not found, either the field is abandoned or bamboo saplings are planted in the field. The presence of bamboo as a site for worship is offered to *Dharni Penu* is essential. It is said that bamboo came into existence near *Sapangada*- the mythical place of origin of the tribe, from the hair of *Nerandali* when she was taking a bath after emerging from *Sapangada*. The Kuttia Kondh believe that a *dharni* stone is found in a newly cleared forest patch, must have been left there by their ancestors who had cultivated the area before. As the cultivators require the permission of *Dharni Penu* before they clear a new patch of forest, she is therefore appeased with an offering of blood from an animal sacrifice. It is believed that without the blood offering, the deity becomes angry and can inflict harm by producing poor yields in swidden plots and can inflict disease and other misfortune on the people. This is indicative of the fact that shifting cultivation is co-eval and co-existent with the Kuttia Kondhs. It is culturally and religiously tuned preventing the community to take up the practice just anywhere in their vicinity.

The **Dongaria Kondh** economy centres around shifting cultivation, plain land cultivation and horticulture. The Dongarias' increasing interest in horticulture has brought shifting cultivation to a limit but for their minimum subsistence, they depend mostly upon shifting cultivation. Though horticulture has a significant

position in the Dongaria Kondh economy, but it does not fetch the right market price as it should, due to various factors. Although horticulture surpasses shifting cultivation in the rate of production, yet at the subsistence level, shifting cultivation maintains its importance as it was in the past. They claim that, in the past, when the Jungle was dense, they depended on cultivation on hills for subsistence. The Dongaria believe that food gathering and hunting was the first stage of economic activity; further development began after that occupational shift from hunting and food gathering to the practice of shifting cultivation. This also indicates technological progress and preference for earning a livelihood. The next step of development marked their orientation towards horticulture, although shifting cultivation continued. Some decades ago, the Dongarias started plain land cultivation. While these stages of development in the Dongaria economy involved technological changes, the social system did not change considerably. In remote pockets, the social system, traditional pattern of distribution of economic means and the socio-political organisation have more or less remained constant.

Similar to the Kuttia Kondhs, the Dongaria also have socio-political and religious practices specific to shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation is also rooted in the Dongaria myth of origin. To convert a patch of forest to swiddens, the Dongarias make an ecological assessment of the area in terms of vegetation, soil moisture, nutrient conditions and suitability for shifting cultivation. After the ecological considerations, the cultural condition is taken into consideration. The forest should have a *dharni* altar established by earlier settlers. The Hill God must permit the people to cultivate the site. Rituals are performed to seek the permission of the deity. On getting the permission they slash the vegetation, otherwise, they never dare to take the risk of inviting the wrath of the deity. Then comes the economic consideration according to which the hill should have enough cultivable land to be divided among all the families in a village or a group of families of bigger size who wish to cultivate it. If ecological and cultural conditions are found favourable then the economic consideration becomes less significant. On the other hand, if the cultural consideration does not go in their favour, the other two conditions even being favourable becomes meaningless.

The **Lanjia Saoras**, traditionally, were hunters, food gatherers and shifting cultivators. In course of time when swiddening became less productive, they started terrace cultivation along with swiddening. For the Lanjia Saora shifting cultivation (*Barooh loom* or *Bagadachas*) has been their way of life. Most of them possess patches of swiddens inherited individually. It is said that the community has inherited the practice from their supreme ancestor *Kittung-Radab* who started cultivating the hill slopes to eke out a living.

The selection of a site for shifting cultivation is mainly considered on two grounds; vegetation and soil. Black soil is the preferred one as it is known to be very fertile and can assure a good harvest. Dense vegetation with good population of timbers is not preferred, for it would require lot of labour force to clear the patches.

Therefore, a fertile land with bushy vegetation is cut and cleared or swiddening. The availability of labour force in a family is the other consideration for deciding the extent of land that could be cleared. During site selection the slope consideration decides the land use pattern. If the slopes are relatively wider they are preferred for terrace cultivation. However, such slopes are not immediately converted into terraces. After a series of cropping cycles under swiddening practice when the yield decreases then people convert it to terraces and take up paddy cultivation.

More than shifting cultivation, the Saoras are well known for their expertise in terrace cultivation. They exhibit a high degree of indigenous skill, ingenuity and technological outfit for preparing the terraces with inbuilt water management system. The terraces are built right up the beds of the hill streams and ascend hundreds of feet from the depth of valleys to the hill slopes and even up to the hill tops.

The Lanjia Saora exhibit technological up-gradation in farming practices in the indigenous way. They have integrated shifting cultivation, terrace cultivation and horticulture in a way that builds a viable economic base for the community with both subsistence and cash crops.

### **Ecological perceptions: Slope land classification and cropping pattern**

On the hill slope Dongaria cultivate a selection of crops. The bushy forest covering the upper part of the hill (*mundeni*), however, is not slashed. On the other hand the slash and burn method is applied to the top of low hills or hillocks. Immediately below the unslashed forest, in the area called *madre gandre*, seasonal crops such as cereals, pulses, vegetables and oil seeds are grown. The next layer down, called *penda gandre* is reserved for perennials, particularly for the fruit bearing species such as citrus, mango, jackfruit, banana, pineapple, and other tree crops without disturbing any naturally growing useful tree species. The Dongarias have the perception that a better harvest results from seasonal crops if they are between two dense vegetation patches (i.e. between *penda* and *mundeni*). Below the *penda gandre* is the area called *penda* where vegetables and oil seeds are cropped. Occasionally, the *penda* is levelled out for paddy cultivation. The Dongarias have rich ecological perception of slope and soil that is instrumental in crop planning at different levels of a slope.

For the Kuttia Kondhs, after slashing and burning of vegetation, marking the individual field area is considered very important. Individual fields are marked out by crop fencing. Usually the castor seeds, maize seeds, and sometimes sorghum seeds are used as fence lines for plot demarcation, for these species are tall species and hence, if they are planted with a particular spacing they make a distinguishing fence. The border of one field planted with castor seeds of one cultivator follows the plantation of maize and sorghum for the other person whose area begins from the same boundary. The other side boundary of the second person may be planted with castor seeds. It goes on like this to differentiate patches of individual fields. The

plantation of castor, pigeon pea, maize and sorghum as boundary species is beneficial as they take relatively longer periods to complete their life cycle in comparison to other crops. Maize which has a shorter life cycle compared to others can be collected easily on maturing from the boundary fence. This also keeps the other crops undisturbed. Following the boundary species, all other crops are sown which include other pulses and vegetables like cucumber, pumpkin, etc. Seeds of yams are put in dibbled holes on the boundary fence, because its coiling system can easily extend to castor plants (Jena, et.al. 2006). Cow pea is planted little after the castor and pigeon pea have been planted so as to prevent the young twigs of the later from the coiling system of the former. The pulses and other vegetables thus are planted at random inside the boundary. The ginger, turmeric if planted is made into pure cultures with which the bird chilli species also share the space. The plotting scheme of the Kuttia Kondhs are almost the same like the Dongaria Kondh, but the major distinction observed is that the Kuttia Kondh have not added the fruit growing species in their swidden system.

The Lanjia Saora community divide a hill into three parts: *Amutti* is top of the hill, *Trangdi* refers to the middle area, and *Baseng* refers to the foothill. In their practice of shifting cultivation (*Barooh loom*), the middle area of the hill is called *Baroon* where people grow multiple crops. In this context *Trangdi* and *Baroon* are synonymous. The foothills and the region between the foothill and swiddening area are terraced and the terraced lands are called *Dunkeli*. *Baseng* and *Dunkeli* are also synonymous in usage. In general, *Baroon* is the space where swiddening is done, in *Dunkeli* wet or terrace cultivation is done, in unterraced *Baseng* cash crops like mustard, niger are cultivated. The horticultural and fruit bearing species are given space in *Baroon* and *Baseng*.

These communities grow varieties of crops in a mixed cropping system that includes cereals, pulses, oil seeds, vegetables and spices. The crops include cereals like *Panicum miliare* (little millet), *Eleusine coracana* (Finger millet/ ragi), *Sorghum vulgare* (Sorghum), *Pennisetum typhoides* (Bajra), *Zea mays* (Maize), *Oryza sativa* (Rice); pulses like *Vigna indica* (Cow pea), *Vigna* species, *Phaseolus mungo* (Black gram), *Cajanus cajan* (Arhar/ yellow dal); oil seeds like *Ricinus communis* (Castor), *Guizotia abyssinica* (Niger), *Brassica campestris* (Mustard); spices like *Capsicum frutescens* (Bird chilli), *Curcuma longa* (Turmeric), *Zingiber officinalis* (Ginger), etc; vegetables like *Cucumis sativa* (Cucumber), *Cucurbita maxima* (Pumpkin), *Lagenaria vulgaris* (Bottle gourd), *Dioscorea* (Yam), *Ipomea batatas* (Sweet potato), *Manihot esculenta* (Tapioca/ Cassava), etc.

### **Rationality of plotting along the slope than across the slope**

While distributing the hill slopes for swiddens, the decision makers first decide upon the area that is to be slashed leaving a reasonable measure of forests on the hill top. The slashing area is then vertically divided into plots corresponding to the requirement of individual families in a village. The preference for the vertical plots is mostly considered on ecological basis (Jena, et.al., 2002). Unlike the horizontal

plots the vertical plots have the significance that each family gets almost the same kind of ecological space for cultivating multiple crops suitable to slopes and altitudes. In such a design the water management during rains is also wellplanned. As slopes at different elevations are cropped with different cropping density and there is fair arrangement of perennials and annuals on the slopes, water flows down from ridge area to valleys with minimal soil erosion. As such the water logging is avoided. Considering the browsing and predatory habit of wild life, plotting along the slope is preferred to plotting across the slope. The wildlife movement usually happens from the hill top where forest is not disturbed. Hence they usually browse upon the crops on the slope closer to the forest at top of the hill. Hence, in a plotting design across the slope, the farmer whose plot is located closer to the forest suffers the loss. In contrast, in a plotting along the slope scheme, the loss gets distributed to all the cultivators. Moreover, by constructing sentinel huts on the upper side of the slope it is easier to guard the crops on a longitudinally divided plot. Hence, horizontal plotting is not rational in the local context and its consideration also guides the cropping pattern at different levels of the slope.

### **Traditional distribution patterns and customary land governance**

One of the basic features of shifting cultivation has been frequent shifting of cropped fields, normally in some kind of sequence in land control, resting in special social groupings under customary laws, but sometimes occurring under other legal institutions of land control. In this context it is important to examine the traditional distribution patterns of swidden lands under customary rules, the power and authority of formal and informal village councils and other social institutions and legal instruments.

The swidden plots are distributed by the village council to lineage groups which distributes it to its constituent households in consideration to the family labour force, as understood in case of several tribal communities practicing shifting cultivation. Once distributed the lands are inherited to fore-generations at the family level. In the early days, particularly at the time of setting up a settlement, one enjoys relative liberty to cultivate as large an area as is manageable considering manpower available in the family.

In the Dongaria Kondh community, the swiddens (*neta* and *bada*) are divided among member families by the clan heads. The inheritance of such lands is maintained in the patrilineal order. Patches of lands under possession of father is equally divided among his sons after his death. In some cases daughters also get shares from their father's land. If a man has only daughter (s) or if a daughter is divorced or widowed then she may get share from her father's landed property. There are different patterns of land distribution. There can be village-wise distribution, clan-wise distribution and *punja* (title group) wise distribution. PTG Villages are found exclusively with one clan or with one dominant clan. In a village-wise distribution there is always a boundary between two villages. Keeping the boundary in view, hills are distributed among respective village communities. People of a single clan or different clans residing in a village can occupy a hill land,



convert it to swidden plots without any restriction. In the Dongaria Kondh community, a rational distribution of hill land was exercised long ago to minimize discrimination in terms of early settlers and late settlers; proximity and distant location; dominant *punja* and others. Thus, hill lands were first distributed among clans, then among *punjas* and then among families. However, some patches of land were kept as buffer land to be distributed to new families who may come from outside irrespective of their clan membership. In case the number of families increased along with the need for more land, further grant of land is made possible through the village level decision making body where *jani* and *mandal* allot the required land if available.

In the Lanjia Saora community, traditionally, the hills have been distributed among *Birinda* or extended families (Patnaik, N, 1989, 1993). Members of a particular *birinda* used to have swiddens exclusively on a hill and no outsider was allowed to share the hill for cultivation. An individual family who has been cultivating a plot continues to own it as long as it is capable of cultivating it. Every family or every household possesses a limited number of plots around the village. This personal possession is hereditary. Ultimately, the father's plot is divided among the sons. However, the base rule for possession right over a land depends on availability of family labour force. In this consideration, in the past, the families who had more labour force could take big chunk of swidden land under their possession. Since the swidden lands have become very limited, over the last three to four decades hardly people have been able to add more lands to their existing possession. Since, initially the swiddens had been distributed *Birinda* wise, the *Birinda* has larger control over the land use patterns and this has limited diverse land use practices in the swiddens.

### **Positive sides of shifting cultivation**

Old traditional swiddens have gradually become converted to fruit orchards giving it a forest like structure. Preservation of timber plants in and around the swidden serves as a seed reservoir for endemic species. Sophisticated fire control mechanism such as fire breaks, fire fighters, coordinated burning is maintained. Swidden soil is often more moist than adjacent forest soil. Careful rotation of swiddens is maintained looking at land-man ratio. Bush fallowing period of different intervals is practiced to allow flow of nutrients to reserve the trend towards leaching and be recycled through burning. Careful control of weeds is remarkably done. Minimal disturbance of top soil in cropping practice help minimizing erosion. It is a sound practice as there is the least risk of total crop failure even due to drought or excessive rainfall because variety of seeds are cropped together and the crops mature at various intervals of time. People are keen observers on the ratio of labour input to productivity and hence, when productivity decreases in relation to labour input, they leave the land for fallowing till the fertility is regained. Unproductive swiddens are converted to permanent orchards

thereby introducing new varieties and land use patterns. Above all, subsistence crops and cash crops are taken simultaneously from the same patch of land.

## Conclusion

Swidden cultivation, as an indigenous knowledge system of the tribal communities in Odisha should be studied and documented thoroughly and an overall assessment of the situation made, as swidden can be a useful component of rural development in hilly terrains and environmental management. The need is emerging to blend traditional knowledge systems with latest technology to make the swidden system more vibrant and productive. It requires development planning to follow consultative processes giving the communities wider choice to maintain traditional practices, sustain indigenous germ plasm, traditional food habit, cultural identity and traditional technology through shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation or swiddening should not be seen as a completely destructive practice rather as a suitable land use practice in mountainous regions of the state and as a way of life for the tribal communities who have been depending on it since generations.

## References Cited

- Atal & Bannagan (1983): Swidden Cultivation in Asia, Vol.1, UNESCO, Bangkok
- Global Biodiversity Strategy (1992): WRI/IUCN/UNEP
- Grenier, L. (1998): Working with Indigenous Knowledge: A Guide for Researchers. Ottawa: IDRC.
- Jena, M.K., et.al. (2000): Biodiversity and Cultural diversity: Modes and Means in Primitive-Modern Continuum, in H.K. Patra (Ed) Environment and Disaster Management, Department of Botany, Utkal University, Odisha
- Jena, M.K., et.al (2002): Forest Tribes of Orissa, Vol.I. The Dongaria Kondh, DK Printworld, New Delhi
- Jena, M. K., et.al (2006): Forest Tribes of Orissa, Vol. II. The Kuttia Kondh, DK Printworld, New Delhi
- Johnson, M. (1992): Lore: Capturing Traditional Environmental Knowledge. Ottawa: Dene Cultural Institute/IDRC
- Mc. Neely, J.A. (1989): Conserving Cultural Diversity: How the variety of human experience can promote sustainable forms of using natural resources, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland
- Mohapatra, L.K. (ed) (1983): Swidden Cultivation in Asia, Bangkok, UNESCO, Vol.2
- Patnaik, N. (1993): Swidden cultivation among tribes of Orissa, CENDERET, XIM, Bhubaneswar

Posey, D.A. (1999): Editor of *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity: A Complementary Contribution to the Global Biodiversity Assessment*. UNEP/Intermediate Technology

Seeland, K. (2000): *What is Indigenous Knowledge and why does it matter today?* In Seeland, K., F. Schmithusen (eds) 'Man in the Forest – Local Knowledge and Sustainable Management of Forests and Natural Resources in Tribal Communities in India, D.K Printworld, New Delhi.

Seymour-Smith, C (1992): Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology

Slikkerveer, L.J. (1999): Growing Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Context of Development: A New Challenge for Indonesia. In *Indigenous Knowledge Systems Research & Development Studies*, No. 3, Edited by K. Adimihardja & M. Clemens. UPT.INRIK, Bandung

Studley, J. (1998): *Dominant Knowledge Systems and Local Knowledge*. Mtn-Forum On-line Library Document, <http://www.mtnforum.org/resources/library/stud98a2.htm>. Accessed August, 2001

The New Agriculturist on-line ([www.new-ag.info/99-5/pov.html](http://www.new-ag.info/99-5/pov.html))

UNCED.(1992):*United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*. Rio de Janeiro

Warren, D.M., L.J. Slikkerveer & D.W. Brokensha, (1995): Editors of *The Cultural Dimension of Development: Indigenous Knowledge Systems*. IT Studies in Indigenous Knowledge and Development. Intermediate Technology Publications, London

# DOM EXPLOITATION IN THE KONDH VILLAGES OF KORAPUT DISTRICT \*

*Sibaprasad Rout*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In spite of the constitutional safeguards and ameliorative measures undertaken by the official and non-official agencies, the tribal problems yet remain intricate and to some extent insoluble. Inhospitable environment, lack of communication, disease and depredation of wild animals no doubt make the tribal life miserable and burdensome. Yet far from the modern society in the hearts of hills and jungles the tribal people with their primitive tools and with still more primitive method of cultivation force the nature to yield a variety of crops. In Orissa there is no parallel to such crops like turmeric, oil-seeds, pepper, ragi and pulses produced by the tribals which very often dazzles the eye of outsiders. In spite of their struggle with the nature in cultivating multiple crops and in producing bumper harvest the tribals lead a life of starvation, poverty and insecurity. The reasons are manifold, but exploitation both direct and indirect stands as the chief factor of their misfortune. It is easy to locate the exploitation by the outside agencies such as the traders, liquor vendors, money lenders and dishonest Government officials, but it is difficult to trace the exploiters who live in the same environment the tribals live and to some extent share the cultural life of the tribals. For ages more clever communities, whether they enjoy higher or lower social status, have taken advantages of the innocence, simplicity and ignorance of the backward communities. Every now and then cases of Kondhs being exploited by Doms in the Baliguda subdivision of Phulbani district are reported to the Court of Law. Dr. V.Elwin has mentioned about the Dom exploitation in Saora villages of Gunupur. Exploitation of the Gours and Chasas is rampant Juang villages of Keonjhar district. It is very difficult to eradicate this type of exploitation by the neighbouring people who have a symbiotic relation with the exploited.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. VI, No.1, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1964-65, pp.21-28

<sup>1</sup> Research Assistant, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

In this paper an attempt has been made to trace a few instances of Dom exploitations in the Kondh villages of Kumbhikota and Laximpur areas of Koraput district. A total of 86 exploitation cases were collected and the present article is based on this data.

### **Nature and Types of Exploitation**

Field investigation revealed that the Kondhs are victims of various types of exploitation since time immemorial. Such cases of exploitation are interesting and can be categorized under the following heads: -

- (i) *Transfer of land from the tribals i.e. the Kondhs to the hands of the non-tribals* – The area under study, and more specifically the villages studied are inhabited predominantly by the Kondhs, who are the owners of the land. A few families of Dom numbering from one to ten may be found in each Kondh village, but as compared to the strength of the tribal population they form minority in most cases. These Doms, though far less in number than the Kondhs are by far the only non-tribals with whom the Kondhs come in direct contact in their day-to-day dealings. Except in one village, where a Karan is the Sahukar, there are no Kumtis or Sahukars of other castes than the Doms living in Kondh villages. The relationship between these alien Sahukars and Kondhs is purely that of “give and take” type lacking anything of personal feelings. They meet twice every year; once in the hard months of the year when the Kondhs run to the doors of the Sahukars and beg for loans of money and crops. They meet for the second time, when the Sahukars come to Kondh villages soon after the harvest time to collect the various crops towards their loans which they advanced a few months ago. For these casual visitors, who live far away from the Kondhs, land is a liability and is of lesser value to be purchased or to be kept under mortgage for advancing loans. The room is thus open only for Doms to play tricks and capture the few valuable plots of land prepared by Kondhs near the stream bed or close to some water sources.
- (ii) *Stealing of cattle, crops and other valuables* – The Doms live as close neighbours to the Kondhs and they often indulge in stealing away with the cattle and crops of the Kondhs from the fields or forest.
- (iii) In the harvesting season, and just before the commencement of any Kondh festival, the Doms move from village to village with loads of cloth and cheap fashionable things for sell. They cheat Kondhs by barter and business and take much more from the Kondhs than the actual price of the article.
- (iv) *Highway Robbery* – A group of Doms may suddenly appear in a Kondh village and by threatening a Kondh may demand crops or cattle from him. Their presence like a bolt from the blue, terrifies other Kondhs who shut their doors and try to escape. The person who falls a victim to the Doms can hardly fight for escape. It is well and good if he immediately fulfills their wants, but in case

he shows any resistance the Doms flee away with any of his livestock, or forcibly take some of his bundles of grains, a few gold ornaments, or any of his other valuables.

- (v) *Rape and Seduction* – The Doms are not only contented with stealing and forcibly taking away the valuables of the Kondhs, they too indulge in cases of rape and seduction. In one case the Doms raped a Kondh girl from a local fair. A few of her relatives tried to save her, but the Doms threatened them with stealing away of latter's possessions. They raped her; seduced her and snatched away all her gold ornaments.
- (vi) *Bribes and Fines*- Bribes and fines are also extracted from the Kondhs by the personnel of Forest Department for cultivating patches of land in reserve forests, by the police people for distilling liquor and occasionally by the school teachers and Sarpanches for certain activities.

The following table gives a quantitative picture of the 86 cases of exploitation.

**TABLE - 1**

*Table showing various types of exploitation of the Kondhs by Governmental and non-Governmental agencies*

Sl. No.	Types of exploitation	No. of cases	Percentage
1.	Stealing and forcibly taking away crops, cattle and other valuables	45	52.3
2.	Cheating by Forest Department and the police officials.	15	17.4
3.	Cheating in barter and business	14	16.3
4.	Land encroachment	9	10.5
5.	Exploitation by mining personnel	2	2.3
6.	Rape and seduction	1	1.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>86</b>	

Deducting seventeen cases (serial Nos. 2 and 5) of exploitation by Government agencies it is seen that the rest sixty-nine. Cases are done by the Doms. To put it in more concrete terms, about 20 per cent of the exploitation cases are related to Governmental agencies, while in 80 per cent cases the Doms are found to be the culprits. More than half of the cases (52.3 per cent) are of "highway robbery" type, while the frequency of rape cases is very negligible, i.e. 1.2 per cent.

### **Dom Exploitation**

In both Laximpur and Kumbhikota areas Doms were found to be the chief exploiters. The people around Laximpur are a little advanced having come in

contact with the modern people and they are not easily cheated by Doms. On the other extreme the Kondhs inhabiting rocky terrains in Kumbhikota areas are more liable to fall a prey to exploitations. Kumbhikota, a village with Dom families numbering more than sixty is the centre of such exploitations. The Doms of this village not only exploit the Kondhs of their own village, but extend their grip to the neighbouring villages. The villages around Kumbhikota constitute the areas of their operation and they pay frequent trips to such villages for stealing cattle and other things. Various kinds of Dom exploitation are described in the following.

**(1) Land Encroachment**

A wide gulf of difference is noticed between the amount of land the Kondhs own in the settlement records and their actual land holdings at present. In settlement records some Kondhs are found to possess more than twenty acres of land, and they are also paying land revenue accordingly, every year. But personal interview reveals the fact that most of their best plots of land have been taken away by Dom Sahukars on mortgage, by force, or by any other unfair means. In some cases, the Doms have bribed the settlement officials and made the records in their names, but in most cases the transfer of land is an oral affair, i.e., a verbal contract between the land owner and the Sahukar. The land of the Kondhs are transferred to the ownership of the Doms in the following ways.

(a) When a Kondh borrows money from a Dom, the latter lends him money with the contract that the Kondh has to pay the loan in terms of grains in the next harvest. The interest for such loans is almost cent per cent. In case the crop fails in the ensuing year and the debtor fails to pay off his loans, the Sahukar extorts more crops with multiple interests towards his principal.

In the long run the loan increases to such a heavy amount that the Kondh is forced to surrender some of his paddy plots to the Sahukar on mortgage for ten to twenty years. The Sahukar takes a thumb impression from the Kondh in a hand note in which he befools the Kondh by increasing the amount of loan actually advanced and by lengthening the actual period of mortgage. Being illiterate the Kondh cannot know the treachery played by the Dom and he gives his thumb impression believing in the latter's honesty.

(b) Money and crops are also lent to the Kondhs on the condition of land mortgage. To meet the expenses of important life crises rituals a Kondh is often forced to give one of his plots on mortgage for money or crops.

(c) Under acute hardships, a Kondh may find no way out except selling a piece of his land.

(d) A Kondh is at times provided with liquor by a Dom on ceremonial occasions and when the former is heavily drunk, the Dom takes a thumb impression from him regarding selling out some land on false pretext.

(e) The land of a Kondh who dies without leaving any successor is often claimed by a Dom to be his land on the pretext that the deceased incurred heavy loans of money from him and had mortgaged the land towards the loans. In such cases, the Dom shows false documents and cheats the relatives of the deceased.

## **(2) *Cheating in Barter and Marketing***

(a) Kondhs are not experts in marketing. Whenever a Kondh wants to sell his cattle he takes the help of a Dom who goes to the market, sells the cattle on the formers behalf and pays him the money. In some cases, the Doms may sell the cattle but do not pay the money to Kondhs in spite of the latter's frequent begging.

(b) A Dom may force a Kondh to give away his big bullock or buffalo in exchange for a small one. If the Kondh denies the Dom may threaten him of stealing away his cattle.

(c) After the harvest, the Doms visits Kondh villages with clothes and utensils for sale. They charge high price for the things and in exchange take crops in big measures. Dom ladies also wander from village to village with dried-fish, molasses and other eatables and sell these things for crops.

## **(3) *Demanding Crops after Harvest-***

At the harvesting season, groups of Doms numbering ten to twenty move to the threshing-floor of the Kondhs and demand a major share of the harvest. They do not get satisfied with the amount given to them by the Kondhs on their own accord and always crave for bigger shares. If a Kondh declines to give so much of crop the Doms may threaten him to steal away his possessions. It is really a pitiable consequences to see how a Kondh feels helpless amidst a group of Doms who demand more than half of his harvest.

## **(4) *Stealing crops, cattle and other valuables -***

Very often, cattle are stolen from the Kondhs cowsheds or are found missing in the forest. A little inquiry of the matter reveals that the Doms steal cattle and sell them in distant markets or slaughter for meat in the forest. Remains of meat, blood-stains on the earth, and charred bone pieces of the slaughtered animal and ashes of the cooking fire are traced in secluded parts of the forest indicating the feasting ground of the Doms.

Cattle are also stolen away after giving prior notice to the owners. The Doms may demand some money, crops or a cow from a Kondh as gift. If the Kondh refuses to give anything the Doms threaten him and steal his cattle.

## **(5) *"Highway Robbery" -***

The Doms are also not afraid of forcibly taking away things form Kondhs in broad day light. A Dom may ask for a cow or bullock from a Kondh and any refusal to these results in taking away the cattle from the Kondh's cowshed by



force. Similarly, failing to persuade a Kondh to give paddy or other grains, a Dom might break into his house and take away whatever crops the Kondh had stored.

**(6) Rape and Seduction –**

A rape case collected during the investigation shows how a group of Doms raped a Kondh girl in a fair and plundered all her gold ornaments. The case was to the referred police station, but in the meanwhile, the accused bribed the police. The policeman pleaded in favour of the Doms and threatened the girl's father for falsely accusing the Doms. The girl's father sold one his buffaloes and paid Rs. 100 and a chicken to the policemen.

The type of exploitation in Kumbhikota area is different from that in Laxmipur area. The tribals bordering Laxmipur are closer to educated people and are clever than those living in interior villages. Besides, there is a police-station in Laxmipur which puts some check to wreckless exploitation. Hence, cases of stealing cattle and crops and forcibly taking away things from the tribals are extremely rare in this area. The chief type of exploitation here is land encroachment by cunning tricks.

Acquiring the land of the tribals is not so common in Kumbhikota area where the tribals are mainly shifting cultivators and they have a few or no irrigated paddy plots to be mortgaged or sold. Hence, the "highway robbery" from of stealing things by force and threatening is the chief methods of exploitation here.

**Methods applied for Exploiting Kondhs**

The Doms do not suddenly attack a village and plunder away the possessions like other robbers. Their methods of exploiting the Kondhs is a gradual process rather than a momentary phase of attack. In the beginning the innocent and insignificant Kondhs of a village are attacked. Since they do not have any voice in the village, they cannot influence or command their neighbours for any help. Even if the neighbours see a villager being robbed by Doms they get frightened and apprehending such attacks in future on them they shut their doors and stay inside. A few of them might oppose in mild tone of protest, but Doms pay no heed to it.

Besides keeping the insignificant persons in view as their target of attack, the Doms also try to please the important Kondhs of the village by providing them with liquor on ceremonial occasions. By giving liquor to create temporary faith and friendly relations the Doms may take thumb impressions from the Kondhs when they are in a state of drunkenness.

**Why Kondhs are the target of Exploitation**

Why Kondhs are the only targets for Dom exploitation requires a little knowledge of their personality structure. Simplicity of character, inaccessibility of

the tract they inhabit, and their illiteracy makes them docile and timid. Occupying the innermost parts of hills and forests, the Kondhs lead a life of their own which is free from complications or modern life. Since they do not come in frequent contact with the modern people, they have developed a strange fear towards them. Doms are the only non-tribals with whom the Kondhs generally live. The latter are believed to retain much power and authority by virtue of which they can command the Kondhs to obey them. Such feeling has been so deep rooted in the minds of the Kondhs from the time of the Raja's reign that it is difficult to root it out. The Rajas invested the power on Doms to collect taxes from the Kondhs. In the days of British rule the converted Doms were getting ample support from the missionaries to defend themselves in spite of various nuisances committed by them. All these led to create a state of mind in the Kondh who developed a maniac fear towards the Doms.

The Kondhs are honest and truthful. They randomly doubt the activities of the Doms in spite of the latter's treachery. They never make attempts to do harm to anybody even if they are provoked to do so. They are truthful in the sense that they do not tell lies. The Doms, on the other hand, are very crooked. From their very childhood, the Dom boys are taught by their parents to live upon the fruits of others' labour. In a village one can find a Dom boy beating a group of Kondh children, but the latter having no courage to defend themselves. The Doms apprehend the danger of the spread of education among Kondh children. They thus give misleading ideas about modern education and persuade the Kondhs not send their children to schools.

The Kondhs have been the constant sufferers and have lost their courage of protest against the capricious whims of the Doms. When a Kondh's cattle or crops are plundered by a Dom his neighbours do not like to protest and pick up quarrels him and tempt him to repeat the work again in future.

They also do not want to run the risk of their life to fight with the Doms, who do not hesitate to go to the extent of murdering their rivals.

### **Remedies**

As evident from the above descriptions, it is not an easy task to save the Kondhs from the dangers they are facing in their daily life. To free them from various exploitations sincere and prolonged attempts by honest workers are necessary. Education should be given supreme importance, because unless the Kondhs get education and unless they realize their own problems it is very difficult to awaken them. It is sure that when they get educated they can better understand their difficulties and find out means to eradicate these by their own efforts.

In order to put a check to the various Dom exploitations drastic steps should be undertaken to punish the *bona fide* Dom culprits. They should be settled in separate colonies and kept under constant watch and supervision. An honest

and sincere man should be employed to supervise the various activities of the Doms.

Immediate measures should be undertaken to raise the economic standard of the Kondhs. Indebtedness is a clog for their development. They inhabit the rocky mountain areas and live hand to mouth, depending mainly on shifting cultivation. They have few or no patches of irrigated paddy plots situated near the stream beds, but a good number of such plots have been tactfully captured by the clever non-tribals. Shifting cultivation, the primary method of their agriculture, is not only a toilsome affair, but is the most unreliable as the harvest depends on timely rain and other favourable climatic conditions. Constant crop failures or the scanty crops harvested from shifting cultivation hardly feed a Kondh for the whole year. Besides, a Kondh may require a lump sum of money and crops for marriage. To meet these demands he has to incur heavy loans and thereby run into indebtedness. Indebtedness consequently open door for exploitation in forms of land encroachment, losing cattle and crops and engaging in Goti work, etc. To put a check to these problems immediate steps should be undertaken to bring back the lost land of the Kondhs from the possession of the non-tribals. Loans of money, paddy and other grains may be advanced to the Kondhs through the Grama Panchayats at moderate rates of interest, to save them from paying unlimited amount to the local lenders. It is important to note that most of the Panchayat people are non-tribals and they deliberately make delay in giving loan to the tribals, as this conflict with their own interest. Strict steps should be undertaken to eradicate evils, from this level, and the Government may lend money or crops to the tribals by keeping their land in mortgage.

This matter should be given foremost consideration, because unless the Kondhs stand on a good economic and educational footing and unless they are able to feed and clothe themselves properly it is very difficult to save them from exploitation.

# MUTHA; THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE KONDH (WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO PUSUNGIA MUTHA IN THE PHULBANI DISTRICT OF ORISSA) \*

*N. K. Behura* <sup>1</sup>

*B. N. Sahu* <sup>2</sup>

The Agency or Malua Kondhs of Phulbani district in Orissa had a systematic political organization which is fast on the decline owing to the superimposition of the modern political institutions during the post independent period. The traditional political organization of the Malua Kondhs contained features, such as effective group control, welfare of the group and a system of extra-group relations. Although the traditional political organization was an institution to unite together a number of individuals of the tribe, who had originally settled over a contiguous area, called the Mutha (meaning control over the area and hence ownership right) for common interests; but at a later stage some non-tribals came to be associated with it having become residents of the Mutha. This association and involvement of the non-tribals in the traditional political organization of the Kondhs has its own peculiar history. The direct association of the non-tribals in the Kondh tribal political organization did not circumvent its smooth functioning because of the historical reason.

## **History of Mutha Organisation**

Prior to the British occupation of the Kondh area that is before 1836 the Kondhs were the subjects of the Raja of Ghumsar. The Raja lived at Ghumsar,

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXII, Nos.1-4, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1970-71, pp.13-21

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer in Anthropology, B.J.B. College, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer in Anthropology, Laxmi Narayan College, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur.

which is situated in the plains area of Ganjam district, that is, on the eastern side of the Kondhmal. During the rule of the Raja of Ghumsar over the Kondh land, some non-tribals, mainly Hindu caste groups including some artisans and some Scheduled Castes too, had started penetrating into it (the exact time of migration could not be collected), which had been occupied until then only by the Kondhs. The higher caste groups established trade and commerce, including money-lending in the Kondh area. They purchased various types of agricultural and forest products from the Kondhs and supplied them in return grocery, tobacco, narcotics, cloths and other articles. The artisans, such as, potters, carpenters and blacksmiths supplied their respective manufactured goods to the Kondhs. Whereas, the third category of non-tribals, i.e., the Scheduled Castes such as the Pana and the Ghasi served the Kondhs as village sweepers and watchmen. The Kondhs did not resent the interpenetration of these non-tribals into their land as the latter rendered some service to them. And as these non-tribal outsiders gradually settled down in the Kondh land they became well conversant with Kondh way of life as well as picked up Kui deftly, the dialect of the Kondh, so as to intimately converse with the latter and thus earn their confidence. After having fully established themselves among the Kondhs, some of them, especially the traders and money-lenders, acquired arable lands from the Kondhs. Despite this sort of intention of the migrants, the Kondhs treated them as their honorable guests. And in fact, they looked after the comforts of the migrants as if it was their obligation to do so. Further, it has been gathered that the Kondhs until very recent times cultivated the lands of their non-tribal neighbours and thatched or built their houses free of any charge. Not only that, the Kondhs, as a noble gesture did and still do offer to their non-tribal neighbours a portion of their kitchen garden produce as well as egg, fowl or meat whenever available. Besides, the village sweepers and watchmen are more or less, fully maintained jointly by the villagers. And the migrants enjoyed a higher position amongst the Kondhs for their literary tradition and better financial conditions. Gradually members of the higher caste groups from among the immigrants were invited by the Kondhs to arbitrate in their domestic disputes and in their intra-village and inter-village disputes also. Consequently, these people acquired an important, intimate and somewhat indispensable position among the Kondhs which, however, provided a basis for their subsequent involvement in the Kondh political organization.

The Raja of Ghumsar and his officials did not understand the language of the Kondhs. As a result he found it difficult to rule them, and hence thought it necessary towards the beginning of Eighteenth Century to appoint some of the Oriyas who were living among the Kondhs as his local officials in the Kondh area. The Kondhs also welcomed this move since they themselves were unable to present their grievances to the Raja in Oriya, the latter's language. Furthermore, the new officials, with whom they were to deal with, were their neighbours and confides.

The Raja, for administrative convenience, divided the entire Kondhmal into several areas, each being called a Mutha. The basis of such division was clan or *gochhi*. This means that a Mutha contained Kondh population belonging to a single clan or *gochhi* or to several fraternal clans. Each Mutha included several adjacent villages within it, which must have been inhabited by members of a single clan or of several fraternal clans in those days; because of this the practice of Mutha exogamy is still prevalent.

The chiefs or heads of the Muthas were appointed from among the members of the Paik caste (a quasi-military and agricultural caste who mainly constituted the militia of the local rulers of southern Orissa during pre-British period), who claim themselves to be Kshyatriyas. The duty of the Mutha-head was to represent the Kondhs under his jurisdiction at the petty court of the Raja whenever called upon to do so, and to attend on him there on all occasions on their behalf. And further he acted as the recognized official intermediary and channel of communication between the Kondhs and the Raja. So concurrently he became the Raja's representative and the chief of the Kondhs. He performed an important sacerdotal duty for the Kondhs and consequently became the hub of their society. This was the state of affairs of the Kondhmal before the British occupation of the area.

In the year 1836, the Britishers penetrated into Kondhmal with the view to capture the rebel Raja of Ghumsar who had taken refuge in this jungle infested Agency tract. They conquered this area and brought it under their control. Consequently they took over the administration of the Kondhmal and instituted appropriate measures to stop human sacrifice which the Kondhs were carrying on in order to restore the lost fertility of the soil.

The Britishers did not disturb the Mutha-heads; instead, they tried to establish more effective control over the Kondhs through them. They allowed the old Mutha order to continue but reorganized it for better administrative efficiency. In recognition of the pre-existent Mutha-head as the hereditary local chief of his Mutha they (Britisher) vested with him powers of administering justice in conformity with the Kondh tradition in lieu of an annual payment of Nazorana or a lump gift and supply of *bethi* or free labour to the British Political Agent as and when required. As a corollary to this, Mutha-head started levying regular annual Mamul or nominal gift in cash or kind from each Kondh family. Following this, the British administration created a few posts of assistants to the Mutha-head, viz the Karjee or judicial clerk, the Bevari or the revenue clerk-cum-accountant and the Dandia or constables. All these posts were hereditary and some amount of arable land was attached to each of them in lieu of service. The Karjee was preferably a Brahman, the Bevari, a Karan (writer caste), and the Dandia, a Paik. Furthermore, the Mutha was divided into several Sub-Muthas, each comprised a few villages. Each Sub-Mutha was kept under the direct supervision of a Kondh hereditary official known as Mutha-Mallick or Pattmajhi. And at the village level,

in each village a Pradhan or Head man and a Chatia or Chawkidar were also appointed on hereditary basis from among the Kondhs and the Pana (a Scheduled Caste -drummers and basket-makers by profession) respectively. They were also allotted agricultural land for their service. All these Mutha, Sub Mutha and village functionaries were answerable to the Mutha head.

### **Pushangia Mutha**

The forefather of the present Mutha-head, Raghunath Patra, had migrated from Jorasingha in Kalahandi district, some thirteen generations ago in search of better livelihood to Mahasingh village, in the Pushangia Mutha of the Kondhmals. One Pojida Patra belonging to the ninth ascending generation of the Mutha-head family, was first appointed as the Mutha-head by the Raja of Ghumsar for his competency, cleverness and capability in tackling and compromising an internecine dispute over the control of lands between two groups of Kondhs in Pushangia Mutha. The list of succession of the Mutha heads, since Pojida Patra, the first Mutha-head, of the Pushangia Mutha is as, follows. As a rule always the eldest son succeeded his father as Mutha-head-

Pojida Patra  
I  
Damu Patra  
I  
Vondu Patra  
I  
Ghasi Patra  
I  
Luha Patra  
I  
Nara Patra  
I  
Gangadhar Patra  
1  
Landa Patra  
I  
Raghunath Patra (Present Mutha-head)

The Kondh refer to the Mutha head as 'Patra' and address him by the term of fictitious kinship relationship he stands with regard to them.

The Pushangia Mutha comprises sixty-seven villages with its official headquarters at Pushangia village, where the Mutha-head resides. As has been mentioned earlier the incumbent of the Mutha consists, besides the Mutha-head, of a Karjee, a Bevari and a Dandia. All these incumbencies are hereditary, and lands have been attached to each of them (As the entire Kondhmal has not been surveyed, the exact amount of land to each of the incumbencies could not be

collected. However, it is sufficient to support a family of ten to twelve members. And the Mutha-head enjoys more and best available land in lieu of service. In view of the wide expansion of the areas and lack of communication facilities within, the Britishers divided the whole Mutha into five Sub-Mutha. viz., Digamilla. Nelipaka, Palmokia. Taprangia and Gadakabali. And to look after the immediate problems of law and orders of the Sub-Muthas, they created five posts of new officials called Mutha Mallick and as an adroit move, on the recommendation of the Mutha-head, appointed five Kondhas to these new posts on hereditary basis. The Mutha Mallicks were required to report law and order incidents of their respective areas to the Mutha-head and to carry out his instructions, Moreover, in each village a Pradhan or Headman and Chhatia or Chowkidar as the village level Mutha functionaries, were appointed from among the Kondhs and the Pana Caste respectively. The Mutha Mallicks were required to act as the liaison officers between the Mutha-head on the one hand and the village Head man on the other. The Mutha Mallicks carried out the instructions from the Mutha-head to their respective village Headmen for compliance and likewise received reports from their village Headmen to be conveyed to the Mutha-head. Alike other incumbents of the Mutha administration, the posts of village Pradhan and Chowkidar were also hereditary and some amount of agricultural land was attached to each of them. Thus, the Britishers turned the Mutha, the traditional political organization of the Kondhs, during the course of their reorganization, into a hierarchical authority structure.

### **Function of the various Incumbents**

*The Mutha-Head-* As the chief of the Mutha, he looked after the general administration, ensured proper execution of civil agency works, and collected land revenue in cash or kind and *mamuls* through the Bevari. He maintained the customary laws of the Kondh tribe and also maintained order which ensured safety of life and security of property. He settled all sorts of disputes that were brought to him-domestic or otherwise. He heard the complaints and cases that were brought to his notice, and delivered judgment on them. He inflicted punishment and imposed fines on a miscreant or culprit, redressed the grievances of an aggrieved in consonance with the Kondh traditional rule.

In all types of cases, before the Mutha-head sits on judgment, both parties, the complainant and the respondent, are required to pay a deferential allowance in cash or kind called Mahat (meaning honour) to him as a mark of respect. Besides, a smaller portion of the fines collected from the accused is also appropriated by the Mutha-head and his assistants, and the rest goes to the aggrieved.

The Mutha-head formerly used to supervise personally the collection of *mamul* from all residents of the Mutha who owned land, either homestead or agricultural, by his Bevari or revenue assistant. But now-a-days the collection of taxes on any sort of *mamul* has been discontinued, and consequently the post of Bevari has become obsolete. All lands in Kondhmal were and are rent-free as no



revenue settlement has ever been conducted. But all residents paid *mamul* or nominal gift, in cash or kind, before independence to the Mutha-head in recognition of their ownership right over the lands they possessed. In the earlier days, especially, during the formative period of the Mutha, *mamul* denoted entirely a voluntary payment given to the Mutha-head as a gesture of good will, which he received with thanks. But with the passage of time it assumed the form of an obligatory payment in order to establish hereditary right over the possessed land, and to avoid any possible eviction or encroachment. Besides this individual *mamul*, the Mutha-head levied Mutha-Nazarana consisted of an assorted presentation of rural agricultural produce to the Raja who acknowledged its receipt by offering a silk saree by the Mutha head. Offer of the saree by the Raja to the Mutha head signified the former's approval of the latter's continuance as the 'Mutha-head. But this Nazarana or presentation transformed into regular revenue since British administration. Since British - times the Mutha-head started collecting one rupee and ten-measures (one measure is equivalent to one seer) of rice from each village every year irrespective of size towards the Mutha-revenue, but actually he paid twelve- rupee annually out of the total collection of sixty-seven rupees and six hundred and seventy measures of rice. The rest he appropriated.

The British Political Agent discontinued the royal practice of presentation of saree to the Muth head against the payment of - the annual revenue, of the Mutha; but instead- initiated the practice of issuing written receipts for that. Presently, the Mutha head pays the same amount to the Government as the revenue of the Mutha.

Apart from the above, income, the Mutha-head had four other types of customary receipts from the Kondh residents of his Mutha, viz, Sari-Mamul, Butta, Mamul, Sanju-Mamul and Kedu-Mamul. The Sari-Mamul was paid by the Mutha Mallick, the Butta-Mamul by the near consanguine of a deceased person, Sanju-Mamul by a Kondh on the occasion of first harvest of his crop and Kedu Mamul by the organizers of a Kedu festival. A Muth-Mallick received annual a sari from Mutha-head, as the token of the administration's approval of his continuing in the post, and paid in exchange Sari-Mamul, which consisted of five rupees, ten measures of rice and fowl. The Butta-Mamul, which included rice, money and live-stock of any quantity, was paid to the Mutha-head by the relatives of a deceased when the former called on the latter to offer condolences. And the Kedu-Mamul was paid collectively by the organizers of a Kedu festival to the Mutha-head for securing the, latter's approval to hold the festival. The Kedu-Mamul was an assortment of various agricultural produces and may be of any quantity; And Sonju-Mamul was the levy of grains from each Kondh family on the occasion of first harvest of a crop.

Whenever a person harvested a crop first, he paid a small portion of it to Mutha—head. The quantity of Sonju (meaning share) paid to Mutha head did not have any specificity. Since the inception of the rule of the Raja of Ghumsar in

Kondhmal till Indian independence, the Kondhs of Pushangia Mutha were being engaged in Bethi- compulsory labour by the Mutha head as and when required. It was the duty of the village Headman to collect persons for Bethi, from their respective villages, on receipt of orders from the Mutha head. Every family, excepting those of the office-bearers of the Mutha organization, was required to send a person for Bethi in turn; and failure under any circumstance, to comply with meant immediate payment of a day's wage to the Headman to engage a person as a substitute thereto. The duty of the village Headman was not only to ensure the attendance of the required number of persons from their respective villages for Bethi but also to supervise the work, in which they were being engaged. Bethi entailed no remuneration, whatsoever, for the workers. They were to make their own eating arrangements, if their work-site happened to be from their homes.

There were two different types of Bethi, viz. Raj-Bethi (Bethi of the Raja of Ghumsar and subsequently that of the British Government), and the Patra-Bethi or Mutha-head-Bethi.

The Raj-Bethi included construction and repair of bridges, building and repair of rest-shed and its fencing, transportation of the luggage of the visiting officials of the administration, and work as their escort and attendant. Further, they were to subscribe towards the ration of the visiting officials.

The second type of Bethi included obligation for catering to the various personal needs of the Mutha-head or Patra; viz. supply of wooden poles, bamboo and bamboo mats; thatching and repair of his house; repair of the fencing of his kitchen garden; tending of his livestock, working in his fields; harvest of his crops; and escorting him on his tour; and such other duties which he assigned.

The Mutha-head or Patra septennially worshipped Patrakhonda - his tutelary deity, with elaborate paraphernalia and on this occasion, he held out a get-together party for all the Kondh leaders as well as for other prominent Kondhs of the Mutha. This he did with a view to reinforcing the loyalties of the Kondhs to him. The present Mutha-head or Patra has abandoned the party since independence.

*The Karjee* - He was the Judicial-clerk of the Mutha and was responsible to the Mutha-head or Patra. The post is defunct now. In the past he maintained all case records. Whenever a complaint regarding any dispute, was lodged with the Mutha-head, it was he who recorded it and fixed up a date and place for adjudication of the case at the instance of the former. He summoned the parties to the place of hearing, and recorded the judgment of the Mutha-head. Maintenance of systematic case records had started since British rule.

And apart from this, whenever any instruction came from the British Government to the Mutha he, with the approval of the Mutha-head, passed it orally on to the Mutha-Mallicks for compliance.

**The Bevari** - He was the revenue clerk-cum-accountant of the Mutha. In the past he collected various *mamuls* or taxes from all over the Mutha under the direct supervision of the Mutha-head. He supervised new patches of shifting-cultivation for revenue assessment. He maintained all the accounts of Mutha administration. The Bevari too has no function since independence, as he was not required thereafter either to collect tax or to maintain the account of the Mutha.

**Dandia** - During the early stage of the formation of the Mutha, like the appointment of other Mutha functionaries, a few Dandia or Constables had been appointed on hereditary basis from the Paik Caste (Paiks formed the local militia in southern Orissa in those days) to constitute the constabulary of the Mutha with a view to helping the Mutha-head in maintaining law and order within the Mutha and thus to ensure his indisputable administrative control over the Kondhs. They worked as official messengers of the Mutha administration. Apart from carrying out errands, they collected required persons and brought them to Mutha headquarters and attend to such duties as were assigned to them.

**Mutha-Mallick**-There were five Mutha Mallicks within the Pusungia Mutha. They looked after the immediate law and order problems of their respective areas. They settled minor interpersonal and interfamilial disputes. But they brought to the notice of the Mutha-head complicated cases and also law and order problems. They assisted the Mutha administration in the collection of tax, in the organization of Bethi work and in such other works. As potential and indispensable incumbents of the Mutha organization, although subordinate to the Mutha-head, they were invariably consulted by the former in every important affair. Now-a-days, they adjudicate and settle dispute or settle any other socio-cultural problem if requested.

**Village Headman**—In every village there was a village Headman. As some amount of authority had been vested in him to maintain peace and order in the village, he looked after the immediate law and order problems of his village and brought dispute and other cases, which he failed to settle, to the notice of the Mutha mallick for necessary action. He assisted Mutha administration in collecting revenues and in arranging persons for Bethi work from his village. As the village-level representative of the Mutha organization he attended to various instructions from the administration. These functionaries, though have become defunct, are still respected like the Mutha Mallicks because of their traditional status and role.

**Chhatia**—In every village there was a Chhatia or Chowkidar. He was the messenger and bearer of the village headman as well as those of other Mutha functionaries. He was always at the beck and call of the village headman. He

reported each case of birth or death in the village to the Karjee, who maintained the record. The Chhatia still continues as the village Chowkidar.

### **Present form of the Traditional Mutha Organization –**

It is evident now from the preceding paragraphs that the Mutha organization has dwindled away, and the functions of its functionaries have either been attenuated or have ceased to exist altogether. This resulted partly out of the constitutional safeguards which the Indian Constitution guaranteed to the tribes and partly of the extension of the scope of different government agencies into the tribes. The constitutional safeguards included among other things such privileges as exemption from paying land revenue, non-eviction from occupancy, no transferability of ownership right over land etc. As a corollary to this measure the Mutha-head was legally inhibited from collecting any sort of tax from the Kondhs, either in cash or kind, and from escheating a person's property, either in part or full, when he died intestate. Consequently, the traditional authority of the Mutha-head over the Kondhs was set at naught.

The position of Mutha-head becomes gradually more insignificant as the scope of general and police administration were extended on to the Kondhs. No longer could he employ them either in private or public Bethi.

In early sixties the statutory Panchayat system was introduced in this area, which assumed some of the functions of the Mutha organization in addition to its new ones. The Mutha was divided under the organization of the statutory Panchayat; this disintegrated the traditional territorial unity because it did not include all the villages. This new alignment of villages also failed to bolster up the traditional sociopolitical unity among the villages in such cases where villages of different Muthas were grouped together.

Further, as a result of the extension of the general administration on to Kondhs all serious cases relating to law and order are being dealt with by police and courts of law. This new system, to which the native Kondhs are still unaccustomed, has not proved to be very much beneficial to them. Because settlement of dispute or redemption of a grievance under the system takes relatively more time and becomes expensive.

They prefer their disputes and any other socio-cultural problem to be settled as per their traditional custom. Consequently, they take their cases now-a-days to the statutory Panchayats with the request to decide them in accordance with their tribal norm. And they also want the traditional Mutha functionaries such as the Mutha-head and the Mutha-Mallicks to be present in the meetings of the statutory Panchayats, in which, their affairs are discussed.

# OATH AND ORDEAL IN KHOND SOCIETY OF NINETENTH CENTURY ORISSA \*

*N. R. Patnaik* <sup>1</sup>

The Khonds or Kandhs belong to one of the principal aborigines of the hills of Orissa and the neighbouring districts. In the nineteenth century they dwelt in an extensive area stretching from the eastern limit of Gondwana to the Bay of Bengal, and from the Mahanadi river on the north to the Godavari on the south.<sup>1</sup> Their area included the hills separating the districts of Ganjam and Vizagapatam in the Madras Presidency and continuing northwards into the Orissa Tributary States of Baud, Daspalla, and Nayagarh, and crossing the Mahanadi, into Angul and the Khondmals. Their area was also extended further into Central Provinces covering northern part of Kalahandi, and the south of Patna.<sup>2</sup>

Oath and ordeal constituted a redeeming feature in the Khond society. Those were mostly used for setting the disputes. The disputes regarding property and offences of all kinds were adjudicated by the council of elders, who heard both parties and examined witnesses.<sup>3</sup> And the oath and ordeal played vital roles at the time of trial.<sup>4</sup>

The Khonds had numerous types of oath or ordeal. One such oath has been described by J. A. R. Stevenson. That is as follows.

“The subject of the circumstance is first repeated by the swearing party, and a basket containing the following things is held before him; A blood-sucker (Lizard), a bit of tiger's skin, a peacock's feather, earth from a white-ant hill, rice mixed with fowl's blood, a lighted lamp. He proceeds with his oath, touching each object in the basket at that part of the oath which refers to that abject. “Oh’ father (God), I swear, and if I swear falsely, then, Oh; father may I become shriveled and dry like a blood-sucker, and thus die. May I be killed by a tiger. May I crumble to

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXX, No.1, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, 1990, pp.20-24

<sup>1</sup> Post-Graduate Department of History, Ravenshaw College, Cuttack.

dust like this white-ant's hill. May I be blown about like this feather. May I be extinguished like this lamp". While saying the last words, he puts a few grains of rice in his mouth, and blows out the lamp, and the basket with its contents is made to touch the top of his head. Thus the litigants and witnesses were examined an oath.

One of the most sacred ordeal tests of the Khonds was founded on the belief that rice steeped in the blood of a sheep\* sacrificed in the name of the Earth Goddess would, if eaten by litigants, destroy the perjured and that a portion of the disputed soil made into clay would, if swallowed by them have similar effect. It was believed that they would be attacked by some fatal illness within seven days.<sup>7</sup>

C.H. Mounsy, the Special Assistant Agent of Ganjam in his report of the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1883 has revealed some of the valuable information regarding the oath and ordeal of the Khonds. He writes that the four kinds of oaths were used for judicial disputes. Of those one oath was used to induce secrecy. The most solemn form of the first kind of oath was called the oath on Tiger's skin. Such an oath was taken in the following way. A piece of land was to be smeared with cow dung and rice sprinkled on it. On this land of Tiger and Cheetah skin, some leaves of the Tulsi plant, some leaves of one of the arum plant (Saru plant), some earth from a white-ant heap and (if the oath was about a land dispute) some of the earth from the spot in question were placed. The man who took the oath would come forward. Lifting the skin with the other things on it and addressing himself to God he would say, "If I am not speaking the truth or if I do not point out this boundary truly (as the case may be) may I be destroyed by a tiger, may my limbs be withered like this Tulsi plant within, may my throat blister to cause my death as if this Saru plant was appealed to it and may white ants eat my body as they do to wood and if it is land case may I be destroyed and my body mingled with this earth."

The ordinary form of oath for petty land disputes was known as 'drinking or eating the earth'. In this oath, seven handful of earth was to be taken from the land contested about. Such earth was to be mixed with water. Then this mixture was to be drunk by the man who claimed the land. At the time of drinking the man was to say that his family belongings would meet death and destruction in three days if he was perjuring himself.

The third form of oath used in land disputes has been given by C.H. Mounsy. One who would take oath was to walk round the boundary of the land that he claimed. He then advanced to the centre of the land where the headmen had already assembled. There a mixture in a cup was to be kept. This cup made of the Sal leaves. Seven leaves of the 'Choturam' were tied together and these were to be chopped every time when placed over the cup so that each piece would fall into the mixture. Before he drank this mixture - a Khond priest was to break a fowl's egg and offer it to Goddess. Then the mixture was to be swallowed by the man invoking the God of rain that He would allow him to live if he was speaking the truth. On the other hand He would make him die within seven days, if he was perjuring himself.

Then he was watched for the said period. If nothing would happen to him he would win the case<sup>10</sup>.

The fourth solemn oath used for land disputes was the recognized form by which a man might clear his character from the charges of 'Pulto Bagha' and seduction. When men and women acquired the power of changing themselves into tigers, they were called 'Pulto Bagha'. This he or she did to destroy the enemies. The oath for it, was taken with the earth mixed with salt from a white ant heap, holding the leaves of the 'Olua' and a Tangi. One was put the Tangi blade between his teeth and touching the other things took oath that if he was perjuring himself he might be dissolved like salt in water, eaten up by white ants so that there would remain nothing of him to be burnt, wither as the 'Olua' loaves, and he cut into little pieces by Tangies. Sometimes they used to swear holding peacock's feather with the belief that those were used as fans of the deities.<sup>11</sup>

The Khonds used to believe that a false oath taken on the potter's wheel would cause lunacy. Likewise if an oath was taken in the field with the standing crop that would cause the death of the thief.<sup>12</sup> A simple offering of liquor to the Earth-Goddess was frequently made to ratify an oath or a promise. The oath, which was to be administered in the courts, embodied all the older forms. A *tambi*, the standard measure, some salt, paddy, rice, cat's fur, the leave of the broom plant and earth form an ant-hill were placed before the witness. He was made to repeat the names of the contents and swear to tell the truth.<sup>13</sup>

Macpherson has mentioned three kinds of ordeals such as piercing hands into boiling water, hot oil and heated iron. Besides these there were other ordeals too. Those were immersion in water, a contrivance with bamboo and the like. <sup>14</sup>

In case of the boiling water ordeal, a new earthen pot was to be filled with water mixed with a handful of cow-dung. The pot was then placed over the fire till the water boils. The suspected man was either to plunge his hand and wrist into it when it was still over the fire. Sometimes he was asked to bring out some articles dropped to the bottom of the pot. At that time the Khond priest was to sit by its side. He would invoke Earth-Goddess for the occasion. If his hand was not found scaled he would be declared innocent. The ordeal by hot oil was to be carried out in the same process <sup>15</sup>.

Yet the hot iron ordeal was of two types. In the first one, a squarish lamp of iron was heated till to turned red hot in a fire. Then a priest was to sprinkle rice over it, one handful of rice was to be thrown in the name of each suspected man. If the iron would smell, while shouting one name then he was to be found guilty. The second method of testing innocence was to make a piece of iron red hot in similar way. That one was to be placed on the back side of the palm of the accused. A stick was to be placed in between the palm and the iron. If neither the sticks nor his palms would be found burnt, then he was to be declared innocent. If not, he was to be declared guilty<sup>16</sup>.

The ordeals by immersion in water were of two types. In the first type, the complaint and defendant would be asked to go to the middle of a stream or pool and sit down so that they were completely submerged. The man who would be found keeping his breath for the longest period would be adjudged truthful<sup>17</sup>. In the second type, only one man was to go into the water. Then the Khond priest would invoke the God of Rain. This being done he poured out little of milk on the surface of the water. If the milk would float, he would be declared truthful. On the other hand if the milk would sink he would be considered a liar.<sup>18</sup>

Another ordeal was still more inhuman. Here one was required to step over the burning logs. A large piece of tamarind wood was to be kindled. When the log would be red hot its piece were to be scattered over nearly four yards of ground. The man to prove his innocence generally in case of theft was required to walk over those logs without getting himself burnt. Before he stepped over, he used to pray God telling to scorch his feet if he was guilty and make him escape unburnt if innocent. In some places like Ghumsar, the man's feet were to be first dipped into oil before he started to walk.

In this context Barbara M. Boal has given a description of one such ordeal by walking on the fire trench. That is as follows.

In the case of adultery, witchcraft or sorcery, an ordeal was to be faced. If a husband accused his wife of consistent adultery, she was asked to justify herself innocent by an ordeal. "Walk the fiery trench", the husband used to say his accused wife and in reply she used to say, "All right, I will", Then she would go to her parents' home and tell the whole story. Then a dialogue between her and the parents takes place. Her parents said : "If you have not committed adultery we will undertake this ordeal". She declared strongly: I have not become adulterous. Then the preparation for the ordeal takes place. The head of the sick (bewitched) person's house or the father or kinsman of the adulterous woman appears before the village council. Then if the accuser says "You must undergo trial by ordeal. I will scatter the rice-grains for you. If the fire does not burn you, I will give you a buffalo, rice, metal pots and rupees for my shame's sake; moreover I will bless you". Thereafter that evening one or perhaps two men of the accused's lineage would collect some rice and an egg. Next morning without looking to any woman's face those two men would go up the hill (to the forest) and offer the rice and egg with invocation. Then they would cut down a large dried up branch of a Sal tree. They would carry the same on their shoulders and join their kinsman. They put the wood down where the trench was to be dug outside the accuser's village boundary. One man would provide a small and large pickaxe and a new winnowing tray. They would go to bathe and return in their damp clothes. They would then dig the fire-trench. Inside the fire-trench they would light the fire. When the embers would look red hot the people of both the sides would gather and listen intently twice to the accuser's charge. One of the woman's (or sorcerer's) kinsmen who had bathed ritually would stand near the trench. Holding some rice he would invoke Bura Pennu and scatter



the rice. He would anoint his feet with castor oil and put seven Pipal leaves under his feet, winding them round with new thread. Then he would lift his battle axe to his shoulder give a Johari greeting to all deities on four sides and then step in to the trench. He would walk through the fire seven times, while another man would keep on fanning it with the new winnowing tray. If he could not manage seven times he would come out quickly. Then the people could know that the woman (or sorcerer) had committed the misdeed. If she/he would be innocent nothing would happen to him. They said, "She/he (as the case may be) has not done wrong. You have been accused without cause". Then immediately they would give the promised buffalo and rice. The woman would go to father's house and stay for a while. Afterwards her husband would come to take her back home.<sup>20</sup>

Yet the ordeal by bamboo was different in character. But it was rarely applied. Two bamboos with six feet long each were to be cut. On the man whose innocence or guilt was to be determined three bamboos were to be placed horizontally touching his right and left arms. Those were to be tied with bamboos. Then he was to invoke God so that the charges against him may be cleared. If he was innocent he would be free from his wooden binds.

There were yet two other ordeals which were of different nature. Those were usually applied to boundary disputes. The ownership of the land was to be proved or disproved by the conduct of a fowl belonging to one of the parties. This fowl was to be tied to the boundary line in dispute. If it would remain quiet there, eat and sleep as usual, the owner of the fowl would be believed to have spoken the truth. On the other hand if it would flutter and try to get away from where it was tied up he would lose his case. The other method was to fix an arrow on the alleged boundary line. Then the Khond Priest would pour rice exactly on the top of the arrow. The side on which the longest heap of rice would accumulate would be taken as the boundary of his land.<sup>22</sup>

Thus there were several peculiar oaths and ordeals prevalent in the Khond society of the nineteenth century.

## References

1. H.B. Rowney, *The Wild Tribes of India* (London, 1882), p.95
2. G.A. Grierson, Ed.) *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. IV (Calcutta, 1906), p.457;
3. Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909) Vol. III, p.357; *Man in India*, Vol. XII, October - December 1932, No. 4 p. 245
4. E.T. Dalton, *Tribal History of Eastern India* (Reprint, Delhi, 1973), p.294.
5. W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal* (London, 1877), Vol. XIX, p.223.
6. Quoted in E.Thurston, *Op. Cit*, Vol-III, p.407  
In some places the rice was mixed with the blood of a pig sacrificed in the name of Earth-Goddess.
7. Board Proceedings, Judicial (Orissa State Archives, Loose Record, Accession No. 2034G), C.H. Mounsy, Special Asst. Agent, Ganjam to Br. Bidee, Secy to the Agent to the Governor, October 10, 1883.

8. L.S.S.O, Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers, Angul (Calcutta, 1908), p.64.
9. Board Proceedings, Judicial (Orissa State Archives, Loose Record, Accession No. 2034G), C.H. Mounsy, Special Asst. Agent, Ganjam to Br. Bidee, Secy to the Agent to the Governor, October 10, 1883.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. L.S.S.O. Malley, Op. Cit, p.64
14. Ibid
15. Board Proceedings, Judicial (Orissa State Archives, Loose Record, Accession No. 2034G), C. Mounsy, Special Asst. Agent, Ganjam to Br. Bidee, Secy to the Agent to the Governor, October, 10, 10, 1883; W.W.Hunter, Op. Cit, Vol. XIX, p. 224.
16. Board Proceedings, Judicial (Orissa State Archives, Loose Record, Accession No. 2034G), C.H. Mounsy, Special Asst. Agent, Ganjam to Br. Bidee, Secy to the Agent to the Governor, October 10, 1883.
17. Ibid.
18. L.S.S.O. Malley, Op. Cit, p.64.
19. Board Proceedings, Judicial (Orissa State Archives, Loose Record, Accession No. 2034G), C.H. Mounsy, Special Asst. Agent, Ganjam to Br. Bidee, Secy to the Agent to the Governor, October 10, 1883.
20. Ibid.  
 Invocation :  
 "O high Bura God !  
 We are understanding this ordeal to justify our daughter  
     If our daughter has sinned  
     May I be burned as I walk this trench  
     If there is no sin may I not be burned"
21. Barbara M. Boal, The Konds, Warminster, 1982, p.14-15.
22. Board Proceedings, Judicial (Orissa State Archives, Loose Record, Accession No. 2034G), C.H. Mounsy, Special Asst. Agent, Ganjam to Br. Bidee, Secy to the Agent to the Governor, October 10, 1883.

# GAMES VIS-A-VIS SOCIALIZATION: A CASE STUDY AMONG KONDH CHILDREN \*

*M. Acharya*<sup>1</sup>  
*R. P. Mohanty*<sup>2</sup>

The main criteria usually adopted to distinguish play from non-ludic activities shows clearly that play is not a Behavior Per se, or one particular type of activity among others. If this be so play would be disinterested or as J.M. Baldwin says, "autotelic". It is determined by a certain orientation of the behavior, or by a general 'Pole' of the activity, each particular action being characterized by its greater or less proximity to the pole and by the kind of equilibrium between the polarized tendencies.

The anthropological study on education has challenged the traditional ideas regarding education, opened new avenues in the realm of psychological investigation, resulted in the refinement of cross-cultural studies to understand the educational pattern and motivation of any primitive society. Margaret Mead was the pioneer in this field, whose work attracted a number of psychologists and anthropologists towards the subject. The researcher's emphasis lies on the fact that the child takes birth with a clean slate of mind and is molded by its culture to fit into its society properly through the process of enculturation. M.J. Herskovits is of the opinion that it is a process whose function is to bring individual behavior into line with the specific requirements of a culture.

"Play and pretence are a vital need for childhood, for which opportunity should be provided if the child is to be happy and healthy, quite independently of any further utility in these activities" as Bertrand Russell sees it. Besides, it has got educational value which creates new aptitudes in children and the imitation and pretence practiced by children cultivate power significance and the learning of

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXXIII, No.2, THRTI, Bhubaneswar 1993, pp.22-25

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer in Anthropology, Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies, Orissa, Bhubaneswar - 751013.

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies, Orissa, Bhubaneswar-751013.

things they have to do in their practical life. This is also observed in the case of the Kondh children of Mundapara in Phulbani district of Orissa.

The various games played by the children of the Kondh society cannot be considered as mere play of games; but it is a source of learning apart from being a source of pleasure. By playing the games with the play-mates they build themselves for their future life. They form some ideas about their social life, such as rituals and the work they have to perform in their matured life.

Most of games are played on the village streets. It is investigated that the following games are played by the Kondh children of Mundapara village.

**Bal Danbi Dambi Kahinam**, (Grinding of dust), is one type of game played by very small children on the village road. They gather some quantity of dust at one place and by means a stick (*pahuruni*) grind it. Generally girls in the age group 8-12 years are seen playing this game.

**Bal Maker**, is a game played very intelligently by the children of both sexes. They collect some amount of dust from a place on the street and hide a small broken pot called (Maker by the Kondhs) inside this. They ask others to find out the piece of earthen pot. He or she is considered to be very much intelligent who could find the Maker out of the dust.

**Podhasi Kodi Karugena Kahenam**, is a play in which small boys and girls make animals like buffalos, bullocks, etc. in Jackfruit leaves. Sometimes two children make two animals and make them fight with each other.

Sometimes they make buffaloes with jackfruit leaves, the legs and horns are made of straw. They make the plough in straw and a rope in *siali* skin. They tie the animals in the plough by means of rope and go out for ploughing the field by pulling the rope on the street. The boys of four to eight years play this game.

**Poshasi Karugene Bijagena Onga Menjina** – is a play in which at one place of village street the boys make Dharni (their Earth goddess) by putting a piece of wood in erect position. A buffalo made out of *siali* fruit is tied upon that Dharani by means of *siali* skin. Small musical instrument like *changu* made of goat's skin is played by all the children. They sacrifice the animal made of *siali* fruit by means of a post shred or knife and offer its juice as blood before the goddess. After it they pretend as if cooking and eating meat curry. The boys of seven to twelve years play this game. It is played just as the Kondh people used to perform in Kedu puja.

**Mudi Sisi Kahinam** – (to hide the ring) is a game played by both boys and girls. One boy or girl is to hide the ring in one of his or her hands and other children are asked in which it is hidden. The boys or girls who can tell it correctly are considered to be very clever.

**Oda Kati Kati Kahinam** – is a game played very often by the children of both the sexes. They draw a square on the street and five or six children stand on it

holding one another's waist inside the lines, representing goats. Outside the lines stands one child representing a human being. Children representing goats move inside the lines and the child representing the human being move outside it waiting for getting a chance to catch one of the goats.

**Palu Madka** - There is also another type of game played by both boys and girls. A big square on the street is drawn on which all the children except one, stand representing different types of fishes. One boy or girl stands on the central place of the square. His or her eyes are tied upon by means of a piece of cloth. All the children representing fishes move and the child representing the human being moves to catch one of the fishes. When he or she catches one of them he or she is asked some questions which he or she should answer in the following manner: -

One Fish asks	: "Ni Medka Pati" or "What type of fish you have got" ?
Person Answers	: "Palu Madka" or "Palu fish"
Fish	: "Ene Akadai Baga Giti"? or "In which leaf you have distributed the share ?
Person	: "Titerakani Baga Giti" or "In sal leaves"
Fish	: "Baba Ambari Siti" or "Whom have you offered the first share" ?
Person	: "Patarenjiiti" or "to the Patra"
Fish	: "Ete Rabage Ambari Siti" ? or "Whom have you offered the next share" ?
Person	: "Ma Mani Siti" or "to my maternal uncle"
Fish	: "Ate Ase Baga Mane"? or "Whom do you give the share left"?
Person	: "Age Mane Gule Aju Baga Gina" or "We all will take the share left".

**Maharikaha** - (Playing the game NATU), It is common among the children of four to eighteen years. Natu is made of wood at the bottom of which an iron pin is fixed. A rope is rounded tightly around the Natu and it is thrown off so that it rotates on the ground. Sometimes, there is a competition among the boys. They throw the Natus at one place and watch whose Natu moves for a longer time. Sometimes, the player is praised highly if he can stop another's moving Natu by the stroke of his own Natu.

**Todkogigi Kahinam** - is a type of game played by the children of both the sexes. Some children sit in one place representing jackfruits, one child represents the thief and another the guard in the fruit garden. The thief comes and takes away one jackfruit. The guard runs after to catch him. If he cannot catch, then he is considered as an inefficient guard.

*Sedi Danju Kahinam* – (to play the game of marriage), is a game played by both boys and girls. One boy represents the bridegroom, one girl the bride and others as the relations of both the bride and the bridegroom. The system of Ganthi (the feast and the marriage) is shown by them in playing. This type of arranged marriage system is called *sendensed* by the Kondhs.

*Shagada Tani Kakons Khenam*, is a game which means to play, the making of bullock carts. The boys play this in the village by means of some iron nails. One sits on the cart and others pull it on the street. It is played by the children of ten to fifteen years old.

*Kojuni Kole Kahinam*, is the game played by boys and girls in which children sit in a circle representing guards and at the centre sits one boy or girl representing a chicken. Another boy acting as a wolf, tries to take away the chicken from the centre. If the guards are intelligent, wolf cannot take it away.

Besides these games there are games like *Bahu Chori*, *Cuchi*, *Dandu*, *Dadu* etc., which are played by the Kondh children. These games are also played by other sections of the people. Hence, their discussion may be overlooked.

**Toys :** By analyzing the games it is found that the Kondhs do not provide toys to the children except Natu and Changu. The toys of the children are mainly the implements or things used in their society. These are winnowing fans, jackfruits, Pahuruni (husking stick), fruits, etc.

### **Significance of the Games :**

Most of the games played by the Kondh children cannot be ignored, because these have got social significance. These games are the ideological aspects of their social life and culture.

The girls children winnowing out dust by small winnowing fans, grinding dust in Phurani (husking stick) etc. shows that from childhood they are trained to perform these household chores which will be helpful in their future life.

The various animals found in tribal areas are also represented in their games and this gives them an idea about these animals from very childhood.

Ploughing the field, pulling small bullock carts etc. give some idea about agricultural operations to the children.

In actual life the chicken, goats etc. are important animals which are sacrificed in various rituals. These are sometimes stolen away by the thief or eaten away by the wolf. So these harmful men or animals should be guarded. They learn this from their childhood through play.

The marriage system *Senden Sedi*, the ritual *Kedu Jatra*, the process of sacrificing animals before Gods and Goddesses all are internalized from their childhood through play.

“*Bal Maker*” and “*Mudi Sisi Kahinam*” games are thought provoking and as such these are helpful for the children to a great extent for cultivating intelligence.

The game “**Medka Kahinam**” taught the offering of share of food to different relatives with different propositions. In some rituals the Patra is offered the first share and then comes the maternal uncle’s share following by the share of others. The children from an early age also understand the importance of Patra and maternal uncle in their society. From a very childhood they perform all the works in the playground which they have to observe in their future adult life.

### **Conclusion :**

The following conclusions can be made out of the discussions made above with regard to the games played by the Kondh children : -

- (i) The game materials used are all locally available and hardly any material brought from outside.
- (ii) To seek pleasure is not the only initiation of these games. Their prime objective is to train these children for their future avocations.
- (iii) Through these games the children become intimately acquainted with their socio-cultural fabric and learn how to play suitable roles in upholding their age old traditions in their day to day life.
- (iv) Some of the games also provoke cultivation of intelligence.
- (v) These games, by offering them an opportunity of playing the roles of adults, help them to find their own identity within the ambit of their socio-cultural surroundings.

### **Bibliography :**

1. *Coming to age among Samoa*, by Margaret Mead.
2. *Man and His Works*, by M.J. Herskovits.
3. Chapter VI (pp 147-150) “Play, Dreams and Initiation in Childhood by Jeen Piaget (1951), W.W. Northon & Comp. Inc. New York.
4. Chapter 12, “Home Ludens : A Study of Play Elements in Culture by John Huizinga (1949), Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London.
5. *On Education* – Bertrand Russel.

# ETHNO-MEDICINAL PRACTICES OF THE KONDH OF EASTERN GHATS \*

*Kalpana Patra* <sup>1</sup>  
*Debabrata Panda* <sup>2</sup>  
*Sharat Kumar Palita* <sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

*The present study documented the ethno-medicinal use of plants by Kondh tribe of Koraput district in Eastern Ghats of southern Odisha. The study was conducted 07 villages under Semiliguda Community Development Block of Koraput district. Information on ethno-medicinal use was collected with the help of a semi-structured questionnaire. The study revealed the use of 26 plant species distributed under 26 genera and 21 families for the treatment of 17 ailments by the traditional medicinal practitioners belonging to sections of Kondh tribe. Ethno-medicinal information about these plants has been provided in detail with their scientific name, family, local name, plant parts used and medicinal uses.*

**Key words:** *Ethno-medicine, Kondh, Medicinal Plants, Koraput*

## Introduction

Knowledge on plant use is the result of many years of man's interaction and selection on the most desirable, the most vigorous and the most successful plant present in the immediate environment at a given time (Rindos, 1984). The need for well-being of a society is an ultimate driver of millennia old interaction and selection of most successful medicinal plants and development of

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 58, Nos.1&2, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2018, pp. 9-14

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources, Central University of Orissa, Koraput, Odisha, India

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, School of Biodiversity, Central University of Orissa, Koraput,

<sup>3</sup> Professor and Dean, School of Biodiversity, Central University of Orissa, Koraput, Odisha, India. Corresponding Author e-mail : skpalita@gmail.com



indigenous knowledge associated with utilization of curative plants. Traditional knowledge on plant use will be lost in the absence of continuous cultural interaction (Winter and Mc Clatchey, 2008). Demographic, economic, socio-political, ecological, religious and cultural entities existing in a community are key drivers of traditional knowledge in a given community (Cetinkaya, 2009).

Far away from modern convenience, tribal people are living under varying geo-ecological setting of hills and forest areas since time immemorial. These tribal people are the ecosystem people who live in harmony with the nature and maintain a close link between man and environment (Sharma *et al.*, 2011). Living a synchronized life and maintaining a constant interaction with nature has enabled them to meticulously observe, scrutinize and exploit the rich plant resources around them. As a result, they have developed culturally important indigenous technologies of utilizing the vast available plant resources and the related bio-cultural knowledge (Sonowal and Barua, 2012). They depend on ethno-medicine, for primary health care and most of these are plant based. Observations of medicinal plant treatments by tribal peoples worldwide have contributed to the development of some of the most important and widely utilized pharmaceutical agents in our medical system (Ballick and Cox, 1997).

Odisha is home to 62 Scheduled Tribes. Their culture and tradition are different from each other. Kondh is the numerically preponderant tribe and are indigenous to Odisha and are known for their cultural heritage and values which centre on respecting nature. The Kondh belong to two linguistic groups, Kui and Kuvi, both belonging to the Dravidian family (Banerjee, 1969; Grodon, 2005) and are believed to be from the Proto-Australoid ethnic group. The primitive sections of the Kondh are divided into two ethnic names, i.e. Dongria Kondh and Kutia Kondh. The Dongria Kondh is found in the Niyamgiri hill ranges of the Eastern Ghats and particularly in the Rayagada and Kalahandi districts. Dongria Kondh speaks a language called the Kuvi and their economies centre round the shifting cultivation on hill slopes along with farming of fruits and vegetables. The Kutia Kondhs reside in the highlands of Belghar in Kandhamal district and the adjoining Lanjigarh area of Kalahandi district. They speak Kui language and practice shifting cultivation. They put the plants into magico-religious use for treatment of various ailments and diseases (Sahu *et al.*, 2013).

Over the years, various scholars have attempted to document the ethno-medicinal knowledge of the Kondh tribe like Panda *et al.* (2005) and Behera *et al.* (2006). However, most of the reports are incomplete and inadequate. In view of this an ethno-medicinal exploration of sections of Kondh community was conducted by the authors during 2014-15. The objective of this study was to assess the traditional medicinal practices of the Kondh tribe and medicinal use of plants by them in Koraput district. The study areas in Koraput are rich in medicinal plant resources. It is high time to document the medicinal utility of

less known plants available in remote areas of the country (Marini-Betollo, 1980, Zaidi and Crow, 2005).

### Materials and Methods

For the purpose of study seven Kondh dominated villages of Semiliguda Community Development Block of Koraput district were selected on the basis of local information on prevalence of traditional healthcare systems and ethno-medicinal practices in the said villages. Ethno-medicinal data were collected by administering a semi-structured questionnaire along the interviews and discussions with the Traditional Healthcare Practitioners (THPs), locally known as Disari. During the study period, interview was conducted with nine THPs (age varying from 45 yrs to 60 yrs) presented in Table-1 with the help of local interpreters. Data were collected on plant parts used, preparation methods, mode of application, as well as identification, collection and utilization. All gathered information was cross-checked with practitioners in nearby villages and the patients who have received treatment. The data collected was cross-examined with available secondary literature. Efforts have been made to collect plant herbaria during flowering and fruiting condition and were identified following "Flora of Orissa" by Saxena and Brahman (1996).

### Results and Discussion

The present study enumerated the use of 26 species plants under 26 genera belonging to 21 families by the Kondh traditional healers of Koraput for the treatment of 17 types of ailments. Out of 26 plant species, three species of plants belonged to Euphorbiaceae (*Phyllanthus fraternus*, *Jatropha curcas*, *Croton oblongus*), two species of plants belonged to Asteraceae (*Eclipta prostrata*, *Blumea lacera*) and Solanaceae (*Datura metel*, *Solanum virginianum*). Rest 18 families are represented by one species each i.e. Amaranthaceae (*Achyranthes aspera*), Acoraceae (*Acorus calamus*), Arecaceae (*Caryota urens*), Asclepidaceae (*Calotropis giganteana*), Asparagaceae (*Asparagus racemosus*), Combretaceae (*Terminalia bellerica*), Martyniaceae (*Martynia annua*), Meliaceae (*Azadirachta indica*), Moraceae (*Ficus hirsuta*), Musaceae (*Musa paradisiaca*), Papaveraceae (*Argemone mexicana*), Poaceae (*Cynodon dactylon*), Piperaceae (*Piper longum*), Primulaceae (*Ardisia solanacea*), Pteridaceae (*Hemionitis arifolia*), Rosaceae (*Rubus ellipticus*), Rutaceae (*Citrus reticulata*) and Zingiberaceae (*Curcuma aromatic*) (Table-2). In terms of the habit of plants, it was found that 46% species are herbs, 31% species are trees, 19% are shrubs and 4% species are ferns.

The data has been prepared in the following pattern: Scientific name, Family, Common Name/Local Odia Name, Life form, Plant parts used, and ailment category/ ailment treated. Traditional healers of Kondh tribe used these plants to cure diseases related to safe delivery, indigestion, stomach disorder, fracture, nail problem, migraine, asthma, ring worms, hair fall, dysentery,

vomiting, fever, scabies, nasal bleeding, stomach pain, labour pain and toothache (Table- 2).

Out of total 26 plant species used for preparation of medicine, maximum 23 numbers of individual species of plants were used for individual diseases. Only three species of plants (*Achyranthes aspera*, *Martinia diandra*, and *Cynodon dactylon*) were used for treatment of more than one disease (Table- 2).

The analysis of ethno-botanical data indicates that the Kondh uses the plants available in their immediate vicinity for variety of uses among which medicinal use of plants is quite significant. For the purpose of preparation of medicine, the whole plant or parts of it is used. By analyzing the ethnobotanical data, it was observed that the Kondh are conservative in plant use, they usually do not over exploit important medicinal plants and as such they have demonstrated sustainable use of plants and plant parts in applications of medicine. Since roots are most frequently utilized for medicine as compared to other plant parts like leaves, barks, tuber, fruits, stem, latex and the whole plant sustainable harvesting methods matter a lot in consideration of preservation and conservation of the plant species in the immediate environment.

The method of preparation of ethno-medicine, as studied, fall into eight categories i.e. plant parts applied as paste (24 %), powder (3%), tablets (14%), fresh juice extracts (3%), direct plant parts (21 %), decoctions (7%), pestled plant parts (21%) and latex (7%). In majority of the treatments the medicines were ingested, followed by application of powder form of medicine externally on affected parts or on wounds for healings.

There is no specificity of plant use for treatment of ailments by Kondh tribe, as Kondh tribe inhabiting in other parts of the state, i.e. Kalahandi, Kandhmal were found to use different plants for treatment of ailment (Panda *et al.*, 2005; Behera *et al.*, 2006) than their counterparts in Koraput. Kondh tribes in the study area take the medicines from the traditional healers with a strong spiritual belief and the spiritual and magical aspect of this practice cannot be ignored (Gelfand, 1970).

The depletion of biodiversity has been considered as one of the most conspicuous effects of ecosystem perturbation. Disappearance of species due to habitat alteration, over exploitation, pollution, effects of climate change and proliferation of invasive species is so fast that many valuable taxa may vanish before they are identified and their scientific value is discovered (Mishra and Choudhury, 2012).

The tribal people in different parts of the world, over the years, have become the custodian of biodiversity and have enormous knowledge of plant based ethno-medicine. The documentation of the indigenous knowledge through ethnobotanical studies is important for the conservation and utilization of

biological resources. Collection and analysis of the ethno-medicinal knowledge of the Kondh tribe of Koraput could be viewed as an important effort as the knowledge gained may help in taking steps required for extraction of possible bioactive compounds from the plants, which can lead to drug designing.

**Table 1** Details of Traditional Healthcare Practitioners (Disari) of sections of Kondh tribe who were key informants of the study

Sl. No	Name of the Disari	Age	Gender	Village	Block
01	Jhudunga Disari	55 yrs	Male	Tankubeda	Semiliguda
02	Bisu Pujari	50 yrs	Male	Tankubeda	Semiliguda
03	Sukuru Sauta	45 yrs	Male	Tankubeda	Semiliguda
04	Ramaya Jani	55 yrs	Male	Hatimunda	Semiliguda
05	Rukumuni Jani	48 yrs	Female	Paligumandi	Semiliguda
06	Dhoni Jani	50 yrs	Male	Putisil	Semiliguda
07	Ichhu kasu	55 yrs	Male	Phulbandh	Semiliguda
08	Pulia Jani	55 yrs	Male	Barkudi	Semiliguda
09	Soda Disari	60 yrs	Male	Mondariguda	Semiliguda

**Table 2** Plant Species used by sections of Kondh Tribe for Different types of Diseases

Sl. No	Plant Species Used	Common Name (Local Name)	Life Forms	Plant parts used	Category of (Ailment Treated)
1.	<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> L. (Amaranthaceae)	Prickly chaff flower (Apamaranga)	Herb	Rt	1. GUA (Safe delivery) 2. GIA (Indigestion)
2.	<i>Acorus calamus</i> L. * (Acoraceae)	Sweet flag (Bacha)	Herb	Rt	GIA (Stomach disorder)
3.	<i>Andrographis paniculata</i> (Burm. F.) Nees (Acanthaceae)	Green Chirayta (Bhuin Nimba)	Herb	WPI	FVR (Fever)
4.	<i>Ardisia solanaceae</i> Roxb.(Primulaceae)	Shoe button ardisia	Shrub	Rt	SMSD (Fracture)
5.	<i>Argemone mexicana</i> L. (Papaveraceae)	Prickly Poppy (Agara)	Herb	Rt	SD (Scabies)
6.	<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Willd.(Asparagaceae)	Indian Asparagus (Satabari)	Herb	Tb	SMSD (Migraine)
7.	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> A. Juss.(Meliaceae)	Neem (Nimbo)	Tree	Sb	GIA (Dysentery)
8.	<i>Blumea lacera</i> L. (Asteraceae)	Blumea (Pokosungha)	Herb	Lf	SD (Ring worms)

9.	<i>Calotropis gigantea</i> (L.) W. T. Aiton (Asclepiadaceae)	Crown Flower (Arakha)	Shrub	Lf	Nail problem
10	<i>Caryota urens</i> L. (Arecaceae)	Wine Palm (Solopo)	Tree	Sb	GIA (Fracture)
11.	<i>Citrus reticulata</i> Blanco (Rutaceae)	Orange (Kamala)	Tree	Sb	SD (Scabies)
12.	<i>Croton oblongus</i> Roxb.(Euphorbiaceae)	Croton	Tree	Sb	SMSD (Fracture)
13.	<i>Curcuma aromatica</i> Salisb.(Zingiberaceae)	Wild Turmeric (Bana Haldi)	Herb	Tb	GIA (Dysentery)
14.	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.) Pers. (Poaceae)	Bermuda grass (Dubo ghasa)	Herb	Lf	1. ENT (Nasal bleeding) 2. GIA(Vomiting)
15.	<i>Datura metel</i> L. (Solanaceae)	Devil's trumpet (Kola dudura)	Herb	St	GUA (Labour pain)
16.	<i>Eclipta prostrata</i> (L.) L. (Asteraceae)	Bhringraj	Herb	Lf	RS (Asthma)
17.	<i>Ficus hirsuta</i> L.f. (Moraceae)	Common Fig (Dimiri)	Tree	Rt	FVR (Fever)
18.	<i>Hemionitis arifolia</i> (Burm.f.) Moore (Pteridaceae)	Herat Fern/ Tongue Fern	Fern	Rt	SMSD (Fracture)
19.	<i>Jatropha curcas</i> L. (Euphorbiaceae)	Barbados Nut (Dhala Baigaba)	Tree	Lx	GIA (Vomiting)
20.	<i>Martinia annuai</i> Glox. (Martyniaceae)	Tiger's claw (Baghnokhi)	Herb	Tb & Rt	1. SMSD (Fracture) 2. FVR (Fever)
21.	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i> L. (Musaceae)	Banana (Kadali)	Shrub	Rt	GIA (Dysentery)
22.	<i>Phyllanthus fraternus</i> G.L.Webster (Euphorbiaceae)	Leaf flower (Bhuine Amla)	Herb	Lf	GIA (Dysentery)
23.	<i>Piper longum</i> L. (Piperaceae)	Long pepper (Pipala)	Tree	Sb	SMSD (Fracture)
24.	<i>Rubus ellipticus</i> Smith (Rosaceae)	Yellow Himalayan Raspberry (Machhakoli)	Shrub	Rt	GIA (Stomach pain)
25.	<i>Solanum virginianum</i> Linn.(Solanaceae)	Febrifuge plant (Bhejibaigana)	Shrub	Fr	DC (Toothache)
26.	<i>Terminalia belerica</i> (Gaertn.) Roxb. (Combretaceae)	Bastard Myrobalan (Bahada)	Tree	Fr	HC (Hair fall)

Parts used: Lf- leaf, Sb-Stem Bark, Fr- fruit, Lx-Latex, Fl- flower, St- stem, Rt- root, Tb- tuber, Ailment Categories- DC- Dental Care, ENT- Ear- Nose -Throat Problems, FVR- Fever, GIA- Gastro-Intestinal ailments, GUA- Genito- urinary ailments, HC-Hare care, RS- Respiratory systems, SMSD-Skeleto-muscular system disorder

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are thankful to the knowledgeable Kondh people of Semiliguda Block of Koraput for providing valuable information on ethno-medicine. Authors thankfully acknowledge Prof. Malaya Kumar Misra, Professor (Retd.), Dept. of Botany, Berhampur University, Odisha for help in identification of plant species.

## References

- Balick, M., Cox, P. 1997. Plants, People, and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany, New York: Scientific American Library.
- Banerjee, S. 1969. *Ethnographic study of the Kuvi Kondh*. Anthropol. Survey of India. Calcutta.
- Behera, K.K., Sahoo, S. and Patra, S. 2006. Green leaves for diarrhoeal diseases used by the Tribals of Kenojhar and Mayurbhanj District of Orissa, India, *Ethnobotanical Leaflets*, 10: 305-328.
- Gordon, R. G. 2005. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Fifteenth edition Dallas, Tex.: SIL International.
- Mishra, S. and Chaudhury, S.S. 2012. Ethnobotanical flora used by four major tribes of Koraput, Odisha, India. *Genet. Resour. Crop. Evol.* 59:793-804.
- Panda, T., Panigrahi S.K. and Padhy R.N. 2005. A sustainable use of phyto-diversity by the Kondh tribe of Orissa. *Indian journal of Traditional Knowledge*, 4(2) : 173-178.
- Sahu, C.R., Nayak, R. K. and Dhal, N.K. 2013. Ethno-medicine and Magico-Religious Beliefs of the Kondh Tribe in Boudh district of Odisha, India, *Life Sciences Leaflets*, 11: 10-22.
- Saxena, H.O. and Brahmam, M. 1996. *The Flora of Orissa*, vols 1-4. Orissa Forest Development Corporation Ltd., Bhubaneswar, India.
- Sharma, J. and Gairola, S., Gaur, R.D. and Painuli, R.M. 2012. The treatment of Jaundice with medicinal plants in indigenous communities of the sub- Himalayan region of Uttarakhand, India. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 143(1): 262-291.

# A B O BLOOD GROUP OF THE KONDHS OF DARINGIBADI (PHULABANI, ORISSA) \*

*Srisha Patel*<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of serological studies it is possible to assess the ethnic position of tribal populations of Orissa. For the present study ABO blood sampling of 60 adult individuals were typed with great difficulty. Slide method for the purpose was mainly followed. Anti-A and Anti-B serum obtained from Haffekine Institute, Bombay was utilized during the investigation.

**TABLE I**

Tribe	O	A	B	AB	Total
Kondhs	20	12	22	6	60
Percentages	33.3	20.0	36.6	10.0	99.99

The blood group B (36.6%) is found to be predominating.

Distribution of O Group (33.3%). A group (20.0%) and AB group (10.0%) come next in descending order.

**TABLE 2**

**Distribution of Blood group and their Gene Frequencies**

Tribe	No.	O	A	B	AB	P	Q	R
Kondhs	60	20	12	22	6	..	..	..
Percentage	100	33.3	20.0	36.0	10.0	0.043	0.070	0.19

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XIV, Nos.2&3, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1972-73, pp.64-66

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer in Anthropology, Khallikote College, Berhampur, Orissa

**TABLE 3****Distribution of ABO Blood group among some Orissan Tribes**

(Male members)

<b>Tribe</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>Total</b>
Juang	26	24	62	10	122
Gadaba	16	39	30	6	91
Khond	15	9	16	5	45
Sabara	17	19	25	12	74
Saora	7	10	5	3	25
Gond	12	5	6	2	25
KONDHS (Present Study)	20	12	22	6	60

**TABLE 4****Distribution of pqr Gene Frequencies among the Orissa Tribes**

<b>Tribe</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>AB</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>q</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>Author</b>
JUANG Number Percent	26 21.3	24 19.6	62 50.8	10 8.2	122 ..	.. .055	.. .121	.. .147	Sarkar)
GADABA Number Percent	16 17.5	39 42.9	30 32.9	6 6.6	91 ..	.. .070	.. .114	.. .132	(Sarkar)
KHOND Number Percent	15 33.3	9 20.0	16 35.5	5 11.1	45 ..	.. .043	.. .070	.. .181	(Sarkar)
SABAR Number Percent	17 23.2	19 26.0	25 34.2	12 16.6	73 ..	.. .070	.. .087	.. .152	(Sarkar)
GOND Number Percent	12 48.0	5 20.0	6 24.0	2 8.0	25 ..	.. .041	.. .045	.. .219	(Sarkar)
SANTAL Number Percent	2 14.2	2 14.3	8 57.1	2 14.3	14 ..	.. .049	.. .147	.. 119	(Sarkar)
KONDHS Number Percent	29 33.3	12 20.0	22 36.6	6 10.0	60 ..	.. 0.043	.. 0.070	.. 0.19	(Present study) S (Patel)



Therefore it may be concluded that the Kondh bear racial affinity with the other Orissan tribes. Comparative studies of blood groups between the Hill Kondhs and the low land Kandhs will be made in future to trace their genetical relationship and to ascertain whether these two groups are of the same stock or different.

### **Bibliography**

- Sarkar S.S; Further studies of ABO blood groups from Orissa Science and culture. Vol.25, pp 694-695, June 1960.
- Sarkar S.S; The Aboriginal Races of India.
- Mourant A.E; (1954) The distribution of Blood groups, Scientific Publications, Oxford.

# ART AND CRAFTS BY KONDH WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT \*

*Bhagyashree Acharya*<sup>1</sup>

*Annapurna Barik*<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

The tribal art and crafts of Odisha have always attracted the ethnographers, anthropologists and museum lovers leaving apart thousands of people interested in these for various other reasons. Tribal crafts are conditioned to the material base and utilizing the available resources around them the tribal artisans showcase their artistic talents. Their art represents the pristine visual work that uncovers the reality of grassroots. Their talents manifested through art and crafts are concrete, natural and witness the diversities of material culture of the natives.

The Kondh community has a rich tradition of art and crafts. The Kondh community in Odisha is sort of the most extensively studied community from ethnographic and culture point of view. However, it impress upon the fact that the art and crafts of the Kondhs form significant part of their culture. As a community, the Kondhs have dragged the attention of scholars and administrators since the late 1850s. In Odisha, probably, Kondh is the only community that has been studied from cultural perspectives from such a long past.

The paper has made an effort to present a comprehensive account of the art and crafts by Kondh women, emphasizing upon the tattooing traditions of the Desia Kondh and Penga Kondh in the Kandhamal and Rayagada districts of the State. The tattooing by the Kondh women, which was a rich tradition, once upon a time has been fading away with

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXXVI, No.2, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2016, pp.83-92

<sup>1</sup> Young Museum Professional, Tribal Museum, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar. E-mail: [acharyaguddy@gmail.com](mailto:acharyaguddy@gmail.com), Phone: +91 8093419977

<sup>2</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar

the onslaught of modernization. Hence, there is relevance to study the tradition of tattooing by the Kondh women. The women in Dongaria Kondh, a PVTG section of Kondh community, have a rich tradition of wall painting and textile craft especially the much popular Dongaria shawl. It has been attempted to present the salient features of such artistic traditions in the community.

The traditional art and crafts of Kondhs reflects artistic view of their life. Their tattooing, cloth embroidery and needle work are not only strengthening their cultural life but also these are improving their economic life. Now the wall paintings and art of Kondhs clearly exhibit the influence of modern art because change in their lifestyle show change in their attitude towards new materials and art forms. With the fading away of Kondh art and crafts traditions poses to be a great loss to traditional tribal folklore and history of the community.

### **Introduction**

Odisha occupies a unique position in the tribal map of India with 62 Scheduled Tribal communities. Out of them 13 tribal communities have been identified as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) that have been recently re-designated as "Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups" (PVTGs) since the year 2009. As per the 2011 census, Odisha occupies the third position in India in terms of Scheduled Tribes population. In the State, the Scheduled Tribe population makes about 28.85% of the total population of the State. These diverse ethno-cultural groups have typical traditions of socio-cultural life in which art and crafts have occupied a significant and meaningful position. Traditional art and craft have been deeply associated in many aspects of their cultural and religious life leaving apart the aesthetic feelings and imaginations.

In the rich cultural tradition of folk art in Odisha, folklore arts, beliefs, rites and ritual, myths, and rural handicrafts are factors that enrich our folk tradition; paintings are an integral part of folk and tribal tradition of the state and often mirror their lifestyle. Rural folk paintings are abounding with colourful design which sources their themes from mystic beliefs depicting god and goddesses, nature, festivals and human and human nature. They portray the traditional sensibility of the Odisha village life and always been renowned for imagination, inventiveness and creativity representing an artistic relationship with life like religion rituals, livelihood, family, relationship and genius.

The State possesses a rich artistic tradition which enjoyed liberal patronage from the temples as well as the nobility, apart from the typical tribal art and crafts. With diverse tribal communities autochthonous to parts of the state, the tribal art and craft occupies a significant position in the art and craft

scenario of the nation. The tribal art and crafts of Odisha have always attracted the ethnographers, anthropologists and museum lovers leaving apart thousands of people interested in art and crafts for various other reasons. Tribal crafts are conditioned to the material base and utilizing the available resources around them the tribal artisans showcase their artistic talents. Their art represents the pristine visual work that uncovers the reality of grassroots. Their talents manifested through art and crafts are concrete, natural and witness the diversities of material culture of the natives.

The 62 communities enlisted as Scheduled Tribes in Odisha have also many sub-groups within. While some sub-groups have been recognised well with specific recorded names, many sub-groups have remained as part of the main community. In a general view point, there are also certain sub-groups who are considered as important occupational groups covered under the main group. For example, the Kondh community in Odisha is numerically predominant tribal community. The total population of Kondh, as per census 2011, is 16, 27,486 that figures out to be 16.97% of the total tribal communities in Odisha. Numerically, the Kondh is followed by Santhal and Gond communities as enumerated by census 2011. Scholarly works, over the years, have identified many sub-groups within the main group of Kondh. While, the Kutia Kondh and Dongaria Kondh section of the Kondh community have been designated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG), many others have not got prominence, although, however, within the Kondh community they are distinct sub-groups.

### **Distribution of Kondhs and their social life**

The highest concentration is found in the districts of Kandhamal, Boudh, Rayagada, Koraput, Kalahandi, Sambalpur and Angul. They are also found in Andhra Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, and due to migration, in Assam and West Bengal. They are sub-divided by groups known as Desia, Kutia, Penga, Dongaria, etc. The Kondhs belong to the Proto-Australoid ethnic group. Their native language is Kui, a Dravidian language written with the Odia script. The Kondh dwellings exhibit greater adaptability to the forest environment. In the past they came in contact with the Aryans for a long time for which their way of life has been influenced by their religious thoughts and inclination towards art is to some extent distinct from the other tribals.

The Kondhs are generally divided in three groups are

- The Kutia Kondh- This is the weakest section leading an isolated life of poverty and indigence.
- The Dongria Kondh- This section is comparatively less primitive and is skilled in horticulture.
- The Desia Kondh- the Kondh of this section have left their hill fastnesses and settled down in the plains to pursue cultivation.

The Kondh houses face each other in rows and on both the sides of the road in village. In each village there are specially built Dhangdaghar dormitory for the unmarried young men and Dhangdighar for the young unmarried girls.

### **Kondh artistic way of life**

Kondh way of life is guided and regulated by their folk beliefs. The traditional ritual, art and crafts of the tribe is well exhibited in their religious-material traditions. They perform certain rites and rituals to appease the supernatural forces in order to achieve peace and progress for the individual as well as for the entire community. Among their divinities Dharani penu, Sarupenu and Tarupenu are famous but the Dharani penu is the main deity among all.

The artistic presentation of the community in daily activities is a part of their life. The cloths which the Kondh wear used to be woven by them to be used later. A man wears a cloth called Kodi. A woman uses two pieces of cloth (Kapda-Ganda). As per their choice they make designs on the clothes in different coloured threads. They also wrap a hand-woven well designed cloth round their body. This is their traditional dress.

They polish and comb their hair well after anointing in oil and fix a comb in it. They tie their hair knots a wooden comb (kokuya), fixed at the hair knot irrespective of sex which adorns the hair lock and keeps the hair tight. As the belles arrange their hair nicely and affix flower bunches and combs so also the young man makes their hairdo. This is an everyday affair with them. Long hair is very much liked by women and men in Desia Kondh society. Hair colour, texture and cleanliness are maintained with variety of herbal application and red soil. Girls make a big knot, more like a French roll, adorned with numerous clips. The hair knot hangs towards left like a hanging ball. 'U' shaped clips are so arranged that the bent portion is shown to outside with the long stem hidden inside hair.

The Kondh, both males and females including children, are very much found of ornaments with which they adorn themselves ordinarily and look attractive. Ladies put on brass-wrist-lets (khadu or paga) and silver anklets (pahari-andu) those who can afford. Elderly or married ladies prefer to put on more ear and nose rings and such ornaments which have more functional value. They use Balanga (bangles) for their hand, Khagala (chain) for their neck, Gonara for their head, Muharang or ear-rings in the ear.

The love for the art of Kondhs includes dance and music which form a part of their jovial social life. They combine music and dance together to make their life merry. On the eve of the dance attention is paid to utilize creative objects and personal artistic skill and knowledge to express through the medium of daily articles in decorating the body.

Their house hold articles, ornaments, bow and arrow, weapons, musical instruments, even the hair doing comb and in the pot and pan, in all the articles there is the streak of art markedly visible.

### **Earlier studies on Kondh Art and Craft**

The Kondh community has a rich tradition of art and crafts. The Kondh community in Odisha is sort of the most extensively studied community from ethnographic and culture point of view. Macpherson's reports that appeared in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. XIII, Part II provides to understand their typical engravings on the craft of Meria Post that is used for sacrificing the meria in which the neck of the victim is pressed inside the rift of branch of a tree from one side and cords are then twisted round the open extremity.

The community had dragged the attention of ethnographers and culture anthropologists because of their act of Meria sacrifice. However, the Kondh art and craft although had not been important objective of such ethnographic studies, yet had been featured sporadically in many scholarly works. Dash & Pradhan (2006) have provided a detailed bibliographic literature on the art and crafts of Kondhs tracing them from various academic works done so far on Kondhs. The authors have quoted Moodalier (1882) who in his 'legendary account of the origin of the Kondhs' emphasized that the religion and tradition has incorporated the artefacts which are product of the craft. The authors have mentioned the works of V. Ball who elaborately dealt about Kondh crafts in his book 'Jungle life in India' (1880); Frazer's Golden Bough (1890) that mentioned about Kondh art and craft in magic and religion; E.B. Havell's (1892) 'the art industries of madras Presidency' in the Journal of Indian Art, vol - IV mentioning the brass crafts of the Kondhs; Edgar Thurston (1892) in his ethnographic notes on 'Brass manufacture in the Madras Presidency', vividly mentioned the metal crafts and art of Kondhs and also the art of tattooing by Kondh women. The journal 'Madras Mail' of 1894 provided elaborate description on the Kondhs' hair style, dresses, weapons, house building, etc. The Madras Mail of 1896 elaborated the hairdo of the Kuttia Kondh women in an elaborate manner. The occasional papers of S.P. Rice, as mentioned by Dash and Pradhan (2006) described the art and artistic patterns in Kondh dress and attires. In 1916, 'The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India' by R.V. Russel and R.B. Hiralal was published that described the art, artefacts and weapons of Kondhs and the tattooing of various designs by Kondh women.

However, the most elaborate work on Kondh art and craft finds mention in Verier Elwin's famous book 'Tribal art of middle India' (1951). Elwin has noted that raw materials, colour and the art of preparation of the objects along with a discussion on their specific use in religions, witchcrafts and other areas of social interactions. In 1981, a book by M. Mallik on 'Kondh and Kondhmal' described the Kondh traditions of art and craft as have found expression in tattooing and various weapons. In the context of tattooing Mallik mentioned that

the most complex type of tattoo is from the forehead to the chin on both the sides of face. Some lines of tattooing is made on both sides of the cheek, which starts and ends in rose designs. The tattoo marks on legs are small roses or circles made with a number of dots confined to the region between the knee and the ankles. The author has described the weapons and crafts used for hunting jungle denizens, birds, snakes, fish, etc.

Barbora M. Boal (1982) elaborated the Kondh bronze crafts mentioning about the process of making and the significance of the crafts. She divided the bronzes used by Kondhs in four categories such as those used in human sacrifices, as dowry objects, artefacts for various purposes, and valuables. In 'The Kondhs of Orissa', by N. Patnaik and P.S. Das Patnaik (1982) a vivid mention on the Kondh art and craft objects have found place. The authors made a close survey of the Kondhs' material and religious culture and described number of items that are significant from art and crafts point of view.

The Art & Crafts of Kondhs, a compilation edited by R.N. Dash and M. K. Pradhan published by CPSW in 2006 provides more detailed account of the art and craft objects of different sub-groups of Kondh. It covers articles on art and craft of Kondh, Desia Kondh, Dongaria Kondh, Penga Kondh, Kuttia Kondh covering their material culture, religious culture, aesthetic life along with the visual perspective of Kondh art and its fading horizons. The compilation is rich with primary information, although has not been able to present the Kondh art and craft objectives as a collective tracing from the past to present.

It may be mentioned that the Kondh art and craft objects have attracted many scholars, although they have not been dealt with exclusively in any report. However, it impress upon the fact that the art and crafts of the Kondhs form significant part of their culture. As a community, the Kondhs have dragged the attention of scholars and administrators since the late 1850s. In Odisha, probably, Kondh is the only community that has been studied from cultural perspectives from such a long past.

### **Kondh women and their typical art**

The Kondh have typical tradition of art and crafts and since the community has many sub groups under the main community, it is apparent that their tradition and culture of art, artefacts and crafts are very elaborate. In this context the paper has attempted to discuss the artistic traditions of Kondh women. The paper presents the findings from a field study in Kondh villages in parts of Kondhmal and Rayagada district.

### **Tattoo of Desia Kondh women:**

The Desia Kondh women call it *tinka*. It means smaller dots, geometric designs, and designs of leaves – flowers – buds, etc. *Tinka* is made in between the forehead area, in between eye brows, chin, cheek, palm, arms (above and below

the elbow), legs and ankles. It is widely seen that *tinka* is drawn on forehead and chin. Amongst elderly women *tinka* is also drawn on the thighs, breasts and back of body. However, since about last three decades the women are not taking interest in tattooing body parts of their girl children, especially on the thighs and breasts because of the pain and irritations that are caused by tattooing. According to the Desia women, after tattooing the tattooed area must remain exposed to air so as to prevent swellings and wounding. The young girls were feeling uneasy and also feeling abashed to keep the body parts uncovered. Hence, the young girls gradually lost interest in tattooing. With the pace of acculturation and mainstreaming the girls are also finding it shameful to get their face and other body parts tattooed which makes them easily discriminated.

The Loharani (women from Kondh Lohar sub-group) are traditional tattoo makers. They are adept to making tattoo on the skins of girls. About four decades ago they were charging a professional fee to the tune of 25 paisa only for making one *tinka* of small size. For a little bigger *tinka* or a picture of flower or leaf, etc they used to charge up to 1 rupee. Apart from the agreed professional fee, the Loharani are sometimes paid more in kind by the women who felt satisfied with the tattooing. The Loharani are still considered as occupational tattoo makers although choice for tattooing has reduced manifold. Loharani usually visit the Kondh villages in winter season especially on weekly market days. The Kartika and Margasira months are considered best time for tattooing.

Some belief systems are connected with tattooing. Loharanis talk of redressing the torture of Yama's court and the fulfillment of their desire in the after-life and such other consoling dialogues to influence the girls and women to be tattooed. They also influence telling that the month of Margasira is the month of goddess of wealth or goddess Laxmi and hence by making a tattoo on the body a girl or women would be able to appease the goddess. The other reason being that during the dry winter season the tattoo wounds heal sooner and hardly any complicity arises.

The tattoos that the Loharani makes have also names indicating the typical designs. Some of the names are Yamadanda *tinka*, Parajanama, Sohagini, Papanasana, Lakshmi, etc. From a close analysis of the tattoos by these names one would find that all the tattoos are of the same type with very little differences which is again not fixed. While making the tattoo the maker, by her imagination, arranges objects in the picture and gives an overall shape to the tattoo. However, by taking different names the Loharani tries to justify that they have a range of designs for those who are interested for it. Some women only take interest to tattoo their names only on arms. The Desia Kondh women in Muniguda and Bissamcuttack Tahsils of Rayagada district have more complicated tattoos with more of geometrical and floral designs per unit area.

Folklores have been associated with tattooing. With reference to the folklore, the Yamadanda tattoo is especially important to be identified properly



by the Yama (demon god) in the other world. That, after death of a woman her soul is presents herself in the court of Yama. There the judgement on her sin and merit in the living world is proclaimed. The Yama's court is full of darkness. After reaching there soul of the woman offers salute to the god in folded hands. At that time the tattoo illuminates (Muniguda side tale) and become needle like (Bissamcuttack area tale). The illumination that emanates from the tattoo makes the god understand that the woman had wished to get rid of Yama's typical punishment from the very beginning and as such she is meritorious and her sins are atoned. Otherwise, without the tattoo on hand, the Yama is not able to know in dark room about the presence of some one that rubs the hands in salutation. So the Yamadanda tattoo was most popular in the earlier days.

Certain taboos and restrictions are also adhered to in the tattooing traditions. That, the married women are forbidden to tattoo themselves. As per Desia Kondh belief, a married woman should not bleed in her hand and get any swelling which is considered a violation of the gods and goddesses as well as a disturbance to ancestral spirits. If however, a married woman wish to do tattooing then, subsequent to tattooing, she will have to rear cows or donate an oxen to somebody for its upkeep. Of the present generation very few have been abiding by the belief strictly and many are not paying any attention to it.

In the present scenario, the present generation Desia girls have started to follow the alien culture along with education. Hence they are not willing to disfigure their body by tattooing. On the otherside the tattoo makers have also been trying to fascinate the Desia girls by trying to allure them with newer and contemporary designs. In the process the tattoo makers also convince some girls to have their hands or legs tattooed. On the other hand due to decreasing interest of girls and women to tattoo their body parts the present generation in the traditional tatoo maker community are no more inspired to be tatoo artists. Hence the tattooing culture is fading away.

#### **Tattooing by Penga Kondh women:**

Penga Kondh or Panga Kondh are seen in large numbers in Baliguda sub-division of Kandhamal district. The Penga Kondh women can be easily recognized from the elaborate tattooing on their faces. At the middle of their forehead in between the eye brows they draw a 'U' shaped tattoo which they call 'bihanga' meaning fly. Just above the two ends of the brows two big dots are tattooed that are called 'kanka or kadka' meaning eyes. At the center of Kanka is a dot called lenju (moon). On the cheeks long lines are drawn from one end to the other. On the chin are tattooed many dots which are called 'patakaja' or the bird's claw marks. However, these patakaja design is not confined to the chin area alone, it may also be tattooed near bihanga or kanka. If the moon is tattooed little above the eye, leaving some space between the eye brow and the moon, then towards the corner of the eyesone, two or three lines are seen tattooed which are called 'kanugohanga' (eye line) or 'kanugadinga'.

This elaborate tattoo on face is called 'gullet godinga' and the dots in this design are called 'gullet bihanga'. Gullet bihanga is very well marked on fair skin and hence girls with fair skin used to prefer that most. On the darker skin such dots are avoided as they make the face look darker and uglier with dots looking like pimple marks. On the nose of some women line tattooing is seen which is called 'mungeli gadinga' or 'mungeli gohanga'. On both sides of the chin three lines are tattooed slantingly which are called 'sirkadinga'. On either corner of the chin sets of three lines are tattooed slantingly which is called 'gohanga'. This is the most widely preferred tattoo design of the Penga Kondh women.

In the making of tattoo certain local materials are used. They include sringa (black), kabanedu (castor oil), turmeric, needle or any sharp and strong pin or thorn of Bael tree. For black, the pot black is mainly used. Sometimes the tattoo makers use toxic graphite of batteries for which the irritation persists for longer time. The girls and women, therefore, very cautiously offer their hands for tattooing to the tattoo maker.

To draw a tattoo, first of all, the lines are drawn on a marker like pen. Once, the girl on whose hand the tattoo is to be made agrees to the design then the tattooing process starts. The tattoo maker using the pin pricks the outline of the drawing. Basing on the requirement the tattoo maker pierce single or multiple lines. The number of pricks per unit area is more for drawing deeper marks. The blood that oozes out due to pricking are cleaned by a plain white cloth and then the black is smeared on the pricked area. This causes some acute reactions which are sometimes very painful to bear. After applying black, oil is anointed on the tattooed area. On the next day the tattooed part is to be washed with warm water following which turmeric paste is applied on the tattooed area. Application of soap or any such material is strictly prohibited for fresh wound. No herbal medicine is also applied to ease the pain and fomentation is also not advised. From the second day onwards till the tenth day or even later turmeric paste is regularly applied on the tattooed area to prevent infection.

The right age for tattooing, especially on the face, is between 10 to 12 years, although, however, the girls of 8 to 9 years go for tattooing. At present, since the interest of girls or women folk has been waned on tattooing, not much face tattooing is seen on young women. Earlier there was a tradition among the Penga Kondhs that prior to marriage tattooing is a must, because this is linked to their concept of beauty. It is worthy to be noted here that the Kondh women do not tattoo their faces by any women belonging to Harijan or Scheduled Caste.

### **Pictorial Art by Dongaria Kondh Women**

To decorate the walls with rice paste is a particular art, mostly seen among the Dongria Kondhs which goes to prove their love for beautification of the surrounding habitat. The art presentations found on the walls are both sacred and secular by nature. They decorate the walls with rice paste during certain

rituals and festivals like Meria and Dasahara festivals. They use red ochre collected from the locality. Some Kondhs purchase coloured powder from the daily or weekly markets and anoint the same in the picture adding castor oil to it. As brush they use narrow fibrous sticks after hammering one end of it. These sticks are generally made from date-palm stem, raw bamboo and sycamore roots.

They are not trained in the execution of art pieces but do it by themselves through observations and instinct. Any one, either a boy or a girl can do so without any distinction of sex but it must be done as per tradition.

During different festivals it is a traditional obligation among the Kondhs to paint the walls. The Dongria Kondhs in course of decorating their houses make paintings on the outer and inner walls. There is difference in folk belief relating to the inner and outer walls decorations. During festive days deities are invoked to the sacred art raised on the inner walls for the welfare of all in the household. Every year new decorative paintings are done erasing the old ones.

### **Embroidered shawl (Kapada Ganda) by Dongria Kondh women**

Embroidered shawl is an ethnically unique textile production by Dongria Kondh. The textile has cultural significance. The Dongria girls are well versed with the tradition of the needle craft. A women use two pieces of cloths called Kapada Ganda, each of three feet in length and one and a half feet in width. Men also cover their body by using this shawl (Kapada Ganda). They usually love to apply three colour threads like red, green, yellow for the craft signifying meanings with different kinds of motifs and design. Both young girls and boys use it normally during special occasion. The Kapada Ganda is often exchange as a gift between young lovers.

The coarse cloth (khadi/ ganda) is loom made. It is purchased and afterwards designs are made on it. On this piece of cloth they make space for designs with a simple ordinary stick or piece of thread etc. There is nothing such that can be called unit of measurement. Some girls are of opinion that the knitting space is automatically maintained even without use of any scale.

In the past, not many colours were in use to make kapda-ganda. Usually there were two border lines across length and two across the breadth. Whatever colours were on the cloth, were printed in the loom. Coloured lines were seen on the body of Ganda. White gonad with coloured lines all over the body was costing a little more in comparison to white ganda. Innovative girls saw sarees in the market with beautiful border prints. This dragged their attention to knit prints on the kapda gonad. They used colours yellow, green and orange in the beginning. At present, even the green, yellow and orange or red is dominating the shawl. Although there is no colour restriction in use, yet use of other colours is comparatively less. Further, the Dongria eyes have been accustomed in these

colours and that's why frequency of such colours is high. Black colour is a recent addition in some shawls.

## Conclusion

Arts and Crafts which are existing right from pre-historic times are changing styles and techniques. Art and crafts are there for centuries together; some of them, basing on the popularity and patronization either fade or continue to the next generations.

Art, anaesthetics and tradition are the major elements in Kondh culture. The art that the Kondh women display is a preservative of the age old tradition and culture. The artistic impulses in Kondh woman have let them to possess the skill of drawing, painting, smearing, decorating etc.

The traditional art and crafts of Kondhs provide a rich commentary on their social and cultural life. Their dress, ornament, tattooing, beautiful wall painting, house decoration, etc, reflects artistic view of their life. Their tattooing, cloth embroidery and needle work are not only strengthening their cultural life but also these are improving their economic life. Now the wall paintings and art of Kondhs clearly exhibit the influence of modern art because change in their lifestyle show change in their attitude towards new materials and art forms. Kondh art and crafts is fading away by the influence of modernization. Of course, the loss of such types have become loss of major elements of primitive culture and so also a great loss to traditional tribal folklore and history.

## References

- Dash, R.N. & Pradhan, M. K. (Eds). 2006. *The Art and Crafts of Kondhs*. Council of Professional Social Workers (CPSW), Bhubaneswar
- Ota, A.B., Panda, P., Patel, P. 2015. *Art and Craft of Tribal Odisha (The case of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups)*. SC & ST Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) and Academy of Tribal Languages & Culture, Bhubaneswar.
- Patnaik, N. & P. S. Das Patnaik. 1982. *The Kondhs of Orissa*, THRTI, Orissa.
- SCSTRTI. 1990. *Tribes of Odisha Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes Development Department*, Government of Odisha.

# EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS OF THE KONDHS OF KASHIPUR BLOCK OF ORISSA \*

*R. C. Sahoo*<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction :

India attained independence in the year 1947. The country was utterly poor at that time and majority of the Indians were living below the poverty line, without basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter. Like other nations India thought of to modernize her nation and hence the Constitution of India in 1950 guaranteed all her citizens social, economic and political justice, freedom of thought and expression, equality of status and opportunity and fraternity. The Government of India wanted to achieve this through peaceful and non-coercive means of the various agencies for the all-round development of the nation. Education has been accepted as one of the powerful means for development. Education along with other agencies has to make conglomerated and integrated efforts to bring about the needed changes. It means that the backward sections of our society (SC, ST and other backward sections) must be provided with opportunity to develop critical thinking and self-determination to make them worth contributing to the process. That is why the Government of India has been making efforts through formal and non-formal ways to educate all sections of the Indian society.

There is a considerable segment of tribal population living in India who are at various stages of socio-economic development. Orissa is one of the States where tribals constitute a sizable proportion of its total population. The population of the Scheduled Tribes is 5.91 million and constitutes 22.48 per cent of the total population of the State. They are commonly known as 'Adivasi'. They have been in a state of social, economic and educational backwardness since a very long time. The tribal population has suffered in the wake of planned economic development. It is unfortunate that the role of education in improving quality of life is lost sight of at all levels in tribal areas. Education is considered irrelevant because it could not help them in improving their life situation; it becomes an easy obstruction because it came in the way of earning through family labour.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXIX, No.1, THRTI, Bhubaneswar 1989, pp.29-33

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, I.I.E., Pune

## 2. Need for and Importance of the Research

In Orissa a few studies concentrated on the educational problems of the tribals but the 'Kondhs' who form the largest part of tribal population in the State (17-15) per cent of the total tribal population) remain neglected. This tribe is one of the most isolated tribes of the State as well as the country. They are educationally more backward than other tribes of the State. The percentage of literacy of this tribe is 7.97 and it is much less than the Scheduled Tribe literacy percentage of the State (13.96 per cent). The highest percentage of Kondhs is concentrated in the district of Koraput (37.37 per cent). According to 1981 census the tribal population in the said district is 55.22 per cent of the total population of the district. The block Kashipur has the highest concentration of Kondh population in the district. Keeping the condition of the tribal population and the interest of the nation in view the investigator took a special interest in studying the educational problems of the Kondh of Kashipur block (Koraput district) of Orissa.

## 3. Objectives

- (i) To study the educational problems of the Kondh children arising out of their socio-economic condition.
- (ii) To study the educational facilities provided by the Government (to the School as well as to the Kondh students).
- (iii) To find out the impact of medium of instruction and their own language on the educational attainment of Kondhs.
- (iv) (a) To find out the interest of Kondh parents in education in general and education of their children in particular.
- (v) To find out the attitude of the Kondhs to girls education.
- (vi) To study the effectiveness of formal educational system in Kondh area.
  - (a) To study the suitability of the school timing and vacation period.
  - (b) To study the attitude of Kondh parents and children towards the behavior of the teacher.
- (vi) To make suggestions and recommendations for improving education in the Kondh area.

## 4. Hypothesis

- (i) The socio-economic standard of the Kondhs does effect the educational attainment of their children.
- (ii) Educational facilities significantly affect the enrolment and drop out at the primary level of education.
- (iii) The regional language as the medium of instruction does affect the educational attainment of the Kondh children.
- (iv) Kondh parents have negative attitude towards education of their children.
- (v) Kondh parents have negative attitude towards girl's education.
- (vi) The present timing of the school does affect the educational attainment.

- (vii) The present vacation period of the school does affect the interest of the Kondh parents.
- (viii) The behavior of the teachers does affect the Kondh parents interest in their children's education.

## 5. Methodology

This is a socio-cultural study of the educational problems. For the purpose of collecting necessary data, the survey method was adopted.

**Sample** - The investigator followed the underlined procedure for the sample selection for this study. The total number of villages of the Kashipur Block is 370, out of which 271 villages are inhabited by more than 50 per cent of the Kondh population. These 271 villages constitute the universe for the present study. Moreover three types of villages are found, i.e. (i) villages having schools, (ii) villages having schooling facility within a radius of 1.5 Km, (iii) villages having no schooling facility at all. The average population of these 271 villages is 178. For the purpose of the present investigation the researcher selected four villages where the average population is near about 178. The above mentioned three types of villages were the representative sample for this study. Due to lack of time and resources on the part of this investigator, four villages have been selected, i.e. two having schooling facilities of its own (Haridaspur and Sargiguda), one having school at 1.5 Km distance (Ramguda) and one without schooling facilities at all (Musirpadar) for an intensive survey of all the families of the village.

## Tools for investigation

- (i) *Questionnaire* : - The investor developed three types of questionnaire, i.e. (a) for the parents which includes the details of information about the family, attitudes of the parents towards the educational system in general and education of their children in particular, (b) for the children who are attending the school, includes the information about the school timing, vacation period, teachers attitude, aspiration for life, educational aspiration, interest in the medium of instruction, participation in extracurricular activities, etc. (c) for the school going - age children, not attending the school, the questionnaire includes the reason for leaving the school, present occupation interest in education etc.,
- (ii) *Discussion* - The investigator discussed with the teachers, educational officer in the Block as well as at the district level, the administrator and officers of developmental agencies to know the educational administration and developmental works undertaken by the Government for the improvement of the Kondhs to solve their problems.
- (iii) *Observation* - There are some factors i.e. home environment, school environment and the socio-cultural background of the Kondhs which could not be asked and the investigator observed these directly in the field.

- (iv) *Official records* – Relevant official records were studied to get information on educational development and administration in the district.

## 6. Data and its treatment

The data collected through the questionnaire discussed and observation were tabulated and analyzed separately. As the data are mostly qualitative in nature, analysis is made through percentages, proportions, etc. only, with a view to getting a quantitative picture of information obtained by the questionnaire.

Delimitation investigation is delimited to the Kashipur block of Koraput district (Orissa) and Kondh were the target tribe of that Block. The school going age children delimited to the child within the age-group of 6-14 only.

## FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND CONCLUSION

### Findings

- (i) It was found from the study that the socio-economic condition of the Kondhs in the sample is too bad (poor). 57.7 per cent of the families purely depend on cultivation as their occupation. But the land the families possess is on hill slopes. Another impediment is the non-availability of irrigation facilities. The land owners have to depend upon rain only. Another factor which should be taken into consideration is the Kondhs cultivation technology is too backward and as result the output is usually less than the normal. 37.3 per cent families depend on daily labour (generally those who have no land or less land). It appears that the contractors were exploiting labourers by paying much less than the minimum wages. Exploitation by the local traders is another factor which makes Kondh families to lead a miserable life. The Kondh economy needs the contribution of all the members of the family to the family income. After the age of 9 the child becomes an economic asset to the family because he/she can work at home or in the family farm, or outside the family and assist in saving or adding to the family income directly or indirectly. The child is consequently withdrawn from school long before he/she completes the primary stage.

So the hypothesis that the socio-economic standard of the Kondhs do affect the educational attainment of their children is accepted.

- (ii) It was found from the study that there was nothing in the school (Haridaspur and Sargiguda) except the single room school building; even there was no chair for the teacher. There were not even minimum educational aids and materials. There was no facility except free supply of text books (no stipend and no uniform facility for the tribal primary children except to those in Ashram Schools. 71.7 per cent of the families



reported that there was lack of schooling facility. It was found the number of children (who did not attend the school at all) in the village Musirpadar (where there is no schooling facility at all) was high 78.9 per cent. In the villages having schooling facilities like Haridaspur, it is 5-6 per cent, 4-5 per cent in Sargiguda and 23.3 per cent in Ramguda. In enrolment also Musirpadar village had low percentage. But in Haridaspur, it was 52.1 per cent in Sargiguda 42.2 per cent and in Ramguda 33.9 per cent.

Hence the hypothesis that 'Educational facilities significantly affect the enrolment and drop out at the primary level of education' is accepted.

- (iii) From the study it was found out that 81 per cent of the Kondh parents have negative attitude towards the present medium of instruction (Oriya language). According to these parents their children were unable to follow the medium of instruction and they were not willing to go to school because in the school the teacher speaks only the regional language and the text books are also in the regional language. They want to have books in their own language. Only 19 per cent reported that their children should learn through the regional language to be able to communicate with the outside society. 76.3 per cent of the children also reported that they were unable to understand the present medium of instruction and 79.5 per cent children reported that it should be in their own language (Kui language). So the hypothesis that the regional language as the medium of instruction does effect the educational attainment of the Kondh children is accepted.
- (iv) It was found from the study that 74.6 per cent of the families were interested to give education to their children and according to them education of their children would bring in good returns and would provide them better life, but due to poor economic conditions they were unable to provide education to their children. Educational facilities are also not available in the villages. They are therefore helplessly withdrawing their children from schools. So the hypothesis that Kondh parents have negative attitude towards education and towards the education of their children is rejected.
- (v) It was found out from the study that the Kondhs attitude to schooling of their daughters is negative where 68.4 per cent families refused to send their daughters to school. According to them the girls should learn the household work instead of getting education. After all they think that they will be housewives so there is no need of education to girls. The hypothesis that Kondh parents have negative attitude towards girls education is accepted.
- (vi) It was found from the study that the Kondhs were satisfied with the present school timing. 78 per cent families were in favour of the school according to them after school time children can help their parents. Only 22 per cent

families and 24.1 per cent children were opposed to the present timing for to them it should be in the afternoon. 75.9 per cent children were in favour of the present timing of the school.

So the hypothesis that the present timing of the school does effect the educational attainment is rejected.

- (vii) It was found from the study that the vacation period of the school is not convenient to Kondh children 66 per cent families reported that the vacation period is not suitable to them accordingly to them instead of winter and rainy season. It is because children are badly needed by their parents during these days to do minor work to help them in the field for different agricultural work.

So the hypothesis that the present vacation of the school does affect the interests of the Kondh parents is accepted.

- (viii) It was also found from the study that the behavior of the teacher in the Kondh area is not favorable. 81 per cent of families opined that the teachers are not co-operative and did not take care of their children because they are Kondhs. They felt the teacher posed to be superior to them. 73.4 per cent children reported that the behavior of the teacher is not favourable and conducive to their education.

So the hypothesis that the behavior of the teacher does affect the education interest of Kondh parents and children is accepted.

### **Recommendations**

On the basis of the educational problems of the Kondhs identified in this study, some recommendations are made for improving the education in the Kondh area.

- (i) There should be adequate school facility for the Kondh village (areas) at least up to primary level.
- (ii) Residential Ashram School facilities should be provided adequately with free boarding and lodging so that the socio-economic conditions will not affect their educational attainment.
- (iii) Residential accommodation should be made available to the teachers too. They should be given short orientation training in the life, culture and language of the Kondh.
- (iv) As far as possible local educated people should selected and given preference in teaching in primary schools after short-term pre-service training (if they are not trained as at present).
- (v) Teaching aids and materials should be provided adequately to schools.
- (vi) For teaching Kondh students, books will have to be written in their dialect as far as possible.
- (vii) The medium of instruction in the lower primary stage (Class I to Class III) should be in their own language instead of the present regional language.

- (viii) Teachers should be encouraged to increase enrolment by getting enough children admitted to the school.
- (ix) The present system of giving stipends only to the lower secondary stage students, should be changed. The same facility be extended to lower primary and upper primary stages.
- (x) Programmes to make Kondhs aware of the need for education and motivate them to send their children to schools should be introduced
- (xi) Craft education should be introduced in the upper primary level to attract the Kondh children and prepare them for the world of work.

#### **Suggestions for Further Research**

- (i) The present research can be extended and taken up at the State level.
- (ii) Comparative study of the Kondh areas and non-Kondh areas regarding the educational problems of the Kondhs can be taken up.
- (iii) Comparative study of the educational problems of the Kondhs and non-Kondhs can be taken up.
- (iv) A study can be taken up to know educational problems of the Kondh students at the college or higher education level.
- (v) A study on the progress of Kondhs in Ashram Schools also be taken up.

#### **Conclusion :**

Here, in this study the problems of education of the Kondhs have been studied with various objectives and recommendations have been made to solve these, problem it is seen that the Kondhs by and large have been remained neglected even in the elementary education. They have been driven to the dark dungeon of ignorance and they seem to have even forgotten that there is anything like light. Normal efforts for educating them therefore proved futile. The ill equipped schools did not attract Kondh children to these schools. The dire poverty of the Kondh which requires participation of their children in their struggle for existence is a serious hindrance as the problems are mainly economic in nature the Kondh students have to help their parents in economic and other walks of life. The parents do not want to send their children to school at the cost of economic benefit they derive from them. Hence the incidence of drop out is very high among them. The primary schools functioning in the Kondh area do not fulfill their real purpose due to various factors. The Kondhs are not able to look beyond their limited horizon and accept new ideas and thoughts in the present circumstances as they are technologically more backward, firmly bound to their traditional ethos and norms and being greatly exploited, more opening of primary schools for the improvement of education will not mean much.

# GROWTH OF EDUCATION AMONG THE KANDHA TRIBE IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY \*

*Nihar Ranjan Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

The Kandha constituted one of the principal aborigines of India inhabiting the region extending from the eastern limit of Gondwana to Bay of Bengal and the Mahanadi river on the north to the Godavari on the South.

It is most unfortunate that education could not reach the Kandhas, who were living in the hills and forest. In this connection William Adam in his educational report of 1838 writes, "I am aware that much may be, and has been, done to civilize those tribe by promoting and protecting industry, by administering justice between man and man, and by punishing crimes against society. But such moral conquests can be secured only by that knowledge and those habits which education gives, and the means of education have hitherto been very sparingly employed".

Of course there were a good number of difficulties to educate the Kandhas. First, the areas in which the Kandhas lived were by and large in accessible and the climate of these areas was unhealthy. Furthermore, there was lack of proper communication. As such influx of the settlers from the more civilized parts who could have educated the Kandhas were not possible. Secondly, the Kandhas were apathetic and indifferent to education. They used to say that they had never known what learning was and could not see why it was necessary for their children. The most absurd argument was that reading would make their eyes fall from their sockets. Further, the Kandhas used to believe that education would make their boys idle in the fields. They were also under the impression that their children, after receiving education, would not help their illiterate parents in the field work. Even the prospect of employments did not attract the attention of the parents for sending

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXXII, No.3, THRTI, Bhubaneswar 1992, pp.5-13

<sup>1</sup> Post-Graduate Department of History, Ravenshaw Collige, Cuttack.

their children to school. They thought that the real intention of the Government was to take away the children who would start readings. It was also seen that in some schools pupils were actually withdrawn in consequence of this mischievous report. Macdonald observed that the Kandhas somehow developed an impression that education and taxation would go together, and that the establishment of schools was a measure in some way connected with the future assessment of their lands. Furthermore, the Kandhas and their Chiefs were reluctant to see schools established in their localities because they superstitiously feared that such an act might bring calamities for them. The elders used to argue that if for centuries they could live happily without education, why could they not live without it now? Such were the feelings of the Kandhas towards education. As John Campbell wrote in this connection, "The hardening influences of self-satisfied ignorance had full possession of these old chiefs, and their gloomy superstitions and hatred of knowledge would and only with their lives." Thus, it was difficult for both the Missionaries and the British Government to introduce education in the Kandh tracts. Till 1845 there was not much progress in the field of education among the Kandhas.

The British officials in charge of the suppression of Meriah and infanticide were the first to take interest in educating the Kandhas. S.C. Macpherson, the Meriah Agent, tried to carry education into the Kandha hills, as early as possible he thought that through the moral and religious advancement of the Kandhas by educating them their ancestral faith and usages supporting human sacrifice could come under permanent change. When J. Caden head was in charge of managing the Meriah Agency in 1844-45, Macpherson requested him repeatedly to adopt some measures as speedily as possible to establish some schools in the Kandha hills. Caden head tried to give some concrete shape to this proposal. But it was of no avail as he had to remain busy in other difficult problems of the Agency.

In 1847, John Campbell took charge of the Mariah Agency from Macpherson. He was very zealous for the establishment of schools in the Kandha hills. During his tenure a number of steps were taken in the Kandha tracts for the spread of education. In the year 1850-51, seven elementary schools were established in the Kandha hills of Ghumsar for imparting education to the Kandha children of those tracts. Those were in China Kimediy, Kurmingia, Udayagiri, Ghumsar and Mahasingi. But the progress of these schools was not satisfactory. The attendance of the students was not encouraging. The parents did not co-operate to send their children to the schools. In some school, the teachers proved their inability to teach and could not attract the Kandha children to the schools.

R.M. Macdonald, the Assistant Agent inspecting the above school wrote, "Children from the villages around often came, attracted by curiosity, to my tent; as soon as the subject of schools was introduced, they would immediately disappear from the crowd and the Malikas would gravely proceed to inform me that, even if they wished it, no school could be established there, as there happened to be no children in that particular Mootah."

However, on the recommendation of Macdonald, sanction was granted for the establishment of nine schools on an experimental basis. The appointment of an Inspector on a salary of thirty rupees per mensem was also granted. The salary of the teachers which was hardly five rupees per mensem raised to ten rupees. An additional allowance of five rupees per mensem was to be given as incentive allowance to teachers whose schools would be reported best. But Macdonald reported that none of the Kandha schools which had been established hitherto were working due to the want of supervision and inadequacy of qualified masters. Therefore, he suggested that some purely Oriya schools which had comparatively less difficulties, might be converted to mixed schools for Oriyas and Kandhas. He made this suggestion on consideration of the benefit that would accrue in the fact of Oriya and Kandha boys reading together in the same school. The former might influence the latter in the interest of the general welfare of the society. He also hoped that the students, after completion of their education from such schools, would be competent enough to become teachers with the knowledge of the Kandha language and would be able to teach better to the Kandha students of the hill areas. However, the Oriya schools in plains which henceforth served as mixed schools for Oriya as well as Kandha students could not fulfill the expectation. The Oriya did not like to send their children to such schools lest they might be spoiled by coming in contact with the Kandha children. The Kandhas on the other hand were apathetic towards allowing their children to join these mixed schools.

Meanwhile the famous Educational Dispatch of 1854 (Wood's Dispatch) gave encouragement to private enterprise for running schools. Whatever might be the utilitarian aspect of Wood's Dispatch, the people of Orissa along with the Kandhas received no immediate benefits from it.

By 1855-56, eleven schools had been working in the hill tracts of Ganjam. However, compared to previous years, the progress made in these schools was somewhat good. Earlier many of the Malikas or Hill Chiefs refused to permit their children to attend the schools. Later on, the guardians, after permitting the names of their children to be entered in the schools register, withdrew their names on the plea that such children had been suddenly afflicted with various diseases. At least that is what they told the authorities. After much persuasion one of the fathers agreed to permit his son to attend school on the tacit understanding that his name should not be recorded in the school's register. However, two of them consented unconditionally. But it was during 1855-56 that some resenting Hill Chiefs were found to have come voluntarily with a request to establish schools in their villages. One of them even volunteered to send his daughters to school. This change in the sentiments of the Hill Chiefs tended to show that a desire for education was gradually kindling in the Kandha tracts.

Macdonald, the Assistant Agent, had previously recommended the establishment of a small model school at Russelkonda, in which the teachers of the existing schools were to receive training for developing the modes of teaching. He

had also recommended that a number of Kandha youths might be educated to be employed in the teaching cadre in question. Further, he proposed to grant a small monthly allowance for the maintenance of a teacher and a limited number of pupils at his Headquarters of Russelkonda. Such pupils might be given a course of reading, writing, arithmetic and drill. And the most intelligent of them should, at the expiration of a fixed period of probation, be rewarded with a post in the Sib bundies or in the Hill Police. Furthermore, the most promising pupils from the other schools should be grafted from time to time into the school at Russelkonda, to compete for the vacant situations. Thus the chance of getting an employment would give a stimulus to the parents for sending their children to school. On the basis of Macdonld's recommendation a Training School for Teachers was established at Russelkonda. But initially his recommendation did not prove successful. No prospect of employment induced the parents to part with their children.

Inspite of the failure to achieve the desired results, the Missionaries' work for the spread of education in the Kandha tracts deserves admiration. With the patronage of the Baptist Missionaries a few Meriah schools were opened to rehabilitate the rescued Meriahs. In this regard the efforts of the Missionaries, namely Mr. and Mrs. Stubbins, Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson and Mr. and Mrs. Buckley were most commendable. The Missionaries also published some school books written in Kui language for the Kandha children. Many of the rescued Meriahs were educated in Mission Schools at Berhampur, Cuttack and Balasore. The Missionaries received rupees three from the Government for each Meriah child for their maintenance. However, compared to the plain area, the number of Missionary schools in Kandha tracts was very few.

The Roman Catholics too tried to educate the children of the Kandha tracts of Orissa. They set up a school where education was provided to the rescued orphans and poor children of the Kandha hills.

In 1859-60, the progress of education was quite encouraging in the hill tracts of Ganjam. There were seventeen schools in place like Kurmingia, Udayagiri, Nuagaun, Tentilgodo, Koinjur, Chokapad, Brahmanpad, Possera, Donga, Ghatigodo, Neddigodo, Godapur, Subarnagiri, Purnagodo, Shankarakhol, Gudrikiya and Sarangodo. Besides, there was also a Meriah school at Uperbhago of the hill tracts of Ganjam, which was established on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1856. The attendance in these schools was quite heartening. Teaching was imparted mainly in Oriya, History, Geography, Mathematics, Astronomy and English were the subjects taught to the students. But the course of studies was found to be difficult for the Kandha students. That was because they could not grasp either grammar or even History and Geography, what to speak of the didactic portions of the 'Hito podesh' and Sutton's theory of Astronomy.

In 1862, the Government changed the policy on the venue of the hill schools. Places of easier reach were selected for the purpose. Such schools become popular in Kandha tracts and the number of students in those schools increased.

Further, the standard of education in those schools improved due to the improvement in teaching and effectiveness of supervision. Now teachers were appointed from among those who received training from the Teachers' Training School at Russelkonda.

In 1863, the Madras Government passed an Act for the better management of the schools. But this Act did not help in the improvement of the school system. In 1865, particularly in the Kandha tracts of Ganjam, the state of education came to face rapid deterioration. There was a drastic fall in the attendance of the Kandha students in those hill schools. And it was ascribed to the frequent Kandh risings of that year. To improve the situation, the Government appointed a School Superintendent in 1865 for all the hill schools with a monthly salary of thirty rupees for the supervision of teaching and learning in those schools. This measure of the Government proved somewhat effective. The attendance at the hill schools considerably improved. Of course behind it lay the proper vigilance of the superintendent of the hill schools.

During this time some changes were made. The school at Upper bhago was closed down and some establishment was transferred to Purushottampur. A school was also opened at Raygada in Jeypore zamindari under the Grant-in-aid rules. To that school a teacher was sent from Ganjam. By 1867, there were thirteen schools in Ghumsar and Chinna Kimeddy with 471 pupils on the rolls. An examination conducted by School Inspector H.B.Grigg was attended by 353 pupils. All the same the Kandha people were quite indifferent to education and the condition of the schools was not satisfactory. The Madras Government brought this fact to the general notice in 1867 in the following words. "The condition of the schools cannot, the Government regret to say, be considered satisfactory, but very considerable allowance must necessarily be made for the great difficulty that is found in procuring competent Masters in this part of the country, and for the indifference exhibited by an uncivilized population to the advantages of education. In respect of most of these schools, there is the same story of incompetent or idle Masters, irregular attendance, false returns of attendance, and want of efficient superintendence".

In 1868, two new schools were opened in the Kandha tracts of Ganjam, one at Kabalgam and the other at Gudrigam. But in every school the attendance was irregular, and there was hardly a boy who was found to have taken active interest in his work. In that year the School Inspector, H.Bowers, remarked that the growth of education in the hill tracts of Ganjam was highly unsatisfactory. The reasons behind it could be ascribed to the high standard of education prescribed for the schools, the want of efficient supervision, the total indifference of the people to education, and the inefficiency of the Masters. The School Inspector suggested that the schools should be placed under the direct supervision of the European Officer stationed on the hills, that the course of instruction should be as simple as possible, that it should be restricted to what the Masters were competent to teach, namely



reading, writing, and the Elements of Arithmetic. In addition to it, he also suggested an increase in the pay of the Masters and the reformation of a Normal Class of Russelkonda. A further suggestion of his was to keep the Junior Assistant Agent in charge of the direct management of the Schools. Pointing out the lack of convenient house for some of the schools, he made the following remark 'It seems to me unreasonable to expect a school to be efficiently carried on in a close, dark, confined native house'.

The Madras Government, considering the above recommendations, took some positive steps to improve the condition of education in the Kandha tracts, particularly to attract Kondha students to the schools. Books and slates were supplied to them and scholarships were instituted. In the meantime one European official, J.M.Smith wrote a practical Hand-book of the Kandha language. For its preparation he took the help of some other works, viz. T.J. Maltby's 'Oriya Hand Book'. J.P. Frye's 'Fables in the Khond language' and H.A. Goodrich's 'Vocabulary'. This book of Smith's was written in Roman script, partly because the Kandh had no written script and partly because it would be more useful to any Englishman wishing to learn the language. The publication of the 'Practical Hand-book' in the Kandha language was financed by the Madras Government. Two hundred fifty copies of it were printed in 1876 at a total cost of five hundred twenty seven rupees. Earlier, through the unwearied assiduity of J.P. Frye, a sufficient quantity of school books in the Kondh language had already been prepared. All these books not only encouraged the Kandha students, but also enlightened the teachers and the British Officials in the matter of learning their language.

The Government also tried to induce all European officials residing in the Maliahs to qualify themselves in the Kandha languages. Ramus, the Baliguda Magistrate, was awarded five hundred rupees for passing the Kandha language examination. The Government of India by its order No. 586, dated the 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1874, had also fixed a reward of 500 rupees to an European and 250 rupees to a Native official who could pass a successful colloquial examination in that language. That was because the acquisition of a colloquial knowledge on the part of an educational officer and other officers of the Kandha tracts for the efficient discharge of their duties was felt to be desirable. The publication of Kandha books, Khond Hand-books and Frye's Khond manuscript helped the British officials immensely to acquaint themselves with the native language. Furthermore, the Government felt that a school literature in the Kandha language was to be prepared for giving instruction to Kandha pupils in schools in the speech of their own language.

Thus gradually, there was a progress of education in the Kandha tracts, though quite slow. Referring to the working of schools in the Kandha tracts, C.F. Mac Cartie, Special Assistant Agent in Ganjam, in his report of 1881 wrote "In reviewing the past history of these schools at least since 1878, I see no cause for despondency in regard to their future prospects; if the progress made had not been by leaps and bounds, at any rate they have in no case fallen back." By 31<sup>st</sup> March,

1882, there were fifteen hill schools in Ghumsar and Chinna Kimedya Maliahs. In these schools the attendance of Kandha students was 257 out of which 250 were boys and 7 girls. In order to popularize education among the Kandhas, games were also introduced in their schools. This led to a remarkable increase in attendance. The Government noticed that not only the Kandhas but also the Kandha Chiefs like the Patros and Bissois were taking keen interest in education and there was a growing demand for schools in Kandha villages. Further some of the Kandhas who were educated in the hill schools became teachers. By 1881, there were four Kandhas among the teaching staff of the hill schools. In the hill school of Udayagiri, the Headmaster was a Kandha. He was Subudhi Malliko. Another improvement was in the interest of the Kandha girls in getting education. In this connection the Special Assistant Agent in Ganjam reported his own experience thus. "The Kandha girls were proud of what they had learnt, crowding round me, whereas they are generally shy, to show me the specimens of their handwork". Furthermore, decided improvements in personal cleanliness, such as wearing fashionable clothes purchased from the plains, was found among the Kandhas due to the impact of education.

When this was the progress of education in the hill tracts of Ganjam, very little was achieved in Kandhamals in this respect. As late as 1868, no serious steps were taken there for the improvement of education. When Dinabandhu Patnaik joined there as Tahasildar he felt the necessity of spreading education amongst the local people and got a school sanctioned at Bisipara, the then Headquarters of the Tahasil, at an expenditure of thirty rupees per month. Even then the people of the locality were indifferent to getting their children educated. Dinabandhu Patnaik worked hard to bring home the utility and benefit of education to the people and succeeded in getting 65 boys and 15 girls to join the school. He also found that numbers of boys were too poor and it was difficult for them to get a daily meal regularly. So, Dinabandhu Patnaik made a further attempt and succeeded in enlisting the sympathy of several general local officials and other gentry in getting a contribution amounting to eighty three rupees for the purpose. It was no doubt a good beginning for the future growth of education among the Kandhas of Kandhamals. Gradually they evinced a desire to educate themselves through schools. In this context, T.E. Revenshaw, the Commissioner of Orissa in 1872-73, reported. "A remarkable move in relation to education has been made among the wild tribes of Kandha hills. These people have submitted of their own wish, and indeed of their own motion, to a tax on liquor shops, the proceeds of which are devoted to the establishment of schools. The tax has been realized without difficulty, and a number of schools have been built and are maintained by the people themselves. However, by the end of the twentieth century in the Kandhamals there were twelve Primary Schools, with Kandha teachers exclusively for the benefit of the Kandhas. But the progress was not satisfactory, mainly due to the fact that the Kandha children were taught by means of an Oriya Primer, which they could not understand, as they spoke only the Kandha dialect.

In Jeypore Estate, the growth of education among the Kandhas was very slow. By 1866 there was not even a single school in the whole of the Vizagpatanam Agency which included the Jeypore Estate. Carmichael then wrote, "The school we set a foot at the town of Jeypore on our first entering the country three years ago, met with no success whatever, and after struggling for some time with neglect and the climate, the master came down and shortly afterwards died." The school was not revived for some years, and a fresh beginning was made for opening a school at Gunupur. Thus due to the absence of schools, the Kandha children of Jeypore Estate were deprived of education. By 1896-96, however, the condition had already been improved and there were 120 schools in the Agencies under the charge of the Assistant Agents at Koraput and Parvatipur with 2551 pupils. Thus the establishment of schools enabled the Kandha children to go in for education, though quite late. But still the progress was slow compared to that of Ganjam district.

Thus due to the sincere efforts of some British officials and Missionaries the Kandhas were somehow educated. Of course it was very little compared to that of the people of the plain areas. Initially the Kandhas remained apathetic and indifferent to education due to their superstitious beliefs against learning. But when the Meriah Agency was created to suppress human sacrifice and infanticide, then the spread of education in the Kandha tracts became one of the prime objectives of the Government. Hill schools were opened and parents were persuaded by the Government to send their children to those schools. Missionaries too worked hard to enlighten the Kandha children. Gradually the Kandhas could understand the utility of learning. Being enlightened under the fold of education, the Kandhas improved their social behavior and habits. Subsequently, they were no more to be depicted as 'stupid and ignorant'.

## References

1. Willam Adam, Reports on the State of Education in Bengal 1835 and 1838 (Calcutta, 1941), P. 448.
2. Selections from the Records of the Madras Government [Hereafter abbreviated as SRG (Madras)], No. XVII, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1854-55 (Madras, 1885), P. 27.  
A.J.Arbutnot, Director of Public Instruction to T. Pycroft, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, August 29, 1855, No. 32.
3. Verrier Elwin, A Brief survey of the aboriginal tribes of the districts of Ganjam and Koraput, Cuttack, 1946), P. 19
4. Journal of Orissan History, Vol. VII, June 1987, No. 1, P.59, D.Behera's Education in Ghumsur, 1836-66.
5. SRG (Madras), No. XVII, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1854-55, P.24, A.J.Arbutnot, Director of Public Instruction to T. Pycort, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, August 29, 1855, No. 32.

6. SRG (Madras), No. XXXV, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1855-56 (Madras, 1858), P.34, Director of Public Instruction to Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, November 5, 1856, No. 827.
7. John Campbell, Personal Narrative of Thirteen Years' Service among the Wild Tribes of Khondistan for the suppression of Human Sacrifice (London, 1864), P.179.
8. Ibid, P.180
9. William Macpherson (Ed.) Memorials of Service in India, from correspondence of the Late Major Samuel Charters Macpherson (London, 1865), P. 239.
10. S.Pearce Carey, Dawn on the Kond Hills (London, 1936), P.21.
11. SRG (Madras), No. XVII. Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1854-55, P.22, A.J. Arbuthnot, Director of Public Instruction to T. Pycroft, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, August 29, 1855, No. 32.
12. Orissa History Congress Proceeding, 1977, P.156, S.Devi's Education in Southern Orissa in early part of Nineteenth Century.
13. SRG (Madras), No. XVII, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1854-55, P.25, A.J. Arbuthnot, Director of Public Instruction to T. Pycroft Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, August 29, 1855, No. 32.
14. Ibid, P.27
15. SRG (Madras), No. XXXV, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1855-56, P.30, Director of Public Instruction to Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, November 5, 1856, No. 827.
16. SRG (Madras), No. XVII, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1854-55, P.28, A.J. Arbuthnot, Director of Public Instruction to T. Pycroft Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, August 29, 1855, No. 32.
17. SRG (Madras), No. XXXV, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1855-56, P.34, Director of Public Instruction to Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, November 5, 1856, No. 827.
18. W.W. Hunter, The Marquess of Delhousie (Oxford, 1895), P.207;  
H.R.James, Education and Statesmanship in India (Bombay, 1917)P, 41;  
Journal of Indian History, Vol.XLII, Part – II, Sl. No. 125, August 1964, P.494
19. W.W. Hunter, Orissa (London, 1872), Vol, II, P. 146
20. SRG (Madras), No. XXXV, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1855-56, P.30-35, Director of Public Instruction to Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, November 5, 1856, No. 827.
21. SRG (Madras), No. XVII, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1854-55, pp-23-24, A.J. Arbuthnot, Director of Public Instruction to T. Pycroft Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, August 29, 1855, No. 32.
22. The Orissa Historical Research Journal, Vol. XXXV, Nos. 1-2, p-34, Nihar Ranjan Patnaik's Missionary activities and its social impact on 19<sup>th</sup> century Orissa.
23. A Sutton, Orissa and its Evangelization, (London, 1850), p.239.
24. H.H. Rislai and E.A. Gait, Census of India, 1901, Vol. 1, Part 1 (Calcutta, 1903), p.288.
25. A. Sutton, Op. Cit, pp 229-239 James Peggs, A History of the General Baptist Mission (London, 1846), p.291;  
Nihar Ranjan Patnaik's, Social History of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Orissa (Allahabad, 1989), p.238.

26. Board Proceedings (Hereafter abbreviated as Bd. Procd), Judicial (Bengal State Archives No. 118A), Bengal Government, Government of India to John Campbell, June 21, 1848; Missionary Herald, No. LXIX, November 1, 1862, p.162.
27. SRG (Madras), No. LXIX, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1859-60 (Madras, 1861), P.65.
28. Journal of Education, Madras, Vol. I, October 10, 1882, p.950.
29. SRG (Madras), Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1860-61 (Madras, 1862) p.182.
30. Journal of Orissan History, Vol. VII, 1987, No. 1, p.61. D. Behera's Education in Ghumsur, 1836-66.
31. SRG (Madras), Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1860-61 (Madras, 1862) p.139.
32. Journal of Education, Madras, Vol. VI, No. 9, September -November 1892, pp.529-531.
33. Selection form the Records of Govt. of India, Home Dept, No. LIV, A.M. Monteath's Notice on the State of education in India during 1856-66, 9Calcutta, 5, 1867), p.64.
34. SRG (Madras), No. XI, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1867-68 (Madras, 1868), p-30, E.B. Powell, Director of Public Instruction to R.S. Ellis Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, July 15, 1968, No.1534.
35. SRG (Madras), No. XI, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1867-68 Appendix1, pp-iii-iv, H.B. Grigg, Acting Inspector of Schools, First Division, to E.B. Powell, Director of Public Instruction, Madras, May 23, 1868, No. 431.
36. Bd. Procd. Educational. Orissa State Archives, Loose Records (hereafter abbreviated as OSA LR) 1839 G], Madras Government, H.B. Grigg, Acting Inspector of Schools, First Division, to Director of Public Instruction, Madras, April 15, 1867, No. 58.
37. Bd. Procd, Educational (OSA LR 1839 G), Madras Government, G.O. Educational, July 29, 1867, No. 242.
38. SRG (Madras), No. XV, Report on Public Instruction in Madras Presidency for 1868-69 (Madras, 1869), ApendixA. No. 1, pp-ix-x, H. Bowers, Inspector Schools, First Division, to E.B. Powell, Director of Public Instruction, Madras, May 10, 1869, No. 110.
39. Ibid. p.x
40. Journal of Orissan History, Vol. IX, June 1989, p-121, Nihar Ranjan Pattnaik's Growth of education and its social impact on 19<sup>th</sup> Century Orissa.
41. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 3348G), Madras Government, R.Davidson, Acting Agent to Governor of Fort. St. George in Ganjam to W. Hudleston, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, November 27, 1875, No. 1021.
42. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 3347G), Madras Government, R.Davidson, Acting Agent to Governor of Fort. St. George in Ganjam to D.F. Carmichael, Officiating Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, June 11, 1875, No. 129.
43. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 3347G), Madras Government, J.M.Smith, Special Assistant Agent, Ganjam to R. Davidson, Agent to Governor Fort St. George, Ganjam, May 11, 1875, No. 76.
44. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 2315 G), Madras Govt., C.G.Master, Agent to Governor in Ganjam to Officiating Chief Secretary to Govt, March 30, 1877, No. 131.
45. John Campbell. Op. Cit, p, 178.
46. Bd. Procd, Judicial (OSA LR ACSN 1690 G), Madras Government, R.Davidson, Acting Agent to Governor of Fort St. George in Ganjam to D.F. Carmichael, Acting Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, July 1, 1874.

47. Bd. Procd, Educational (OSA LR Acsn 1228 G), Madras Government, G.O.Educational, September 20, 1883, No. 619.
48. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 1228G), Madras Govt, H.B. Grigg, Director of Public Instruction to Acting Chief Secretary to Govt, Madras, August 10, 1883, No. 5515.
49. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 2005G), Madras Government, C.F. Mac Cartie, Special Assistant Agent, Ganjam to H.B. Grigg, Director of Public Instruction April 1, 1881, No. 6s.
50. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 1941G), Madras Government, C.H. Mounsey Special Assistant Agent, Ganjam, to H.B. Grigg, Director of Public Instruction, April 5, 1882 No. 3.
51. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 1941G), Madras Government, A. Munro, Inspector of Schools, First Division to H.B. Grigg, Director of Public Instruction, June 5,, 1882 No.1273.
52. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 1942G), Madras Government, H.B. Grigg, Director of Public Instruction to Chief Secretary to Government, August 28, No. N-444.
53. T.J. Maltby, The Ganjam District Manual (Reprint, Madras, 1918), p.72.
54. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 2005G), Madras Government, C.F. Mac Cartie, Special Assistant Agent, Ganjam, to H.B. Grigg, Director of Public Instruction, April 1, 1881 No. 6s.
55. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 1945G), Madras Government, C.H. Mounsey Special Asst Agent, Ganjam, to H.B. Grigg, Director of Public Instruction, April 9, 1884.
56. Bd. Procd. Educational. (OSA LR Acsn 1946G), Madras Government, Special Assistant Agent, Ganjam, to Agent to Governor, April 1, 1884.
57. Utkal Dipika, January 25, 1868.
58. The Orissa Historical Research Journal, Vol.X,1962. No.4, p55, S. Patnaik's Orissa in 1868.
59. E.T. Dalton, Tribal History of Eastern India (Reprint, Delhi, 1973), p. 301.
60. Quoted in W.W. Hunter's A Statistical Account of Bengal, (London,1877), Vol.XIX, p. 265
61. L.S.S.O, 'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers, Angul (Calcutta, 1908)p, 128.
62. R.C.S. Bell, Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput (Cuttack, 1945), pp 156.157.

# DONGRIA KONDH \*

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

Dongria Kondh is one of the primitive groups of the Kondh tribe. As the name signifies it is a community of hill dwelling (*dongar* means high-hill land) people. The striking unity of the Dongria Kondh is reflected in their claim as the descendants of Niamraja, their legendary ancestor-king. Although the Oriyas call them 'Dongria Kondh' they call themselves '*Dongran Kuan*' or '*Drili Kuan*'.

They inhabit in 116 villages spread over a contiguous highland country coming under the administrative jurisdiction of Bissam-katak and Muniguda and Kalyansingpur blocks of Rayagada district of Odisha. Since they are a sub-tribe of the Kandhas they are not enumerated separately by the Census but along with the main tribe the Kandhas. However, after the Dongrias were identified as a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) and later re-designated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) by Government of India, majority of them have been covered under two micro projects named Dongria Kandha Development Agencies (DKDA) of Chatikona and DKDA of Parsali, both operating in Rayagada district to bring about their all-round development. As per the data of Mid Term Review of Micro Projects conducted by SCSTRTI in 2010-11, 102 Dongria Kondh villages – 62 and 40 with a population of 6254 and 2584 (Total 8838) respectively come under both the micro projects.

The above cited Mid Term Review (2010-11) shows that their sex ratio were 1358 in DKDA, Chatikona and 1338 in DKDA, Parsali and their level of literacy is 33.68 and 25.78 respectively

They inhabit exclusively the wooded Niamgiri hill ranges (from about 1500 ft. to 4500 ft. above sea level) of Rayagada district of Odisha. The background against which the villages stand is really picturesque. If one views a village from a distance he will find some low-thatched houses almost lost in greenness. Every Dongria Kondh village is a cluster of houses arranged in two rows and in each row the houses are continuous in a linear fashion. Between the two rows of houses runs the main street of the village. In majority of the villages,

---

\* Published in *Particularly Vulnerable Tribes (PVTGs) of Odisha*, Vol. I, 2015, pp.450-58 and updated in 2019

<sup>1</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

besides the Dongria Kondh, there are the Domb, the nearest and the most unavoidable neighbours of the Kondh.

Girls' dormitory (*dasha-hada*) is one of the important social institutions of the Dongrias to which young boys of the same village cannot enter. Young men from affinal clan villages attend the dormitory late in the evening and leave the place before dawn.

The Dongria males put on a long narrow piece of cloth round the waist in such a way that the two embroidered ends of the cloth remain hanging one in the front and the other at the back. The piece of cloth is termed in their *Kuvi* language as *drili*. It is nearly 20 to 28 ft. long and 1 ft. in width. The women wear a cloth of four to five ft. in length and nearly two-ft. in width. They use another piece of cloth, which covers the front side like an apron.

The Dongria Kondh organize themselves into strictly exogamous territorial clan groups. Cooperation and conflict between clans are the significant dimensions of their social structure. Each of the Dongria Kondh clans can be divided into four functional groups, namely, *Mondal*, *Bismajhi*, *Jani* and *Pujari*. Clan is called *kuda* and the functional group is called *punja*.

Both simple and compound families are found among the Dongrias. The compound families are either polygynous, a group consisting of a man and two or more wives and their children or a group formed by the remarriage of a widow or widower having children by a former marriage. Co-wives live in the same dwelling with the husband and their unmarried children.

They are basically swidden cultivators and also raise orchards. They grow banana, pineapples, turmeric and a number of varieties of cereals and pulse in the swiddens. Besides they depend upon forest resources for meeting the daily necessities of life. They raise livestock like goats, pigs and hens for meeting the demands of prestations and for their own use on ritual occasions. Barter and labour exchange are essentially still in practice, and traditional labour cooperatives based on age and sexes continue to be functional today.

In every year between January- March they observe *meriah* festival at the level of clan and sacrifice buffaloes to offer it to the earth goddess, *dharni penu*. Characteristically they are one of the feuding tribes of India who wage feuds to keep peace. Although they consider the Dombs as untouchables on several socio-economic, political and religious occasions they and the Domb act together.

They are distinct in their language and culture from the neighboring tribes and castes. Unaffected by Christianity in particular, they have maintained their age-old forms of economy, social organization, beliefs and rituals and have existed in seclusion of hill regions separated by formidable natural barriers.



# LIFE AND CULTURE OF THE DONGRIA KONDHS \*

*A. C. Sahoo* <sup>1</sup>

Among all the tribes, Kondhs top the list for their numerical preponderance in the state of Odisha. Considering different levels of economic development and socio-cultural background, the Kondhs can broadly be divided in to several sections. Of them, mention may be made of Desia Kondhs, Kutia Kondhs, Dongria Kondhs, Pengo Kondhs, Sita Kondhs, Malua Kondhs, Nanguli Kondhs and Bura Kondhs etc. The Dongria Kondhs are a major section of the great Kondh tribe and inhabit the Niyamgiri hill ranges of south Odisha.

The Dongria Kondhs are very simple, happy and straight forward and upright in there conduct. They have a lot of respect for their gods, goddesses, deities, spirits and unseen powers. However, they are very superstitious in nature. They work very hard and enjoy leisurely hours. They derive pleasure by helping others and attach great importance to human life. Basically they are out spoken and occasionally become very aggressive. They love their children and their family members and have strong feeling of togetherness among themselves. They believe in equality and feel proud of their social position and status. They depend on the scheduled caste Domb people for their socio economic affairs. They respect elders and satisfy ancestral spirits at all costs. Both males and females adorn their body in a culture specific style. They are very hospitable and proud of their own village and territory.

The Dongria Kondhs mostly live on high hill-land locally known as 'Dongar' which signifies the nomenclature of their community as 'Dongria Kondh'. They have their own language known as 'Kuvi' and distinct culture. They claim as the descendents of Niyam Raja, their legendary ancestral king.

Their **area** comes under three community development Blocks namely Bissam-katak and Muniguda of Gunpur sub-division and Kalyanisinghpur block of Rayagada district. Apart from these some of them are also found in Lanjigarh Block of Kalahandi district. The area inhabited by the Dongrias is a

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 47, No.1&2, 2007, pp. 98-109

<sup>1</sup> Officer on Special Duty, Tribal Museum, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswarr

contiguous rectangular patch over the Niyamgiri hill ranges. Not only by virtue of their habitat but also due to their special cultural characteristic they are clearly distinguished from other Kondh sections as well as other communities.

They are one of the major sections of the great Kondh tribe having about 10,000 population distributed in around 120 settlements. Origin of the Dongria Kondhs is obscure. However, according to their legend and folktales, they claim that they are the brothers of other Kondhs such as Kutia Kondhs and Desia Kondhs who are residing adjacent to their locality and the Niyam Raja had settled them on the Niyamgiri hills since time immemorial. In order to differentiate them from other Kondh groups they keep long hair as an ethnic identity. They also prove through legends that they are the original settlers of Niyamgiri hills since centuries.

**The land of the Dongria Kondhs** is situated between 20°3' and 17°50' N Latitude and 81°27' E Longitude and over high plateau of Niyamgiri hills ranging from 1000 ft. to 5000 ft above the sea level. The area is comparatively cooler and receives 80% of the total rainfall during monsoon. The Dongria Kondhs enjoy three seasons. However, the climate is relatively cool and pleasant through out the year. February to June found to be hot. In May the temperature rises up to 33°C. The average annual rain fall vary from year to year. However, on an average, it is found to be 60 inches. They practice slash and burn type of cultivation, which causes depletion of forest.

The humidity is very high in monsoon time. In summer the wind blows from south to west. The periodicity of rainfall is neither uniform nor regular. As the result of which very often drought is a common problem in the area. The topography of the area is very uneven and lowest part of their habitation is situated above 1000 ft of sea level. So far as the water resources are concerned Gadgada Nala in Bissamcuttack Block and Sakata Nala in the Muniguda Block are two major perennial sources. Almost all the Dongria Kondh villages in K. Singhpur Block have natural flow of stream water.

The **soils** by and large are lateritic and land is sloppy which is not suitable for agriculture. Due to practice of shifting cultivation, a number of hills have become barren. There are hills having only large stones and boulders and at the same time a number of mountains have luxuriant growth of forest which indicates that there is fertile soil suitable for different agricultural and horticultural purpose. A very few tracts are there where the soil type is loamy or clay. But a major part of their land has brown colour soil with poor water absorption capacity.

The Niyamgiri hills and forests are full of fruit bearing trees like Jackfruit, Tamarind, Blackberry, Mango, Banana and Citrus variety. Extensive pineapple plantations are the example of potential eco system and efforts of

man. Apart from different fruit bearing trees a number of valuable timbers like Sal, Biza, Sisua, Asana and Haladu etc, are abundantly found in the hill ranges.

Animals like tigers, bear, wild boar, deer, *sambars*, wild goats, spotted deer, porcupine, hare, many kinds of poisonous snakes etc roam in the local forest. Birds like jungle chicken, peacocks, pigeon and different kinds of sparrows are found. Different varieties of herbs and shrubs having great medicinal value are available.

The **economic life** of the Dongria Kondhs mostly revolves round the forest. It is their main source of food, firewood, herbal medicines and raw materials for house construction. They go for hunting and trapping of birds and animals to get non-vegetarian food items. The hill streams provide them ample scope for washing clothes and cleaning utensils. They also do fishing there and catch crab for relishing with special pleasure. Their favourite sago-palm sap that they collect from the sago-palm trees, are mostly found in the forest. Their swiddens lie in the forest. They work in the forest and there by learn many things in the process of their socialization. As a fish cannot live without water, the Dongria Kondhs can not live without forest. In the changing economy from shifting cultivators to horticulturist they have to depend on the forest to raise orchards and fruit bearing trees for survival. They strongly believe that forest in and around their habitat is a perennial source to provide them all that they need for survival for all time to come. They love their natural habitat very much and hesitate to come down to the plains. They never like trespassing of outsiders into their habitat and resent such movements. Each clan and sub-clan maintains their territorial boundary within their own group members. Any encroachment in this regards may lead to fatal feuding situation.

For construction of a **house** a Dongria has to select a site for which he has to undergo several observances and perform necessary rituals to get approval of the deities. The Dongria house is rectangular in ground plan and gable shaped to look at. They make the houses like a railway compartment, the front compartment of which is used as store room-cum-rest house, the middle room is the main room used for dining, cooking, sleeping, storing of valuable materials and a corner is used for enshrining family deity. The third and last room is located at back side is meant for the women during their menstruation period and delivery time. The walls are made of bamboo splits or poles or wattle of broomstick over which they plaster mud and cow dung. A coating of coloured earth is plastered over it to enhance the beauty of the wall surface on which on special occasions they make traditional paintings. Some people now-a-days are using mud or unburnt or burnt bricks for making wall. They use doors and shutters over which various designs and motifs are carved.

The Dongria Kondh houses are located in two parallel rows leaving a wide street in between. The Domb houses are distinctly separated from the Dongria Kondh houses as the former are considered lower in social status. Each

village is inhabited by people of a single clan or more than one clan. Some of the villages jointly form one territorial unit called Mutha. The dominating or the original clan members may allow members of other clan into the unit with the approval of the headman. But all the clan members living in a village abide by the same customary rules.

The Dongria Kondhs follow prescribed rules for selecting the place of residence. Soon after marriage, the young man constructs his own house with the help of family members and kinsfolk. Mostly he constructs the house in his father's village. Sometimes, he moves to other village to establish a new residence. There are cases that husband and wife after marriage move to bride's parental village with the approval of the parent-in-laws and the village elders. A family may move to a village inhabited by members of other clans provided members of the host clan agree to accommodate them. By and large, rules of residence are strictly followed and any deviation leads to quarrels and conflicts between families, lineages and clans. Migration of the members of a clan from an old village to a new one may take place, but at the time of buffalo sacrifice festival, sacrificial blood is offered to the deities in both the villages.

Mostly in the Niyamgiri hill ranges lands are fertile due to deposit of humus through out the year. Perennial streams provide water flow which is conducive for nourishment of plants and fruits bearing trees which the Dongrias grow in and around of their habitat. Moreover, they are experts in raising orchards on the hill slopes. They manage their horticultural crops in such a manner that they get crops round the year for their sustenance. Thus, they are hardly affected by natural calamities.

The land belonging to a clan is known as *Padar*. The clansmen always own the land and they can lease it to anybody for cultivation. Hence, the ownership rights are never transferred. If a man is issueless his land goes to his lineage brothers. Thus, the sub-clan or the clan, according to the situation holds ownership rights of possession over land in the clan territory along with the authority to use its natural resources. The traditional land owner has every right to take back his land whenever he wishes. Customarily, mango and tamarind trees are owned at community level and its fruits are enjoyed by all the people. The utility lands like pasture, forest, dancing ground, community centre, youth dormitory, streams, and shrines are used freely by every one of the community. The stream bed lands cultivated by the Dongrias are strictly prohibited to the Doms. The Dongria's great affinity towards clan territory and its socio-economic importance is seriously realized along with their socio-psychological and emotional attachment. The Dongria Kondhs inherit land through patrilineal descent line and women have no right over the land and property. When a man dies all his land and property are shared by his sons.

The Dongria Kondhs are addicted to alcoholic drinks. In addition to the juice of Sago Palm trees which is their favourite drink, they consume varieties

of wines. They distil liquor from *Mohua* flower, rice, molasses, banana, mango, orange, jackfruit, pineapple, blackberry and a few other sweet fruits containing starch. Each family is proud of possessing juice giving *Salap* trees. Now a days, some of them sell *Salap* juice to the neighbouring Scheduled Caste people for money. By and large the Dongria Kondhs use *Salap* in socio-religious functions to entertain their guests and friends. Their weakness for drinks very often put them into unavoidable peril that they sell and mortgage their valuable plantations to the neighbouring Scheduled Caste (Domb) people. Some of them quarrel among themselves due to heavy addiction. On one hand drinks are unavoidable in marriage, life cycle rituals, ceremonies and social functions and on the other it is the major causes of their economic backwardness.

The Dongria Kondhs practice **shifting cultivation** extensively for production of food and cash crops. They clear forest before summer season and set fire to the dried matter. Spraying of ashes and digging up of the field by hoe and sticks is followed by sowing of seeds in the traditional fashion. They clean the bushes and unwanted plants and watch the crop from the attack of animals and birds. Crops are harvested one after another. But starting from the selection of site upto the harvest they perform several magico-religious rites. They practice wet cultivation near the sides of perennial streams. But this type of land is scarce and a few people own such lands.

There is **division of labour among** the Dongria Kondhs on the basis of age, sex and special skills. Some people have specialization in carpentry, thatching of roof and house construction. The women are very hard working and shoulder major economic responsibilities. The male members enjoy drinks and relish buffalo flesh and dry fish very much. Ragi gruel and rice of small millets are their usual food items. They also eat pulses and varieties of vegetables, which they grow in their own fields. They remain perpetually indebtedness to the Dombs for payment of bride price, to meet expenses of rituals, ceremonies, festivals and sacrifices to appease deities. They save in form of gold, silver cattle wealth and land in the plains as well as utensils, ornaments and hard cash.

The selling of land or trees by pledging is called *jerat*. No document is signed. After the transaction one can not claim ownership on the property again. The seller takes an oath before the Earth Goddess and loudly tells that *I will melt like salt in water, my body will be rotten like the straw, my life will vanish like the ashes go away in the wind, and I will die fast like the grass and evaporate like drop of wine, if I claim it again*. The Dongria Kondhs also sell and mortgage standing crops of turmeric, zinger, pineapple, mango and jackfruit orchards. The main reason for selling of orchards is their busy schedule in swidden plots and hesitation to go through the tedious process of marketing of the produce. The local Scheduled Caste traders pay advances much before the fruits ripen, and the Dongria Kondhs also feel relaxed by selling much before.

Now-a-days they derive a good income from their orchards, fruits trees and sale of turmeric, ginger and forest products. Their economic development is visible in their house construction, use of modern articles, practice of modern cultivation, changes in dress style, use of silver and gold ornaments and standard of living as a whole. No more they are poor but quite extravagant.

The Dongria Kondhs are very cooperative in nature. At the time of strenuous works one can hire the services of **village labour cooperative**. In this case one member from each household come to work for a needy person and the practice is known as Sahabuti. Some of the lineage members work for some one and it is known as Dutarubuti. When all the youth dormitory members work for some one it is called as Dasabuti. The members rendering services are provided with food, drinks and little money by the host.

**Hunting** is a traditional pastime for the Dongria Kondhs and they go for hunting individually or in a group. Apart from hunting with bow and arrow they use locally made guns, axe, knife, snares, traps and a few other hunting weapons. They also use indigenous technology and various devices for hunting big animals. They appease the hunting deity before their hunting expedition. The hunted animals are equally shared among the hunters and the real hunter gets a bigger share. If the wounded animal moves to the boundary of neighbouring village, the former group has right over the animal. The dogs are domesticated to be used for hunting as well as watching the standing crops.

The **prestations** are in vogue among the Dongrias in several forms. There is prescribed governance pattern for prestations and counter prestations. The major factors responsible for this are social relation and socio-economic interactions between groups and political activities. One's kinship level and social status is determined on the kind of gift. The occasions when prestations and counter prestations made are birth, name giving, marriage, death rites, *meriah* sacrifice, important community level festivals etc. The sharing of prestations and counter prestations bring about unity and solidarity and establish social harmony as well as mutual relationship among the community.

**Family** is the smallest social unit in the Dongria Kondh society but village forms the most important unit for many of the socio cultural and socio religious activities. Apart from this they have multiple social institutions functioning at their respective levels in very organized manner. They have simple and compound type of families, due to the practice of polygyny. A man can have two wives and their children in one family. There are extended families having unmarried brothers and sisters along with widow mother and divorced sisters. Sometimes, some of the relations from mother's side, wife's side and member of lineage groups live together under a common family head. But usually in all the nuclear families wife manages her own economic activities with the help of her husband and unmarried sons and daughters.

Relationships between the uterine brothers are very close even if they live independently in separate houses.

The **lineage system** is very strong. The extended lineages are sub-clans locally known as Punja and named as Mandal, Bis-majhi, Jani and Pujari. The senior most Man of Jani Punja takes charge of worshipping the village deities. The function of the Pujari Punja is to assist the Jani in religious functions. Mandal Punja have right to act as secular head and looks after the over all wellbeing of the village. Bis-majhi Punja is to assist the Mandal. The extended lineage of Dongria Kondhs is so large that it is very difficult to unite them together for all lineage purposes.

Beyond this, the greater socio-territorial organization called **Mutha** comprising a group of villages constitutes an important administrative unit. The unity of a clan is very strong. Among important clans mention may be made of Niska, Sikaka, Wadaka, Pusika, Jakasika, Kadraka, Nundruka, Wangesika, Miniaka, Kundika, etc. Among the Dongrias two or more clans jointly form a single exogamous unit. They have common origin, common shrine and common occasions and jointly perform certain rituals. Marriage is strictly prohibited between brother clans and they are regarded as Maa- Kuda.

The entire Niyamgiri hill ranges come under the "**Muthas**" namely Jakasika, Kadraka, Niska, Wadaka, Pusika, Sikaka and Nundruka. The demarcation of 'Mutha' boundary, their interaction, co-operation and some social restrictions are the striking feature of Dongria Kondh Mutha system. However, village plays an important role in the field of unity and extension as well as for different communal activities. Relationship between different kin groups both in the same family and with other families is excellent. After marriage the son lives in his own house constructed in collaboration with all family members.

Role of **girls' dormitory (Adas beta)** and its special function has an immense value in socialization and personality formation. Here both boys and girls of different villages meet each other within the limits of cultural restrictions and social rules. Different social sanctions concerned with marriage, pre-marital relationship and interest for acquiring of mates from the boyhood keep the boys away from their formal school education. Clan feuds, conflicts, quarrels and tensions among the Dongria Kondhs some times lead to fatal result.

The young unmarried boys are prohibited to go the girls' dormitory of the same village as all the girls are considered as their sisters. But the boys from other villages can come and meet the girls and develop intimacy with them and stay there overnight. The girls learn embroidery works, playing musical instruments and dance etc from their elders. Sometimes a boy and girl love each other which may lead to marriage. It is very dangerous for the boy to

develop intimacy with a girl when she is already betrothed. In that case it always leads to clan feuds. Two persons of the same sex can be tied up by ritual friendship. A male addresses his ritual friend, as Sai and female addresses as Ade. This relationship may be extended to both the families for generations and marital relations between two ritual kin groups are not allowed. This friendship is established through a ceremony conducted usually on a festive occasion when presentations are exchanged between each other. Salap drinking friendship groups are very informal, voluntary and flexible. They enjoy drinks moving in groups from each other's sago palm trees in turn. Early in the morning they meet, drink and chit chat, around fire beside the *salap* tree.

Another very important institution is **Sadar - the village community centre** where all the elders gather and discuss village matters. It is usually located on the village streets where the village deities are enshrined and buffalo sacrifice is performed during Meriah festival. This house is very strong as it is constructed using beautifully carved pillars and beams. The walls are also nicely painted with geometrical designs on festive occasions. The boys and girls are assigned works in the construction and maintenance of the centre but it is used by the elderly males. Each village has its **Jatra Kudi shrine**- who is the protector of the village enshrined at the eastern side of the village boundary.

The **sympiotic relationship between the Dombs and Dongria Kondhs** is most significant for several reasons. The Dombs serve the Dongria Kondhs as messenger, cattle watcher, street sweeper and weavers. As messenger a Domb is very influential and feels dignified by establishing himself in the village. He plays very vital role in sale of any produce, giving advance for orchards and fruit bearing trees, purchase of buffalo for community rituals, payment of bride price etc. He acts as a go-between the Dongrias and the police, court, revenue and such other matters. Now-a-days they play unavoidable role in day to day socio economic life of the Dongria Kondhs. They are so intelligent that without having any productive asset, they are comparatively better off economically. In these days the Dombs freely take shelter in Dongria Kondh villages with the help of their Domb relatives and hence, their number is increasing over period of time. Domb people are the all time neighbours of the Dongria Kondhs. Both the groups live in the same village but in two separate wards.

After marriage Dongria couple eagerly want a child because they believe that one of their ancestors is likely to take birth. When a married woman does not conceive for a long time, she is looked down upon by her kith and kin and treated with traditional herbal medicines and magico-religious remedies. Adequate care is taken of a pregnant woman and restrictions are observed with regard to her diets and daily work. At the time of **childbirth** an expert old woman attends her. She is paid some remuneration both in cash and kind. The new born baby is not given any food other than mother's milk. After 21 days, the lactating mother is given her normal diet. Ear piercing and name



giving ceremonies are observed in which special food and drinks are relished. Name giving ceremony is observed when the child is about one month old. On this occasion the maternal uncle is invited who has special rights to select the name and lead the celebration. He also presents special gifts which depend on the sex of the child. When the child is about 6 months old an experienced old woman is called for piercing the earlobes and specific thorn is used to make about a dozen of holes in both the sides. No specific pubescent ceremony is observed for the girls. However, the girl is considered unclean till the 7<sup>th</sup> day from the date of her first menstruation.

As the child grows up, he or she goes through different stages of socialization. During the age of 10 to 12 years they start searching for age mates and friends to develop friendship with them.

**Marriage** is an auspicious occasion and quite expensive affair. Not only higher amount of bride price is paid but also the groom has to work for about 2-5 years in the girl's house. Marriage within the same clan or the same "Mutha" is strictly prohibited. The minimum age for the marriage for a boy is 20 to 22 years and for a girl, 16 to 18 years. Marriage of boys and girls, according to their parents' choice is often made. However, a number of boys and girls now-a-days select their life partner in course of their dormitory life.

They strictly observe **village and clan exogamy** and are prohibited to marry within the affinal kins and their lineage groups up to two to three generations. Acquiring more than one wife is socially approved. A woman can marry after she is divorced. Similarly a widow can marry even if he has children. Usually a widower gets married if he has no children. Marriage among the Dongria Kondhs is a means of creating alliance between two clan groups. It has important socio-economic implications. Marriage by negotiation is most prestigious and it is practiced by well to do people. This kind of marriage negotiations undergoes through a series of phases. As per the local tradition from the very early childhood boys' father searches for a suitable girl for his son. At the first phase, a group of women under the leadership of boy's mother proceed to girl's village and to the girl's house through a middle woman of the girl's village. As per the usual practice, the girls relatives usually refuse and they use filthy language and behave in a very rough manner. They boy's party comes back. But subsequently girl's father puts the matter before the traditional village council and everything is discussed in details either to approve or disapprove the proposal. This first phase is known as "Wenga". After about four to five months the boy's male relatives proceed to girl's village. Further negotiations are made. Nothing concrete happens at this second round. However, with patience, the boy's party returns and this process is known as "Sidi Wenga"

Again in the third phase (Dena Wenga) boy's male and female relatives approach the girl's parents to agree to the proposal but with little success. Yet

their behavioural patterns are clearly understood. If the indication is in positive side then the boy is sent to girl's family to serve for a period of two to five years. During his stay in the girl's house he tries his best to satisfy one and all. The boy renders multifarious services during his stay and goes through a lot of ordeals to prove his eligibility. If he is successful he is allowed to talk to his would be wife. Subsequently, the boy visits his own village with some of the friends from girl's village. When the boy is found suitable in all respects the girl's kinsmen attend a feast organized in the boy's parents. This function is known as "Wedakodan".

Then a day is fixed for payment of bride price "Modar" at the bride's house (Malan Jhula). On this occasion, maternal uncle of the bride demands his traditional share (Mamawali). Accordingly bride's father's mother demands a Sari (Pinga-hendra). Bride's villagers demand village share (Kutum Kadu). Boy's party and girl's party finalize the bride price. However, both the parties come to a decision after which bride price is paid by the boy's party. After completion of these formalities boy's party come back and wait for some days. Then they send the message to fix up the date of marriage. Before marriage the girl is invited by her relatives and she is presented gifts.

On the scheduled day of wedding a group of boys from groom's side visit the bride's house in advance followed by near and dear relatives of the groom. After reaching the bride's house song, dance, merrymaking and drinking takes place. After completion of prescribed magico-religious rituals the bride is beautifully adorned. In a procession the bride is brought to groom's village. All the way both the parties sing songs and entertain each other. On the way bride's clan's villagers, if any, greet them but other clan villagers demand money. As soon as the procession reaches the edge of the groom's village, the women of the village greet them and lead them to village with dance and songs. A chicken is sacrificed at the boundary of the settlement in front of the bride to satisfy village guardian deities. Another two rituals, one in the middle of the village and other in front of the boy's house are performed. Before bride's entrance to the house of the groom a mock fight between the friends of the girl and boy takes place and she is purified with turmeric water. On the fourth day of marriage the boy and girl are taken to river side to conduct a ritual under a mango tree. Thereafter, bride's party is given a good feast and they go back in the same day. However, one of the younger sisters of the bride stays back. In the night bride is taken to a house where the boy waits for her and they are allowed to stay there over night. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of marriage the couple pays a visit to girl's parents and comes back after two to three days with rice, hen, pig, goat etc, which are shared by the groom's villagers. Similarly, gifts are brought by boy's relatives, which are consumed by the bride's villagers along with the meat of a buffalo given by boy's parents.

Among the Dongria Kondhs **marriage by capture** is a common practice. A boy falls in love with a girl in the youth dormitory and kidnaps her to his home with the help of his friends. Sometimes, it leads to difficult situations when the girl's engagement is already fixed with some other boy. If the girl really loves her kidnapper the matter is settled by paying heavy compensations to the girl's parents and the villagers of the prospective bridegroom. After her abduction the girl is rendered all possible hospitality and comforts. Often when a boy fails to pay the bride price after negotiation, his friends may capture the girl and carry her to his village. But this may lead to fight between both the sides.

After marriage the Dongria Kondh couple usually lead a happy life. They work together share each others happiness and sorrows. They procreate children and take adequate care of them till they get married. Old parents are respected and their needs are given top priority. At their old age they live together and enjoy life with their grand children. Even in the death bed sons and relatives treat them with utmost care. After death, the dead body is considered defiled and not touched by the family members.

After **death** within six to eight hours, the corpse is kept till all the relatives arrive and then it is carried to the cremation ground. The purificatory rite is conducted in the next day if the family members of the deceased are economically well to do. Other wise it may be deferred for a few days. It is customary to invite mother's brother, father's mother's brother, father-in-law and all the uterine kins along with agnates. All the invitees usually attend the ceremony with rice, pig and wine. In the death of mother's brother a buffalo or cow is expected to be presented by the nephew. All the near and dears proceed with Pejeni to the cremation ground to know the cause of death. They verify the ashes; if any portion is found unburnt or pebbles, small stones, iron pieces are detected, then it is presumed that the death is due to black magic. All possible attempts are made through a Dissari and Pejeni - the magico-religious specialists to identify the person responsible for the death. On the day of purificatory rite buffaloes, pigs and goats brought by relatives are sacrificed and consumed. Villagers and relatives of neighbouring villages also participate in the feast. Mortuary rites of the individuals died by snake bite, falling from trees and tiger attack are observed on seventh day of the death. In this case dead body is not cremated in the village cremation ground but at the edge of the village. Death due to small pox, chicken pox, diarrhoea, unnatural accident etc is treated separately. In this case the corpse is buried and participation of distant relations and neighbouring villagers are restricted. A series of ritualistic observance and consecrations are performed.

Dongria Kondhs are animists and polytheists. They believe in the existence of a large number of supernatural beings who control their day to day life. The whole life of the Dongria Kondhs is pervaded by their **religion**.

Always they remain submissive and dutiful to their religion and supernatural entities. But invariably they also entertain some benevolent and malevolent spirits. They are so much involved with their expensive magico-religious affairs that it is one of the major causes of their poverty. All over the year in one or other way they celebrate some magico-religious functions and sacrifice animals starting from chicken to buffaloes. From the very childhood till the death, a Dongria Kandh goes through different magico-religious rites. However, it stands as a barrier to innovation and change.

The Dongria Kondhs believe in a host of spirits and unseen powers. According to their beliefs and age old socio-cultural practices those spirits and deities are appeased in their respective prescribed manner. One can find the magico-religious centres of different nature inside the house, within the village boundary and inside their clan territory. Specific, rituals are performed in these centres on various occasions.

It is undoubtedly true that role of **magico-religious specialists** are very much significant and meaningful in different aspects of their mundane life. The Jani is a magico-religious specialist of the village who performs all the rituals at community level. He is very much respected and possesses a high social status. The "Pejuni" is diviner-cum-medicine person. He also functions as astrologer and psychologist. "Gurumai" the women magico-religious functionaries also plays vital role in appeasing spirits at individual level.

They celebrate a number of **festivals** all over the year. Among them mention may be made of Meriah/ Kodru Parbu, Ghanta Parbu, Illuarpa, Pungal Pam, Mandia Rani, etc. Among all these, Meriah sacrifice is socio-economically most important. This is also very expensive and people of different age, sex, status and clan participate to celebrate this festival with pomp and ceremony. A number of feasts and festivals are observed at Mutha and village levels and some others, at the individual level. There are seasonal festivals too.

The most important **Kodru Parbu** or **Meriah** is locally known as Toki Parbu. Now-a-days they offer buffalo sacrifice in place of human being. It is observed in every four to five years for a couple days. The organization of Kodru Parbu depends on the economic condition of the village as it is performed at the village and clan level. All the families contribute for its celebration and the contribution is comparatively very high than other feasts and festivals. The villagers who observe this festival first inform all clans village and finalize the day of celebration. Thereafter, all other clan villagers are invited to participate as they have to sacrifice the buffalo on the last day of the Kodru Parbu.

Installation of Meriah pole and purchase of buffalo is done observing all customary prescriptions. A healthy and mature buffalo free from any

wound and scar mark is purchased. After sending message to different clan groups the villagers keep themselves engaged in organizing the festivities. The village Kudi is repaired, re-thatched and beautifully painted with colourful motifs and designs. The whole village is enclosed within bamboo splits leaving only two passages at both the ends. Each family gets ready by arranging sufficient food stuffs, drinks and good clothes, birds and animals for sacrifice. The villagers start singing and dancing before a few months of the celebration praising their territory and ancestors. All the relatives arrive during the day time and other clansmen and women arrive singing and dancing. They are given a warm reception.

On the day of Meriah sacrifice or on the last day of the Parbu, very early in the morning the buffalo to be sacrificed is brought to the sacred centre of the village where other clansmen sacrifice the buffalo and within a few seconds the animal is torn into pieces. The head of the buffalo is taken to be offered to the earth goddess of the village. A portion of the flesh of the buffalo is shared by the other participating villagers, which they roast and eat on the way while going back. The remaining portion is shared equally by the host villagers. However, the drinking, dancing and entertainment continue for two to three days.

**Ghanta Parbu** is observed by a well to do Dongria families having good harvest. Since all the villagers take part in this festival the host family obtains the prior approval of the traditional village council. All the friends are invited. The festival which starts either on Monday or Friday continues for three days. A number of Pejunis and other magico-religious specialists participate in this event. The host's house is re-thatched and walls are white-washed by the dormitory girls. The rituals start in the evening of the first day when goats and s are sacrificed. In the second day morning goat sacrifice is given by the organizing household. In the third day the Pejenis dance and conduct rituals in front of the organizer's house. Finally a pig and a buffalo are sacrificed. The Pejunis dance and perform rituals all through the village street and they visit house by house. Finally, all the participants and magico-religious specialists are entertained with drinks and food. This is a very expensive event for a family but the Dongrias do not care for the expenses.

**Illu Arpa** is celebrated at the household level. All the household deities and ancestors are appeased in the backyards. Jani spells incantations in the presence of the Pejunis. All the kith and kins of the family are invited to attend. Goats, chickens and a buffalo are scarified. All the participants enjoy the feast and on the second day afternoon they return to their respective villages.

The Dongria Kondhs celebrate **Pungal Pam** - the festival of flowers in the month of January-February. Three leaf bowls are made and kept before Jatrakudi. A buffalo is garlanded with flowers and sacrificed by the villagers. In the **Bicha Hapam** festival, a number of rituals associated with sowing are

conducted for seven days along with communal hunting. At the onset of the rains, the Rain God, "Bhima" is worshiped. In the similar way, **Pidika Jatra** is performed at village level to save the crops from the insects and for first fruit eating. **Mandia Rani** is celebrated to eat newly harvested millets. Pigeons, fowls, goats, pigs are sacrificed to satisfy the deities of shifting cultivation. Likewise a number of rituals are observed till harvesting and storing of the crops. Apart from these, a number of feasts and festivals are observed at individual and village level when there is bumper crop or when frequent natural calamities take place.

The sorcerers and witches are hated in the community. People are afraid of them and avoid enmity with them because they may harmful.

Jani is the sacerdotal leader of the village and he has great role to play in the traditional council. Bismajhi is the formal secular head, who was working as representative of the then Zamindar or king of the area for revenue collection. He also decides several cases of disputes and offences. The fines collected from the offenders are kept with him for future community level expenditures. Bariko is a man from the scheduled caste-Domb community who serves as the messenger. He helps in resolving disputes relating to customary matters. The disputes inside village are mostly mutually settled and small fines are collected from the offender which is spent in a community feast. Inter-village feuds are decided by the Mandal, the secular leader of the Mutha. His verdict is given due importance in all inter-village and intra-village disputes. The Gaudia and Jhateni, who hail from the Domb community, serve as cattle herders and sweepers of the village street respectively. They work on annual contract for the villagers and are given food almost daily. The post of Jani, Bismajhi and Mandal are hereditary and in absence of male heir, the post may go to one of the lineage members. But the Bariko, Gaudia and Jhateni can be changed as and when so required. The Dongria traditional leaders not only enjoy high prestige and status but also exercise considerable power and authority in the village.

The **traditional village council** is very powerful. It usually decides cases or discusses community matters in the community house - Kudi. Early in the morning Barik lights fire around which the village elders sit and discuss different village matters mostly relating to fixation of dates of rituals and ceremonies, amount of contribution from each household, quarrels and conflicts between individuals and groups, visit of government officials and other important guests. All matters relating to the interest the village are also decided there. The village council plays a vital role for maintenance of peace and harmony in the village. The village leaders are respected. Before punishing someone attempts are made to reform him and reconcile the matter. Mostly, the culprits are fined and demanded drinks. Serious offenders are ex-communicated. The cases like adultery and anti-clan activities, offences against

divine powers etc, are seriously dealt with and the culprit may be driven out of the village. A Dongria Kondh hardly goes against the divinity as he apprehends divine punishment.

## References

- |                                |         |  |
|--------------------------------|---------|--|
| Behura, N.K.,                  | 1990    | 'Shifting Cultivation: A cause for environmental degradation', <i>Adibasi</i> , THRTI, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, Vol. XXVI. No. 2, pp 1-7.                        |
| Das Patnaik, P.S.,             | 1972-73 | 'Bejunis: Their initiation into shamanhood', <i>Adibasi</i> , Tribal Research Bureau, Orissa, Vol. No. 1, pp 11-20.  |
|                                | 1976    | 'Liquor among Dongaria Kondh of Orissa', <i>Adibasi</i> . THRTI, Orissa, Vol XVI, No. 3, pp. 52-57.  |
|                                | 1984    | 'Ownership Pattern, Land Survey and Settlement and its impact on the Dongria Kondhs of Orissa', <i>Adivasi</i> . THRTI, Orissa, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, pp. 23-32 |
|                                | 1988    | 'Concept of Debt among the Dongria Kondhs', <i>Adibasi</i> , THRTI, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, pp. 11-15.  |
| Nayak, P.K.,                   | 1989    | <i>Blood, Women and Territory: An analysis of clan feuds of the Dongria Kondhs</i> , New Delhi, Reliance Publishing House.                                   |
| Padel, Felix,                  | 1995    | <i>The Sacrifice of Human Being: British Rule and the Konds of Orissa</i> , Delhi: OUP.  |
| Patnaik, N<br>P.S. Das Patnaik | 1982    | <i>The Kondh of Orissa – Their Socio Cultural Life and Development</i> , THRTI, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.   |
| Patnaik, N.                    | 1986    | Herbal medicines of the Dongaria, <i>Adibasi</i> , THRTI, Bhubaneswar, Orissa Vol. XXVI No. 4, pp. 1-4   |
| Rout, Siba Prasad              | 1964-65 | 'Dom exploitation in the Kondh villages of Koraput district', <i>Adibasi</i> , TRB, Orissa, No. 1, 21-8.   |

# DONGRIA KANDHA \*

A. B. Ota <sup>1</sup>

S. C. Mohanty <sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The Dongria Kandha, a picturesque tribal group constitutes a primitive section of the Kandha – numerically the largest among the 62 tribes of Orissa. They stand apart from others for their famous *Meria* festival, expertise in horticulture, separate language -*Kuvi* and colourful dress, adornments and life style. For being the denizens of hills and highlands (*dongar*), their neighbors name them *Dongria* but, they call themselves '*Dongran Kuan*' or '*Drili Kuan*'.

Dongria men and women are quite fashionable in their personal adornments, that makes them attractive and distinguish them from others. Dongria men put on a long and narrow piece of loin cloth in such a way that the two embroidered ends hang in the front and the back. This piece of cloth termed *drili*. Dongria women use two pieces of cloth (*Kapda-Ganda*), each, 3 - 4 feet in length and one-and half feet in width. The first piece is wrapped round the waist with a knot in the front. The second piece covers the upper part of the body like an apron.

Dongria men grow long hair to distinguish themselves from other sections of the Kandha and prepare braided locks like the females at their scalps. A wooden comb (*Kokuya*) is fixed at the hair knot of men and women which adorns the hair-lock and keeps the hair tight. A tiny knife (*Pipli*) with colourful thread balls at its metal handle, adorns the hair-lock of women that also serves the purpose of cutting as and when required. A variety of hairpins and clips enhances the beauty of the unique hair style of men and women.

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Dongria Kandha, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2007

<sup>1</sup> Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar



Dongria men and women are very fond of beautifying themselves with a variety of ornaments. Both the sexes wear ear-rings and nose-rings (*Murma*) with brass-made pointed sticks (*Kulti*). Men and women put on aluminum neck rings, bead & coin necklaces (*Kekodika*), finger rings in bunch. In addition to that women wear bangles, anklets, toe rings.

### HABITAT

The Dongria Kandha inhabits the lofty *Niyamgiri* hill ranges spread across Bissam cuttack, Kalyansingpur, Muniguda blocks in Rayagada district. It is an enchanting hill country endowed with bounties of nature. As a part of the Eastern Ghats, the *Niyamgiris*, situated on the borders of Rayagada and Gunupur sub-division rise steeply from 1,000 feet to a number of peaks, of which the highest is 4,970 feet above the sea level.

### SETTLEMENT

Dongria villages are located in the hill-slopes, hilltops or valleys in a tangle of thickly wooded hill ranges. The habitation site is chosen upon the availability of sufficient land for Podu cultivation and a perennial source of water.

At the village entrance within mango grove and jack-fruit trees lies the shrine of the village deity- *Jatrakudi Penu* in a thatched shed. Its walls are painted with beautiful coloured geometric designs. It protects the people from evil-eye.

In the middle of the village street another thatched shed (*kuddi*) accommodates the Earth-Goddess (*Darani Penu*), the supreme deity. Close to the *kuddi*, there stand beautifully designed and carved wooden posts representing the consort (*Jhankad or Kotebali Penu*) of *Darani Penu*.

At the other end, close to the hill stream lies the girls' dormitory (*Da-Sha-Hada* or *Hada Sala*). It is the place for young boys and girls to meet and mate each other, spend night together and be taught lessons about their society and culture. It is a preparatory home for the unmarried girls to learn about their life ways before entering into the family life. The boys build this structure and girls maintain it.

### HOUSING

A typical Dongria Kandha houses have low thatched roofs – hardly 2-3 ft above the ground. Built upon a rectangular ground plan it consists of a spacious rectangular room and another small room (*Dhapa*) at the back with verandahs in front and back.

The living room is used for sleeping and dining. Often a ceiling like platform is built inside to store food grains and other sundry articles. A small partition wall separates the kitchen from the main room and keeps it out of the sight of outsiders. Cattle are tethered to the wooden posts in the cowshed (*Hada sala*), built near the house.

## FOOD, DRINKS AND STIMULANTS

Dongria eat three times a day, - morning, midday and evening. Seasonal cereals, pulses and vegetables viz, maize, millet, *Kandul*, *Kating*, *Baila* and *Jhudang* etc, roots like *Rani Kanda* and *Langala Kanda*, fruits, green leaves and mushrooms are cooked and eaten. They relish non veg items prepared out of fish, chicken, mutton, buffalo meat, pork and beef. They like to eat dried fish- baked on fire with their evening meal.

They are very fond of Mahua liquor (*Irpi Kalu*) and Sago palm juice (*Mada-Kalu*). Besides they also brew and drink *Kadali -Kalu* (Banana -liquor) and *Guda kalu* (Molasses-liquor). Liquor is used as medicine, as ritual offering to appease deities and ancestors, to entertain friends and relatives. It is indispensable in many occasions. It is part of their life.

They consume various narcotics and stimulant, like- *Kara*, *Dhungla*, *Kundeli* and *Chunga*. *Kara*- prepared out of raw tobacco leaf and fine ash for chewing. *Dhungla* is *chewing* of raw tobacco.

## ECONOMY & LIVELIHOOD

### Daily Routine

Dongria Kandha are early risers. They leave their bed by 3 to 4 A.M. and gather at *Kuddi* (Shrine of village deity) to relax with *Pika* and gossip. After an hour with the cocks' first crow, they disperse to work on their Dongar lands. They keep themselves busy there till afternoon with short breaks for lunch, drinks and rest. The whole family works and eats together in the field. There is gender based division of work. After 4.00 P.M. they visit their orchards and collect ripened fruits for sale and own consumption. Older family members also do not sit idle but do some light works. Children above 7 years help their parents at home and in the field.

### Shifting Cultivation

Paucity of plain and wet lands and natural conditions has made them shifting cultivators. In their swiddens called *Haru* they grow a variety of crops comprising cereals, pulses, legumes, fruits and vegetables, roots and tubers. A *Haru* owned individually is cultivated for 3 - 4 years and left fallow for 4 - 5 years for regeneration.

### Horticulture

Dongrias are skilled horticulturists. Taking advantage of favorable climatic conditions they raise jackfruit, mango, citrus, banana, pineapple and turmeric plantations in vast stretches in the hill slopes right from valley bottom to the hill top. In their kitchen gardens (*Bada*) lying close to the settlement site

they also grow mango, jackfruit and vegetables like gourd, pumpkin, bean, brinjal, chilly etc.

Traditionally a Dongria has indisputable right to plant fruit trees anywhere besides his own land and enjoy the fruits of his trees. The main environmental factors, which have favoured fruit growing in the Niyamgiri hills, are high altitude/good drainage and longer duration of low temperature period. They produce tons of fruits but earn less due to exploitation by middlemen. They have proved that the skill, ingenuity and perseverance of Man can tame any rugged terrain without the help of modern technology.

### **Forest Collections**

Dongria continue their age old subsistence activity of food gathering from the forest. Seasonal food collection is still an indispensable part of their economic life. Their food is greatly supplemented by a seasonal variety of fruits, roots and tubers, mushrooms, green leaves etc collected from the jungle. Besides the edibles, they also bring firewood; timber and forest produce for their own consumption. It is a family affair and both the sexes take part in it.

### **Animal Husbandry**

Dongria Kandha raise livestock like buffalo (*Kodra*), cow (*Kodi*), goat (*Adda*), sheep (*Mendha*), pig (*Paji*), dog (*Neudi*), fowl (*Koyu*) and pigeon (*Parua*) for meeting the demands of prestations and for their own use in ritual occasions. They do not draw milk from cows and buffaloes. They believe it is meant for their calves. The animals are sheltered in their respective places.

### **Wage Earning**

To the Dongria, the descendants of the Niyam Raja of the Niyamgiri hills, wage earning is not a very respectable job. They prefer to work for the members of their own community either on nominal payment or on labour-exchange basis. Among them, there is no employer-employee feeling and no demand for payment of wages. They treat each other as equals.

Mutual exchange of labour is essentially still in vogue, and traditional labour cooperatives based on age and sex continues to be functional today.

### **Trade & Barter**

Though they produce tons of fruits and crops they usually do not carry it to the nearby markets to get a better price. While visiting the local weekly markets as a matter of routine, Dongria women carry small head loads of fruits for sale.

A major portion of their surplus products is sold to their cunning Domb neighbours to whom they are indebted. They are not good at sale, barter, purchase and such other economic transactions and hence quite vulnerable to economic exploitations by unscrupulous traders, money lenders and middlemen.

## SOCIAL LIFE

### Family

Mostly, Dongria family is nuclear, monogamous and patrilineal consisting of parents and their unmarried children. When a son is grown up and gets married he sets up his own house and lives there with his wife and children.

The family acts as an economic unit. All the capable adults and children above 8 years of age toil in the field and contribute to the economic pool of the family. Men do the hardest works such as – ploughing cutting trees and digging holes etc. Women besides their routine housekeeping and child care activities also take up subsistence activities like cleaning of thorns and thickets in the fields and hill slopes and make the field, dibble seeds, weeding, reaping etc.

Indoors and outdoors, hardworking Dongria women work more than men. Both husband and wife visit the markets to trade their commodities and buy provisions.

Life in a Dongria Kandha family is very peaceful. Husband and wife are partners in all walks of life. They work together and have mutual respect for each other. Husband seeks his wife's advice in all social and economic matters. The older people are highly respected. Children obey their parents.

### Marriage (*Haidi*)

A Dongria man marries to have children and continue his family line. It elevates his status to a full-fledged adult member of the society. Grown up boys and girls enjoy freedom to meet and love each other, talk, crack jokes, exchange sweets, gifts and pleasantries and choose their mates for marriage. Boys and girls belonging to the same clan are considered brothers and sisters. Hence marriage within the clan is strictly prohibited.

Dongrias prefer adult marriage and arranged marriage. Payment of bride price is customary for acquiring an eligible bride. Demand for high price often leads to clan feuds.

### Pregnancy & Child Birth

After marriage Dongria welcome pregnancy and child birth. They believe an ancestor is likely to be born. During the last month of pregnancy offerings are made to the ancestors and gods. Feasts are given to friends and relatives before delivery of the child. The delivery takes place in the back room (*Dhapa*) of the husband's house with the help of a midwife. In case of any trouble, the whole village rises for help. A shaman or shaman in is called to conduct rituals for smooth delivery. The pollution period lasts for 21 days.

**Name-Giving (*Mila-Daru*) Ear & Nose Piercing (*Ki-Ka-Patpikamu*):**

When the child is about a month old, the *Mila-Daru* - name giving ceremony is performed. Maternal uncle and grand-parents are invited. Nose and ear piercing are conducted both for the male and female children. When the child is six months old, a woman of the village, proficient in the art of piercing is invited. She pierces in four places at the ear-lobes and septum of the child with the help of thorns. After piercing, she inserts four neem-sticks there and applies castor oil or baked-turmeric paste to stop bleeding.

**Puberty Rite**

On her first menstruation the girl is kept in seclusion for a week in the *Dapa* room of her house. On the seventh day, a *Bejuni* is called to invoke the spirit, *Gangu Penu*, to spare the girl. She conducts a ritual beside the stream, puffs the spirit away from the girl's body and sacrifices a chick to please the spirit. After this the girl takes bath and gets free from pollution.

**Youth Dormitory (*Da-Sha-Hada* / *Adasbetta*)**

As they grow up Dongria boys and girls enter into the traditional youth organization i.e., the labour cooperative and the youth dormitory. Their dormitory is called *Da-sha-hada*/*Da-sha-sika*/ *Dhangdi Sala*/ *Adasbetta* meaning unmarried girl's (*Da-sha*) house (*Hada/Hala*). Unmarried boys, (*Dhangda*) do not have any dormitory house. They sleep on some one's verandah in small groups and the sleeping place is known as *dhangrenga duki*.

*Da-sha-hada* is located behind residential houses at the extreme end of the village near the stream. It looks different for its decorated walls. Boys and girls build and maintain it. It is the place where the unmarried girls spend their night, sing and dance in open space. Here boys and girls meet, mix freely, dance and sing together, cut jokes, make friends, exchange gifts, and love each other and choose their life partners. Sometimes married men join them but married women are not allowed.

Following clan rules, the boys of the same clan and village are not allowed to visit the girls in the Dormitory in night. Only the boys of other clan and village are allowed. They come in late evening and leave before dawn.

It is also a training center. Here girls learn from their seniors, the needle work of embroidery, the art of playing their traditional musical instrument, *Goani*, the techniques of living, the cultural practices, social values, customs, traditions, economic pursuits, folklores, arts and crafts.

The boys and girls form their respective labour cooperatives. Their services are requisitioned by the villagers for specific works. The income goes to a common fund that is utilized in arranging common feasts. By working, they learn the techniques of community life, living and livelihood, arts and crafts.

## Death Rites

Dongria believe that, life (*Jarmana* or *Jurma*) and death (*Hateyas*) are determined by the Supreme Being, *Darani Penu* who has created this world. The cause of death is attributed to malicious agencies like the evil spirits, black magic or the wrath of gods and deities. They fight tooth and nail to save a person till his/her last gasp by administering their folk medicines and performing all sorts of magico-religious rites.

The dead are cremated and the pollution lasts two days only. On the 2nd day, *Jani* conducts mortuary rite (*Karja-ki-manamu*) at the altar of the ancestor-spirits- *Ghar-Dumba* and *Kandha Dumba*. After this the departed soul is happily admitted into the rank of ancestors and does not harass his family members. Relatives, community members and neighbours are invited on this occasion to participate in a feast. A feast is arranged for the villagers, kith and kin.

## RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Dongria strongly believe in the existence of a large number of Supernatural beings who exercise control on various aspects of their mundane life. Their pantheon is composed of Gods, deities and spirits- both benevolent and malevolent.

### PANTHEON

#### The Supreme Deity

Goddess Mother Earth called *Darani Penu* or *Jhankar* is their benevolent Supreme Goddess. In every village street She sits in a hut called *Kudi* represented by three elevated stones. Her consort *Kotebali Penu*, represented by a big vertical stone with crossed wooden pole (*Munda*) at its back lie at the back of *Kuddi*. He watches the village and protects its inhabitants from mishaps. He is worshipped with *Darani Penu*.

#### Village Deities

***Jatrakudi Penu:*** Installed at the village outskirts in the shades of a grove he watches the conduct of the villagers and never excuses any one. He has a bad temper and punishes deviant conduct causing calamities. To please him Shamanin worships him with sacrifices.

***Hira Penu:*** is a female deity considered - the maid servant of *Takrani Penu* with whom she is worshipped. She inflicts pain and tortures the children if she is neglected.

***Niyam-Raja Penu:*** is a male deity, represented by a sword and worshipped during *Dasara* and *Jura Parab*. He saves the people from unnatural deaths and accidents.

### Deities of Nature

**Lahi Penu** or **Dongar Penu**: A male deity worshipped by the Shamanins during April-May (*Baisakh Lenju*) after which trees are felled in the swiddens.

**Lada Penu**: is the forest deity who resides under a banyan tree at the entrance of the forest. She is worshipped with *Lahi Penu* by the *Jani* in the month of May (*Sarua*) before onset of communal hunting. She protects the people from attack of wild animals and grants them success in hunting.

### Household Spirits (*Dumba*)

A wooden post (*Tuli Munda*) inside the sleeping room of each house represents the "Ancestor Spirits" who can be dreadful if not appeased properly.

**Lai-Penu**: is a female spirit who brings prosperity to the house if worshipped properly during the month of September (*Dela Lenju*) by the *Bejuni*.

**Sita Penu**: is a female spirit represented by a dry gourd containing seeds hung from the ceiling at the western corner of the sleeping room. She is Goddess *Laxmi*- the deity of wealth and worshipped by the housewife during the full-moon-day of December (*Push*) after harvest of all the crops.

**Danda Penu**: a female spirit represented by another small post in the sleeping room. She is the guardian deity of the granaries (*Duli*). After she is worshipped in the month of September (*Dela lenju*), the granaries are replastered and grains like *Kosla* and *ragi* are kept.

**Chhatar Penu**: is a male spirit, represented by another post (*Munda*). He is worshipped by the *Bejuni* inside the house during *Meria* festival. He is very pernicious and brings diseases if not properly appeased. To please him a buffalo is sacrificed.

**Bhairo Penu** is a harmful male spirit who can cause accidental deaths in the family if not appeased with the sacrifice like a cow by the *Bejuni* during *Meria* festival. He is represented by a big wooden post in the sleeping room.

These ancestor spirits are also invoked ceremoniously by the *Jani* during the *Meria* festival. For each spirit a lump of sun dried rice is kept inside separate icons over which blood of a chick is sprinkled to please them. If satisfied, they save the household members from odds and evils.

### Malevolent Spirits

They are *Mieli-Penu*, *Buru Penu* and *Suka Penu* who intentionally harass people with different diseases and cannot be satisfied by ordinary shamans except the *Bejunis*. There are also ghosts (*Mahane*) of bad persons who died unnaturally. They roam here and there, especially near the cremation ground and in forlorn places. Only experienced *Bejunis* can deal with them.

## RELIGIOUS FUNCTIONARIES

Dongrias have many kinds of Magico-Religious Functionaries and Specialists who act as people's representatives to mediate between humans and supernaturals.

*Jani* is the ritual head of the village. This post is hereditary. He performs all village rituals and gets a special share of sacrificial animals.

*Lamba* - the specialist *Jani* who belongs to *Nishka Mutha* and officiates in the rituals of *Meria* festival

*Ichan Jani* - the *Jani's* assistant who sacrifices animals, arranges *puja items* and participates with the *Jani* in the recitation of the incantations.

*Pujari* - plays a special role in *Meria Puja*. He prepares an umbrella out of a bamboo collected from the forest in the dead of night, unnoticed by anybody and dangles it in the *Meria* procession to ward off the evil-eyes and pernicious spirits. He strikes at the head of *Meria* animal first and then others follow. In other religious functions, he also presides along with *Jani* and *Ichan Jani*.

*Beju - Bejuni*: (Shamans and Shamanins) - the divination specialists. Through divination, prayer and rites, they get into trance and communicate with spirits responsible for causing mishap. When they regain senses, they adopt rice-supplication process called, *puchna* to ascertain various types of sacrifices required to appease different spirits. He/she also practices black & white magic.

*Dishari*: the medicine man who practises herbal medicines backed by magical powers.

### Annual Festival Calendar

Sl No	Name of the ritual	Date of observance	Purpose	Offerings	Deities worshipped	Who worships	Communal or Individual
1.	<i>Ghanta Parab</i>	Baisakh Sarua April-May	Fulfillment of vows and to improve economic condition	Animals are sacrificed by vow makers, Lamb-1, Liquor-80-90 bottles	<i>Sita Penu</i> <i>Takrani Penu</i> <i>Hirapenu</i> <i>Jatrakudi Penu</i>	Bejunis	Communal
2.	<i>Salangi</i>	<i>Jaistha (Jet)</i> May-June	To save cattle from diseases & epidemics	Fowl-2, Pigeon-1, Liquor-15 bottles	Ancestors	family Head	Individual
3.	<i>Mandia Rani</i>	<i>Shravana (Sabna)</i> July-August	For bumper harvest of ragi	Buffalo-1, Fowl-1, Liquor-110 bottles	Kotiasal	Jani / Bejuni	Communal /individual



4.	<i>Dhan-Nuakhia</i>	Bhadra (Bhada) (August-Sept.)	First rice offered in honour of <i>Jhankad</i>	Fowl-1, Pigeon-1, Pig-1, New rice, Fruits, Vegetables purchased individually	<i>Jhankad</i> and evil spirits	Jani	Communal
5.	<i>Pidika</i>	<i>Ashin</i> (Dashara) Sept.-Oct.	For ample growth of castor seeds and to save it from insects	Buffalo-1, Fowl-3, Pigeon-1	<i>Jatrakudi Penu</i>	Jani / Bejuni	Communal
6.	<i>Punapadi</i>	Kartik (Dewali) Oct.-Nov.	First eating of <i>Kosla, Kandul, Arka, Jana</i> and other seeds and fruits	Buffalo-1, Pigeon-1, Fowl-2	<i>Jatrakudi Penu</i>	Bejuni	Communal
7.	<i>Dongar Puja</i>	<i>Margasira</i> (Pand) Nov.-Dec.	To get more crops	Pig-1, Fowl-1	<i>Haru Penu</i>	Bejuni	Individual
8.	<i>Meria Puja</i>	<i>Magha</i> (Maghe) Jan.-Feb.	For betterment and prosperity of the village	Buffalo-1, Fowl-1, Goat-5 and sacrifice of animals by vow- takers	<i>Jhankad</i>	Lamba, Jani, Pujari Bejuni	Communal
9.	<i>Bihan Puja</i> or <i>Sadrangi Laka</i>	<i>Chaitra</i> (Setar) March-April	Before sowing season	Fowl-1, Pigeon-1	<i>Darani Penu, Sita Penu, Haru Penu</i>	Jani / Bejuni	Individual

### **Meria Festival:**

It is the biggest and most important festival observed communally in any one of the villages of a *Mutha* for 8 days during January-February in which people of other *Muthas* too participate. This festival is dedicated to the Supreme Goddess, *Darani Penu*, and Her disciples and all other deities and spirits. If there is no good harvest, this expensive festival may be postponed to the next year.

Arrangements are made at least a month in advance. Till the festival is over, all the works are suspended and people remain jubilant awaiting the celebrations.

Four days before the festival, the *Pujari* brings a bamboo pole from the forest unnoticed to prepare *Meria* umbrella (*chhatri*). To make the bamboo pole strong, it is soaked in the stream for two days. Before the day of the festival, a coloured cloth fitted with coloured glasses is fixed on the bamboo pole and posted before the *Jhankad* to be dangled by the *Pujari* in the *Meria* procession.

Four days before the guests arrive in their respective relative's houses with gifts like bottles of liquor, *kosla* rice or paddy and one sacrificial animal - a goat or a lamb or a fowl. *Bishmajhi* collects them and keeps them for use in the festival.

The festival begins on the fixed day. *Lamba* assisted by *Janis*, *Ichan-Janis* and *Pujaris* leads the ritual proceedings. Friday is considered an auspicious day for the festival.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Day**

The *Lamba* and other religious functionaries accompanied by the drum-beaters and musicians go to a banyan tree to take out the *Meria* utensils kept there. On return, the *Lamba* places those articles in the *Kuddi*. There he starts the proceedings to invoke all deities and spirits by reciting mantras with other *Janis* for the whole night.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Day**

In the morning the *Bejunis* reach the *Jhankad* and dance in batches to please the deities. The *Lamba* and *Janis* take rest. When the *Pat-Bejuni* gets into trance, *Lamba* rushes in to take note of the presence of the spirit. In the evening they host a feast to entertain all the invitees. After the feast, the third sitting starts with *Lamba*, *Ichan-Janis* and the *Pat-Bejuni*, invoking the *Darani Penu* together. In late night three post-pubescent girls bring three brass-wares from the *Pujari's* house. Then they go straight to the stream to bring three pitcherful of water without looking back.

They come to the *Meria* animal - a big buffalo tied to a big wooden post and bathe it with the water to make it purified for sacrifice. Then, they take the *podo-kandi* (iron-chain and plate) from the *Lamba* to tie the forelegs of the buffalo. All the people reach the *Jhankad* and get ready with their axes and knives to strike at the animal. Invoking the deities the *Lamba* and the *Pat-Bejuni* get into trance amidst the beating of drums. After regaining senses they make arrangements for the *Meria* sacrifice.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Day**

Little before the dawn, all go to the village outskirts in a grand procession led by the *Lamba* and *Janis*. The *Dishari*, *Pat-Bejuni* and *Ichan-Jani* carry the brass-wares with water. The *Pujari* dangles the umbrella before the procession to ward off the evil-eyes and spirits. The *Bejunis* rejuvenate their

energy and dance rhythmically with the beating of drums. The young boys howl and ululate in chorus. People fall upon each other to hold the ropes of the *Meria* animal tied to a big wooden-pole. Other vow-takers too, tie their sacrificial animals.

Just at the break of dawn, the animal is sacrificed and the first blow is given by the *Pujari*. Other blows fall one after the other and thus the animal is hacked to death. Even when blows are being showered, the entire belly of the buffalo is torn apart and its intestine etc. are pulled out nibbled and rubbed over the body out of joy and revelry by the participants. It is believed, more the animal is tortured the more the *Penu* is satisfied.

After that, the *Meria* head is brought back in the procession by an outsider (*Padria*) other than the *Mutha* clan-members. It is tabooed for the *Mutha* clan-members to touch it. Reaching the *Jhankad*, the *Lamba* draws a big square diagram on which the *Meria* head is placed. The *Lamba* offers it to *Darani Penu* by putting on vermillion over it and pouring five gourdful of wine over it. This marks the end of the ritual.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Day

*Padrias* customarily go to *Lamba* and ask for a portion of *Meria*-animal he got the previous day. After mock exchanges the *Lamba* concedes. The *Padrias* cook the meat with rice and feed the host villagers. The next two days, boys and girls sing and dance before *Darani Penu*.

On the last day, *Lamba* himself kills a goat, cooks it with rice and offers it to *Darani Penu*. He distributes this ritual food (*Lamba-Begu*) among all the *Mutha* families. In the evening the young boys and girls exchange rice to apologize for offending each other by joking. Boys touch the hands of the girls parents to beg excuse offering a bottle of liquor.

### ASTHETIC LIFE

As denizens of hills and forests Dongria Kondhs live in close harmony with nature. Both the material and non-material aspects of their culture are profoundly influenced by nature. This has generated a sense of beauty among them and given birth to a natural artist within each of them. They are lovers of beauty which is reflected in their colourful lifestyle and more conspicuously in their distinct style of dress and ornaments, dance and music and arts and crafts.

In this context their traditional youth dormitory functions as a school of learning for the youngsters. The dormitory members get the scope to learn the rhythms of dance and music, and techniques of making art and crafts, often by imitating the seniors. It serves as a centre for preserving their cultural heritage

and folk tradition, in addition to transmitting the same from generation to generation.

Dongria girls make beautiful embroidered shawls called *Kapda Ganda*. It is a fine piece of needle work in which bright coloured i.e., mostly red, yellow and green coloured threads are used. The younger girls in the dormitory learn needlework from the elders. They are also taught the art of playing their traditional musical instrument, *Goani*.

Dongria men and women sing songs and dance in all festive and ceremonial occasions. Men play the musicals instruments and women locking their hands behind each other dance in a line in front of the male drummers. They wear their colourful costumes during dancing. The young women do not dance in front of their elders. Their songs and dances reflect lyrics expressing love and devotion, narration of different aspects of their socio-cultural and economic life.

### SOCIAL CONTROL

At the village level a set of traditional village leaders and the village council exercise control. They shoulder all responsibilities, participate in all social activities and influence the life of their fellowmen.

*Jani*, the priest, is formal secular and ritual head of the village and village council. He presides over the village council meetings.

He is the custodian of the norms, customs and social sanctions. All important matters are brought to his notice for opinion and intervention. Depending on the gravity of the matter, he may convene a meeting of the village council to decide the issue or may settle it himself. In the event of any of his fellow-villager having been offended or assailed by a person of another village he takes the issue to the headman of the aggressor's village. He fixes dates for various meetings, rituals, ceremonies, feasts and festivals in consultation with other leaders and village elders and participates in all events in family, lineage and village levels. He can alone worship the Supreme Deity *Darani-penu*. His post is hereditary. He does not demand any remuneration for his services. But villagers give him the head and a large share of the meat of sacrificial animals in communal rituals and hunts.

He holds the highest and prestigious post in the village and commands respect from his fellow villagers.

*Bishmajhi* is the revenue collector and village fund manager whose secular position comes next to *Jani*. He collects land and forest revenue from the households of the village and fines imposed on offenders by the village council. He presides over the village meetings in absence of *Jani*. He fixes up the rate of subscription for communal feasts and festivals in consultation with the *Jani*. He

assists *Jani* in all social and religious events. Like *Jani*, he does not get any remuneration.

**Barika** is the village messenger who belongs to Domb community. He carries news around the village about important events, such as-death, birth etc, summons people and leaders to the village meetings, collects cash or grains from the villagers on the headman's instructions. His presence is necessary in all village meetings. He accompanies the villagers to deposit land and forest revenues at Bissamkatak. He being an Oriya knowing man, is the liaison between the villagers and outsiders. He arranges petty loans for the villagers. He fixes rates for each produce to be sold in the market by the villagers. He assists the village youth in the bride capture and bride-price fixation and intra-clan disputes. He reports criminal offences to the police in consultation with *Bishmajhi* and *Jani*. For his fees, he gets about 5 kilograms of *ragi* or *kosla* rice from each household during harvest. Besides, he also collects cooked rice every day from each household.

Well to do and resourceful persons are elected for these positions. They exercise influence on the people and in the process of decision making.

### **Modern Leadership**

The statutory Panchayat Raj system has created a set of elected leaders like Ward Member, Sarpanch and Block Chairman. They act as the spokesmen of the people and look after development works liasioning between the people and government and other external agencies.

### **Traditional Village Council (*Sabha*)**

It is composed of household heads and village leaders. The *Jani* convenes the meeting. *Barika* informs one and all. The council discusses matters of common interest and deals with customary affairs. The topic is generally initiated by the *Barika* and all members freely participate in the discussion. The accused and the aggrieved are called to explain their positions. The council may depute the *Barika* and other elderly persons to make further enquiries in the matter and attempt for reconciliation if possible. Decisions are taken unanimously. The council handles matters like inter-personal quarrels, breach of taboos and customs, offences committed in drunken state, partition of joint families, inheritance cases, irksome love affairs, adultery etc. The offenders are fined in shape of cash and or kinds of liquor bottles.

### **Mutha Organization**

*Mutha'* is an important feature of social and political organization of the Dongria Kandha. It consists of group of adjoining villages and is treated as an administrative -cum- social unit. It is led by a head designated as *Mandal*. The

entire Dongria area has been divided into 21 *Muthas*. This organization had received recognition from the ex-feudatory set up

### CHANGING SCENE

Dongria say “We are *Paroja Logu* (subjects), We are happy with our *Dongar chasa* (Hill cultivation) and do not like *Pada Desia* (outsider)”. With this attitude they lived in isolation in their remote mountainous habitat segregated from the outside world by natural barriers for centuries keeping their culture and cultural identity intact.

Development interventions were made during British regime from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century though the Kondh territory was later declared as a Partially Excluded Area.

Formal tribal development policy and programmes evolved after independence. But after the establishment of Community Development Blocks in the Dongria Kandha area, introduction of Purchase-Sale and Fair Price Shop Scheme in 1964 and with developed communication facilities, the Dongria Kandha are frequently coming in contact with the outside world. The process of change has put them in a transitional phase. Yet they are still in the mooring of their traditional way of life.

After adoption of Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) Approach from the 5<sup>th</sup> Plan period development of Dongria Kandha is being looked after by the dedicated agencies such as two Integrated Tribal Development Agencies of Gunupur and Rayagada and two Micro Projects i.e., Dongria Kandha Development Agencies (DKDA) of Chatikona and Parsali, all operating in Rayagada District.

The impact of planned change and modernization is visible in their way of life. On the other side, their traditional dormitory and kinship organizations are weakening.

The Dongria are in a state of flux. Old customs, beliefs and values still hold good. In spite of the changes, their social structure has retained many of its basic characteristic features.

# THE TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF THE DONGRIA KANDHA OF ORISSA \*

*A. C. Sahoo* <sup>1</sup>

The Dongria Kandha is one of the major sections of the numerically preponderant Kandha tribe of Orissa. They mostly inhabit the Niyamgiri hill ranges, situated in Bissam cuttack and Muniguda C.D. Blocks of Gunpur Subdivision and Kalyansinghpur C.D. Block of Rayagada district and Biswanathpur area of Lanjigarh C. D. Block in Kalahandi district. Their habitat is confined to a rectangular forest tract situated at a height of 1000ft. to 5000ft. above the sea level. The Dongria Kandha villages are found on the hills tops, spurs and hills bases. Since they live in the hills, they are called by the local plainsmen as the 'Dongria' (the hill dwelling) Kandha.

They speak a Dravidian tongue, known as 'Kui' which is an admixture of 'kui' and "Telugu". Their unique characteristic features and rich cultural heritage distinguishes them from the neighboring tribes and non-tribal groups.

Their distinctiveness is revealed especially from their dress style, mode of living, indigenous skills and technology, cultural pattern and social system. They claim themselves to be the descendants of the Niyam Raja, their legendary ancestor king. This belief binds them together and keeps their social affinity intact. They are an endogamous group and follow clan exogamy. In recent years, some of them have acquired wives from the neighboring Desia Kandha community whom they consider as their brothers.

One of the striking characteristic features of the Dongria is their strong belief in the supernatural as well as magic, witchcraft and sorcery. They attach importance to group solidarity and ensure it by their devotion to numerous gods, goddesses and spirits. They like hard work and derive pleasure by performing dance and music in their leisure time. In their society, the division of labour based on age and sex is quite strong. The elders are respected and obeyed.

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXX,VI, Nos. 1 & 2, 1996, pp. 34-39

<sup>1</sup> Officer on Special Duty (Tribal Museum), SCSTRII, Bhubaneswar.

The Dongria Kandha have relationship with the local Scheduled Caste (SC) people - 'Domb' who either live in Dongria Kandha villages or in nearby villages. They mostly act as middlemen between the Dongria Kandha and outsiders for several purposes. The Scheduled Caste communities maintain a symbiotic relationship with the Dongria Kandhas. The SC people usually purchase the fruit orchards and trees of the Dongria Kandha in a lower price and make a good profit by selling the produce in the local market at higher price. They serve the Dongria Kandha as messengers, cattle herders and sweepers of the village. In certain villages, SC people are given land by the Dongria Kandha for cultivation but being tenants they can't have ownership rights on the land.

The Dongria Kandhas are lover of beautiful arts and crafts. They adorn their body with various types of ornaments. Their customs also deserve special mention, because of socio-cultural importance. The male members also adorn their body with jewellery items and keep long hair like the women folk. The male members put on two nose-rings whereas the females put on three nose-rings. The excellent embroidered cloth with beautiful needle-work reveals the indigenous artistic talents of the Dongria Kandha women. Accordingly, the male members also put on a long narrow piece of cloth round the waist with its embroidered ends, one hanging in the front and the other at the back.

The Dongria Kandha villages are situated amidst hills and forests of the Niyamgiri hill ranges. Throughout the year, the area looks green and picturesque. Due to lack of proper communication, many of the villages remain away from the mainstream of the civilization. All over the hills here and there, one can find cleared patches without any vegetation ready for slash and burn type of cultivation which is not only an age-old practice but also the mainstay of their subsistence economy. Besides, there are plenty of pineapple, banana, lemon, orange and other plantations as well as jackfruits and mango groves found in the area. Adjacent to the villages, sago-palm trees not only add to the scenery but also provide the most favourite traditional drinks to the Dongria Kandha.

The Dongria Kandha shift their settlement sites from one place to another within their Mutha boundary. The reasons behind such change are natural calamities, drought, outbreak of cholera and smallpox, loss of cattle wealth and menace of evil spirits. If there are repeated mishaps in a settlement site, it is considered inauspicious and villagers select a new site. Depletion of forest around the settlement that causes several problems of survival and inter-clan or intra-clan feuds are also some of the causes responsible for shifting of settlement site. Sometimes newly married couples also leave for new settlements to establish their new households separately. There are several instances where some people come to stay in the villages of their close relatives. Sometimes the sons-in-law also go to live with their fathers-in-law. On special ground, one can live in the village of his maternal uncle or sister's husband villages or ritual friends who usually offers him some land for cultivation and raising plantations.



Sometimes due to maladjustment, the Dongria Kandha prefer to shift to other settlements irrespective of any kinship affiliations.

Each Dongria Kandha village has the institution of youth dormitory. It is the centre where unmarried girls spend their leisure hours. The number of dormitories varies according to the villages. Boys from other villages belonging to different clans visit the girls dormitory and spend nights with the girls. The dormitory is the place where a girl socializes herself with the community living, social norms and cultural values. The boys and girls also get chance to interact with each other for choosing their life partners. The dormitory is the cultural centre for various activities of the boys and girls. By and large, it is a place for dance, merrymaking, enjoyment and learning things that becomes useful in future.

Like the girl's dormitory in every village, there is a community house popularly known as the 'Sadar'. The house is constructed on communal co-operative labour and here community level matters are discussed. Women are strictly prohibited to enter this house.

The Dongria Kandha have an intimate relationship with their forest. It provides them materials for their house construction. It serves as the major source of food and other essential consumable items. They collect a variety of mushrooms, tubers, roots, stems, green leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds from the forest for their consumption. The forest is the place where their gods, goddess, and spirits live. A Dongria cannot think of life without forest.

Apart from forest they also depend on land for their survival. Their cultivable lands can broadly be classified into three categories, viz. Dongar, i.e., the hill slope land for shifting cultivation where they grow pineapple, citrus plants, banana, turmeric, ginger, and varieties of other crops. Next comes Bhata type of land which is situated at the base of the hills and is comparatively more fertile than the Dongar land. In Bhata land they mostly take up wet cultivation. The third category of land is the kitchen garden, locally known as Bado which is kept more fertile by manuring and it is mostly used for growing different types of vegetables. These soil types of the area are red stony, clay and in some places patches of black soil and red soil are also noticed.

Marriage among the Dongria Kandhas is an expensive and a complex affair. It is very difficult to acquire a life partner. It involves a lot of risks and responsibilities. The selection of mate, followed by negotiations, bringing the bride home and leading a happy conjugal life give rise to a number of ceremonies and rituals. The prolonged inter-group hostility, involvement of risks, tensions, humiliations, frustrations, physical pains, and mental torture are some of the negative factors which sometimes lead to fatal consequences. At the same time, the hospitality, comforts, pleasure, interaction and group activities are the positive aspects of marriage, which binds not only two persons of opposite sex but also two different kin groups and strengthens inter-group

relationship. The Dongria Kandha tries to maintain internal solidarity by establishing balanced marital alliances. Although clan exogamy is given priority attention, practice of village exogamy is also strictly observed.

In the Dongria society, the family is the smallest basic social unit. There are simple as well as compound families which are either monogamous or polygynous. There are also instances of joint and extended families where several brothers live together with their spouses and children. Many Dongria males prefer to have more than one wife because of economic necessity. Since they are shifting cultivators, they need more manpower and it leads to acquisition of more than one wife. It is noticed that the co-wives live together with the husband and undertake household and field activities on a co-operative basis. After the death of the husband, the sons of co-wives sometimes quarrel among themselves for partition of paternal property and it often leads to fatal consequences.

Beyond family and lineage, there are larger agnatic descent groups, called *punja*; the maximal lineage is divided into higher *punja* or the senior *punja*, and lower or junior *punja*. Each *punja* has its own traditional roles and functions. The community level magico-religious functions are conducted by the Janipunja assisted by the Pujari *punja*. The secular functions are taken up by the Mandal *punja*. The *punjas* are further subdivided into lineage groups. Above the *punja* or maximal lineage, lies the largest descent group, clan, locally known as Kuda. It has linkage with the traditional Mutha system.

Mutha is a territorial organization and all the kinsmen belonging to a Mutha behave as a corporate group. All the members of a particular clan (Kuda) live within the boundary of a particular Mutha and all of them are identified by a common name. Each clan (Kuda) has social significance and its own origin myth. Among different Mutha, mention may be made of Jakesika, Menika and Mandika. The people of Niska Mutha occupy the top position in their social hierarchy. They have direct link with the Niyam Raja, the mythical ancestor of the tribe and they abstain from eating beef to maintain their ritual purity.

At the time of hunting, if the game animal is wounded by the members of one clan and killed by another clan, the clansmen who have wounded the animal should get back the body of the dead animal. The violation of the custom leads to clan feuds and the offender pays heavy fine to settle the dispute.

The clan plays quite vital role in possession and utilization of land and forest which are two very important productive assets of the Dongria Kandha. Each clan (Kuda) has its own territory well demarcated from all sides. The clans belonging to Mutha have absolute rights over their respective territories. Each Mutha is composed of clans and each clan of several villages, the number of which vary from one Mutha to other.

The Mutha territories are locally called, Padar and named after specific clans. When members of another clan live in the village of the founding clan, the former are expected to observe certain formalities. The people of the other clans can participate in all communal feasts and festivals of the village. They are allowed to fetch firewood for cremation of dead, because it is mandatory that all the households in the village are required to give firewood for the purpose. They can use the common land, pasture, forest, dancing ground, community centre, mango grove, tamarind trees and any other communally owned resources. But they cannot have the right to sell, lease out or transfer the lands which is prerogative of the bonafide members of the founder clan who enjoy exclusive rights of ownership of the village by descent and inheritance.

The women have no right over husband's property, only they can work and enjoy the residuary right for their maintenance. Women are considered to be living assets of the family. Sometimes the daughters raise some orchards and sell it out to earn their pocket money. The paternal property goes to the son and is equally divided among the brothers. They sell and purchase land by conducting a ritual and never claim the property once sold. The Dongrias also mortgage cultivable lands, fruits, trees and animals. The men and women in an organized group help each other at the time of need and hardship. The dormitory girl's traditional labour co-operative helps the needy families of their village in plantation, weeding, hoeing, sowing, bonding, harvesting and other such works.

Their kinship network is broad based and extensive. Other than the consanguine and affinal kinship, they have ritual kinship ties. It is a very common practice among the Dongria that two persons of the same sex establish ritual kinship. The males, address their ritual friends as 'Sai' and the females address as 'Ade'. As per the tradition, a formal ceremony takes place in which both the friends take food from the same plate and since then their ritual friendship gets social approval. Some Dongria Kandhas also establish ritual friendship with the local Scheduled Caste people and others, belonging to same age-group.

The Dongria presents gifts to and accepts gifts from kinsmen and ritual friends. Within kinship network, it has been determined what kind of gift is to be given and expected in return. The forms of gift vary from a number of buffaloes to some chickens and few pots of sago-palm juice. It brings unity and solidarity among members of various clans and lineages. The exchange of gifts sometimes determines the relationship between two individuals and groups.

A Dongria Kandha person acquires different names during his lifetime. Starting from the very childhood, soon after the maturity, inside the dormitory, on the eve of marriage, and when he enters into his father-in-laws house, he is addressed and referred by different name. Sometimes during old age he is also given a separate name. The same person is called by the name Ratnu at childhood, Chichada inside the dormitory, Kudunja at the time of marriage by the in-laws and Kangapoi in his old age.

After a Dongria's death, the near and dear kinsmen are invited and they wait till the dead body is cremated. Next day the mortuary rites are observed as per their tradition and customs. The roles played by mother's brothers, members of the first descending generations, the father-in-law, and the uterine brothers, as well as close agnates of the deceased are quite significant. In mortuary rites, mother's brother and sister's son of the deceased are expected to present buffaloes. The deceased and his family accept cooked food from the neighbors. The villagers also have some roles to play in the period of crisis. The mortuary rites in exceptional cases are observed after seven days of the occurrence of death. Before conducting the mortuary rites, the bereaved family members observe certain taboos. For purification, some animals and birds are sacrificed for satisfying ancestors and other deities. The flesh of all the sacrificed animals is consumed in a communal feast.

The Dongria Kandha celebrate a number of feasts and festivals in which, on the one hand, they satisfy their deities and spirits and on the other, enjoy delicious food items. There are certain festivals and rituals which are organized at the individual household level and some at the village or community level. At the individual household level, they celebrate Ghanta Parba that mostly includes feasts and festivals and participation of all kin groups including members of different clan groups. The households observe it in collaboration with the villagers and a formal meeting of all household heads takes place, prior to the celebration. According to the date fixed, guests, kith and kins are invited to attend the ceremony. In a Monday or Friday, the ceremony starts before which the host household head thatches his house and makes wall paintings with help of co-villagers and skilled persons. For the services rendered by the villagers, for collection of thatching materials and other works, the host serves them a sumptuous meal. The participation of magico-religious specialists, recitation of incantations, sacrifice of animals and birds, enshrinement of special stone by the villagers, enjoyment of special drink and eating of sumptuous meals are some of the major attractions of this occasion. The beating of drums, singing of the songs, sacrifice of buffalo and pig in the burial ground makes the occasions very lively and enjoyable. They celebrate the occasion with pomp and ceremony in order to satisfy their gods, goddesses and spirits as well as kiths and kins wishing for the prosperity of family members. Mostly, well-to-do households in collaboration with the villagers celebrate this festival according to their convenience and particularly when they get a good harvest.

Unlike the Ghanta Parba, another very important festival i.e. Illuiarpa is performed at the household level to worship household deities and ancestors. The kinsmen are invited to attend the occasion. This is a one day ceremony. At the community level, a festival called Pungalpom, i.e. the festival of flowers is observed in the month of January-February, especially when the villagers reap a bumper crop. They also observe sowing and broadcasting ceremonies, known as Bichhahapam. Besides, they celebrate Enda Penu Puja for appeasing various

spirits and to enjoy feasts and festivities. The most important and famous festival observed by the Dongria Kandha is Kodru Parba or Meriah sacrifice. It is supposed to be observed at the clan level, but practically organized at the village level. According to the need and situation, a particular village performs Meriah sacrifice to appease various spirits and deities with the hope of better health and happiness. Usually, this festival is celebrated once in every five to six years and the duration may vary. The people subscribe for the festival at the household level and all the villagers get ready for the celebration of the festival at least one year back. All the villagers equally contribute and purchase a good buffalo and the role of village messenger is unavoidable in this connection. The buffalo is first brought to Koteiwali Penu and given a bath with turmeric water.

All the kiths and kins and other clan people are invited well before the celebration of the festival. All the villagers get ready with sufficient foodstuff and drinks. They make their houses well decorated with coloured mud. On the first day of celebration that is one day before the buffalo sacrifice, different animals and birds are sacrificed and guests enjoy feasts. On the next day the buffalo is sacrificed by the male adults belonging clan to touch the buffalo with the weapon. The buffalo is sacrificed in a fine morning and each of the participants from other clans is given a slice of raw flesh of the sacrificed buffalo. They return home with the raw flesh singing and dancing all the way. The festival is brought to an end after appeasing the earth goddess Dharani Penu. In this ritual several spirits in and around the village are appeased by offering animal sacrifice.

The Dongrias have their own traditional village council to handle their customary matters. The council holds its meeting at a place in the village called, Sadar, the seat of the earth goddess. Almost every day early in the morning the village messenger shouts loudly to call the villagers to Sadar. The meeting of the traditional council starts after the arrival of the traditional village leaders and other participants. Each member takes part in the discussion, but final decision is made by the secular chief. The matters that are put forth in the council meeting are related to fixation of dates, family contributions and sharing of duties and responsibilities for different rituals and festivals and other matters. The council also resolves disputes among persons and groups. While taking decisions, the council makes efforts to settle disputes amicably and peacefully. Sometimes, the offender is fined to offer a feast to the villagers. Heavy fine is demanded in case of sexual offences and for breach of rules of clan exogamy. As per the custom, one has to host a feast for encroaching upon the usufructuary right over a tree in other's land. The guilty is always punished irrespective of his socio-economic status. The community interest and personal security are always safeguarded by the council. The headman belongs to the founder lineage. Some leaders among younger generation are also given due recognition in the council. However, in decision making process the elderly persons and traditional leaders take active part. The village leaders take all care with seriousness to uphold the unity and maintain peace in the village. The lineage leaders also have some important role

to play. The role of the village messenger, who usually belongs to the Scheduled Caste community, for settlements of deputed is very important. On several occasions, the Dongria Kandha chooses to act upon his suggestions. The Dongria Kandhas do not have a single political head, rather they believe in the consensus in the council. In spite of the latest changes in the politico-jural set up, the traditional leaders still enjoy the respect and confidence of the people.

During last few decades the development interventions made by the government, particularly through the Dongria Kandha Development Agency, (Kurli), Chatikona, deserves mention. The Dongria Kandha are quite aware of their age-old socio-economic problems. They realize that by participatory development approach and giving emphasis on natural resources and human resources development, they have brought changes in their standard of living. According to them, they have been directly motivated to help themselves and to develop spirit of competition among themselves in positive direction.

Now a days, they are raising orchards and food crops for cash and better living. Some of the elderly Dongrias hold the opinion that the recent strategy of development adopted by the government proved to be very effective and successful for of its culture and community specific approach. In these days they are seriously thinking several times before disposal of standing crops and utilization of hard earned money. The great achievement according to them is control of indiscriminate mortgage of their standing crops and selling of fruit bearing trees to the traders at a nominal price. The most striking and remarkable feature of the development process is their group consciousness about systematic and scientific management of their environment and society.

## References :

- 1 Banerjee, S. 1969 *Ethnographic study of the Kuvi Kondh*, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta.
- 2 Barbara, M. Boal, 1982 *The Konds*, Aris and Philips (Ltd) Warminster Wilt, England.
- 3 Dalton, E. T. 1960 *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*. Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta
- 4 Nayak, P. K., 1989 *Blood Women and Territory: an analysis of Clan Feuds of Dongria Kondhs*. Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi
- 5 Patnaik, N. & P.S. Das Patnaik. 1982 *Kondhs of Orissa*, T.H.R.T.I., Bhubaneswar.

# DEMOGRAPHY OF KONDH VILLAGE <sup>1</sup>

*S. Panda*

## Introduction

India has a large tribal population. Demography of tribal people is necessary to know the different aspects and changes of the population. Very few authors have worked in tribal demography. But in India a considerable work has been done on different aspects of demography of the general population. In Orissa so far, no proper demographic study on any aspect of the tribal people has been undertaken. In the present paper attempts have been made to study certain demographical aspects of a Kondh village, such as marriage, family, fertility, mortality, education and occupation, etc.

The Dongria Kondh are a primitive section of the Kondh tribe. The Dongria Kondh village 'Khambasi' is situated on the high hill of Niamgiri at a height of 3000ft. in Gunpur Subdivision of Koraput (former undivided) district in Orissa. The village is surrounded by a chain of hills. It is partly isolated which kept it apart from the main stream of the society in the country. There is no influence of the civilized society. The village is fairly big in comparison with other hill villages. In that village there is the co-existence and inter-relation between the tribal people and the Doms, their non-tribal neighbors. The Doms exploit the tribesmen taking advantage of their ignorance and honesty. Kondhs are the owner of all the land and Doms have no right over it. But they are exploiting the Kondhs since a good number of years. They remain attached to the village but dwell at the outskirts.

According to 1951 Census, the total population of the village was 239; in 1961 it increased to 330 and in 1968 it was calculated to be 414 individuals. Doms speak Oriya but Kuvi is the mother tongue of the Dongria Kondhs. There are nine clans among the Dongria Kondhs, such as Wadeka, Kadraka, Kundika, Sikoka, Pusica, Prasca, Bengaska, Melaka, and Kurunjalika. These are endogamous groups. Khambasi is in the Wadeka *mutha* and therefore members belonging to Wadeka clan predominate and own all land. All the other clans except Wadeka are outsiders and have migrated to this village. The society is patrilocal and children belong to father's clan. The people (Kondh) are primarily shifting cultivators but Doms are mainly businessmen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XI, No.3, 1969-70, pp.27-35

Khambasi, the selected study village, is situated about 380 miles away from Bhubaneswar. The investigation was done during October 1968. The main purpose of selecting this village is that, it is more or less a compact village. Since Dom families also live in the village, it is interesting to compare the demographic aspects of these two groups. The eastern part of the village is attached to a small hill tract which runs from village Kurli towards the Chatikana railway station situated about 9 miles away. There is a big weekly market near this railway station, which caters to the need of the Kondh people. Most of the people of other hill villages attend this market. People of this village are now going to the hospital run by the D. K. D. scheme (Dongria Kondh Development Scheme) situated three miles away from the village, in another village named Kuril. There is a Primary School established three years ago by the D. K. D. Scheme, which is managed by two non-Government lady social workers of Kasturaba Trust.

### The Population

The data utilized in the paper are taken from the Dongria Kondh and Dom people of the village. The outsiders are not taken into account, as their number is very small and they are the temporary inhabitants of the village.

**TABLE - 1**  
**Age and Sex Distribution of the Population**

Age Groups	Dongria Kondh				Dom			
	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%
0-5	11	26.1	24	28.2	12	40.3	21	42.5
6-10	18	--	17	--	17	--	16	--
11-15	13	23.5	12	20.6	7	16.4	9	21.3
16-20	13	--	18	--	4	--	10	--
21-25	8	--	16	--	3	--	7	--
26-30	13	--	13	--	6	--	5	--
31-35	7	50.4	10	51.2	2	43.3	6	35.6
36-40	7	--	4	--	4	--	4	--
41-45	4	--	7	--	3	--	2	--
46-51	6	--	8	--	3	--	4	--
51-	11	--	16	--	6	--	3	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>--</b>

The age composition of male and female population in the village is presented in **Table 1**. From the table it is obvious that in the age-group 0-5, the proportion of female is higher in both the communities. It is remarkable that in the total population the percentage of female is higher both among Dongria Kondhs and Doms. There may be some sociological and biological factors behind it. It was not possible to investigate in detail all the factors due to paucity of time. The proportion of individuals in various age categories gradually decreases from



the age-group 0-5 onwards. The proportion of individuals below 20 years is quite high. Almost nearly half of the population is below 20 years.

### Marriage

The Dongria Kondh marriage is not simple but is a long complicated process. They observe clan exogamy. They have retained their traditional ways and customs in selecting mates. Monogamous type of marriage is frequently noticed. Polygyny is also found in some cases to get more wives to assist in shifting cultivation.

In **Table 2-A**, the marital status of the population in various age-groups has been presented. In **Table 2-B**, the age at first marriage of every married man and woman is presented. Most of the Dongria Kondh males marry at the age of 16 to 20 years, the percentage being 47.2. Large number of marriages occurs in the age-group 21 to 25 (46.7%). But this is not the case with Doms. Dom girls marry earlier. Child marriage is totally absent in Dongria Kondh society as is seen from the table.

**TABLE - 2-A**  
**Dongria Kondh Marital Status in Various Age-Groups**

Age Groups	Unmarried		Married		Widowed		Divorced	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0-10	32	40	--	--	--	--	--	--
11-20	24	16	3	9	--	--	--	--
21-30	0	7	17	20	--	--	1	--
31-40	--	1	14	13	1	4	--	2
41-50	--	--	8	5	1	10	--	--
51+	--	--	8	4	2	14	--	--
Total	56 (50.4)	64 (44.1)	50 (45.4)	51 (35.1)	4 (3.6)	28 (19.3)	1 (.9)	2 (1.3)

**TABLE 2-B**  
**Age at First Marriage in Various Age-Groups**

Age group	Dongria Kondh				Dom			
	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%
10-15	1	1.8		--	2	6.2	10	2.50
16-20	26	47.2	30	37.5	13	40.6	22	55.00
21-25	20	36.3	38	46.7	11	34.3	6	15.00
26-30	8	14.5	13	16.0	--	18.7	2	5.0
37 & above	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	55	--	81	--	32	--	40	--

*Cause of Late Marriage in Females* - in their society the father of a girl is not worried about the marriage of his daughter. It is the responsibility of the father of the boy to propose.

The ancient custom of procuring wife by service is widespread. Accordingly, a boy is required to serve in his would be father -in-law's house as a suitor servant called 'Khamari', and marries the betrothed girl after a lapse of some years. The time period depends on the will of the father-in-law and in most cases he delays, so that both his daughter and his would be son-in-law work in his field longer. Another cause is high bride-price. It is against one's status and prestige to accept a lower amount of bride-price for one's daughter. The high bride-price makes it difficult for young women to marry and marriage is postponed till late in life. So girls seldom marry below 20 or even 25 years of age.

From **Table 2-A**, it is observed that the percentage of widows is greater in Dongria Kondh society than in the Dom society. No widower is present among Doms but 4 such persons are present among the Dongria Kondh. Maximum numbers of widows are present among the Dongria Kondh, in the age-group 51 and above. Their society does not restrict divorce and second marriage. Divorce is rare in both the societies. All the percentages are given in the table. There is no divorced lady in Dom society and only one divorced man is present. The Dongria Kondhs always wish to have as many wives as possible, but getting more wives is very difficult due to bride price. Only 5 Dongria Kondhs have two wives and one has three. In case of Doms only one man has two wives. Considerable attention has been given to the influence of polygyny on the fertility of women. "On a priori grounds it would seem probable, in view of the ovulation cycle and the chances of conception, that moderate dispassion of the husband's sexual acts would be likely to cause reduction of the fertility of married women" (Lorimer). It is interesting to note that in polygynous families the number of children is not more as compared to the monogamous families.

## **Family**

Structurally, three types of families are observed, the nuclear, the joint or extended and the compound families. A nuclear family is constituted by a man, his wife, and their unmarried children. The female members of the family leave their parents after marriage and go to live with their husbands. Nuclear family is divided into ordinary, broken and incomplete. After the death of the husband or wife, the children and their father or mother or on the other hand divorced male or female and his/her children constitute the broken family. Again single family consisting of a spouse without children is considered as incomplete family. It may be complete after getting issues.

The extended family is extended both vertically and horizontally. Large family groups consist of several genealogically related nuclear families living together. (1) A man, his wife, his married children and their children and bond of

close kinship embraces uncle uncles and aunts, cousin, etc., (2) Several brothers, each with his wife and children living together. Families which are based on the special marriage custom of polygyny and remarried widow or widower and their children have been taken here as compound family.

In **Table 3-A**, types of families found in the village are presented. Nuclear families are higher in proportion both among the Dongria Kondh and Dom. This is due to their economic stringency and they generally prefer to be separated after the death of the father. The percentage of nuclear families is 70.39 and 72.0 among the Dongria Kondh and Dom, respectively. Compound family is 13.6 percent and 4 percent and extended family is 15.9 percent and 24 percent among Dongria Kondh and Dom, respectively. There are few broken and incomplete families.

**TABLE 3-A**  
**Showing Types of Family**

Name of Tribe & Caste	Nuclear Family		Incomplete	Compound	Extended	Total
	Ordinary	Broken				
Dongria Kondh	22 (50%)	5 (11.3%)	4 (90.9%)	6 (13.6%)	7 (15.9%)	44
Dom	14 (56%)	1 (4%)	3 (12%)	1 (4%)	6 (24%)	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>69</b>

Among the simple families most of the families are small with 3 persons in the family, but joint families have 7-14 members in the Dongria Kondh society. The greater number of member in some joint families is due to the following cause. In these families there are two to four widow or unmarried father's sister or father's father's sister or own sister of the family head. This is because in their society barren women or women with daughter only have no right over their husband's property. Woman having male issues can inherit property. Therefore, barren women in widowhood return to their parental house, a reason for which there was greater number of widows.

**TABLE 3-B**  
**Distribution of Family Size**

No. of Individuals	No. of Families Dongria Kondh	No. of Families Dom
1-3	13	4
4-6	15	10
7-9	13	8
10 & above	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>25</b>

### Fertility

The fertility of women varies in two different ethnic groups living in this village. Fertility rate of any group depends on the customs and traditions

relating to their sexual behavior. Social taboos and mating pattern play important role in determining the fertility. There are social taboos on illegal sexual intercourse. They do not marry within the clan. This taboo restricts illegitimate children to a great extent. Within a short period of stay, it was not possible to study the complete reproductive behavior of the people. Causes of low fertility may be due to various factors, such as abortion, still birth, miscarriage, etc. The most difficult was to find out the incidence of abortion.

Number of children born per month in Dongria Kondh society is 3.02 and in Dom society it is 3.9 as given in the **Table 4-A**.

**TABLE - 4A**  
**Number of Children Born per Mother**

Name of the Community	No. of Children Per Month								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Dongria Kondh	12	11	3	11	9	1	1	0	48
Dom	4	3	5	7	6	3	2	1	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>79</b>

**TABLE - 4B**  
**Age at Menarche**

Name of the Communities	Age at Menarche		
	11 to 12	13 to 14	15 to 16
Dongria Kondh (55)	30	21	4
Dom (50)	26	22	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>6</b>

*Figure in the parenthesis indicates number of women examined*

**TABLE - 4C**  
**Age of the Parents at the time of Birth of First Child**

Age Groups		Number of Fathers	Percent of Total Fathers	Number of Mothers	Percent of Total Mothers
Dongria Kondh	16-20	2	55	--	--
	21-25	28	51.9	31	53.4
	26-30	23	42.5	27	46.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>54</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>99.9</b>
Dom	16-20	7	21.2	11	34.3
	21-25	15	45.4	15	46.8
	26-30	11	33.3	6	18.8
<b>Total</b>		<b>33</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>99.9</b>

Pre-marital sexual relations leading to infanticide in Dongria Kondh group may be one of the causes of less number of children. The age of parents at the birth of the first child is one of the important factors in fertility study. In Dongria Kondh society the highest numbers of males become father when they

were within the age 21-25 years. It is also same in case of females. In Dom society females becomes mother a bit earlier than Dongria Kondhs and so also, the males becoming father at an earlier age. So among Doms the age of father and mother at the time of birth of first child is lower. It may account for greater number of children in the Dom society as compared to the Dongria Kondhs. (**Table - 4C**)

### Mortality

The numbers of deaths in 1967-68 are recorded here. This year large number of children died of smallpox. Higher percentages of death were recorded among the male babies. The percentage of male and female children died were 47.2 and 25.0 among the Dongria Kondh and 19.42, 8.3 among the Dom but the percentage of infant death in Dongria Kondh and Dom group is 72.2 and 27.7 ratio in the two groups. This is due to the fact that, at the time of epidemic, Doms were vaccinated, but Dongria Kondhs were afraid that this was against the will of the God. The main reason of the high rate of infant mortality is due to the lack of hygienic and medical care of the children.

### Literacy

The Tribal populations in India in general are educationally back ward than the general population. The Dongria Kondhs in particular are educationally quite backward. Their boys have very recently started attending schools. Among them out of the total population of 256, there are only 21 literates and all of them are males only who number 111 and their percentage of literacy is 18.9.

In case Doms out of the total 145 only 21 are literate, 17 being males and 4 females. Percentage of literates in various age categories has been presented in **Table 5**. The Dongria Kondh boys do not attend schools in the day time; they keep themselves busy in their fields. But the Dom boys are reading at the day time.

**TABLE 5**  
**Percentage of Literates**

Age Groups	Dongria Kondh		Dom	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
6-10	11	--	2	--
11-15	9	--	2	2
16-20	1	--	4	1
21-25	--	--	2	--
26-30	--	--	1	--
31-35	--	--	1	--
36-40	--	--	1	--
41-45	--	--	0	--
46-50	--	--	0	1
50+	--	--	4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>21 (18%)</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>17 (25.37%)</b>	<b>14 (4.55)</b>

## Occupation

Dongria Kondh economy almost entirely depends upon hard toil. The hill slopes are cleared by them for shifting cultivation. Being the traditional owners of all the land, they are remarkably proud of their position as landlords and tenacious of their rights. Except kitchen garden, Doms have no land. They cultivate lands of Dongria Kondhs when they are permitted to do so.

Out of the 44 Dongria Kondh families, the primary occupation of 41 families is cultivation. Only 3 families have no land. They work as labourers. No Dongria Kondh is doing business. Both males and females work in the field. A Dongria lady is very laborious. She can do all types of agricultural works, except heavy works like felling trees. Besides being engaged in household activities, the women work in the field and at times also work as labourers. Pineapple, plantain, orange, mango and jack-fruit are extensively grown on the hill slopes of Niyamgiri hills – the Dongria Kondh habitat.

Doms are traders, weavers and middlemen for the products of the Dongria. Business is the primary occupation of 15 Dom families, weaving is of 3 families and 3 cultivate lands given by their Dongria Kondh masters for their remuneration as village servants.

**TABLE 6**  
**Occupation of the Tribe and the Caste**

<b>Name of the Tribe and Caste</b>	<b>Number of Families</b>	<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Weaving</b>
1	2	3	4	5	6
Dongria	44	41	3	--	--
Kondh	25	3	4	15	3
Dom					
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>

# THE DONGRIA KONDH YOUTH DORMITORY: AN AGENT OF DEVELOPMENT \*

*T. Patnaik* <sup>1</sup>

*B. B. Mohanty* <sup>2</sup>

*P. K. Nayak* <sup>3</sup>

## **Introduction:**

Youth dormitory otherwise known as the institution of bachelor's house is one of the most important social institutions found among many primitive societies of the world. S.E. Peal, the first English writer who examined the communal barracks of the primitive races drew attention to the fact that from Bhutan to New Zealand and from the Marqueses to the Nigeria, the system existed and was distinguished by certain persistent features (Elwin, 1968:19).

In tribal India as described by Majumdar, dormitories are found practically in all parts of the country where the tribal people have their habitation. The institution is found among most of the aboriginal tribes, such as the Munda, Ho, Oraon and Kharia of Chotnagpur plateau and Odisha, Gond and Bhuiya of Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, Konayak Naga of Assam and among the Bhotia of Bihar. Many tribes of Melanesia and Polynesia are also known to have dormitories. In Southern India, the Muthuvena, Mannam and Poliyan of Tamil Nadu and the Kunikar of Kerala are reported to have the dormitory institutions (Majumdar, 1967).

Elwin grouped the dormitories into two types. The first one is semi-military barracks type supposed to aim at a strict isolation of boys connected with war, hunting and magic. The second type allows them to have relationship with the unmarried girls by regulating pre-nuptial interests of the tribal youths (1969:19). Majumdar holds that dormitories are both bi-sexual and mono-sexual. The tribal men's dormitory is usually the largest building since it serves as a

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 42 & 43, Nos. 1&2, 2002-03, pp. 17-39

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Deputy Director, SCSTRI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Director, SCSTRI, Bhubaneswar

meeting place of the villagers, as a guesthouse and a sleeping house of the men. Both types of dormitories fulfill important social and religious functions (1967).

The subject of origin of the dormitory is always controversial and remains obscure. There are different views regarding how, when and under what circumstances the youth dormitories have originated.

- The youth dormitory is possibly a survival of the communal house from which private dwellings split (Elwin: *ibid*).
- Hodson holds a similar view. He opines that there are three stages in the development of the home. At the initial state, the whole village lived together in a communal house. In the subsequent stage, a group of individual houses were developed with the sexes segregated into unmarried boys and married men having their dormitory and a separate dormitory for un-married girls. And, thus, only the mothers and very young children lived at home. Finally, due to the economic pressure of modern systems of taxation, the husband shared the mother's house and the family house came into existence (1911:75). For Hodson "the dormitory institution would seem to be rather symptomatic of a definite level of culture than distinctive of any special ethnic group" (*ibid*).
- Hodson further holds that the object of the dormitory was to avoid incest and perhaps was instituted to prevent children from witnessing the primal scene and being an embarrassment to their parents. (Hodson, 1911:86).
- In countries like Africa and Assam, dormitory serves military purpose.
- According to some other scholars, among certain primitive societies sexual intercourse is prohibited during the busy agricultural seasons and so a man's house is separately provided for and on the other hand, the lonely woman lived together in a separate house. Besides, menstruating women were also kept segregated in these houses.
- Moreover, among certain tribal communities like Maria and Muria, husbands are not allowed to sleep in the house with their wives so long as the naval cord of the newborn child has not fallen. Among many other tribal communities, sexual relationship is prohibited until the child weans.
- Elwin is of the opinion that there are practical and straightforward reasons behind the establishment of dormitory organization. In his view, it is a need everywhere for a rest house for visitors in a village and the organization of younger generation of the tribe to form a village workforce. Moreover, those societies that are based on age-grades need special clubs for the younger people and the un-married ones. He is of the view that the Bondo and some other tribal dormitories in Odisha, perhaps, aim at enabling girls to find suitable husbands and test their desirability (1968:24).



- Elwin viewed the dormitory organization as a unique phase of human development. According to him, "The village dormitory elsewhere provides the most important evidence for any discussion on group marriage, group concubine, pre-nuptial chastity, pre-nuptials infertility, the value of rules of exogamy etc to the anthropologist'. On the other hand, to the non-anthropologist, the dormitory informs about "co-education, the expediency marriage between those who have grown up together, the relation of paternal responsibility, the relation of discipline and freedom and the elimination of jealousy. It opens up the widest problem of sex and marriage." (ibid).
- The institution of dormitory forms an integral part of tribal society and its importance and vitality cannot be ignored. S. C. Roy while describing Oraon dormitory says that the dormitory is an effective economic organization for purposes of food quest, a useful seminary for training young men in their social and other duties and at the same time an institution for magico-religious observances calculated to secure success in hunting and to augment the procreative power of young men (1915:211).

It may be pointed out that under the impact of modernization primitive customs, practices and institutions have become disorganized and disintegrated beyond our imagination. The same is the case with dormitory organization. Elwin is of the opinion that under modern conditions, when mankind is at every stage of development, the dormitory is suffering from drastic and rapid changes and one day anthropology must become history or nothing. The socio-cultural characteristics are as valuable as their economic resources to adapt to a rapidly changing world. Information on customs, practices, art, culture, religion, etc is of great practical importance and an indispensable pre-requisite for an effective administration and development. Mazumdar very strongly opines, "The main purpose of education is to strengthen the feeling of responsibility in the people and to conserve the values in society which have stood the test of time that have helped them to survive. Any scheme of education devised for the tribal people must take notice of the indigenous methods of training and must be broadly based on what has been of abiding significance to their cultural life. The system of dormitory life, for example should be carefully studied. If oriented to suit the present needs, the youth organization of the dormitory is likely to prove a bulwark to these tribes who still jealously guard it as a treasure and a legacy" (1964: IX). Thus, the development of indigenous groups largely depends on the improvement of two basic resources, social, cultural and natural. These are mutually supportive of each other. As such before launching any development programmes /projects for tribal communities, there is a need for understanding them, their cultures, values, traditions and institutions, which helps in achieving the development goal.

### Nomenclatures used by Different Tribal Communities:

The institution of dormitory is differently known by different tribal communities. A list of some of which is given below.

Name of the State	Name of the Community	Dormitory Nomenclature Mono-sexual		Bi-Sexual
		Male	Female	
	Konyak Naga	Ban	Yo	-
Assam	Memiss	Ikhuichi	Iloichi	-
	Angami Naga	Kichuki	-	Arichu
U. P.	Bhotias	Rangang	-	-
	Munda and Ho	Gitiora	-	-
Chotanagpur & Orissa	Oraons	Jonkerpa/ Dhumkuria	Pelo-erpa	-
	Gond	Gotul	-	-
Chotanagpur	Ao and Sema	Morung	-	-
	Juang	Majang	-	-
	Bhuinya	Dhangarbasa/ Mandaghar/ Darbar	-	-
Orissa	Bondo	-	Ingersin	-
	DongriaKondh	-	Da-She-Hala /Da-she-hada	-

### Studies on Dormitory:

Scant attention has been given to the study of dormitory institutions among the tribes. Except a few, most of the ethnographers have made some sketchy descriptions of dormitories of a few tribes of India. C. von Fuerer-Haimendorf has given a detailed account on the Konyak Naga, S.C. Roy on Oraons and Verrier Elwin on the Muria Gond. The most exquisite description of a dormitory organization called "Bukumutula" is found in Malinowski's Trobriand Islanders.

In Odisha, youth dormitories are still in existence and found very functional among a number of tribal groups such as the Oraon, Paudi Bhuinya, Bondo, Juang, and Dongria Kondh. However, such dormitories or dormitory like organizations, which did exist among most other tribes of Odisha have dwindled away. The present paper is based on the study of the institution of bachelors' dormitory of the Dongria Kondh. The Dongria inhabit the Niyamgiri hills in southern Odisha. The focus of the paper is on delineating and understanding the structure and function of the institution of youth dormitories among them. It also traces the importance and utility of youth dormitory as a social institution, which can be tapped and harnessed for pursuing development programmes among the Dongria Kondh a primitive tribal group (PTG). It discusses the dormitories in

respect of their structure and composition, constitution, management, rules and regulations, role of dormitory members, and change and transformation.

### **Earlier References on Dongria Kondh Dormitory:**

Literature on Dongria Kondh dormitory is scanty. Nayak while describing the girl's dormitory of the Dongria Kondh notes *da-sha-sika*, *da-sha* meaning a matured girl. The dormitory house presents a separate look from the rest of the houses because of its decorated walls. Their number varies from village to village. The young boys (*dhangaras*) do not have any dormitory house and they sleep on someone's verandah in small groups and the sleeping place is known as *dhangrenga-duki*. Following the principle of village exogamy, young boys of the same village attend the dormitory at late evening and leave before dawn. Each matured girl who is a member of the dormitory assumes a new name known as *sahala* name. He further opines that it is a natural instinct on the part of the boys and girls to attend the dormitory. Even after marriage, a man visits the dormitory though he never allows his wife to revisit the same. The younger girls in the dormitory learn needlework from the elders. They are also taught the art of playing their traditional musical instrument, Goani. Besides, entertainments with exchange of jokes and gifts also take place among the dormitory mates. In the dormitory, sleeping partners are often changed and more importance is given to the relatively rich *dhangra*, identified by use of more ornaments, specifically *murma* and *murmum* (1989:45).

Patnaik refers to the Dongria dormitory house as Hada Sala and also Dhangadi Sala or Adasbetta. It is smaller in size, located at one of the extreme ends of the village near the stream. In the youth dormitory, clan exogamy is strictly followed because there is a strong negative social sanction against clan incest.

Cases of conception in the dormitory are of rare occurrence as they use indigenous herbal medicines as a protective measure. In their society pre-marital conception is not treated as a great offence. The institution is losing its importance in some villages as young girls are not present in these villages. However, the training that the institution used to impart has now become the family responsibilities for the enculturation and orientation of the children (1982).

Upali Aparajita opines that the Dongria Kondh dormitory is monosexual, known as *da-sha-sika*. The dormitory houses are specially built located behind residential houses close to the hill streams. While visiting the dormitory, they follow the rules of clan and village exogamy. After nightfall, the un-married boys and girls spend the night in merry making, singing and dancing. Exchange of gifts like traditional sewed scarves, carved wooden combs is made among themselves. Now, these gifts are replaced by local made imitation jewellery and plastic combs. The author remarks that dormitory organization is thus a very integral part of the Dongria Kondh society. However, the institution is losing its importance under the impact of neighboring Hindu culture. The development

programmes also influence the social structure of the Dongria Kondh to a great deal. The boys who have education in the schools feel ashamed of visiting the dormitory (1994:207).

The *dhangadas* and *dhangidis* form their respective labour cooperatives. Each group works as a unit. Their services are requisitioned by the villagers for specific works. The income is deposited in a common fund utilized in arranging common feast. The youth dormitories act as learning and training centers and the youth learn in practice their traditional arts and crafts, songs and dances etc.

R. K. Nayak and others mention that the number of the Dongria Kondh dormitories vary in a village from one to as many as five depending upon their population. For the young women, the dormitories are their social headquarters from the age of about seven until marriage. In all other aspects the young women remain fully a part of their households. The dormitory helps to relieve pressure on their family sleeping room. In addition, it serves as the beginning of both their community service and sex experiences. Dormitory practice can never be viewed as promiscuity. The Dongria Kondh society does not approve free sex as the relation between young men and women is based on prescribed rules. They follow the principle of clan exogamy and also village exogamy. The young women do not dance in front of their elders. Their songs and dances reflect lyrics expressing love and devotion, narration of different aspects of their socio-cultural and economic life. Dormitory is a place where marriages are materialized. Alternatively, the young people of a village while go to the market or festivals or elsewhere also have the scope to choose their mates (1990).

Young men of other villages are entertained at the dormitory. In case a second group of young men arrive, the former group usually withdraws to avoid conflict. Non-Dongria persons are not allowed to enter the dormitory. Sleeping arrangement inside the dormitory is mainly made on mutual understanding. The young girls normally sleep in rows but when the young men visit them, those who wish to form pairs sleep in the centre. Those who do not wish to pair sleep in a corner or make another row.

Exchange of gifts like clothes, ornaments, rings; hair clips etc are made between both the sexes as a token of love. In case of a betrothed young girl, knives and traditional clothes are prohibited as gifts. The youths prefer their traditional dress pattern. In case they are differently dressed, the young women refuse to sleep with them.

### **The Dongria Kondh People**

The Dongria Kondh habitat is situated at about 380 miles away from the State Capital Bhubaneswar on the top of the Niyamgiri hill ranges in Rayagada district. There are both rail and bus services from the State Capital up to Chatikona, a village on the Waltair-Raipur railway line and to Muniguda, a sub-

urban town. And from Chatikona and Muniguda one has to climb four miles to reach the Dongria Kondh villages.

The Dongria Kondhs belong to a Dravidian linguistic group. They speak Kuvi. The name 'Dongria' signifies that they are community of hill-dwellers, Donger means high hill land (Nayak, 1989). They practice both shifting cultivation and horticulture.

Their dress pattern is unique. The males wear long clothes tied around the waist many times while both the ends are kept free in the back and front. The females use two pieces of clothes, one piece they wear like a skirt and the other like an apron that covers the front side. The men and women grow long hair. Both the sexes are fond of ornaments. Sometimes, it is difficult to differentiate the sex from a long distance.

Nuclear composition of family is most common among them. Patrilineal extended and polygynous families also exist. The family is patrilineal, patrilocal and patripotestal in nature. Each clan group acts as a corporate group forming a territorial organization or *mutha*. The Dongria Kondh social structure is characterized by co-operation and conflict between the clans.

The Dongria Kondh is a section of the great Kondh tribe. The total population of the Dongria will be a little more than 10,000. Their population in the Micro Project area is 7952 of which 3458 are males and 4494 are females.

The study was conducted in three villages namely Khambesi, Kudubalipadar and Kurli that come under the Kurli G.P. of Bisam-Cuttack Block. The village lies at an altitude of about 3,000 feet above the sea level. The villages, Kurli, Kudubalipadar and Khambesi are situated at a distance of about 13, 15, 17Kms respectively from the Block Headquarters at Bisam-Cuttack.

Khambesi and Kudubalipadar come under Wadeka Mutha, Wadeka clan territory and Kurli under Jakasika Mutha, Jakesika clan territory. The first two are multi-clan villages whereas Kurli has uni-clan composition. The clans have their sub-clan groups. Namely, Mondal, Jani, Bismajhi and Pujari.

**Table 1: Households, Population and Number of Dormitories in the 03 Study Villages:**

Name of the village	No. of Households	Population			No. of Dormitories	No. of Dormitory members
		Male	Female	Total		
Khambesi	98	189	229	418	6	36
Kurli	35	82	94	176	3	16
Kudubalipadar	5	7	14	21	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>57</b>

It is evident from the table that in each of the three villages, female population exceeds the male population. There are 10 *da-she-hada/ dhapa* with a total of 57 members. The village Khambesi has maximum number of *da-she-hada* i.e. six with 36 members followed by Kurli -3 *dhapas* with 16 members and Kudubalipadar with 1 *dhapa* and 5 members. It is found that the members vary from 3 to 7 in the dormitories located in the study villages.

### **Dongria Dormitory:**

The Dongria Kondh girl's dormitory is meant for the maidens only. It is known as *da-she-hada* or *da-she-hala* (*da-she* meaning an unmarried girl and *hada* or *hala* meaning living house). They do not have any specific sleeping house for the young boys. The boys usually sleep in someone's verandah or in the house of a widower in small groups. This place is known as *dhangrengaduki*.

The Dongrias hold different views regarding the *da-she-hada*. In the first place, they trace its origin back to the mythological period and hold it as a traditional cultural practice followed since generations. Some believe that a community house for the youth not only serves the purpose of accommodation at night but also separates grown up boys and girls from sleeping with their parents. There are other views which support the fact that the dormitory is a preparatory home for the girls before entering the family life. It might have been instituted to assign the older boys and girls, the task of educating the younger children with the cultural practices, customs, economic pursuits, folklores, riddles and above all to teach them the art of social adjustment. Imparting education on these is the duty of the parents but for which they have neither time nor inclination and as such the responsibility is bestowed upon the dormitory.

The size of the dormitory varies from village to village depending upon the population of unmarried girls in a village. It is informed that some villages having no grown up girls do not have the dormitory institution. A list of *da-she-hada* in twelve villages of Kurli Gram Panchayat is given below.

### **Village wise position of *da-she-hada* in twelve villages of Kurli G.P.**

<b>Name of the Village</b>	<b>No. of Dormitories</b>	<b>Name of the Village</b>	<b>No. of Dormitories</b>
Mundaball	2	Khejuri	3
Hutesi	1	Radanga	4
Hundijali	2	Patalamba	1
Bandeli	2	Gandeli	1
Kirida	1	Gortuli	2
Kudigumma	Nil	Thuaguda	1

In village Kudigumma, at present no dormitory is functioning, as the village does not have any unmarried young girls. In Patalamba village there is only one dormitory, but it was informed that there were more in the past.

Further, it is found that in some villages, dormitory has stopped functioning for some reason or other. But the institution by no means is extinct for these village girls who sleep separately in groups and in small rooms called *dhapas* as found in the two of study villages namely, Kurli and Kudubalipadar. An account of the number of *da-she-hada* / *dhapa* in the study area and the enrolment position of members in each of these dormitories is given below.

A dormitory member or a matured girl is known by the name *da-she* and their group as *da-she-sikaanda* young boy, as *da-we-yu* and their group, *da-we-ga*. The term *da-she* also refers to *dhangudi* and the *da-we-yu* to *dhanguda*.

A dormitory may be composed of girls belonging to one clan group or a number of clan groups. Previously, the villages were uni-clan in nature for which membership in the dormitory was restricted to one clan only. But, now with the increase of population and immigration, dormitories have accommodated multi-clan members. The picture that emerges from the study villages reveals that in Kurli, the dormitory is uni-clan, composed of members of Jakasika Kuda only, in the other two villages they are multi-clan in nature, the dormitory members belong to Wadeka, Kadraka, Sikoka, Kundika, Melka and PrasakaKuda.

The age of dormitory members varies from 10 - 40 years or even above. Age group-wise distribution of 57 dormitory members is furnished below.

**Table 4. Age Group-wise distribution of Dormitory Members**

Age Group in years	No. of members in study villages			Total
	Khambesi	Kudubalipadar	Kurli	
10-14	6	-	7	13
15-20	11	3	7	21
21-24	2	-	2	4
25-29	2	1	-	3
30-34	5	-	-	5
35-39	2	1	-	3
40+	8	-	-	8
Total	36	5	16	57

The table shows that out of total 57 members, maximum (21) belong to age group of 15 to 20 years, while minimum (3) belong to age group of 35 to 39 years. It is interesting to note that quite a sizable number of dormitory members belong to age group of 40 and above.

Genealogy of the dormitory members shows that sisters and their consanguinal kins can share the same dormitory. Besides, spinsters, divorcees and widows without children are allowed to the dormitory. Higher age is not a bar for continuance. Spinsters of higher age do not pair with *dhangdas*. Selection of dormitory members is based on their mutual understanding and friendship.

The oldest member of a dormitory acts as the head and is known by the name *kajari*. Every member is expected to obey her. It is the *kajari* who more often selects the *dhangdas* for pairing, makes distribution of works on festive occasion and fixes dance expeditions. Both male and female shamans (Beju and Bejuni) do not visit the dormitory as a customary prohibition.

In Dongria settlements, the dormitories are generally built at the backside of the rows of residential houses close to the streams. These remain separated from the residential house by a narrow path in between. Such location of the dormitory helps the girls to maintain privacy and secrecy. It is a convention that the parents are supposed to know nothing of what happens in the dormitory. A girl also does not let her parents see her when she goes or comes out from the *da-she-hada*.

Each *da-she-hada* is approximately rectangular in its ground plan. But all the dormitories are not of the same and similar size. There are degrees of variation among them. Generally a dormitory measures about 7 feet in length and 8 feet in breadth with a sloped low roof. It is a single roomed hut with a narrow verandah about 7 feet in length and 2 feet in breadth in the front. It is having only one front door and no windows. The height of the dormitory door is very short in size being about 3ft and breadth being 2ft. one has to enter the house by bowing down.

Dhapa is comparatively a small room than the *da-she-hada*, which is an extension of a residential house on the backside. It is connected with the main house by a narrow door. Besides, it is provided with another door at its back. The *dhapas* are also having no windows. Out of the 3 *dhapas* in Kurli, two are located near the stream.

The construction of dormitory is based on skill and co-operation by work groups of both sexes. The boys do the technical and hard work required for the building like cutting and transportation of timber from the forest, raising wooden structure, making ropes from the jungle grass, making beams, roofs, etc. The structure is built on 9 bars made of *dhamara* wood. After the structure is raised, the girls plaster the walls with mud and cow dung mixed with chaps of paddy. After plastering, the walls are polished with rounded stone.

Inside the house along the borders of the walls, there is a continuous platform meant for storing of food grains and belongings of the dormitory members. Towards the eastern corner of the room, a place is left for the fire in a



customary manner. From the roof, bamboo bars are hanged, where the clothes of the dormitory members are kept. Besides, they keep other belongings like hair clips, combs, oil and necklaces in small baskets / earthen pots kept in the rope shelves hung from the roof of the house. Besides, one or two small sized mats are found to be hanging on the walls to be used for sitting and sleeping purposes. Now-a -days, photographs of the dormitory members and other outside visitors are hanged on the wall. There are also small containers kept in the dormitory used for spitting. On the floor, two to three small holes known as *heni*, which serves the purpose of mortar, fixed for husking food grains. Two to three pestles made up of round wooden bars fitted with iron ring at one end are kept in one corner of the room. In the dormitory, the members sleep with their feet towards the fire and use scanty or no beds for this purpose. Occasionally they use small mats made up of bamboo strips purchased from the local market.

Generally a girl after attaining puberty is eligible to enter the dormitory. But, there is no taboo on the younger girls to attend it, though they might not be allowed to sleep there at night. On the other hand, a young boy becomes a *dhanguda* only after he develops mustache. Admission into the dormitory does not require any special rites and rituals. There is also no specific initiation ceremony observed. It is a customary practice that 2-3 years after attending dormitory, the *dhangudi* is given a name known as Sahala name and then she became a full-fledged member. These names are of great importance to them, as until that time, they are not allowed to have mates in the dormitory. Their parental names are rarely used in the dormitory or by other mates. On the other hand, parents and close relatives hardly ever use the sahala name at home. The first word of the *sahala* name indicates the name of one of the local flowers, leaves, trees, food grains or activities and appearances of the *dhangudi* concerned, while the second one refers to the feminine form (Wani). A few of these names and their meaning are cited below.

Dormitory names	Meaning
Chichard Wani	The member is very active
Girulu Wani	Name of a flower which they eat
Pipad Wani	Talkative
Wadala Wani	Who bends like a leaf
Putuk Wani	Short height
Porodi Wani	Name of a leaf
Lahi Wani	Rice or Lakshmi
Sakar Wani	Black gram
Palachi Wani	Leaf of Kurai tree
Biguru Wani	Straw

There are about 10 spinsters found in the *da-she-hada* of village Khambesi, while in other two villages, they are not found. However, Patnaik (1982) remarked that Bachelors and spinsters are rare in the Dongria Kondh society. In

order to find out under what circumstances girls remained as spinsters in the village Khambesi, the life histories of few of them are cited below.

**Case Study-1:** in village Khambesi one Wadeka Timi aged 45 daughter of Wadeka Kalia is still found to be visiting the dormitory. She was engaged at her early age to a Pusika boy of village Gumma and her parents received one pair of buffaloes (Sambandh Podha), two tins of alcohol, rice, etc. from the groom's family as a customary gift. Wadeka Timi after maturity attended the dormitory. The groom's family asked for marriage. At this point, she firmly refused to marry the boy on the plea that he was an alcohol-addict. Her parents returned the gifts to the groom's family. Now, she is continuing as a spinster in the dormitory as she did not get any suitable match. However, she does not sleep with any *dhanguda* and she acts as the Kajari of that dormitory.

**Case Study-2:** Another example is Wadeka Saka, sister of Wadeja Timi, a widow of 43 years old who is still a dormitory member. In her early childhood she was betrothed to a Sikoka boy. Unfortunately, the bridegroom died at an early age and her marriage with anyone else could not be materialized. As a result she remained a spinster.

**Case Study-3:** one Wadeka Basiki, daughter of late Wadeka Sura, village Khambesi is 39 years old. Her parents died when she was too young leaving three other girls younger to her. In order to look after her sisters, she remained unmarried. Now, all her sisters have got married. But Wadeka Basiki remained as a spinster. She is attending the dormitory and happy with her life.

**Case Study-4:** Wadeka Manu, aged 35 years, daughter of Wadeka Lutuka, village Khambesi was negotiated to Jakasika Shyma, son of Jakasika Ghani of village Kurli twenty years ago. Later, Jakasika Shyma married to another Sikoka girl of village Khajuri. Now, he is blessed with two sons. Wadeka Manu disliked to be his second wife although he wanted to marry her. Though polygyny is prevalent among them, but in recent times, the girls are somehow opposed to such a practice. As stated by Wadeka Manu, "I don't want to marry in fear of ill-treatment from the in-laws. The husband will beat me in a drunken state under the plea that I am not working and a lazy woman compared to his other wife. What will happen, if I return to my parents with a child?" While narrating this she cited the case of her older sister, Sakar Wani who had married as the second wife to Prasaka Nara, son of Prasaka Bandhan. She was subjected to repeated physical assault from her husband on the ground that she was lazy and doing no work. Finally, her husband left her and now she is staying with her parents along with her daughter. According to their customary law, she is not allowed to attend the dormitory. So, Wadeka Manu is of the opinion that "life as a spinster in the dormitory is far better than such a type of married life."

It is observed that the present generation Dongria girls view marriage as the end of sexual and domestic freedom of life and friendship between young

people. Rather it burdens them with the economic responsibility, change in residence, and transformation in life-style. They confidently hold this view, for a Dongria girl as a daughter is never economically dependent on her parents nor as a wife on her husband. Rather, she is an economic asset to both as she works more than a Dongria male.

The Dongria clan system plays an important role in regulating their marriage and activities in the dormitory. All clans are grouped into two categories: Bhai clans and Bandhu /Samandhi clans. Those clans who permit marriage between them are known as Bandhu /Samandhi clans. Marriage ties among Bhai clans are prohibited as they form a single exogamous unit.

They follow clan exogamy strictly as there is a strong negative social sanction against clan incest. In pursuance with the clan rules, the boys and girls of one village are considered as brothers and sisters even though they belong to Bandhu /Samandhi clan groups. Thus, the *dhangudas* do not visit the dormitory of their own village. This practice of clan exogamy as well as village exogamy functions well as the Dongria Kondh lineages are not well developed. As such, according to Nayak, "Most of the Dongria Kondhs remember the names of their ancestors up to the grandfather's generation and rarely trace genealogical connection beyond that beyond the extended family. A lineage may include a few other nuclear families living in other villages, all of which can be genealogically linked" (1989:307). Premarital relationship, which does not violate the clan rules, is not considered as an offensive act.

#### **Mode of Acquiring Dormitory Partners:**

The way of life of the Dongria Kondh and the work pattern provide ample opportunities for the meeting of boys and girls. They often meet at market places, *podu* fields, forests, festive occasions, social functions like Siba Ratri etc. held at Chatikona. In these places selection of dormitory partners takes place. There they talk, exchange jokes and gifts with one another. While mixing, they develop intimacy and a boy throws his traditional cloth (Ganda) knotted in it food materials like *liya*, dry fish etc. over the girl of his choice and asks for her company for the day. The other way to show his desire for companionship is to snatch the cloth of the girl. Sometimes, the boy also threatens the girl to kill, if he will see her with any other boy. If the girl reacts positively, they meet at lonely places. Afterwards, the boy visits the dormitory of that village where the girl is a member. However, they follow clan selecting their dormitory mates.

Besides, the above practices, late at night the *dhangudas* visit the dormitory of their *bandhu* villages. On reaching there they blow mouth organs called gain at the door of the dormitory to inform about their arrival. The Kajari of the dormitory first collects information about their clan names and village names. Then only she allows them to enter the dormitory. According to rule, it is the Kahari who decides with whom who will pair. But in practice, generally, pairing

is prefixed earlier on the above said occasions and accordingly the boys come. Once a boy is betrothed to a girl of a particular dormitory he is not allowed to visit that dormitory by strictest of the rule. Visit to the dormitory takes place during a particular season in the year. It mainly takes place during the period of ripening of Ragi, Kosala and watching of Dongar fields before harvesting.

The real life at the dormitory begins at night. As such, it may be termed as a nightclub. The girls work at the Podu fields during the day and return home at the sunset and make preparations for the night to be spent in the dormitory. The girls do little household work like fetching water in the evening. The mother or sister-in-laws mainly do the cooking. The girls wash themselves in the stream and start combing; they dress up by putting flowers in the bun and wearing ornaments, sitting in groups on the verandah of the dormitory. After early dinner, they assemble one by one in the *da-she-hada*. Thereafter, they sweep the house and lit the fire. In moon lit nights they dance for an hour or two, the smaller children playing game nearby. Sometimes, they just sit round the fire and chitchat while the older girls engage themselves in knitting their traditional attire. While doing this and waiting for the boyfriends from other villages, they pass out their time by chewing pulses after being fried. Besides, they sit-down in groups and listen stories from any one of the colleagues, exchange jokes and tell riddles and talk about their boyfriends. The dormitory is also used as a forum for expedition or allotment of duties at wedding and religious functions. The smaller girls return to their respective homes as the night grows. The boys generally visit the dormitory late in the evening. On their arrival, the girls receive them joyfully and all of them spend some time in merry making. Thereafter, the boys and girls on the basis of their intimacy with one another form pairs and lie down facing each other and exchange talks. Besides, some of them also go out to lonely places with her mate for more intimacy. Very early in the morning, the boys leave the dormitory, so that their visits may be kept a secret from others. On the other hand, the girls also start preparing for the day's routine like husking of grains after the departure of the boyfriends.

It is quite natural that pre-marital sex is possible in the dormitory, which sometimes leads to pregnancy. Among the Dongria Kondh pre-marital pregnancy is never regarded as a social offence. Instances of pregnancies in the dormitory were few in the past as the girls used indigenous herbal medicines. But, now such pregnancies are more often occurring and the girls are now going to the medical center at Bissam-Cuttack for abortion. Besides, the problem arises, when a particular girl who is already betrothed to some other boy became pregnant. Such incidents lead to loss of life and intra-clan and inter-clan feuds. Besides, when a girl who is previously engaged elopes with her dormitory partner, intra-clan and inter-clan feuds also break. A few case studies in this context are discussed below.

**Case Study-1:** Wadeka Pula, daughter of Wadeka Ranga of village Khambesi was a member of the dormitory. She has been negotiated to a Kadraka boy of village Jangjodi. During her membership in the dormitory, there were rumors regarding her sex relationship with many *dhangudas* and in course of time she became pregnant. She told that Kadraka Mandala, son of Kadraka Musur of village Kuduballipadar is responsible for this and she came to stay with Mandala's family. This led to a clan feud between the villagers of Jangjodi and Khambesi. The people of Jangjodi demanded Rs. 30000/- towards their *jala* that they paid to Pula's family. In turn, her family asked Kadraka Mandala to pay the amount and his family paid the amount by incurring a loan. Kadraka Mandala in grief left Kuduballipadar. It is said that he is staying in Assam and saying that he is not responsible for this. She is a good girl and mixing with many boys. Now, Wadeka Pula is blessed with a daughter and staying with her parents.

**Case Study-2:** Jakasika Meneka, daughter of late Jakasika Jagili of village Kurli betrothed to Kadraka Pada of village Kadrakumma. They gave a gift of two buffaloes, two bottles of alcohol and Rs. 2,500/- towards bride price. Jakasika Meneka became pregnant in the dormitory by her lover Wadeka Rela of village Khambesi. Her brother Jakasika Tina was against her marriage to Wadeka Rela since he had received the bride price from Kadraka Pada. Jakasika Tina was angry with her sister and threatened to kill her. The terrified family members sent Jakasika Meneka to her paternal uncle's house at village Mundaballi. She gave birth to a dead child. After that she was brought to Kurli. Her brother returned the bride price. She waited for Wadeka Rela to take her as a wife. But he never visited her and kept quite. Jakasika Meneka in her grief did not take food, became weak day after day and at last died.

**Case Study-3:** Sikoka Beri, 25 years old, belongs to village Bhatigumma. Her parents died when she was a child. She came to stay in village Khajuri with her paternal uncle. She was negotiated for marriage with Wadeka Laba, son of Wadeka Beri of village Khajuri who at that time was reading in the Kurli residential school. He was also engaged with more girls. After completing the school, he left for Puri. In course of his stay at Puri, he fell in love with a non-tribal girl. His parents when got this news brought him back to the village.

Meanwhile, Beri became pregnant in course of her dormitory life. She was sent to Wadeka Laba's house. But, Laba denied to accept her and left the village unnoticed. It is heard that Laba is in Kerala and had got married. Now Sikoka Beri is blessed with a child and living at her father-in-law house.

#### **Case Studies on Inter-Clan & Intra-Clan Feuds:**

**Case Study-1:** One Nisika Kalang of village Hingaballi was negotiated to Jakasika Buruchi of village Mundaballi. The bridegroom's parents had not given any kind of bride-price. In the meanwhile, the Jakasika Buruchi fell in love with Wadeka Barango in course of his visit to the dormitory at village

Mundaballi. She became pregnant and eloped with Wadeka Barango. In consequence, it provoked the Jakesika to avenge the Wadeka. It was on one market day, held at Chatikona, both the clan groups were front to front, all heavily drunken. They attacked each other and many of them from both the sides were injured. At this point, the Jakasika men threw one Nisika boy of Hingaballi under a moving train. Luckily, he escaped death with serious injuries. He was admitted to the hospital at Bissam Cuttack and remained there for one month. The dispute became more acute as the recent act of violence remained fresh in their minds. Nisika clan waited for the revenge. However, the matter was somehow settled by the intervention of the then Special Officer, Dongria Kondh Development Agency, preventing further bloodshed. Wadeka group paid Rs. 2000/- to the Nisika group and the case was settled.

**Case Study-2:** One Wadeka Nabaghana Bismajhi of village Khambesi was a regular visitor of the dormitory at village Harame in Bisam-Cuttack block. There he fell in love with the daughter of Mandika Pakuru Jani. However, the girl was engaged formerly to a Pusika boy of village Dongmati in Singpur block. Wadeka Nabaghana brought that Mandika girl to his village Khambesi. The Pusika kinsmen came in groups to village Khambesi and attacked Wadeka Nabaghana's house. They took the girl back to village Dongmati to her in-laws house. However, there she stayed for about 2-3 months from where Wadeka Nabaghana again brought her to Khambesi. He paid the penalty money amounting to Rs. 9000/- to the Pusika kinsmen. But, the Pusika kinsmen still awaited the opportunity for taking revenge.

**Case Study-3:** One Jakasika Kasadi, daughter of Jakasika Jangu, of village Kurli was negotiated to Kadraka Babru of village Kadrabundelli at an early childhood. He had made a customary payment of two buffaloes, two tins of alcohol and Ragi towards bride price. Jakasika Kasadi after maturity began to visit the dormitory where she developed intimacy with one Kadraka Sukkla of village Khambesi. She eloped with him. Her parents brought her back and sent her to in-law's house at village Kurli. One night, Jakasika Kasadi escaped from her in-law's house and came to her relative's house at village Niskabondeli. From there, she sent information to her lover Kadraka Sukkla to take her away. Accordingly, he brought Jakasika Kasadi to his village Khambesi and informed her husband Kadraka Babru to take the amount of compensation for the loss of the bride and the amount spent by him in connection with the marriage negotiation. However, he and his clansmen did not accept the offer; they wanted to collect it from the girl's parents whom they had paid.

Thus, the issue turned to a feud between Jakasika and Kadraka clan groups. The matter was referred to the Police Station at Sampur by Kadraka clan. Since Sukkla belonged to Kadraka clan, Kadraka Babru happens to be his brother and it was illegal to take away brother's wife. This enraged Kadraka Babru's parents. The villagers of Khambesi (Wadeka Mutha) supported to Kadraka

Sukkla. Thus about 30-40 persons from Khambesi village and about 100 persons belonging to 7-8 Kadraka villages met at the Police Station with arms and when both the clan groups were about to unleash a fight, some educated youth from village Khambesi and the Ward member Wadaka Madan interfered and tried to settle the matter amicably. Kadraka Babru's clans men demanded Rs. 1,50,000/- from the girl's parents which at last agreed for Rs. 18,000/-. It was decided on a meeting held at DKDA office Chatikona in the presence of a Police S.I., MPW of Bondeli and some members from village Khambesi and Kurli. A written document was prepared and it was finalized that half of the amount i.e. Rs. 9000/- each had to be borne by girl's parent and by Kadraka Sukkla of village Khambesi. But at last Kadraka Babru's family did not take the amount in anticipation that the same incident might recur in future if any girl from their village did the same mistake.

Thus, the case studies illustrate the nature and involvement of the kinsmen in the combats. Nayak remarks rightly that feuds occur in the wider network of kinship relations, social customs and practices and, although, these were terminated sooner or later, that was only for a temporary period, for the kinship relationship and social customs associated with it may in future press for a fresh feud.

There is a natural desire among the youth to attend the dormitory. The parents do not interfere with the life and discipline of the dormitory. Rather, they motivate their boys to visit the dormitory which make them fit for acquiring a life partner and having a family. The following case study is relevant in this context.

**Case Study-1:** One Wadeka Pradeep, son of Wadeka Ranga, belong to village Khambesi. Being shy, even at the age of fifteen was not attending the dormitory. Frequently, his mother was telling him 'how could you manage with your future wife if you did not attend the girls' dormitory'. Wadeka Pradeep was negotiated to a Kadraka girl belonging to village Bandeli under the constant pressure from her mother; he went to attend the dormitory at village Panchakodi along with other boys. In course of his visit, he developed intimacy with one Sikoka girl of the dormitory who had been engaged to a Kadraka boy belonging to village Tebapada. The Kadraka boy had brought another wife who was also blessed with children. He had not taken the Sikoka girl until then. But, when he heard the news regarding the affair, he captured the girl and took her to his village, Tebapada. But the girl was unwilling to stay with him. One day she escaped and went to her relation's house at Khambesi and continued keeping relationship with Wadeka Pradeep. Her in-laws again forcibly took her back. At this instance, she sent information to Wadeka Pradeep to elope her otherwise she would take poison. On an appointed day, he brought the girl to his house. This lead to clan feuds between the Kadraka and Sikoka kinsmen involving village Tebapada and village Panchakodi. The people of Tebapada harassed the people of Panchakodi by destroying their cattle, birds, attacking the houses, beating the

people etc. This feud did not take further violent form due to the intervention of the school teachers of both the villages who helped settle the matter amicably. It was decided that the girl's father would pay Rs. 12,000/- to the boy's father towards the penalty (tapu). The girl's father, in turn demanded the amount from his son-in-law Wadeka Pradeep. He paid Rs. 9,000/- to the people of Tebapada village and the matter was finalized with this amount. Now Pradeep is having a son and is living happily. But the Wadeka kinsmen of village Khambesi were still waiting for an opportunity to get back the amount from the Kadraka clan's people of village Tabapada. Thus, though it seems that the conflict has come to an end, in reality, it exists in their minds as the Dongria view and value the clan solidarity more than anything else.

Besides the cases narrated above, quarrels over the dormitory girls are also frequent between the Dongria Kondh clan Groups.

**Case Study 1:** One Salia Bismajhi, son of Jalia. Bismajhi was attending the dormitories regularly in villages, Sutarguni and Golgala even after his marriage. One day one Salia Bismajhi came to the girl's dormitory of village Golgala and saw one Lumba Pujari sleeping with the girl whose Sahala name was Dundibani with whom he had slept previously. He became furious and abused the girl. Her friends told that she was perhaps in love with Lumba Pujari who enticed the girl with some magic. This added fire to his anger. He along with his friends waited for the opportunity to take revenge. One day when Lumba was on his way to his village with a piglet, Salia and his friends caught hold of him, beat and snatched the piglet. Later they killed it, roasted and consumed. Lumba came to the village and told the incident to the villagers. The village council meeting was called. Salia and his friends were fined with an amount of Rs. 20/- and a tin of wine. A village feast was arranged to bring about a mutual reconciliation between Lumba and Salia.

### **Rules and Regulations of Dormitory:**

- The dormitory members maintain strict secrecy of their activities inside the dormitory.
- Outsiders (non-Dongrias) are not allowed to enter the dormitory.
- The dormitory girls belong to more than one clan and sub-clan groups.
- Selection of mates in the dormitory is governed by rules of clan exogamy and village exogamy.
- The boy once betrothed to a girl is not allowed to attend the dormitory in which the girl is a member. But each is independent to keep relationship with any other youth of the opposite sex.
- Partnership changes from time to time in some cases.
- When a girl's parents shift to another village she joins the dormitory of that village may retain her original dormitory name or be given a new name.



- The girls are given dormitory names after attending the dormitory for two to three years.
- Visitors from other dormitories are always given warm reception.
- A boy visitor from another village is given a partner for the night.
- Often the girls put the boys to test by physically assaulting them.
- A boy or a girl without having put on his /her traditional dress is not allowed to enter the dormitory.

#### **Dormitory Fund:**

Customarily the Dongria Kondh clansmen or lineage-men make gifts of swidden land called Kambudi to the dormitory girls. They cultivate the land the produce is kept in the dormitory. Besides, *dhangudis*, form their own labour cooperative called *da-she-brute*, earn some money by working in the farm of their fellow villagers. During agricultural season they work in farms and fields of a number of Dongria families. Each family, for this labour gives the team food two times a day and a token money of Rs. 10/- to 20/-. This money is also kept in their dormitory fund. Moreover, in marriage ceremonies they also collect money for rendering customary services. They spend this money and produce of grain on the occasion of the visits of dance parties of *dhangudas* to their dormitories / villages especially on many festive occasions in the off-season. Every occasion is celebrated with a feast to which they also invite all their family members. They make provision to serve buffalo meat and rice on these festive occasions.

#### **Retirement from the Dormitory:**

A member ceases to continue in the dormitory after she gets married. No specific function is observed during the retirement period. However, the departing member is given a traditional shawl (Ganda) and two or three packets of *dhungia* and is entertained with a feast.

#### **Functions of Dormitory:**

Collective behavior and group action are found inbuilt the Dongria Kondh social structure. It is the institution of youth dormitory that regulates the interpersonal relationships between men and women a great deal. It strengthens social unity, cohesiveness and solidarity, even if for the dormitory maiden often fights ensue between groups.

#### **Social Functions:**

- The Dongria Kondh dormitory plays an important role in regulating the inter-village and inter-clan relationships.
- The institution helps to maintain community as well as group solidarity as the youth work together during their stay in the dormitory.

- It facilitates the socialization of the Dongria youth and inculcates in them a sense of junior-senior status relationship. The young girls once enter the dormitory are taught by the seniors how to obey their superiors, about their cultural and customary practices and the code of conduct.
- By providing sleeping accommodation for the young girls, it relieves the burden of the parent's sharing the same room with their grown-up children, as their dwellings are only one roomed. They want their children, irrespective of boy and the girls to be independent.
- In social functions like marriage ceremonies, the dormitory members in groups work accompany the girl during her courtesy visit to her relative's villages. Further, through them the invitation for marriage is sent to the relatives. They form dancing parties in bridal processions on marriages and also in festive occasions. Besides, on the day of marriage, (*gota-arpa*) the dormitory girls bring water in seven vessels and keep these over burning hearths constructed earlier in front of the house. The water from these pots with turmeric paste is used to give a bath to the boy friends of the groom who have reached the bride's house in advance. The boys in turn put some coins in a leaf plate, which the dormitory girls take. The bride is also given a ritual bath after the girls apply turmeric to her. The make-up of the bride like putting ornaments etc. is also done by her dormitory girl friends.
- The same procedure is also repeated on the fourth day of the marriage at the groom's village in which the dormitory girls of that village perform the required rites and render necessary services to the bride's friends and in return get a token money.
- Acquiring mates by capture is part of the marriage practices among the Dongria. In case of a capture, the girl's parents and relatives do not speak out their mind rather they keep quiet. It is the dormitory girls who collect information from their dormitory-visitor friends and try to rescue her.
- The dormitory also helps in slower development of the young girls awakening sexual curiosity to be satisfied step by step?
- It is an important centre of recreation for the youth.
- Thus, the institution of dormitory has a pervasive social role to play towards initiating the growing generation to know and cope with the customs and traditions of their society.

#### **Educative Functions:**

- In the dormitory, the younger members learn from their elders discipline, social approbation and justice, reciprocity of obligations, customary laws of their own society. Besides, through folktales, folk stories, riddles and

narration of past events they become able to know the relations between efforts and rewards, between crime and punishment.

- The dormitory is a forum where they learn how to regulate sex, have successful conjugal life. The seniors provide tips on sex education.
- Lessons on various agricultural operations and other minor economic pursuits are imparted in the dormitory through songs and mimetic dances depicting them.
- Besides, the dormitory mates get the scope to learn the rhythms of dance and music and techniques of making art and crafts, often by imitating the seniors. It serves as a centre for preserving the cultural heritage and folk tradition, in addition to transmitting the same from generation to generation.

#### **Economic Functions:**

- The dormitory members form labour co-operatives known as *da-she-bruti*. The group works in Podu fields of the landowning households for which they get food two times a day and some money as token remuneration.
- Besides, each member works in her allotted Podu plot.
- Thus dormitories help in providing training to the youths in different economic pursuits. It is observed that the Dongria Kondh houses are homes for the married couples and their smaller children. The life and interest of the youth centres round the dormitory.

#### **Persistence and Change:**

The Dongria dormitories are functioning as living institutions forming the centre of chief attractions for the youth. They have survived the challenges of time and all external and internal forces acting on them. The dormitories are still found well maintained and well attended. The dormitory rules and disciplines are followed quite earnestly. However, in recent years the educated youth are averse to follow the dormitory traditions and practices.

The Dongria Kondh are under the impact of development and change. More and more outside contact and exposure to mass media have registered some changes in their socio-cultural life. The Dongria villages on the Niyamgiri hills are no more inaccessible. The two Micro Projects set-up in the Niyamgiri hills have brought about significant changes in the socio-economic life and living of the people. With the establishment of residential as well as non-residential educational institutions and non-formal education centers in the Dongria villages by the development agency, education has made some progress among the Dongria Kondh. In villages, where educational institutions are located and which lie at close proximity to urban areas, some boys in particular have now started a movement voicing against the continuance of the dormitory organizations. It

started from the village Khambesi and now spreading to other villages. The Khambesi Yubak Sangh organized meetings involving youths and parents of other villages and discussed the demerits as pointed out by these young men are discussed below.

- The inter clan feuds that often takes place among the Dongria is mostly due to the practice of their dormitory life. According to their custom, in most cases, the negotiation for marriage of a girl takes place at a very early age much before she attends the dormitory. Latter, while attending the dormitory, if she falls in love with some other dormitory mate and in course of time get eloped, then, such a situation gives rise to quarrel and conflict between the girl's family and the family of the boy to whom she has been engaged from her childhood. That eventually leads to a serious clan feud resulting in murder and heavy financial loss to both the groups.
- In the Dongria society, pre-marital pregnancy is not considered as an offence. Even the in-laws accept the bride saying that she has brought the *mamarbija*. Since pre-marital pregnancy is attributed to dormitory life, these young boys are no more in favour of continuance of such an institution. Now, they do not like to marry girls who are pregnant before marriage. Recently, there are instances where the girls have faced problems due to their pre-marital pregnancy. Such cases have been discussed in the foregoing chapter.
- They opine that due to presence of the dormitory institution in villages the parents are least bothered about the marriage of their grown up girls. They believe that the girl will select her own mate during her dormitory living. But the girls who fail to get a suitable match while in dormitory grow older year by year and remain spinsters lifelong.
- Similarly, if a boy already engaged to a girl at an early age elopes with another *dhangudi* while attending the dormitory and does not accept the girl whom he has betrothed as his second wife, the girl cannot marry and has to remain a spinster, unless and otherwise someone proposes her. Such conflicting situations sometimes lead to clan feuds.
- According to their customary rule, even after marriage a boy can attend the dormitory but not the girl. Now, the young wives disapprove this practice and do not like their husbands attending the dormitory. In case, the husband attends the dormitory against the consent of the wife, quarrel and conflict takes place between the spouses that result in divorce. Recently, one such case is reported in the village Khambesi.

**Case Study:** Wadeka Jambu, 30 years old, daughter of Wadeka Gambu of village Khambesi married to Jakasika Bhima of village Kurli. However, it was all right for a period of 3-4 months of their marriage. The problem started when

Jakasika Bhima began to attend the dormitory. There were frequent quarrels over this between the husband and wife. It was so acute that one day without any information Wadeka Jambu left Kurli and came to stay with one of her relative's house at village Singpur. After 3 months Jakasika Bhima got the news of her stay, went to meet her. But she denied going with him. Rather, she returned to her parent's home at village Khambesi. Now, she is continuing as a dormitory member. Her husband had brought another widow as his wife.

- Due to cultural contact and growing of awareness, at present, they feel that the un-married boys and girls should no longer sleep together in the dormitory and mix freely which is not found in the neighbouring societies. Therefore, they consider such practice as a shameful and uncivilized act.
- The other important reason for abolishing the dormitory institution is the lack of interest among the young boys and girls towards education. Although, schools are functioning in this area, the enrolment position of the school is very low added with large-scale absenteeism and dropout. This is because of the fact that boys and girls remain frequently absent from the schools due to their attraction towards the dormitory life. Therefore, they feel that unless and until the dormitory organization is closed, the enrolment position specifically of the girls in schools will not be improved and dropout and absenteeism cannot be checked.

The above issues were discussed in the meeting attended by persons of different Dongria villages, where two views were emerged. Persons belonging to Kurli G.P. were in favour of closing down the dormitory institution while others belonging to villages like Nisikabundeli, Tenda, Duargadi, Baligumma, etc. advocated in favour of the continuance of this institution. However, the groups that were against the dormitory threatened the other group of dire consequences if they continue to visit the dormitory in future. Accordingly, they in small groups kept watch over different dormitory at night and the visitors to the dormitory are caught hold of and assaulted by cutting their hairs forcibly. As a result of confrontation between two groups, there were an atmosphere of panic and fear among the youths and dormitories were remained un-attended for about six months. However, the forcible closure of dormitories could not be continued for a longer period. Generally, more and more youths, particularly, the *dhangudis* could not resist their desire for attending the dormitory and created public opinion in their favour for revival of the dormitory institution. They started attending the dormitory and now the group, which opposed the continuance, has become a non-entity. Under such agitation, the dormitories in the village Kurli were broken. Now these are functioning in *dhapas*.

### **Conclusion:**

The dormitory organization, *da-she-hada* is an important traditional social institution of the Dongria Kondh. In spite of incursions of modernity the

institution is still found in an active state; people value its functioning in the greater interest of the community. It serves as a centre for socializing young and un-married girls and their boyfriends shaping their personality structures. Dormitories teach them how to behave and act conforming to the prescribed cultural norms and standards. They become instrumental in upholding the value of societal living and intra-and inter-group relationship on the basis of mutual help and cooperation. They inculcate this value in the minds of young children, the fast growing future youth. The dormitory goers are in all respects young and able bodied and they form a vibrant sub-population, the source of strength of the village community. The dormitory organization also serves as a matrimonial agency providing opportunities to the unmarried boys and girls to select their life partners. A girl after her tenure of apprenticeship in dormitory comes out as an ideal Dongria woman capable of efficiently managing her own conjugal family and handling any on-toward situation in life.

The educated Dongria youths in recent years have become scornful of its continuance and have raised their voice against it, admonishing the practice. Notwithstanding this, the positive values of the institution of youth dormitory are being held in high esteem by the people. Being an important social organization, its continuity is considered essential as it could be tapped in a very modest way for bringing about economic development of the people. Taking the help of this institution, improvement of female literacy could be achieved. Girls' dormitories can be at the same time developed into ideal centers for imparting formal education to the Dongria girls and boys.

Dongria Kondh is characterized by an absence of economic stratification, although economic grades among them are present. Absence of a well-defined division of labour in primitive society does not favour hereditary skill development leading to the formation of artisan classes or guilds. For them, spontaneous co-operation in domestic and economic life becomes essential. It is the dormitory organization that impacts the training and enables the children to participate in all spheres of activities, be they social, economic or religious.

The dormitory organization of the Dongria Kondh shows that it is one of the very important institutions which embrace a host of others. Development functionaries need to be aware of its utility. The institution is in the process of transformation. But to what extent the transformation is beneficial for the society remains an open question to all. The Dongria Kondh social structure is subject to two opposing forces acting upon it: one for continuity, conservation, apathy for the traditional institution and the other for changes, showing dissatisfaction with the existing conditions, substitution of old values with new.

The tensions generated as a result of such confrontation between the younger generation, one believing in tradition, the other coming under the influence of new system of education and social intercourse with the outside culture are symptomatic of weakening social solidarity and group strength.

Nevertheless, the traditional youth organizations can be mobilized and their potentialities can be harnessed for the betterment of the community.

### References

1. Colonel, Dalton (1872), *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, Office of the Superintendent of Govt. printing.
2. Elwin, Verrier (1968), *The Kingdom of the Young*, Abridged from *The Muria and their Ghotul*, Oxford University Press, London.
3. Hasnain, Nadeem (1990-91), *Youth Dormitory" in Tribal India Today*, Published by A. C. Chawla for Harnam Publication, 4378/4BM Ansari Road, New Delhi, pp.63-66.
4. Mazumdar, D.N (1994), *Races and Cultures of India*, Universal Publishers Ltd., Mall Road, Lucknow, U. P., pp.124-36.
5. Nayak, P. K. (1989), *Blood, Women and Territory-An analysis of clan feuds of Dongria Kondhs*, Reliance Publishing House.
6. Nayak, R, Barbara, M. Boal & Babor Soreng (1990), *The Kondhs: A Handbook for Development*, Indian Social Institute, 10, Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi, pp.38-42.
7. Patnaik, N. & P. S. Das Patnaik (1982). *The Kondh of Orissa*, Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute (THRTI), Bhubaneswar, p-102.
8. Roy, S.C. (1935), *Dormitories for Bachelors: The Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa*, Man in India Office, Ranchi, pp.189-92.
9. Risely, H. H. (1891) *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vol.1. Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Press.
10. Aparajita, U. (1994), *Culture and Development –Dongrias of Niyamgiri*, M.C. Mittal Inter India Publications, pp.206-08.

# THE STATUS OF WOMEN AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDH \*

*S. Routray*<sup>1</sup>

The Christian era of 1975 was celebrated as the International Women's Year all over the world. The International conference which was held in Mexico in June-July of 1975 was a unique event. The convention highlights various handicaps and disabilities from which the women folk suffer. It stresses the importance of ameliorating the condition of women and providing them with better facilities to play an equal and effective role in contributing to international peace. The popular UNESCO slogan was "Educate a man and you educate an individual, educate a woman and you educate a family".

The Government of India has adopted various measures of welfare for women, among which the revised 20 Point Programme is one. The 12th point "Equality for women" is exclusively meant for the women. It comprises six sub-points such as:-

- ☛ To raise the status of women.
- ☛ To enhance awareness of the problems of women.
- ☛ To create mass consciousness about women's rights.
- ☛ To implement a national programme of training and development.
- ☛ To enable women to participate with equality in socio-economic development and nation building.
- ☛ To rouse public opinion against dowry and ensure effective implementation of anti-dowry legislation.

Besides, the Article No. 14 of Indian Constitution has provided for women's equality in the eyes of law. Article No.15 also says that "nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women".

In view of this an attempt has been made to study the problems and status of women in the tribal areas of Orissa. As a first step a study was

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVII, Nos.2 & 3,1987, pp.31-37

<sup>1</sup> Research Assistant, THRTI (now SCSTRTI)



undertaken in the Dongria Kondh area of Koraput district. The central study village was 'Khambesi' of Bisamcuttack block of Koraput (undivided) district. The village lying at about 3,000 ft. altitude, from the sea level is located in the 'Niyamgiri' hill ranges. It is situated in a relatively isolated and inaccessible area because of the natural barriers through which no road communication has developed and such situations have enabled the Dongria Kondh to retain their traditional form of economy, social organization, rituals and beliefs to a great extent. The Kondh society is generally homogeneous but the scheduled caste 'Domb' live with them as neighbors. From the field investigation it is recorded that at present the Kondh population of that village is 289 out of which female population is 161 accounting for 57 percent of the total population.

This report combines empirical data with theoretical concepts relating to various aspects of women in the Dongria Kondh society. An attempt has been made to ascertain the present status of Dongria women in the following pages.

Generally, the Dongria Kondh women wear simple dress with graceful gait and are frank and gentle in manners. They have short to medium stature with broad face, flat nose, and separated eye brows with thick lips. Their body colour varies from dark to light brown with straight hairs on head.

They dress themselves with two pieces of clothes (Kapda-Ganda) -one wrapped around the waist with a knot in the front and the second hanging around the waist, one end of which passes through the arm-pits and tied at the back to cover their upper parts. The adult women use a small piece of cloth (*langota*) as underwear. In the several holes made all along the ear-lobe earrings are worn. In the nose they wear three brass rings (Murma) one on each alae and one hanging from the septum. They neatly comb (Kokuya), and use many hair clips to keep the hair tight. A tiny knife (Pipli) is fixed in the hair which serves the purpose of cutting and self-defense. They put on bead and coin necklaces (Kekodika) in bunches. Some women of well-to-do families put on golden necklaces. Aluminum rings are put on by the young girls which they get as gifts from the young unmarried boys (Dhangdas). Besides this in ceremonial occasions women wear clean saris and dresses with brass wristlets (Paja) and silver anklets (Pahari-Andu) etc. All the ornaments are kept in a bamboo basket (Hakusa). The dress and ornaments they put on though poor in quality give us an idea about their fine aesthetic outlooks.

The status of women in Dongria society can be ascertained in terms of their opportunities in participating the social institutions, behavior of the men towards them and the ideology of religious beliefs prevailing in their society. Their status is also directly related to their role as a mother and wife in so far as child bearing and sexual life is concerned.

The data has been collected from the village 'Khambesi' with a population of 161 females and 128 males. Before studying the women, a census

has been made in order to find out the distribution of women in various age groups. The age range covers from 0 to 60 years having interval of 15 years. It reveals that highest concentration of females numbering 55 is in the age-group of 30-44. Total number of female children are 47; married females, 90; old women, 3 and young women, 33. For collecting these data, methods like interview, observation and genealogy were adopted.

A special study was undertaken to represent statistically the position of married women including unmarried girls. This status has been broadly studied under five heads such as Social, Economic, Political, Religious and Educational, each grouped under three levels - 'High' 'Moderate' and 'Low'.

In the social life these women enjoy a high status. They have freedom in selecting their mates. The institution like marriage and family bestow a significant status to them. The marriage is generally monogamous in nature. Polygyny is also practiced by Dongria Kondh. A man may marry for a second time if his first wife is found to be barren or if he requires additional man power for shifting cultivation. A person having three to four wives is considered rich in the society because his yield becomes more with the help of additional man power. Therefore, women help in the enhancement of the social and economic prestige of men. In the study village 11 cases of polygynous families are seen out of which one sorrorate case is found.

The Dongria Kondh usually marries at a late age, i.e. the boys approximately at the age of 25 and the girls after 20 years. Widow remarriage is allowed by the society. In case of remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees, no marriage ceremony is performed. Only formal recognitions of villagers are required.

The procedure of marriage which they call 'Haidi' consists of a number of rituals. The village priest (Jani), assistant priest (Pujari) and the shaman (Beju) officiate in the ritual, which is supposed to bring a happy conjugal life of the married couple. A boy or a girl is considered to be a full-fledged adult member of the society only after they get married. In case of a woman she becomes housewife by shouldering the responsibility of managing her family and looking after the members of her family. The institution of marriage binds the boy and the girl with each other to lead a conjugal life which is mutual. A Dongria Kondh girl enjoys the liberty to select her own mate. Cases of love marriage are found among them. The unmarried boys and girls try to find opportunities to meet with each other at various sites such as in the dormitory house (Adasbetta), the *dongar* (swidden) field, the weekly market, the forest and on the bank of a stream or at the foot of the hills. They develop familiarity by studying each other's attitude. Then they make up their mind and finalise their choice. After that they first chat and laugh together. When they feel to marry each other they inform their parents through some of their kinsman, who take initiative to perform the marriage ceremony. Sometime due to the unwillingness of the parents a boy

elopes with his mate to a distant place and stay there in a relative's house. On their return their union is socially approved.

Sorrorate type of marriage is occasionally found but no cases of levirate were found in the study village. The exogamous clan such as Niska, Wadaka, Kadraka, Sikoka, Jakasika, Praska, and Pusika regulate the marriage. Each clan is exogamous unit within which marriage is prohibited. The 'Niska' clan members claim to be the superior most in the hierarchy as it is tabooed for them to eat beef and flesh of buffalo.

The Jani (priest) belongs to this Niska clan. He is only entitled to worship the Earth Goddess (Dharni Penu) during Meriah Festival. They cannot establish marriage alliances with 'Sikoka', 'Wadaka' and 'Kadraka' and 'Bengeska' as they eat snakes and insects.

The Dongrias always prefer hard working and able bodied girls for marriage. Sometimes a girl is bargained for a higher amount of bride price and poor people cannot afford to pay the high bride price demanded by the girl's parents which sometimes leads to lot of fissions or clan feuds in the society. In the study village there was a case of this type. The Kalanga Wadraka was demanded a high bride price for his marriage. The villagers had to fight against the bride's party and a feud took place. But lastly the situation was controlled and a compromise was reached.

In the Dongria Kondh society a divorcee is permitted to remarry. A Dongria Kondh woman has also privileges to divorce her husband if she is ill-treated by her husband repeatedly as a result of the habit of indulgence in liquor. Carelessness and irresponsibility in taking care of the family members, lack of masculinity are also reasons which may compel her to desert her husband. In that case her family has to return the bride price which they received at the time of marriage. But incidence of divorce is rare in Khambesi. The number of male divorcees is more in comparison to the female divorcees because in most of the cases it is seen that the divorce is initiated from the male side.

Women in Dongria Kondh society are considered as economic asset of the family. They rise very early in the morning. First of all they grind the millet (Ragi or Suan) and then start cooking. By 6.00 A. M. they finish their cooking and all domestic works and they start towards their *dongar* fields carrying food and babies at their back. There difference between males and females so far as the division of labour is considered.

Women like men are generally non-vegetarians. They take meat, dry-fish, green vegetables. Mandia is their staple food.

They do not accept any *pucca* or *kutchra* foods from their Domb (Scheduled Caste) neighbours as they consider their social status higher than the Dombs. They do not go to any 'Domb' house, even they will not sit on their

verandah. But as wage labourers they go with the Dombs in group for construction of roads. But some relaxation is allowed in case of their children. They play and read with the 'Domb' children and they also eat cooked food from the Domb's house. They do all these without the knowledge of their parents.

The Dongria males appear to be less active in economic activities than the females. As they are shifting cultivators, the help of women is indispensable to them. The women are very hard working and active. They also shoulder higher responsibilities of the family. Clearing the shrubs on the *podu* land, manuring, hoeing, dressing, reaping, winnowing the crops after harvesting etc. are exclusively done by the women. The women do not take part in any rituals connected with shifting cultivation. They are forbidden to climb trees. Therefore, they collect fruits while men climb trees to pluck mango, orange and jackfruits etc. The women also weave mat, with the leaves of the wild date-palm, stitch leaf cups and leaf plates at their leisure time. Both men and women work as wage labourers. When they go for work, they go in group. The females and males form separate groups. Previously the Dongria Kondh women did not like to work as wage earner rather they preferred to work in their Dongar fields. In construction and repairing of house, women help men in all sorts of work except thatching which is a taboo for them. They take care of the domestic animals such as buffalo (Kodru), cow (Kodi), goat (Adda), pig (Paji) etc. They do all sorts of household works such as cooking, fetching water from stream, tank or well, cleaning utensils, plastering verandah and walls with cow dung. As the care taker of family women shoulder higher responsibilities and act as the cashier and accountant of the family.

As mothers, the women are very affectionate to their children. They not only give birth but also take care of them, feed them and properly guide them to grow up. As mothers, they have more duties in socializing their children. Most of them are not aware of the sanitary habits. At the time of illness they only nurse their children in their indigenous way by taking the help of the medicine man or the village 'Beju' or 'Bejuni' (shaman) who performs *puchona*- shamanistic rite and gets one hen and some measures of rice as remuneration.

It is now seen that most of the mothers have developed interest towards the education of their children. Generally, they send their children to the Dongria Kondh Development Agency (DKDA) School which is located at their village.

The religion of Dongria Kondh centers round the propitiation of Gods, spirits through rituals and sacrifices. Dharani Penu (Earth Goddess) is installed in a hut in the front yard of each village called 'Kuddi' and is represented by three elevated stones placed horizontally upon them. She is specifically worshipped during 'Bihon Laka' and Meriah Laka by the priests - 'Jani' and 'Lamba'.

The female shaman called 'Bejuni' has higher status in the society as they practice divination and cure diseases. She has to undergo a long course of

training under a competent Bejuni before becoming a qualified practitioner. During her training period she puts on a red sari (Uchitrai Ganda), uses two metal bells as her anklets and holds a bundle of peacock feathers (*tanya*) that she fans over the head of a patient and utters some incantations. She can forecast the future events for which villagers pay respect to her. Her important role in the ritual-*Ghanta Parab* is elaborately described in the book "The Kondh of Orissa", (pp. 157) of Dr. N. Patnaik as follows:-

"The Ghanta Parab is observed for three days in the month of Baisakh. 'Ghanta' means earthen pot and each such pot with four cakes is offered to 'Takrani Penu' along with a sacrificial animal by the vow takers who suffers from small-pox and cholera. In this festival the role of Bejuni is remarkable. The 'Pat-Bejuni' and other 'Bejunis' sit in a row, each with a winnowing fan for divination. The Pat-Bejuni draws three squares representing three Penus with sundried rice powder and piles up a heap of rice ball in each of the three squares. Thereafter, all the Bejunis start singing in chorus, and invoke three Penus while offering rice to them. After all the Penus are visualized the Bejunis along with drum beaters go-round the village and its outskirts for seven times waving a bunch of peacock feathers over their heads towards the evil spirits. On the second day, Pat- Bejuni sprinkles water with a mango twig from the earthen pot over their heads to purify the house from pollution and in return collects sundried rice presented to her by each housewife. On the third day, a Pat-Bejuni is possessed by 'Takrani Penu' and thereafter she behaves like Takrani. When she regains her senses the lamb is sacrificed by the Ichan Jani and blood is sprinkled over the piles of rice for three Penus. Thereafter, vow-takers sacrifice their votive animals on that altar one after the other in the 'Ghanta'. The Bejunis simply touch those 'Ghanta' in order to purify that.

When all the sacrifices are over, the Pat-Bejuni along with her team of Bejunis and drum-beaters goes in a procession to the western outskirt of the village and the villagers ...roll on the ground to get touch of the feet of the Pat-Bejuni. Then the Pat-Bejuni performs a ritual at the Jatra-Kudi in a manner similar to earlier ones and sacrifices a pigeon by piercing a sharp bamboo stab through its rectum.

After this the ritual comes to an end. The vow-takers take away their respective ritualistic food and offer only the head of the animals already sacrificed to the 'Bejunis'. The Pat-Bejuni alone receives the lamb. All the Bejunis distribute rice and head of the animals equally".

Besides the above ritual, the Dongria Kondh observe 'Salongi Puja', 'Mandia Rani', 'Pidika', 'Donger Puja', 'Bihan Puja', in general and 'Meriah Puja' in particular. This year the Dongria Kondh observed the *Nuakhia* (Marangi Laka) in a very simple manner. No communal feast or communal hunting was done. The village Sarapanch (Lachamana Wadaka) and Beju (Daitari Kadraka) and many members sitting together at the village Kuddi (Sadar Ghar) had decided

not to observe the festival pompously for dearth of funds and they had to go to Bhubaneswar to meet the Minister on some political matters.

Irrespective of age and sex, all the Dongria Kondh must have to obey certain taboos like food taboos, totemic taboos, reproductive taboos and mortuary taboos, etc. to avoid mishaps. One parturient woman is required to observe certain taboos and restrictions as stated below –

- (a) She must not visit the burial ground which may harm the baby in her womb.
- (b) She must not go alone to any place in the evening or night so as to avoid coming under the influence of evil spirits.
- (c) At her advanced stage of pregnancy she is advised not to do any hard work like-carrying logs from the forest which may cause abortion or miscarriage. From the time of pregnancy, till her confinement for delivery, her husband shoulders more responsibilities and takes full care of his wife. It is because to a Dongria the child is considered to be the blessing of Dharani Penu and also he considers his wife as a better-half of his life.

During the survey, 43 households were covered and fertility data were recorded. The sex ratio is found to be 1,258 females per 1,000 males. Out of 161 females, the married females number 90. There are 4 cases of abortion, 4 cases of still birth, and 31 cases of infant mortality in the village. The rate of fertility of the females as well as the males is found to be very low. It is perhaps due to their usual pre-marital visits to the Dormitory house where they have sexual relationship with the unmarried boys (*dhangdas*). This data was obtained from Smt. Malati Biswal's Ashram of the Kasturaba Memorial Trust. The doctor endorses this opinion. Some Dongrias feel that the use of buffalo meat is also another cause for low fertility. But they are so much fond of taking buffalo meat with liquor that they cannot give up this habit.

Barrenness is a stigma in their society. The Dongrias have no herbal medicine for the cure of barrenness. On the contrary, they have ways to induce barrenness which otherwise helps them in birth control. For instance, they believe that if seven red 'Kaincha' seeds are cut by a woman, she never conceives after that. 'Bano beta' is an effective herbal medicine used by the Dongrias for child birth. This root is pounded and the juice is extracted and about half a cup of this juice is orally administered to effect quick and easy delivery. Three-year old castor bark, Kalara leaf and Bajramuli roots are pounded to extract juice that is orally administered for quick falling of placenta of the new born.

Dongria women's menopause occurs within the age of 46 to 50 years. There is a medicine for those who desire early menopause. Equal quantity of 'Korkati' (male Kankada), 'Denjanipuyou', 'Mara', 'Diseniheru' and 'Penkaponga

Daki' roots are pounded and the extracted juice is orally administered to the woman who desires early menopause.

In the socio-political domain, the Dongria women occupy a low position in their society. They are debarred from the membership and leadership of the traditional tribal councils. All of their traditional leaders except that of the female shaman (Bejuni) are males and their posts go along the male line only. In the study village three tribal ladies named Bongari Kadraka, Sitari Wadaka and Singari Wadaka have become members in the Mahila Samiti. It is due to the sincere efforts of Mrs. Malati Biswal, a social worker of Kasturba Memorial Trust, popularly known as 'Appa'. In every month, each of the ladies gets an allowance of Rs.30 from the Government. These women with some political awareness have earned social prestige in the village that helps them exercise an influence over their husbands in decision making at their family level.

The Dongria Kondh women enjoy freedom of participation in village dance and music. They spend most of their leisure hours through gossiping, merry making, dance, song, music and by sewing of the traditional scarf (*kapda ganda*) sitting at the backside of the house. They present this scarf to their near and dear ones with love and affection.

The Dongria women are born and brought up in the lap of nature and are educated in the traditional socialization process. Most of the women of this village are educationally very backward. Out of 161 females, 17 have class-III level of education, 17 have class-1 level of education and the rest (majority) are illiterates. During this year (1986) not a single girl has enrolled in the Village School given the fact that being a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) of Orissa, they get full help and assistance from the Micro Project (D. K. D. A.) functioning since 1978 which aims at their all-round development.

### Analysis

Economically they may lie below the poverty line, yet, in this regard they can be grouped in terms of acquisition of Dongar land and occupation. Women cultivating two or more Dongars are grouped under 'High'; having one to two Dongar come under 'Moderate' group and having no Dongar are grouped as 'Low'. It is seen that out of 161 females, 120 (74.53%) are 'Low', 39 (24.22%) are 'Moderate' and 2 (1.24%) are 'High' in economic status. But regarding division of labour, cent percent of them have 'High' economic status.

In social life the division is based on their present marital status. Married women are ranked 'High'; the widows 'Moderate' and divorces, 'Low'. In this ranking 67 out of 90 female (74.45%) are 'High', 20 (22.22%) are 'moderate' and 3 (3.33%) are 'low' in social status. Unmarried females –both adult and children also have good social status though they are illiterates. They have only received informal education from their parents, their kith and kin with love and affection.

They are allowed to visit their dormitory, relatives, market and to move around with their friends in the village.

In political and ritual life, those who are politically sensitive are grouped as 'High', those having political awareness are grouped as 'Moderate' and those having least awareness are grouped as 'Low'. Excluding 47 minor female children, out of the remaining 114 adult females, 7 (4.86%) have 'High', 15 (13.16%) have 'Moderate' and 92 (81.98%) have 'Low' political status. The division is based on their performances and practices relating to political affairs and rituals. Those who perform communal worship are called as 'Bejuni' and are given 'High' status, those who worship only their household deities are 'Moderate' and 65 (40.38%) of the females has 'Low' religious status.

As regards their educational achievements, few are educated up to primary level. These who have primary education and above are ranked as 'High', those who have lower primary education are ranked as 'Moderate' and the rest illiterates come under 'Low' rank. Out of 161 females 127 (78.89%) are illiterates, 34 (21.11%) have lower primary education and there is not a single female educated up to upper primary level of education. To eradicate this problem we have to take up certain measures to improve their educational status. Creation of awareness for education among Dongria mothers and girl children starting from the pre-school Anganwadi education leading to Primary and Post Primary education imparted through tribal lady teachers with certain incentives would go a long way to bring them into the fold of education.

### **Conclusion**

From the above analysis it is clear that though Dongria Kondh women are debarred from certain religious and managerial functions, yet their social status is high. It is also established that in various aspects of social life women enjoy status and freedom such as, in the choice of a husband, seeking of divorce and so on. But in other few aspects such as in political and ritual sphere they have low status.

There is urgency in helping these women through developmental programmes aimed at their social, education and economic emancipation by which the inherent strength of these women can be channelized towards their empowerment and all round development.



# CHILD REARING PRACTICES AND SOCIALIZATION PROCESS AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDH \*

*Florencia Bara* <sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Ethnography of primitive people gives us a picture of their culture and varied aspects of human life. However, a systematic account of human activities gives us very little insight into the mental attitude of the individual. His thoughts and actions appear merely as expressions of rigidly defined cultural norms to which he belongs. We comprehend little about his rational thinking, his feelings, his friendship and conflicts with his fellowmen. The personal side of life of the individual is almost eliminated in the systematic presentation of cultural life of the people. The way in which a person reacts to his culture is a matter and that should concern us deeply. Courtesy, modesty, good manners and conformity to definite ethical standards are universal, but what constitute courtesy, modesty, good manners and ethnical standard is not universal. It is more important to know how the individual reacts to these standards.

The human infant comes into the world, as a biological organism with animal needs. The basic needs of all the children are the same i.e. the infant must be fed when feels hungry, must be covered with warm cloths when feels cold, must be put into the lap of the mother or mother surrogate whenever insecure and thus, be made comfortable in all respects. But the differences between the culture and societies can be observed in the way in which these basic needs are met and the children are taught to manage with such situations with a consistent behavior pattern of a particular society. Thus, he is gradually moulded into a social being and learns social ways of acting, feeling and behaving. Every human being tries to adjust himself to the conditions and environment predominantly determined by the society to which he is a member. If he fails he is ridiculed and warned not to do so. If he becomes a social deviant, sometimes, he is brought back into line by the efforts of his social group. Thus, one of the most significant

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 44, No. 1& 2, ,2004, pp.56-67

<sup>1</sup> Deputy Director, SCSTRII, Bhubaneswar.

tasks that each human being must do is that of adjustment with other members of his society. The child must learn ways of developing effective social relationship with different individuals within his society and environment.

The biological maturation of the child leads to his social development. Maturation is basic to the development of certain motor skills and some nerves and muscles used in language. These skills, motor and language are basic to a number of relationships. Thus, the child must also develop some capacity to differentiate empathies and to understand before he can react and function effectively in his social world.

Each society appears to have distinctive values, characteristic patterns of behavioral expectations and differences in child rearing practices. It furnishes a set of expectations and relationship, which influence the eventual development of social skills, behaviors and attitudes. The way a child relates to society is first learnt in the family with his parents, more specifically with the mother, the siblings and then eventually with his peers and finally with other significant adults.

Thus, socialization is a very broad concept and process. It is the process whereby original nature is transformed into human nature and the individual into a person. It is the process of adjustment through which an individual is fitted into a given society. The whole way of life concerned with, how a child becomes a social being, how he is born and brought up, how he is cared for, how he perceives and interacts with physical world around him, how he deals with his environment and problems of life. The chief actor in a process of socialization is the family, which inculcates in the growing child the basic discipline necessary for living with others. The family makes it easier for the child to internalize the social norms by creating the design to live up to the expectations of others.

The physical dependence of the child upon the parents and in particular upon the mother soon after birth develops into emotional involvement. This emotional involvement arises largely because the parents and sibling are a source of both frustration and satisfaction. The human organism does not suffer from deprivation and frustration passively. It reacts to it by manifesting rage, anger, hostility and aggression. As the child matures he is expected to control his impulse and part of his frustration and deprivation may be expressed as hostility and resentment against those adults who are the source of his frustration.

The new born infant is treated as a biological organism; he is taken care of and given physical attention. His primary need is food and his most important early experiences center round the act of feeding and being fed. Between maximum satisfaction and starvation lies a wide range of variations. Feeding habits differ from society to society, culture to culture and from family to family. In some groups the infant is fed whenever he cries, in others, only at rigidly prescribed intervals. He may be nursed well until childhood or may be weaned early. Some infants experience alternate period of satisfaction and neglect. The

way the infant's biological needs are met with and the degree of satisfaction and deprivation he/she experiences, convey an image of the world as niggardly or indulgent, capricious or reliable. This image may remain as a permanent part of adult character, especially, if it is reinforced by later experiences.

The infant is also responded to an emotion-laden ways. The attitudes of acceptance or rejection, approval or disapproval, relaxation or tension depend on the physical care he receives. The mother's attitudes, affectionate fondling, caressing and physical posture during the act of feeding are prompted by cultural values.

As the infant grows to childhood, emotional responses to his behavior take an increased importance. The adult responses change from efforts to satisfy his bodily needs to attitudes of approval and disapproval designed to encourage him to exercise self-control. Thus, the child is encouraged to feed himself instead of being fed and he has to renounce the satisfaction of being fed. He must learn to control his elimination and to stop depending upon his mother for cleanliness.

The present report on Child Rearing Practices and Socialization Process of the Dongria Kondh society, a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) of Niyamgiri hill ranges, is based on the field study conducted during November-2000.

### **Methodology:**

A semi-structured interview guide was prepared for collection of data on child rearing practices and socialization process. Personal interview and observations were made and case studies were collected to support the analysis of different events of the Dongria Kondh socialization processes.

## **II. Maternity & Child Birth:**

### **Carving for Children:**

Pregnancy followed by childbirth is one of the most important events in the life of a Dongria Kondh woman. The main purpose of her marriage is to beget children. To become a mother is the ever-cherished desire of a married woman in their society. Children, as the binding force tighten the relationship between the husband and wife. Like all other societies, in Dongria Kondh society children are the source of joy and future hope of the parents. Being the economic assets to their parents, they share the burden of their parents from their early childhood by assisting them in all kinds of economic and domestic activities. Perhaps this is one of the most important reason for which the parents like more children.

The Dongria Kondh couples both men and women are very eager to have children immediately after their marriage. The husband and other family members anxiously wait for the news of pregnancy of a married woman, especially for the first issue which confirms whether she is capable of bearing children or happens to be a barren lady.

Sangari Sikoka of village Kolerpota in Muniguda GP was married to Katri Wadaka S/o Kokunda Wadaka of village Khambesi by way of bride capture. Being a matured lady she conceived within one year and delivered a son after nine months. She vividly remembered her nine months period of pregnancy. She avoided eating all non-veg food items including dry fish, which was one of her favorite item after market days in order to protect the fetus. She was loved more and appreciated by all her family members and neighbors when she became pregnant.

A married Dongria woman after her maturity and marriage has strong desire to have children. But if she does not conceive within two or three years she consults the Jani, Disari and Beju / Bejuni (magico-religious functionaries) for some herbal medicines and to know the supernatural power who is displeased and responsible for her infertility. She takes herbal medicines as given by the Disari. She also offers *puja* as prescribed by the Jani and Bejuni.

Palo Sikoka, w/o Sukur Wadaka of village Khambesi was married after she was captured by a group of 5 friends of Sukru about 15 years back. Sukru paid Rs. 500/- as *jhola* (bride price). She was matured when she married, but she did not conceive after one year. She consulted, the Bejuni who performed Puja for her and she was paid Rs. 300/-, cloth and rice (5 *mano*). After two years she conceived and Bali was born after nine months. But, the child died at the age of 2 years by fever (*nambri*) and vomiting. The couple consulted the Disari and as per his advice went to Kalabandh near Mulundpur where Prasak Dombu- the Disari offered Puja to Dharani Debta and the couple vowed that if they are blessed with a baby and he/she grows to childhood they will come back with a buck to offer to Pujato the Dharani Debta. Harischandra was born after a year and when he became 7 (seven) years old the parents with their child and offering (a buck) went to Kalabandh and offered the Puja. Now, besides Harischandra they have 2 more sons and a daughter.

Though health centre, dispensary, PHC and a private hospital run by the missionaries are available at a distances of 15 Kms at Bissam-cuttack, they rarely consult a medical personnel or avail any medical facilities, During the field visit it was found that a mobile health camp was organized by the health department but out of 3 expectant mothers only one was available in the village for undergoing medical check up.

In Dongria society, the married couple dislikes to adopt any type of birth control measures. However, recently due to wide publicity about family planning some of them have developed a positive attitude towards this practice.

Singari Sikoka, the second wife of Tunia Jakasika of village Kurli has adopted family planning measures after her fourth issue. She has two sons and two daughters from herself in addition to 3 children of her co-wife Sitari Mandika. Tunia - the husband allowed Singari to undergo this family planning

operation. She used to have very painful period of pregnancy with waist and stomach pain and difficult delivery in all four cases. Last delivery was done at Bissama-cuttack in the hospital after three days of difficult labour pain. They had to stay for eleven days in the hospital and so finally, they decided for the operation as they already have 7 children in their family. The 1st wife Sitari had delivered 5 babies out of which a boy and a girl died at the age of 5 and 2 half years respectively. Sitari explained to me about all her pregnancy periods and the related problems including difficult deliveries. She was married to Tunia before attaining puberty. She attained maturity after five years and since then each of her pregnancy period and delivery was very difficult. She used to suffer from general weakness, nausea, and waist and stomach pain. She works as a helper in the village Anganwadi centre. As such she came in contact with the Anganwadi worker and other health personnel at regular intervals. Being motivated by these personnel, she wanted to undergo birth control operation. But her husband disagreed as she is the first wife and their cultural norm does not allow this. Tunia reported that he is often being ridiculed by the neighbors for allowing his second wife to adopt family planning measure as if he cannot feed them and their off springs allowed one of his wives to undergo operation.. He feels sad when he hears such comments and sometimes, he feels that he has committed a mistake. But his first wife Sitari feels it was right because she has empathy for her co-wife who suffered so much in all her pregnancy periods and subsequent deliveries, because she herself had the experience of such pains.

#### **Confirmation of Pregnancy:**

The married Dongria Kondh woman on cessation of her monthly period for continuous two to three months and in some cases having nausea and vomiting becomes confirmed about her pregnancy. She proudly intimates her husband and mother in law. All the family members and the society welcome the message with joy. It is considered a blessing from Dharni Penu (Earth Goddess). It enhances the social status of the woman in their society. The husband boasts over the message of pregnancy and proudly declares among his friends that his wife is rich as she is pregnant and will give birth to a child - "*Na Wadi Dukri Milaya mane-Fututa*".

On the other hand, the husband dislikes a barren wife and he is at liberty to have a second wife to beget children. No medical treatment is undertaken for getting children though medical facilities available at Bissam-cuttack. But, such women use to take recourse to some indigenous medicines and make vows to sacrifice animals to become pregnant. In some cases, Disari also advices to offer *puja* to appease the gods and deities for the purpose.

#### **Preference for Sex:**

Although the birth of a male child is generally preferred to continue the family line, a female child is never disliked. It is equally welcomed and the

parents treat a male and female child on equal footing as both of them provide economic assistance to their parents since early childhood. Girls fetch high bride-price to their parents where as boy's parents have to pay bride price to get them married. It is also observed that among the Dongrias that as compared to the boys, girls work more both in domestic front and in the *dongar* (swidden) field. However, in most of the tribal societies women work more than the men.

### **Taboos and Restrictions:**

In the Dongria Kondh society maternal and child mortality is caused due to their ignorance, illiteracy and strong traditional belief system. Cases of abortions and stillbirths are reported due to lack of awareness of the mothers and their preoccupation with their works. They are not much careful about the general precautions and preliminary health care during early pregnancy and gestation period as a whole, which leads to further complications. Some of them fall prey to malnutrition due to lack of balanced diet. Extra or nutritious food is never a regular habit of an expectant mother. This is due to their ignorance, poor economic condition, combined with the prevailing social customs and food habits. It is reported by all the mothers who were interviewed that as soon as the gestation period starts, many of them stop taking even regular food due to nausea and vomiting whereas others abstain from taking non-vegetarian food except dry fish. Non-vegetarian food is an occasional item available to them. The pregnant woman is restricted to take pork. They believe that non-vegetarian food items will harm the baby or cause indigestion. They also fear that the baby may overgrow and cause difficult delivery. Pregnancy is normal and causal occurrence after the marriage of a woman. No special attention is given to the pregnant woman who continues her normal household and outdoor duties till the occurrence of labour pain. She also takes her normal food during this period, which is not at all different from that taken normally by other members of the family barring some restrictions of a few food items. Occasionally, seasonal fruits like pineapple, banana, jackfruit, mango, orange, etc. form a part of her extra diet when ever available. Snacks like biscuits, fried rice, flattened rice, cake etc. are given to her in case of few well to do families.

The pregnant Dongria Kondh women avoid visiting lonely and dark places in order to protect her fetus from the eyes of the evil spirits. They never visit the origin of the spring and fountains as the spring deities are considered to be harmful and feel annoyed if a pregnant woman goes to such places where spring deities are believed to stay.

### **Special Treatment:**

In Dongria Kondh society the men or women do not have any idea about special treatment of the carrying mother and immature baby. They also never take special care for embryonic development to facilitate growth and ensure healthy off spring.

### **Belief about Twins:**

Birth of twins is considered inauspicious among them and they apprehend it as a sign of some misfortune to the family. On query, they reported the case of Laxmidhar Wadaka of village Khambesi whose wife gave birth to a pair of twins in her second issue and her husband died after suffering from Nambri (Malaria) and stomach pain for continuous three years even after consulting the Disaris of 10 to 15 villages and taking herbal medicines as prescribed by them. They also reported the cases of Ghasi Wadaka of the same village whose wife gave birth to twin and both of them died after two days.

### **Abortion:**

The woman does not disclose early abortions, as she is held responsible for this. Some among them believe it to be caused by some evil spirit. Still birth is considered a disease. Though most of the Dongria Kondhs believe still birth and infant mortality are caused by the evil spirits but in actual case, death occurred due to fever, malaria, diarrhea, measles and other such health related factors.

Abortion is resorted to in case of illegitimate pregnancy as it is always disapproved and looked down upon by the society. In case of unsuccessful abortion, delivery takes place in the girl's parental home. If the male person involved does not accept the unwed mother voluntarily, the mother and the illegitimate child are often humiliated and teased by other members of the society. If any Dongria male agrees to marry the girl, the child may be accepted by her husband or can live at her parental home. Ame Wadaka, S/o Buklu of village Khambesi who was staying at Khajuri with his wife and children was excommunicated for life, due to his intrigue with another woman of his village.

### **Delivery:**

Usually delivery takes place at husband's house in the second room known as *Dhapa*. The neighboring elderly women including the mother-in-law assist the parturient woman and delivery takes place in sitting posture. One of the assisting women cuts the umbilical cord with a small knife (*kati*) and places the placenta in an earthen pot and burry the same behind the house. After the delivery the mother cleans herself with tepid water. The neonate is wrapped with warm cloth anointed with turmeric paste and bathed with tepid water. During the confinement period, the mother has no other work except her attending to her personal cleanliness and caring the baby. The baby is breast fed whenever he cries or needs suckling. The mother is given *ragi* gruel and rice with some salt or vegetable curry. During the pollution period, the family members and consanguine kins are considered polluted. The villagers and other members of the community do not accept food or water from them. They are also restricted to participate in any common social or religious functions of the village. The family

members do not take any non-vegetarian food and abstain from participating in any communal feast and festival.

The parturient mother and the neonate are treated as impure and are secluded in the *Dhapa* for a minimum period of one month. Seclusion period is also the time for drying and dropping off of the naval stump. After dropping of naval cord the child can be taken to the first room and taken to lap by the family members and others as it is considered clean.

#### **Purification Ceremony:**

Purification ceremony is held usually after one month when the seclusion period is over. All the cloths used during her seclusion period are taken out to the stream for washing after boiling with ash. Those who can afford are now-a-days using washing soaps for this purpose. The *Dhapa* and backyard is cleaned and smeared with cow-dung. The parturient mother takes bath after head wash and then she is considered purified. Thereafter, she is allowed to resume her normal duties.

Name giving ceremony (*Mila-Daru*) is held as per their convenience. During this occasion, maternal uncle and grandparents are invited. The baby is anointed with oil and turmeric paste, bathed and made to sit on the mother's lap. Grain divination process takes place for selection of name of the baby. Usually, the names of dead ancestors are considered for the neonate because they believe in rebirth of one of the dead ancestors of their family. Now-a-days, due to external influences many new non-tribal names are being given to the children.

#### **Adoption:**

The kinsmen of the Dongria society usually adopt the orphan child. If the mother dies after delivery any of the lactating woman among the kins breast-feed the baby. In case no wet nurse is available, the baby is given *ragi* or rice gruel.

### **III. Infancy**

#### **Feeding:**

As soon as the seclusion period is over, the Dongria Kondh mother resumes her normal works, like attending to all household chores and other economic pursuits. As such, she fails to devote much of her time in attending to the need of the infant. Sometimes, she is so busy with her work that the infant has to wait crying bitterly to be fed. The mother, who usually devotes full time in nursing the baby in the first month, shifts her attention abruptly to other works. Such abrupt change in attending and feeding creates a sense of confusion and frustration in the infant's mind. In several such cases the Dongria Kondh women reported that the infants very often cry bitterly and even refused to suck for some time. They reported that they had to pacify them by caressing, fondling and then breast feed for long hours. Such situation arises when the mother goes to work



leaving the baby with a child nurse or grandmother. In such case after return from the field the Dongria Kondh mother feels it to be her first duty to fondle, caress and breast feed the baby before attending to other works. The Dongria Kondh women use to breast-feed the baby in sitting and sleeping position. But it has been reported and observed that women while in journey tie their babies in a sling with a piece of cloth and the child can suck comfortably while walking over mountainous routes. It has been noticed that the babies being satisfied after being breast fed taking a deep slumber in this position while the mother is walking through mountainous route for long hours. But during the night the mothers usually feed their baby in sleeping position. Supplementary starchy food like *ragi* gruel or rice is given to the baby after 3 to 4 months. No such ceremony of first rice eating is held.

### **Weaning:**

Weaning and discontinuation of breast-feeding depends on the liking of the baby and on flow of milk from mother's breast. Dongria women never like to practice forceful weaning unless the milk ceases to flow due to the unexpected pregnancy, disease or other reasons. They allow sucking till the child himself dislikes it after taking sufficient amount of solid food like rice and *ragi* gruel. In case, milk flow ceases before completion of a year or so the mother forcefully weans her child with much sorrow. In such case she consults the Disari or Jani for remedial measures. If there are lactating women in their family the child is given her breast if her milk flow is enough for two babies. It has been observed that Sitari Mandika of village Kurli, sometimes feeds Singary's (her co-wife) baby when she is busy in some domestic works. In their society, weaning is never practiced till the baby sucks or the next child is born. It has been observed that children of 3 to 4 years of age continue to suck milk from the mother. In case of weaning due to stoppage of milk for prolonged illness or unexpected pregnancy, the baby is given rice and millet gruel for about 5 times a day. For forced weaning the mother anoints some bitter paste around her nipples so that the child starts disliking the breast and gives up sucking. During early infancy the sleeping hours of the baby is long, but slowly it is reduced with age. The infant is usually made to sleep on the ground over a mat or gunny bag on which some torn clothes are spread. Now-a-days, some of the Dongria families are using small stringed wooden cots locally available for the purpose.

The Dongria Kondh parents and elders do not expect bowel and bladder control during infancy as the baby has no control over it. Elders do not mind if the child urinates or defecates anywhere at any time. The urinated clothes are dried under sun where as defecated clothes are washed with water. Now-a-days washing soaps are used for cleaning such dirty clothes instead of just washing. The baby's buttocks are washed or wiped with a piece of torn cloth if available. The infant, if gives indications about it, is taken out for defecation. The infants of walking stage who also start talking and can understand baby language, is

taught to go outside for defecation. But infants who continue to urinate on the bed at night are sometimes awakened and taken out for urination.

The infant usually starts walking and talking at the stage of one and half years. The work oriented parents and elders in Dongria Kondh society find little time to help the baby in this stage. But a child nurse and old grandparents often teach and help the baby in learning to walk and talk through baby language. Thus, the infant listens, imitates that utterance and slowly develops his language.

#### IV. Childhood

Differentiation of sex among Dongria Kondh children is marked from early childhood. A girl child of about 5 years most often follows the sister, mother or grandmother whereas a small boy usually follows the brother, father or other male relatives while going to the work site. It is really interesting to see a female child following her sister, mother or aunt with a small vessel while going to fetch water from the stream. She learns household works, like sweeping and cleaning, bringing fire wood and looking after the younger siblings in the absence of the mother or when she is busy with her domestic chores. Subsequently, when she becomes 13 to 14 years old she learns to husk paddy, operate grinding stone and to plaster the house with mud and cow dung and do agricultural operations like wedding, reaping, threshing winnowing, cleaning and storing.

Boys in their early childhood do not have any work. They simply accompany the male members, especially the father and the brother observe them at work and learn the agricultural operations, watching the crop fields and assist in tending cattle. At about the age of 13 to 14 they practically start doing the work of cattle tending, ploughing, hoeing, tree felling, sowing, reaping, threshing, house building and other manual works.

During early childhood i.e. up to 5 years of age both the sexes go naked. Thereafter, boys wear smallclothes and girls use loin clothes and small saris. Now-a-days, some boys and girls use modern dress like pants, shirts and frock etc. if their parents can afford.

Both parents and their children love each other very much and their love is expressed in terms of their affectionate talk and cheerful smile. Children anxiously wait for the return of their parents after day's work. On many occasions, the former accompany the latter when going outside their village. Although children have to participate in various works of the household the parents maintain them till they are married. They want their children stay with them till their marriage. The married daughters exchange visit to their parental home and maintain cordial relationships.

## V. Adolescence

Adolescence is the most critical period in the life of an individual. The first phase of adolescence starts generally with the onset of menstruation in case of girls and emergence of pubic hair in case of boys. No specific puberty ceremony is attached to the boys. In case of girls with the onset of her first menstruation symptoms she is confined in the *Dhapa*, (back room) for seven days when she is considered polluting. She is restricted to look at anybody; more specifically she should not look at the face of any male member. She has to put on oil on her head. She is tabooed to enter the main room and touch any other belongings of the house. There is a restriction for her to participate in any communal or household ritual. Ragi cake baked upon fire is served to the girl as food besides in addition to her normal diet i.e. *ragi* gruel. She cleans and washes herself and her cloth and eats at the back side of the house attended by her mother or other female members. On the seventh day, she is taken to the stream for purification. She puts on oil and turmeric paste on her body and takes bath washing her head. The Bejuni accompanies her and invokes the *Gangue Penu* the deity who is supposed to have entrapped her during this period. She also sacrifices a red-feathered chick and sprinkles the blood on the feet of the girl. She also utters incantation and puffs intermittently over all parts of the body of the girl to drive away the deity and after which the girl is treated purified and free from the clutches of the deity. In subsequent monthly periods, no such restrictions are imposed and a menstruating girl is free from pollution after her bath and she is allowed to go to the *Dhangdi basa*, the youth dormitory.

## VI. Training

The parents and other kinsmen do not give scope to their children to develop aggression and to become revengeful. Instead, they help them to lead a friendly and corporate life. They encourage bravery and want their children to be brave and courageous enough to face difficult situations in life. Inculcation of courage and bravery starts at the late childhood at about the age of 11 to 12 when a male child goes to the Jungle to fetch fuel wood or *dongar* field to watch and guard the crop field. Sometimes he also stays in the field at night with his father. There he learns to confront and chase wild animals with loud noise, making fire and use of weapons. Anger of the boys are tolerated and inspired in some cases, like clan feuds but anger of girls are suppressed and discouraged. Parents do not support their children who fight and quarrel among themselves. Verbal aggression, disobedience, defiance, temper, tantrum, etc. are dealt with by scolding and sometimes even beating.

Parents and elders are not much careful about giving cleanliness training to their children during their infancy and early childhood. During the first year sometimes up to the stage of walking they are given bath two times daily by their mothers after which bathing and feeding routine often lies upon the grand

parents or the child nurse. They mostly neglect daily cleaning of teeth as a primary cleanliness habit. Children below the age of six never brush their teeth and others above their age group are also very casual in brushing teeth.

Cloths are washed at an interval of fortnight by using ash or soap. The habit of spitting everywhere even nears the hearth inside the kitchen makes unhealthy surroundings. In the Dongria Kondh houses the children have very little in scope to learn about sanitation. Women do not do comb hair daily. They do it occasionally at leisure hours or while going to market or visiting friends, relatives and on festive days. However, in case of males, combing is also irregular. Young girls before going to dormitory often do combing regularly.

A girl at her teen-age goes to sleep with other girls of the village in the youth dormitory (*dhangdi basa*) house during night. This provides her the scope to develop friendly and corporate life in a wider circle. Thus, a part of her emotional attachment shifts to her friends from her mother and family. Likewise, the grown up boys form groups, gossip among themselves, play drums and go to *bandhu* villages to visit girls of *dhangdi basa*. Boys and girls develop friendship with the opposite sex and during this period they develop curiosity about sex. Dancing and singing are regular features of the Dongria Kondh villages during off-seasons. Sex knowledge is acquired during this period.

## VII. Adulthood

The girl attains her adulthood with the onset of puberty at the age of 14 to 15 years and she is fit for marriage in Dongria society. But there are cases when a girl is married before attaining her puberty. In case of Sitari Mandika, the 1st wife of Tunia Jakasika, she was married before puberty and she was matured after 5 years of her marriage.

A Dongria Kondh boy is considered matured only when he is physically fit and has acquired adequate knowledge in earning his livelihood independently. Only after this the parents think of his marriage. In some exceptional cases boys also marry early, so as to increase the number of working members in the family. An adult boy can participate in the village affairs. After marriage, a boy attains full adulthood and maintains his family independently. He becomes the master of his household. Likewise, a girl attains adulthood after her marriage and when she goes to stay with her husband. She becomes the active earning member of the household. Finally, she attains her womanhood after becoming a mother by which her relationship and attachment with her husband are strengthened. Though women are submissive and obedient, they are at liberty to play their role in certain spheres. In case of unsuccessful marriage, the man or the women can initiate divorce and go for second marriage. Masculinity in case of men and fecundity in case of women are great virtues, which are framed by one's capacity to bear children, where as impotency in case

of former and barrenness in case of the latter is ridiculed in Dognria Kondh society. Couples after marriage lead a conjugal life. They are loyal to each other, shoulder responsibilities of adulthood, bear children, rear them up, train them in economic activities, social mores and help them to achieve their adulthood.

**References:**

1. Acharya, M & Mohanty, R. P. 1993 Games vis-a-vis Socialization: A case study Among Kondh Children, *Adivasi* Vol. XXXIII No. 2, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, PP. 22-25.
2. Benedict, Ruth 1935 *Patterns of Culture*, Butler & Tanner Ltd, London.
3. Hurlock, E.B. 1959 *Developmental Psychology*, Tata McGraw - Hill Publishing Company Ltd. New Delhi.
4. Mead , M 1954 *Coming of Age in Samoa*, Penguin Books Ltd. Harmandsworth, Middlesex.
5. Patnaik, N & Das Patnaik, P.S. 1982 *The Kondh of Orissa*, Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, Orissa, Bhubaneswar.

# BEJUNIS; THEIR INITIATION INTO SHAMANHOOD \*

*Prabhansu Sekhar Das Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

The Western part of the district of (undivided) Koraput of Orissa forms the present habitat of the bulk of the Dongria Kondh tribe. It is spread over in an area of about 250 square miles covered by the rugged and precipitous hills and mountains known as *Niyamgiri* Hills in the (undivided) district of Koraput. The entire area is situated at an average elevation of about 2,000 feet above the sea level. Mountain ranges attaining 4,000 feet height are not uncommon in this locality. The whole area is diversified in appearance by exposures of naked rocks, ranges of ancient *sargi* (*sal*) forest. The whole surface is thrown up into innumerable terraced *Dongar* plots for cultivation.

## Dongria Kondhs and their Religion

The denizens of this area are called Dongria Kondhs. Socio-economically, they are one most backward tribe of Orissa. The core of their religion consists of polytheistic beliefs in the cult of ancestors and a large pantheon to be propitiated in many occasions. Their magic is primarily concerned with mysterious impersonal forces and powers residing mostly in natural and artificial objects. The instruments employed in dealing with them are principally charms and spells, adjurational observations and taboos. The magical rites are organically connected with their normal activities of hunting, fishing and agriculture.

## Religious Functionaries and Roles of Bejunis

The religious functionaries who are entrusted with the propitiation of the village deities of the Dongrias are *Jani*, *Bejuni*, *Gurumai* and *Dishari*. The *Bejuni* (the female shaman) occupies a crucial place among them. There are a number of *Bejunis*, under one head *Bejuni* in a village, who perform various magico-religious ceremonies on behalf the people and participate in communal and

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XIV, 1972-73, No. 1, April, 1972

<sup>1</sup> Junior Research Officer, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

individual functions. Besides their public role as the 'Shaman', they also practice black-magic in their private capacity to destroy or damage the normalcy of the society and as such they may be termed as sorceresses. They perform their duties in a frenzied state and are believed by the people to be in direct contact with the gods. By virtue of their position they command high prestige from the Dongrias.

### **Qualifications to be a Bejuni**

When a female practices this art, she is called *Bejuni* and a male is called *Beju*. But in a village, the *Bejunis* always outnumber the *Bejus*. Generally, the old women are eligible to become *Bejuni*, though there is no formal age-restriction. This is also not a hereditary profession but an acquired art and a personal accomplishment. Skill in dancing is essential for a *Bejuni*. It is the first step to appease the *Penus* (gods) and in course of frenzied dancing, she gets into a trance and makes prophecies and offers solutions to the problems of the clients. Names of different *Penus* are also to be memorized by a *Bejuni*. She should also know the art of divination with the movement of the winnowing fan, waving of peacock feathers and supplication through *arua-rice*. Simultaneously, she must know the kind of sacrifice, to be made for different *pujas* and for different diseases. To know all these techniques an apprentice undergoes training under a *Pat Bejuni* or Head *Bejuni*. Thus in a village there may be four to five *Pat Bejunis* who impart training to the interested candidates in the evening after the day's work.

### **Basic Components of a Bejuni and respective Penus**

The *Bejunis* are believed to gain power by the grace of their own *Penus* or ancestor spirits. It usually comes to the persons who have an inclination towards it. With the increase of their eagerness or rather yearning and devotion, they begin to pass sleepless nights in contemplation of certain *Penus*. In the village Khambesi, there are nine *Bejunis* who have got different *Penus*. Arju Wadaka's mother (a *Bejuni*) worships *penus* like, *Kalia Patu*, *Sundar Patu*, *Kashaya Rani*, *Tamba Rani*, *Nidi Muta*, and *Tamba Muta*. Maida Wadaka's wife (a *Bejuni*) worships *Kumita Nani* and *Baruanaka Nani*. Drimba Jakishe's wife (a *Bejuni*) worships *Hiralai* and *Dandalai*. Ludruka Wadaka's wife (a *Bejuni*) worships *Ghara-Deota* and *Nia-made-Deota*. Arju Wadaka's sister (a *Bejuni*) worships *Lada Penu*, *Sureni* and *Bai-Sureni*. Dheda Sikaka's wife (a *Bejuni*) worships *Lepruti*, *Thakrani* and *Maradi Deota*. All these *Penus* are ranked as ancestor-spirits.

### **Preliminary Stage to become a Bejuni**

It is evident from the above discussion that each *Bejuni* has her specific *penus*. Moreover, the *Bejunis* worship female ancestor spirits and the *Bejus*, male ancestor spirits. But there is no difference among them as far as their power over men and nature is concerned. For days together, the different 'Penus' are contemplated deeply and incantations are made in their honour. Dances are performed regularly. During this exercise, the *Bejuni* in her dream or in frenzied state visualizes her *Penus* and solicits their blessings. It is believed that the *Penus* want different sacrifices to be offered to them in various occasions. Once it is

realized; she is possessed by the spirits frequently and remains in trance. Then the public comes to know that the concerned woman is at the first stage of becoming a Bejuni. At the second stage, the Bejuni contracts a 'spiritual marriage' with the Gods. This is done even if the woman is married. Beju and Bejunis are considered profane and inexperienced until such marriage is performed. To gain supernatural power, they must enter into conjugal relationship with Penu.

### **Spiritual Marriage: The First Ceremony**

To perform this type of marriage, a place is selected either near a stream or under a mango tree. On the scheduled date, the concerned Bejuni and her husband go to the marriage alter, prepared before, after ceremonial bath in turmeric water. The Bejuni becomes her own priest. She carries various articles like, a winnowing fan, earthen lamp, resin-powder., Siali leaf, *arua* rice, firewood, turmeric powder, mango leaves and *ragi* powder for the marriage ceremony. Another Bejuni (under training) also accompanies her. The bride Bejuni puts on a mark of *ragi* powder on her forehead and applies the same on the forehead of her husband. She also catches a hand full of *arua* rice. The assistant Bejuni in the meanwhile brings a pitcher-full of water from the stream, keeps it under the mango tree and puts into it a pinch of turmeric powder and fastens *sal* and *siali* leaves over it. The funnel of the pitcher is covered with garland of tender mango leaves. The bride Bejuni throws handful of *arua* rice over it while uttering incantations to Dharani Penu (the supreme deity of Kondhs).

In the meantime, the relatives and the friends gather at the spot. The relatives and friends prepare garlands out of tender mango leaves and fasten them to the pitcher. The bride Bejuni with the help of the assistant Bejuni invokes the specific Penu (with whom marriage is to take place) by uttering incantations. While doing that she shivers and develops hysteric feats with the beating of drums. Suddenly, with a perceptible jerking, she starts dancing and gets into trance. This is an indication that she is possessed by the specific Penu. Her husband then dons a *saree* and joins his wife in dancing. Various questions are put to her by her friends and relatives which she answers in a state of trance. Immediately when the bride Bejuni starts dancing, the assistant Bejuni feeds *arua* rice to a cock and a pigeon for five times. Then she gives *arua* rice to the bride Bejuni and her husband and keeps her right hand over their heads. She also starts uttering mantras and moves round the mango tree for 15 times. The process of giving *arua* rice to the Bejuni and her husband is repeated during intervals of each round. The feeding of the cock and the pigeon is also repeated 15 times. It is the process of appeasing the concerned Penu. After circumulating the mango tree repeatedly, a feather is taken out from the pigeons and cocks and the heads of bride Bejuni, her husband and the spectators are touched with it. Immediately after that the pigeon is killed by the assistant Bejuni and blood is sprinkled on the pitcher to satisfy the Penu. After this sacrifice, the bride Bejuni comes back to her senses and becomes free of the spirit.



### **The Second Ceremony of Marriage**

After some days the second phase of marriage takes place in an auspicious day. It is held at the altar of the first ceremony. In this phase the bride Bejuni stands facing east catching the little finger of her husband. The married couple goes round the mango tree for seven times followed by an assistant Bejuni. This circum-bulation is called 'Sat-padia'. After this ceremony, new clothes, dyed with turmeric are tied to the head of the bride Bejuni and her husband. The people then carry them on their shoulders to the place where the pitchers had been kept. The right foot of the bride Bejuni is placed on the left foot of her husband. A cock is fed *arua* rice for seven times and then the assistant Bejuni kills it by crushing its head under her feet and sprinkles its blood over the feet of the bride Bejuni and its head is placed over the pitcher.

### **The Third Ceremony of Marriage**

The third ceremony then takes place after an interval. During this event the pitcher under the mango tree is taken out and its water is poured over the bride Bejuni and her husband. It is regarded as a holy bath during which the Penu gets into the body of both of them. Their feet are washed properly and the marriage rituals come to an end followed by a small feast. It is believed that the bride Bejuni hereafter attains the status of shaman equipped with spiritual knowledge. She is not to be dishonoured and disrespected after this.

### **The Fourth or 'Tapu' Ceremony**

'Tapu' means sacrifice. This is celebrated only when adequate funds are arranged. It is a very expensive function as a lot of expenditure is incurred to purchase different animals and food accessories to satisfy different ancestors, spirits and also to feed the entire village. The function continues for three days. It may be mentioned here that each Bejuni has got different Penu and different animals are prescribed to be sacrificed for each. In this connection the case history of Malo, aged 40, wife of Jagli Sikora may be given.

### **Malo's Case History**

Malo is worshiper of four Penu such as Jati-Guru, Budi-Guru, Silka Peju and Bhangrai Peju. To observe this function, she purchased four earthen pitchers, six fowls, three pigeons, one goat, five *karies* (lambs), forty kilogram of rice and other food materials. Before the day of ritual an altar (*pat*) with an enclosure and temporary leafy-shed over it was prepared by the young men and girls (Dhangadas and Dhangidis) of the village.

### **Observance on the First Day of Tapu Ceremony**

On the first day, about ten apprentice Bejunis came to her house along with Pat-Bejuni (Head Bejuni) after taking bath and put on clothes dyed with turmeric. The Pat-Bejuni held a bundle of peacock-feather and a winnowing fan and the Bejunis held a winnowing fan each. The music party also reached the spot. Malo appeared before the public with disheveled hair wearing a new *saree*

and had vermilion marks on her forehead. There were chains of tinkling bells on her ankles. She held a handful of peacock-feathers. She also held in her hand an earthen pitcher with a narrow neck. This pitcher was full of water and mango leaves had been fastened to it. She handed over the pitcher to one of her apprentices and besmeared a portion of the altar with cow dung. After this she drew up an icon square on the besmeared place. This was done with a mixture of *arua*-rice powder, *ragi*-powder and vermilion. A lump of vermilion was placed at the middle of the square around which another square was drawn up. In the small square about 1/4th kilogram of *arua*-rice was strewn and the pitcher was placed upon it. When interrogated, it was said that the pitcher represented Jati-Guru Penu, a very powerful goddess. She protects life and property of the people. She is therefore properly worshipped with the supplication of *arua* rice after which adequate 'Tapu' (sacrifice) is offered to appease her.

The apprentice Bejunis, the Pat-Bejuni and Malo sat before the pitcher in a row. Pat-Bejuni first started uttering verses and sprinkled water over the visitors to purify them. She offered *arua*-rice to Malo in a winnowing fan. Malo also started uttering mantras. Supplication of *arua*-rice and uttering of magical verses in a low voice began simultaneously. The disciples also joined them. Then the Pat-Bejuni raised her voice. Malo followed her and the disciples also started making the same incantations. It continued for half-an hour after which a fowl, a pigeon and a lamb were placed one after the other over the head of Malo and then tied to different poles posted beside the pitcher. After that the Pat-Bejuni set fire to the resin powder and threw it over Malo and on the pitcher. Immediately after this Malo started shivering and danced to the tune of drum-beating. It started in a slow rhythm but became rapid in due course with the quick beating of drums. It was the sign of the Penu entering into Malo's body. The Pat-Bejuni and other Bejunis too started shivering and danced with Malo. The Pat-Bejuni dancing with Malo, bent down, placed left hand at her waist, waved the handful of peacock feathers and started dancing. The tinkling of ankle bells of the Bejunis was very loud. During the dance, the Pat-Bejuni embraced Malo twice and thrice and fed her resin-powder. Malo gradually became possessed by the spirit of the Penu and nodded her head frantically. The spectators tried to control her but she went on dancing in a frenzied manner till she fell down unconscious. The Pat-Bejuni too fell down. Other dancers were restrained by the spectators.

After few minutes they all came to their senses and the last phase of the Puja was performed by the Pat-Bejuni. Malo again supplicated with *arua*-rice and muttered the Mantras. The sacrificial animals were again brought one after the other. They were bathed and the vermilion was put on their heads. Then they were kissed by Malo. The fowl and the pigeon were again touched to the head of Malo and then strangled to death by the Pat-Bejuni. Their blood was sprinkled on the pitcher, the icon square and also on Malo's head. The lamb was not killed and tied again at the pole. Puja for the first day was over. It was 3 O'clock in the afternoon when it was completed. A small feast followed. The Mandal (village

leader), Bishmajhi, Jani and some relatives cooked rice separately. This was eaten exclusively by Malo, her husband and the Bejunis who participated in the dance.

### **2nd Day Performance of Tapu Ceremony**

On the 2nd day the same process was repeated with some deviations. On that day another pitcher representing Budiguru Penu was placed instead of the first one. The first one was replaced at the back of the second one. This Penu is believed to bring rain, protect animals and enhance animal wealth if properly appeased. Hence she must be given Tapu. The Bejuni attains a greater identification with the Penu in the second day than on the first. As on the previous day, two fowls, one pigeon and one lamb were brought. Fowls and pigeon were killed but the lamb, instead of being tied, was set free. The children of the village chased it and drove it out of the village, so that it could not return or even look back. It is believed that the lamb is the messenger who conveys the prayer of the concerned Bejuni to Budi-Guru Penu. Malo danced twice and became possessed by the spirit. She was applauded and garlanded by the spectators. Pat Bejuni taught Malo 'Puchna' i.e. the art of asking questions to the deity while supplicating with *arua*-rice. While asking questions, the answers from the deity are believed to be clearly audible to the Bejuni. The second ceremony continued from 8 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock in the evening.

### **3rd Day Performance of Tapu Ceremony**

On the 3rd day the ceremony started from 4 A.M. in the morning, continued for two hours and was completed before the dawn. Neither the drum beaters nor the public were invited. Only the Pat Bejuni and the apprentices were present. At 3 A.M. Malo took bath with other Bejunis, put on a new black *saree* and came out of the house with the third earthen pitcher. She placed the pitcher in a square drawn with charcoal powder. A black cloth was wrapped over the pitcher. This pitcher represented the spirits, Silka Peju and Bangarai Peju, who are considered to be very pugnacious and bring immense harm to the people.

During this performance the ritual procedure was almost the same as before. Supplication was made with *arua*-rice by the Pat Bejuni in a winnowing fan accompanied by spells and incantations. Two black fowls were kept one after the other on the pitcher. Vermilion marks were painted on them. Arua-rice was also sprinkled over them. This process was repeated for 15 times. A pigeon was brought and the same procedure was again repeated. Lastly a lamb was brought. The 3rd pitcher was lifted and placed on the back of the lamb and the animal was forced to move round the black square. Then Malo sat on the back of the lamb and rode thrice round the square. After all these rituals, Malo again started supplicating with rice and began to dance in a frenzied state. At the height of it she started rolling on the floor. The Pat Bejuni immediately got up and threw a lump of resin-powder at her and the apprentices caught hold of her and pressed her to the ground. This frenzied state symbolized her successful attainment of the status of Bejuni. When she came to her senses, she again supplicated with

rice. The Pat-Bejuni, while doing this along with Malo, whispered thrice in her ear. This is considered as the final lesson taught to the apprentices. The animals and birds for sacrifice were killed one after the other. Their blood was sprinkled over the earthen pitchers and their carcasses were left at the altar.

### Other Performances on the 3rd Day

After completing the rituals on the 3rd day Malo, accompanied with Pat-Bejuni and other disciples went to Dharani Penu of their village and started dancing there. The Pat-Bejuni with other three Bejunis went round the village to ward off the evil-spirits which are supposed to be invading the village and the Mutha during the three days of the performances. After warding them off the party returned to the altar where they were joined with others in a communal dance with the accompaniment of drum beating. This was done to give a public recognition to Malo becoming a full-fledged Bejuni. The villagers too assembled there and offered *arua*-rice and pigeons to Malo to solicit her blessings. Then Malo with her party moved round the nearby villages in the 'Mutha' to acquire wider public recognition and collected *arua*-rice and animals for sacrifice.

Persons in difficulties (such as disease, barrenness, etc.) promise to offer sacrifices of animals after getting proper remedy. They offer these sacrifices during the 'Ghanta Parab'. Ghanta is a small earthen pot in which the offerings are made. When Malo remained busy in moving round the village, the maidens and women of the village made necessary arrangements for Ghanta Parab. The males piled up firewood on the altar and the women decorated the fourth pitcher with red ochre. The art is locally known as 'Linga' representing 'Thakurani Penu'. Further, *puja* accessories like plantains, edible roots, fruits, sweetmeats and a buffalo were also kept near the altar. The pendal was well decorated with flowers and mango leaves by the young girls. Each individual brought his or her own Ghanta (earthen pitcher) and Puja accessories. All these arrangements were completed by the evening, so as to start the Parab the next day.

### 4th Day Performance of 'Ghanta Parab'

On the 4th day the Ghanta Parab otherwise known as the festival of earthen pitchers, took place. *Kumtekane* and *Basumekane* are two principal deities, grouped together as 'Thakurani Penu', are worshiped in this occasion. It is believed that Thakuranipenu is very ferocious and inflicts smallpox on human beings and animals if she is not propitiated. Therefore, the families where somebody had suffered from smallpox worship Bejuni and dedicate their children at her feet and satisfy her with offerings and sacrifice of animals.

On this day, Malo, Pat-Bejuni and the apprentices reached the altar with the drum beaters and the village leaders. Each worshipper carried a *ghanta* on the head, a winnowing fan with *arua*-rice and other *puja* accessories on the waist and either a fowl or pigeon with the right hand. The previous procedure continued. The sacrificial animals like, a lamb, a goat, a fowl and a buffalo were brought to the altar one after the other on whom Malo sat for a few seconds, after which

these animals were taken back. The purpose was to make a public show of the animals and to make them fit for sacrifice by the ritual touch of the shaman.

The 'Ghantas' were passed on, one after another to Malo and she worshipped it, with vermilion and *arua*-rice. This process was repeated for 7 times. During intervals, the supplication with *arua*-rice and feeding of it to the fowls also continued. While this process was coming to an end she suddenly wept aloud. Then she shuddered and went on jumping about. The Bejunis and the females ululated. The males clapped. The drum beating became more loud and rapid. Malo danced in ecstasy, holding the fowl. Immediately the animals, meant for sacrifice were brought. Malo stood upon each for some time. She was also jumping over them. Then she stood upon the piles of firewood, where too she danced. After being possessed by spirit she lost her senses. The animals excepting buffalo were killed one after another by the Jani and the blood was sprinkled both over the pitcher and over Malo. Ultimately the buffalo was dragged by the young men of the village and tied to a post at the outskirts of the village where a small platform had been prepared. Malo came to her senses after resin-powder had been thrown at her. She took her pitcher (Ghanta) on her head and others followed her. They walked in a file towards the platform. Before reaching the platform the boys, girls, men and women who had suffered from smallpox came forward and lied prostrate on the road by which Malo was to pass. She walked on each adult and touched the children with her feet.

Malo reached the village outskirts and placed her 'Ghanta' first at the middle of the platform and others kept their respective 'Ghanta' on both the sides of the main pitcher. Malo, again became, possessed by spirit while supplicating with *arua*-rice. Simultaneously, the buffalo was slaughtered by the young mass and its head was placed over the main pitcher and then on the floor. Other animals were also sacrificed. The individual worshipers also sacrificed their own animals. The heads of the sacrificed animals were heaped up near the buffalo head. There was a pool of blood over the platform.

The platform specially prepared for Thakurani Penu is considered to be purified by this pool of blood. One 'Ghanta' was first broken by Malo on the blood and others followed it to drive away Thakurani Penu from the village, lest the villagers suffer again. They all including Jani and Mandal except Malo came back with their respective animals. In the evening a feast was arranged by Malo in honour of the participants. People of the 'Domb' caste were also invited to the feast. Malo thus became a Pat-Bejuni. All Bejunis cannot afford the expenses of the ceremonies for which they cannot attain the status of Pat-Bejuni.

# FESTIVALS, RITUALS AND SHAMANS AMONG THE DONGRIA KANDHA \*

A. K. Gomango <sup>1</sup>

S. C. Mohanty

The Dongria Kandha, a picturesque tribal group constitutes a primitive section of the Kandha a major tribe of Orissa. They stand apart from others for their famous *Meria* festival, expertise in horticulture, separate language -*Kuvi* and colourful life style. They are also shifting cultivators. They inhabit the lofty *Niyamgiri* hill ranges spread across Bissamcuttack, Kalyansingpur, and Muniguda blocks in Rayagada district. It is an enchanting hill country endowed with bounties of nature. The Dongria Kandha with their colourful costumes and adornments, scintillating dance and music display their spirit of freedom and spontaneous joy of life in close harmony with nature.

Like other primitive tribes they, through their age-old experience, have evolved certain traditional mechanisms and institutions to meet their needs in everyday life. There are socio-religious and economic organizations and institutions for achieving different objectives. Religion is one of them, which plays a significant role in establishing peace, harmony, and solidarity in their society and guides them to follow the right path for prosperity.

They are polytheists. They have adopted number of gods, deities and spirits into their pantheon. They observe certain festivals and rituals round the year to worship and appease the supernaturals, and also for recreation. The Dongria Kandhas are well known even today, as in the past they had the custom of human sacrifice called *Meria*. Due to the intervention of the British rulers this barbarous practice was stopped and buffalo was substituted for the human bait.

They are very sincere in observing religious rites and rituals and could go to any extent to get the blessings of supernatural beings. Like any other society they have their religious practitioners to mediate between them and their supernaturals and thereby help them to meet their religious ends. Their age old institution of shamanism still has a powerful influence on them and their male and female shamans called *Beju* and *Bejuni* (*Pejni*) respectively are among the most distinguished and respected magico-religious functionaries in their society.

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 48, Nos. 2, 2008, pp 7-24

<sup>1</sup> Research Officers, SCSTRII, Bhubaneswar

Though, the Dongria Kandha might differ from other ethnic groups in their religious beliefs and practices, they have one thing in common with others that is, they have different kinds of magico-religious specialists like priests and shamans. Such positions are based on the premise that there will always be an uneven distribution of knowledge and of personal abilities and that individuals with higher level of ability are in a better position to relate to the super naturals. They can be primarily religious in the sense that they seek help from the divine or spiritual world, or they can be more magical in that they attempt to manipulate the spirit of the supernatural forces. Such people who have special religious knowledge either control supernatural power out rightly or facilitate others in their attempt to influence it. These specialists are called shamans and priests.

### **Magico-Religious Functionaries among the Dongria Kandha**

There are number of magico-religious and secular functionaries in a Dongria village. They operate in their respective domains of duties and responsibilities. They propitiate deities and spirits through different types of rituals. The Dongria have large pantheon of deities and spirits to reign in different domains and the responsibility of appeasing them also have been distributed among several magico-religious functionaries. During festivals, rituals and ceremonies they perform rituals offering liquor and animals sacrifice, pray and invoke supernatural powers to get their blessings and protection. These functionaries are called, *Jani*, *Lambajani*, *Ichanjani*, *Pujari*, *Beju*, *Bejuni* (*Pejni*) etc. Besides, there are *Gurumeni* and *Barik* who assist them whenever necessary. In certain occasions the family heads perform certain rituals to appease ancestral sprit and household deities and spirits at the family level.

In brief, traditionally *Jani* the high priest is also the secular head of a Dongria Kandha village. He plays most important role both in the religious and secular spheres. He is the principal worshiper of *Darani Penu*, the Earth Goddess and commands great respect in the society. There is an *Ichan Jani* from the *Jani*'s lineage to assist *Jani*. He prescribes and arranges items for rituals and assists *Jani* during worship. The *Jani* who has vast experience and officiates in *Meria* festival is called *Lamba Jani*. *Pujari*, a hereditary functionary performs special duties in the *Meria* festival. He makes an umbrella out of bamboo and during rituals he joins with *Jani*. He also takes part in other communal festivals and functions. The *Bejus* and *Bejunis*, have special responsibilities in their society. They are experts in magico-religious rituals.

### **Dongria Shamans**

The shaman is the kind of spiritual specialist who derives his power directly from the supernatural agencies usually through mystic experience. He/she is adept at trance, divination and curing. Though the priest and the shaman coexist in the same society, the latter serves as a medium of communication between human and supernatural. He often establishes a

personal relationship with the supernatural beings and/or knows the secret medicines and spells necessary to manipulate supernatural power. On the contrary the priests as religious specialists also mediate between people and super naturals but usually do not have powers to control the supernatural agencies. While the shaman controls supernatural power and conducts rituals as and when required, the priest mediate between human and supernatural and lead congregations at regularly held cyclical rites.

In Dongria Kandha society their male and female shamans called Beju and Bejuni (Pejni) respectively perform the art of shamanism. They have their own adopted spirits to whom they regularly worship to get their favour and help in occult practices. They can communicate with spirits and deities who are believed to be responsible for causing human problems. In order to communicate with spirits, they get into trance through divination, prayer, offerings, oblation and certain rituals. In this state they tell people about their problems and solutions by communicating with the concerned spirits. They prescribe the remedy through the rice supplication process called *puchana*, which is an important part of the shamanic ritual. They advise and sometimes forcibly demand performance of rituals and animal sacrifices to appease supernatural powers.

The Dongria Kandha strongly believes that shamanism is a magico-religious art, which is gifted to certain persons by supernatural powers. Their success in learning and practicing the art depends upon supernatural will and sanctions. Becoming a shaman can be the result of a mythical experience, such as a vision or a period of special training or both. Though in actual practice they learn the art from the veterans, they deny such learning and training and ascribe supernatural blessings to their taking up of the practice. In reality the shamanic practices of the Dongria Kandha is a learned behaviour acquired by proper training and orientation to the trade by the persons having the interest and aptitude for such work.

### **Initiation to Shamanhood**

The path to shamanhood runs through a series of steps and stages. During this time the future shaman or shamanin is supposed to master his/her mystical techniques and to learn the religious and mythological traditions of his tribe. This preparatory stage, more often, commences amidst a series of rituals and ceremonies as well as apprenticeship under a veteran shaman/shamanin.

The process reportedly, begins with the receipt of suprnatural message through dreams, vision, pathological sickness, ecstasies etc. The commonest kind of experience for the "chosen one" comes through a divine or semi divine being who appears during a dream, a sickness or some other circumstances, informs him/her that he/she has been chosen to follow the path of shamanhood. It is said, those who ignore such message face fatal consequences.



After the message is received through ecstatic experience, the next step for the chosen one” is to receive theoretical and practical orientation and instructions from the old masters. On successful completion of training and apprenticeship, the candidate goes through a series of prescribed rituals to attain full-fledged shamanhood and receive social recognition as such.

**The early stage :-** Vision, Early Signs, Test and Ordeal, Diagnosis and Detection, Apprenticeship etc.

When a person experiences such dreams he informs his family members, friends and relatives. Sometimes people become aware of person's early signs by observing certain behavioural changes. Whenever there is performance of dance and music during rituals and festivals, the person loses control of him self and starts dancing and gradually enters into a state of trance. At this time persons having joking relationship with him test him by giving him a handmade cigarette stuffed with chilly powders to smoke, or by putting the burning tip of a cigarette on his skin or by piercing his ears with a pointed twig. If the person come out of the ordeal successfully he is recognized a prospective shaman. If he fails he is rejected and faces social ridicule of being a pretender.

When such behavioural changes are noted in a person, his family members consult an experienced shaman. The latter performs divination by rice supplication process and goes into trance to find out the cause and identity the spirits responsible for this. Then he prescribes appropriate rituals to initiate the novice into shamanhood. But it takes sometime for the new candidate to achieve fullfledged shamanhood and join the ranks of the shamans. In the beginning he works with experienced shamans to gain experience. In this early stage of practice, his family members provide him with a winnowing fan and ragi for supplication instead of rice, because as a beginner he may not be able to control himself and thereby cause harm.

Every Beju and Bejuni has their personal deities of spirits whom they call Penu. Usually they worship ancestral spirits who help them for performing shamanic rituals. It is said that Bejunis adopt male spirits and Bejus, female spirits.

Other anthropologists have made similar observations. “The Bejunis are believed to acquire power through the special grace of their own ancestral spirits of Penus. It generally comes to the persons who have a temperament towards it with the increase of their earnestness or rather yearning and devotion, they begin to pass sleepless nights in contemplation of certain Penus... For days together there different Penus are contemplated deeply, incantations are made in their honour. Dances are performed regularly. During there processes, the Bejuni in her dream of in frenzied state visualizes the respective Penus and solicits blessing from them. It is believed that the Penus ordain different sacrifices to be offered to them on various occasions. Once the vision is realized, she is possessed by the spirits frequently and remains in trance. Then the public comes to know

that the concerned woman is at the first stage of becoming a Bejuni. At the second stage the Bejuni contracts a 'spiritual marriage', with the Gods... Beju and Bejunis are considered profane and inexperienced until such marriage is performed... the Bejunis worship female ancestor spirits and the Bejus worship male ancestor spirits. But there is no difference among them as far as their power over men and nature is concerned". (Das Patnaik; 1972-73: 12-13)

### **The Final Stage: Spritual Marriage**

The next phase involves the spiritual marriage with adopted spirit(s) without which it is impossible to achieve full-fledged shamanhood. It is an expensive affair as it requires purchase of clothes, birds and animals for sacrifice, and hosting a feast for the participants at the end of the ritual. Hence the ritual is performed when the aspiring Beju / Bejuni can afford the expenses.

In this stage a series of rituals are conducted in a selected spot on scheduled dates and times. The spot usually lies under a mango tree near a stream. The rituals items consist of *arua* rice, turmeric paste or powder, *ragi* powder, resin, vermilion, new clothes, fire wood, *siali* leaves, mango leaves, sacrificial birds such as cock and pigeon etc. Apart from the apprentice, the shaman and his/her spouse, who are the main actors, the fellow villagers, friends and relatives, experienced shamans, assistant shamans (Gurumai) other apprentice shamans and the Dom musicians participate in the proceedings.

### **First Ritual -**

The day before the ritual, the aforesaid ritual spot is cleaned and an altar is made below the mango tree enclosed under a wooden structure covered with mango branches and leaves at the top. On the scheduled date the apprentice Bejuni accompanied by her husband, another apprentice Bejuni or an assistant called Gurumai, drum beaters belonging to Dom caste, and some fellow villagers proceed to the spot carrying all the ritual items and accessories and the birds for sacrifice. The Beju couple takes bath in the nearby stream and put a mark of *ragi* powder on their foreheads. Their assistant also takes bath. They bring a pitcher full of water from the stream, put a pinch of turmeric paste or powder in the water, cover the mouth of the pitcher with *sal/siali* leaves and fasten a garland made of mango leaves around its neck.

While the Dom musician beat drums, the Bejuni throws a handful of *arua* rice over the holy pitcher uttering incantation first to solicit the blessing of their Supreme deity -Darni Penu and then to invoke concerned patron spirit to whom she intends to marry. Suddenly with a jerk she starts trembling and dancing showing hysteric fits and loosing self control gradually. This is taken as the sign of spirit possession. At this time her husband wearing a new saree along with some onlookers join with her in dancing and her assistant fills the air with the smoke of the burning resin and incense. When the rhythm of the dance and drum beat

enter into a frenzied state, the Bejuni goes into trance. At this moment, the onlookers ask her question which she answers satisfactorily.

After the question –answer session, the assistant Bejuni, gives *arua* rice to the bride Bejuni and her husband and keeps her right hand over their heads. Then she moves 7-15 times around the mango tree chanting verses and repeats the rice giving process. During these rounds she also feeds the rice each time to the cock and the pigeon brought there for sacrifice. Completing the rounds she pulls a feather from these birds and touches it over the heads of all the participants including the Bejuni couple. Then she kills birds and sprinkles the blood over the holy pitcher to appease the patron spirit. After that the bride Bejuni comes out of her trance and regains her senses. The music and dance stops. The first rituals ends and all of them return home.

### **Second Ritual -**

The ritual takes place after a couple of days following the first ritual and it symbolises the wedding ceremony.

On the scheduled day, the bride Bejuni stands at the spot facing east holding her husband's little finger. Accompanied by her assistant and husband she circles around the mango tree seven times. It is called Satapadia. New clothes dyed with turmeric are tied around the heads of the couple. The onlookers carry the couple on their shoulders to the spot where the holy pitcher is kept. The right foot of the bride Bejuni is placed over the left foot of her husband. A handful of *arua* rice is placed on their feet and a cock is made to peck the rice seven times after which the assistant Bejuni kills it and sprinkles the blood over the feet of the bride Bejuni and offers the head to the groom spirit by placing the birds head over the mouth of the holy pitcher. The wedding ritual ends here.

### **Third Ritual -**

It is the concluding part of the wedding ceremony. It may either be done sometimes after the preceding ritual on the same day or be postponed to a later date as it includes a feast to all the participants.

It is the ritual of holy bath. At the same spot, the participants take out the holy pitcher containing turmeric water and bathe the Bejuni couple pouring the holy water over their heads and also wash their feet. The Bejuni couple entertains their companions hosting a feast with alcoholic drinks. It is believed that with this holy bath, the patron spirit enters into the body of Bejuni and the latter attains full-fledged shamanhood. She gets social recognition and respect to enter into the rank of Shamanins.

### **Rituals & Observances for becoming a Pat Beju or Pat Bejuni**

Among the Bejus and Bejunis, few attain the rank of principal shaman and shamanin i.e., Pat Beju and Pat Bejuni. To qualify for this prestigious and

coveted rank, a Beju or Bejuni is required to have long years of practice and experience. Then he or she must conduct a series of elaborate rituals, which are very expensive. Thus the status of principal shamanhood comes at a price. The Beju of Bjuni aspiring for this title should have the capability to afford the price.

The Bejus and Bejunis interviewed during our study agreed on the point that professional experience is the first and foremost criteria for qualifying for the post of principal shaman or shamanin. But they remained tightlipped about the ritual performances. However with the help of the data from secondary sources, a brief account of the ritual described as a case study is given below.

The rituals and observance continue for 3 to 4 days. "It is a very expensive and a lot of expenditure is incurred to purchase different animals and food items, accessories to satisfy different ancestors, spirits and also to feed the entire village. ...each Bejuni has got different Penu and different animals are prescribed to be sacrificed for each. In this connection the case history of Malo, aged 40, the wife of Jagli Sikora may be given." (Das Patnaik, 1972-73:12)

"Malo is the worshiper of four Penu such as Jati-Guru, Budi guru, Silka-Peju and Bangari-Peju". For this ritual "she purchased four earthen pitchers, six fowls, three pigeons, one goat, five Karies (lambs), forty kilograms of rice and other food materials .....Before the day of ritual an altar (*pat*) with an enclosure... covered with leaves was constructed" (Ibid, 1972: 13).

#### ***1st Day:-***

"On the 1st day the Pat Bejuni and ten apprentice Bejunis, came to her house...The Pat Bejuni held a bundle of peacock- feathers and a winnowing fan and the other Bejunis held a winnowing fan each". The Domb musicians also came to the spot. "Malo appeared... with disheveled hair. She was wearing a new saree and had vermillion marks on her forehead. There were chains of tinkling bells on her ankles. She held a hand full of peacock feathers"... and "an earthen pitcher...full of water and mango leaves fastened to it. She handed over the pitcher to one of her apprentices and besmeared a portion of the altar with cowdung. After this she drew up an icon square on the besmeared place ...A lump of vermillion was placed at the middle of the square around which another square was drawn up. In the small square about 1/4<sup>th</sup> kilograms of *arua* rice was strewn and the pitcher was placed upon it...the pitcher represented Jati-Guru Penu, a powerful goddess... She protects the life and property of the people. ...The Bejunis (disciples), the Pat-Bejuni and Malo sat before the pitcher in a row. Pat-Bejuni first started uttering incantations and sprinkled water over visitors to purify them. She offered *arua* rice to Malo in a winnowing fan. Malo also started uttering *mantras*... The disciples joined them ...This continued for half an hour after which a fowl, a pigeon, and a lamb were placed one after the other over the head of Malo and then tied to different poles posted beside the pitcher. After that the Pat-Bejuni set fire to the resin powder and threw the same over Malo and on the pitcher. Immediately after this Malo started shivering and danced to the tune

of the drum-beating. It started with a slow rhythm but become rapid in due course with the quick beating of drums. It was the sign of the Penu entering into Malo's body . The Pat-Bejuni and other Bejunis too started shivering and danced with the Malo. The Pat-Bejuni ...bent down, placed left hand at waist, waved the handful of peacock feathers and started dancing. The tinkling of ankle bells of the Bejunis was very loud. During the dance, the Pat-Bejuni embraced Malo twice and thrice and fed her resin-power. Malo gradually became possessed by the spirit of the Penu and nodded her head frantically. The spectators tried to control her but failed ...she danced till she fell down unconscious. The Pat Bejuni, too fell down. Other dancers were restrained by the spectators. After a few minutes they all came to their senses and last phase of the *puja* was initiated by the Pat-Bejuni. Malo again supplicated with *arua* rice and muttered the *mantras*. The animals were again brought one after the other. They were bathed and vermilion was put on their heads. After this they were kissed by Malo. The fowl and pigeon were again touched to the head of Malo and then strangled to death by the Pat Bejuni. Their blood was sprinkled on the pitcher and the icon square and also on the head of Malo. The lambs was not killed and tied again to the pole. Puja for the first day was over... Small feast followed. The Mandal (village leader), Bishmajhi, Jani and some relatives cooked rice separately. This was eaten exclusively by Malo, her husband and Bejunis who participated in the dance". (Ibid)

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Day :-**

"On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day the same process was repeated with some divinations. Another pitcher representing Budiguru Penu was placed in place of the first one. ... As on the previous day, two fowls, one pigeon and one lamb were brought. Fowls and pigeon were killed but the lamb was set free. The village children chased it and drove it out of the village, so that it could not return or even look back. It is believed that the lamb is the messenger who conveys the prayers of the concerned Bejuni to Budiguru-Penu. Malo danced twice and become spirit possessed. She was applauded and garlanded by the spectators. Pat-Bejuni taught Malo "Puchna" ie, the art of communicating to the deity while supplicating with *arua* rice. While asking questions, the answers from the deity are believed to be clearly audible to the Bejuni" (Ibid). The second day ceremony ended there.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Day :-**

"On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day the ceremony started from 4 A.M. in the morning and continued for two hours and completed before the break of the day. Neither the drumbeaters nor the public were invited. Only the Pat-Bejuni and the apprentices were present. At 3 Am. Malo took bath with other Bejunis, put on a new black Sari (cloth) and came out of the house with the third earthen pitcher. She placed the ... pitcher in a square drawn with charcoal powder. A black cloth was

wrapped over the pitcher. This pitcher represented the spirits, Silka Peju and Bengrai Peju, who are considered to be very pugnacious”.

“During this performance the ritual procedure was almost the same as other occasions. Supplication was made with *arua* rice by the Pat Bejuni in a winnowing fan...two black fowls were kept one after the other on the pitcher. Vermillion marks were painted on them. This process was repeated for 15 times. A pigeon was brought and the same procedure was again repeated. Lastly a lamb was brought. The 3<sup>rd</sup> third pitcher was lifted and placed on the back of the lamb and animals were forced to move around the black square. Then Malo set on the back of the lamb and rode thrice around the square. After all those rituals, Malo again started supplication with rice, and began to dance in a frenzied state. At the height of it she started rolling on the ground. The Pat-Bejuni immediately got up and threw a lump of resin-power at her and the apprentices caught hold of her and pressed her on the ground. This frenzied state symbolized her successful attainment of the status of Pat Bejuni. When she came to her senses, she again supplicated with rice. The Pat Bejuni, while doing this along with Malo, whispered thrice in her ear. This is considered as the final lesson taught to the apprentice. The animals and birds ...were killed one after other. Their blood was sprinkled over the earthen pitcher. The carcasses were left at the altar”. (Ibid).

“After completion of the rituals on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day Malo, accompanied with Pat-Bejuni and other disciples went to Dharni Penu of their villages and started dancing there. The Pat-Bejuni with other three Bejunis went round the village to ward off the evil-spirits...the party...joined with others in a communal dance with the accompaniment of drums beating. This was done to give a public recognition to Malo as a full-fledged Bejuni... Then Malo with her party moved round the nearby villages in the Mutha to acquire wider public recognition and collected *arua* rice and animals for sacrifice”. (Ibid)

“Persons in difficulties (such as disease, barrenness, etc) promise to offer animal sacrifices after getting proper remedy. They offer these sacrifices, during the ceremony ...called Ghanta Parab. Ghanta is a small earthen pot in which the offerings are made. When Malo remained busy in moving round the villages, the unmarried young men and women of the village, made necessary arrangements for Ghanta Parab... All these arrangements were completed by the evening so as to start the Parab next day”. (Ibid)

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Day: The Ghanta Parab:-**

“On the 4<sup>th</sup> day the Ghanta Parab the festival of the earthen pitchers took places. Kumte Kane and Bamune Kane are the two principal deities, grouped together as ‘Thakrani Penu’, are worshiped during the occasion. It is believed the Thakarani Penu is very ferocious and inflicts small pox on human beings and animals if she is not propitiated...” (Ibid). Ghanta Parab though a communal festival, it is not observed regularly every year like other seasonal festivals. Observation of this festival is scheduled as and when required to help a Bejuni to

attain the rank of Pat-Bejuni on one hand and on the other, it provides a ritual occasion to the villagers to fulfill their vows to their deities and spirits to come out of their personal crises by offering foods and sacrifices.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day, Malo, Pat-Bejuni and the apprentices reached the altar with the drumbeaters and the village leaders. Each worshiper carried a Ghanta on the head, a winnowing fan with *arua* rice and other puja items occasions in the left hand and a fowl or pigeon in the right hand. The previous procedure continued. The sacrificial animals like, a lamb, a goat, a fowl and a buffalo were brought to the altar one after the other where Malo sat for a few seconds after which those animals were taken back.

“The ‘Ghantas’ were passed on, one after another to Malo and she worshiped it, with vermilion and *arua* rice. This process was repeated four times. During intervals, the supplication with *arua* rice and feeding of it to the fowls continued. While this process was coming to an end she suddenly wept aloud...The males clapped. The drum beating became more loud and rapid. Malo danced in ecstasy, holding the fowl ... After being possessed by spirit she lost her senses. The animals, except the buffalo, were killed one after another by the Jani and the blood was sprinkled both over the pitcher and over Malo. Ultimately the buffalo was dragged by the young men of the village and tied to post at the outskirts of the village where a small platform had been prepared. Malo came to her senses. ...She took her pitcher (Ghanta) on her head and others followed her. They walked in a file towards the platform. Before reaching the platform the boys, girls, men, and women who had suffered from small pox came forward and lied prostrate on the road by which Malo was to pass. She walked on each adult and touched the children with her feet”.

“Malo reached the outskirts and placed her ‘Ghanta’ first at the middle of the platform and others kept their respective ‘Ghaanta’ on both the sides of the main pitcher. Malo was again, possessed by spirit while supplicating with *arua* rice. Simultaneously, the buffalo was cut by the young mass and its head was placed over the main pitcher and then on the floor. Other animals were also sacrificed. The individual worshippers also sacrificed their own animals. The heads of the sacrificed animals were heaped up near the buffalo head... the platform specially prepared for Thakrani Penu is considered to be purified by this pool of blood. One ‘Ghanta’ was first it to drive away Thakrani Penu from the village, ... All Bejunis cannot afford the expenses of the ceremonies. They cannot therefore attain the status of Pat Bejuni”. (Das Patnaik; 1972-73: 14-20)

### **Services of the Shamans rendered for various kinds of Rituals & Festivals**

The Bejus and Bejunis perform large variety of shamanic rites at the individuals’ family level and at the community level. While the Bejus combine the works of shaman and medicineman, Bejunis restrict their field of activities to shamanism only, though there is no difference in their shamanic practices. But interestingly people consider Bejunis to be more effective in this art than their

male counterparts and therefore Bejunis outnumber the Beju in Dongria Kandha villages. It may be for the reason that the Beju divide their time between practice of medicine and practice of Shamanism whereas the Bejunis are totally dedicated to shamanic practices.

Various kinds of shamanic jobs are undertaken by the Bejus and Bejunis to serve the individuals' families and the village community. It is evident from our study that their services are more demanded to deal with a multitude of problems at the individual level than at community level. Nevertheless their special role and responsibilities to interact between the concerned supernatural agencies and the village community and obtain the former's favour in the interest of the latter during various seasonal festivals and rituals can not be dispensed with in anyway.

### **Life Cycle Rituals**

#### **Birth**

The services of the Bejuni is not only required for problems like sterility and miscarriage, but also for the attendant problems of child delivery and post delivery periods. The post-delivery services of the Bejuni mostly include performance of purificatory rituals and identification of the ancestors taking rebirth in the newborn baby and preventive rituals to check infant mortality.

A case study is cited below as an example. In this case Shri Mandra Kadraka of Kurli has availed the service of a Bejuni named Jakasika Illime of the same village to perform the post delivery ritual following the birth of a son.

This ritual was held when his son was 21 days old. Both the mother and child bathed anointing turmeric paste. The Bejunis drew a number of squares with rice powder near a wooden post called Tulimunda in the main living room representing the seat of ancestors. Jani, Pujari and Gurumeni were also present there. They put piles of rice on every square. The Bejuni began her incantations to invoke the deities and spirits while her assistant Gurumeni poured Mahua liquor in the squares. After prolonged recitations the Bejuni got into trance. At this state she answered the questions put by Gurumeni. The question in this case was to name the ancestor taken rebirth in the newborn son. The reply was – “grand father Tose Kadraka”. Then the Bejuni regained her senses. The ritualized fowl and pigeon were sacrificed to appease the ancestor. The blood mixed with ritualized rice was anointed on the forehead of the child. Then they sprinkled holy water for purification in all directions with the help of mango twigs. The holy water was prepared by mixing the pounded bark of the mango tree with water. After the ritual the functionaries and guests were entertained with food and liquor. The *Bejuni* was remunerated with ½ kilo of rice, the heads of the sacrificed animals, food and liquor.



### Puberty Rites

The onset first menstruation of a girl is treated as a period of crises in the Dongria Kandha society. She is kept in seclusion in a back room of the house for a period of seven days. In the past they used to stay in the dormitory. Presently she is confined to the back room of her house and attended by her mother, sister and other female members. She is not allowed to do any work especially household works and tabooed to attend any rituals and functions, during this period of pollution.

During this period the girl is considered vulnerable and susceptible to the attack of malevolent deities and sprits and evil eye. Therefore she is subjected to certain taboos and restrictions as a preventive measure. A Beju is called upon to perform rituals to save her from the evil agencies and especially a deity called Gangu Penu, who becomes very active in this time.

On the seventh day the girl goes to a stream with her companions and the Bejuni. She takes bath in the stream anointing turmeric paste on her body. After bath she stands on the bank. There the Bejuni performs rituals offering *arua* rice, vermillion, and burning incense to the *penus*. She recites hymns, ritualizes the chicken and handful of rice and waves them from head to feet of the girl. She repeats the process thrice and throws away rice, to ward off the spirits. The chicken is sacrificed and its blood sprinkled on the pile of rice and on the girl's feet. She is considered free from pollution after this ritual.

### Classification of Shamanic Jobs undertaken by the Bejus and Bejunis

Nature and kinds of jobs undertaken		Level of the job
1. Diagnostic, Curative & Preventive practices for treatment of various kinds of illness	a) to determine cause and b) to prescribe remedy for various types of fever, body aches & pains, small pox, chicken pox, unidentified diseases etc.	Individual family level
2. Dealing with Deities and Spirits (Exorcism)	a) To prevent and remove various kinds of diseases, misfortunes and human sufferings (other than diseases) b) To ward off malevolent spirits (including ancestral spirits) causing trouble c) To appease benevolent ones to earn their pleasure and protection d) To detect the spirit causing trouble	Individual family level

3. Performance of Life Cycle Rituals	<p>a) Pregnancy and childbirth          - To prevent miscarriage, infant death and facilitate easy delivery.          - To identify the ancestor taking rebirth in the new born baby</p> <p>b) Puberty rites for girls to ward off evil spirits.</p> <p>c) Preventive rites during wedding to protect the couple from evil spirits.</p> <p>d) To detect the cause and agencies responsible for abnormal and unnatural deaths and prescribe ritual remedies to prevent future mishaps.</p>	Individual family level
4. Agricultural Rites and Festivals	a) Dongar Puja (November – December) -To get a good harvest (Lahi Penu Laka)	Individual family level.
	b) Bicha Hopan/Bihan Puja (worship of Darni Penu) (March-April) -to start sowing	Both at individual & community level.
	c) Mandia Rani (July-August) (Worship of Koteiwali) -to get a bumper Ragi crop.	Individual & community level.
	d) Pidika (September-October) (worship of Jatrakudi Penu) -To save castor from pests and insects & reap a good harvest	Individual family level
	e) Mendo Puja /Mendo Dakli (December-January)(worship of Lahi Penu and Sita Penu) -To start harvesting)	Individual Family Level
	f) Baliko Repa (April-May) (worship of Darni Penu) -To prevent Kosla and Ragi crops)	Village community level
	g) Kuteli Perpa (April-May) (worship of Lahi Penu, Budharaja and Niamraja) -To appease and seek permission for felling trees from the Dongar	Individual family level
5. Rituals and Festivals for first	a) Nuakhia/Marangi Leka (August-September) (worship of Darni Penu,	Individual and

eating of seasonal crops and fruits.	other deities & spirits) -To start first eating of newly harvested paddy.	community level
	b) Punahapadi (October-November) (worship of Jatrakudi Penu) -For first eating of Jana, Kosla, Kandal, other seasonal crops & fruits	Individual and community level
6. Other seasonal Rituals and Festivals	a) Meria (Jan-February) (worship of Darni Penu) -For allround prosperity and wellbeing of the whole village.	Community level
	b) Ghanta Parab (April- May) (worship of Takrani Penu, Jatrakudi and Sita Penu) - for fulfillment personal vows made before deities & spirits by animal sacrifice	Community level
	c) Salangi (May-June) (ancestor worship)-To protect cattle and other livestock from disease and ill health	Individual family level.
	d) Male Manji (October-November) (ancestor worship) - For the well being of family	Individual family level.
	e) Enda Penu Puja (worship of Enda Penu held as and when required)	community level.

### Marriage

All the religious functionaries including the Bejunis have certain responsibility to solemnize the Dongria Kandha marriage. The Bejunis chant verses and weave peacock feathers to drive away malevolent spirits from affecting the newly wed couple.

The Bejunis perform a ritual during the wedding ceremony. After the arrival of the groom in the bride's village on the day of wedding the Bejuni accompanied by Domb drum beaters, goes to a stream to fetch water in an earthen pitcher and then she cooks rice with that water. This food is offered to ancestral spirits- Dumba in the sleeping room of the bride. At that time the Bejuni invokes spirits and deities and prays them to take this food and protect the life of the married couple.

After marriage, the bride accompanied by the Bejunis and others again goes to the stream. There she prepares food. The Bejuni performs rituals in which a fowl and a pigeon are sacrificed. Then the blood of the animal and cooked food are offered to the deities and spirits by the Bejuni. Then she wards off the evil spirits with the help of peacock feathers and *arua* rice

## Death

In normal cases of death the Bejunis have no role to play. But in case of abnormal deaths caused by suicide, snake bite, small fox, cholera, pregnancy and child birth, tiger attack etc. as well as serial deaths occurring in a family or village, the action of evil and disgruntled spirits are suspected. Further, the unhappy and restless spirits of the victims of abnormal deaths are believed to turn into dreadful ghosts and attack the humans at the earliest opportunity. During such time, the Dongrias badly need the services of the Bejuni to conduct protective and preventive rituals for identifying and appeasing the concerned supernatural agencies.

## Agricultural Rites

### Dongar Puja:

These important seasonal agricultural rites are connected with the beginning and closing stages of shifting cultivation. As these are connected with the swidden (Dongar), they are commonly referred as Dongar Puja. One of them called Kuteli Perpa is linked with the starting phase of shifting cultivation and the two others called Lahi Penu Laka and Mendo Puja are connected with the concluding phase i.e., the harvesting of crops.

### Kuteli Perpa:-

This ceremony is held every year in the month of Chait (March-April). The Bejuni performs rituals to appease deities like Lahi Penu, Budha Raja and Niam Raja and obtain their permission before felling of trees in the swiddens. No one starts cleaning the swiddens before performing this ritual. Before this ritual a spot in the Dongar is cleaned and a square is drawn and crossed. On the appointed day the Bejuni accompanied by the owner and his family members goes to the spot and fires a bundle of dried twigs. In the square three balls of rice are kept for Lahi Penu, Niam Raja and Budha Raja. Then the Bejuni offers items like incense sticks, liquors and worships the deities by her incantations. Gradually she goes into trance, talks to the deities and conveys their desire for animal sacrifice. After getting her indications a fowl and a pigeon are sacrificed and the blood sprinkled on the heap of rice. Then the cleaning of the swidden plot starts. This ritual is observed by all the families possessing swiddens.

### Lahi Penu Laka:

This ritual is also observed in the Dongar before harvesting of crops independently by every family. Both the Beju and Bejuni can perform this ritual. But most often people prefer the services of Bejuni for this purpose.

Beju and the owner of the Donger land with his family members go to the spot with all the *puja* items. The spot is cleaned and plastered with cow dung. Bejuni draws there a square and cross it with *ragi*/rice powder. She keeps *bel*

leaves, three pits of rice, burning incense, resin and heaps of different crops, in and near the square. She recites the names of Darani Penu, Lahi Penu and Loda Penu and other local deities. She feeds rice to a fowl and a pigeon before sacrificing them. After sacrifice she sprinkles the blood over the spot and keeps their heads in the square. The heart of fowl is roasted in fire and offered to the Penu in leaf. The family members prepare food and everybody present there enjoys it. After the ritual they expect to harvest a good crop from their *dongar*.

#### **Mendo Dakli/Mendo Puja:**

Like other two agricultural rites called Dongar Puja, this ritual is held in the *dongar* with the help of a Bejuni. This is performed by individual *dongar* owners in their respective *dongars* during December - January after the Lahi Penu Laka and just before starting the harvesting operations. In this ritual they worship the deities of *dongar*, namely, Lahi Penu and Sita Penu and solicit their permission to harvest the crops.

On the scheduled day the Bejuni, the farmer and his family members go to the site carrying *puja* articles and sacrificial animals. The ritual procedure is same as other two *dongar puja* rites. A fowl and a pigeon are sacrificed to please the deities. Well-to-do families may offer a goat and a pig instead. Then threshing and processing of crops start and grains are kept in a cleaned spot. A person carries some Kosla grains in a bamboo basket to the owner's house. On reaching there, the family members wash his feet with turmeric water and sprinkle some water on his head. After that he goes into the house to store the grain. Then the operation of harvesting and storing of crops begins there after.

Besides the above three rituals, there are some others conducted by the Bejus and Bejunis for the Dongria Kandha families as described below.

#### **Mala Manji:**

It is observed in every household, in the month of Kartika with the help of the Bejunis on days like Wednesday Sunday or Tuesday. It is meant to appease household deities and ancestral spirits to keep the family well. For this ritual articles like *tingulu* (small earthen pot), winnowing fan, wine, pigeon, fowl, *arua* rice, *ragi* gourd, *ragi* and rice powder, incense are required. After drawing squares with rice or *ragi* powder, the shamanin starts the proceedings. In front of the squares she keeps piles of rice and *ragi* on which *tingulu* and gourd are placed. She offers some rice, burn incense, recite incantations and shakes rice in her winnowing fan and gets into trance and answers questions. Then the fowl and the pigeon are sacrificed. The ritualized rice and *ragi* are put into the *tingulu* and gourd and hung in the ceiling of the house.

## Services rendered by the Bejus and Bejunis at the Community Level during observance of Rituals & Festivals

### Meria Parab

Meria or Kodru Parab is and the most important communal festival held in the month of Magha (Jan-Feb) to worship Darani Penu and other village deities. It is believed that this festival brings them good rain, good crops peace and prosperity. This festival is observed in all the villages belonging to a Mutha in rotation. Hence each village makes arrangements for this festival when its turn comes after a gap of several years depending upon the number of villages in its Mutha. It is a great socio-religious occasion to which the heads of other villages of Mutha and neighbouring villages, friends and relatives are invited to attend. Preparations are made much before the date of the festival, which is observed with pomp and ceremony for 8 days.

The villagers erect a *munda*, a wooden post under the supervision of Jani before two months of the festival. During this time the Domb musicians beat drums and play other musical instruments. Soon after the Bejunis recite incantations and dance to get into trance to tell if any mistake made during the installation. They perform a ritual there sacrificing a fowl and pigeon to please the deities.

Lamba Jani plays a leading role in the festival. Other functionaries have their specific respective roles to play, which are never considered minor. On the first day Lamba with others brings utensils and ritual items, keep them at Sadar and perform rituals. Pujari's main duty is to prepare a Meria Chhatri (umbrella). It is used in the processions to ward off evil spirits and fixed at Jankad.

The festival starts on a Friday or Saturday morning. Bejunis led by the Pat Bejuni go to the seat of Darani Penu. There they chant and dance to the tune of the music to please Darani Penu. Then Pat Bejuni gets into trance. There they sacrifice fowl, pigeon and a goat, under the supervision of Lamba Jani.

In the mid night Lamba Jani, Ichan Jani, Pujari and Pat Bejuni perform rituals at the Darani Penu. At that time near Koteiwali the sacrificial animal i.e., a buffalo brought for *meria* sacrifice is bathed with turmeric water by the Bejuni to purify it.

In the meanwhile every household also sacrifice goats, sheep, fowls and pigeons in their individual capacity before Jatrakudi. The *meria* buffalo is tied to a wooden post erected for the purpose. Before sacrifice all the functionaries utter *mantras* to pray Darani Penu to accept this sacrifice. The Bejunis and Lamba Jani get into trance time and again. They dance in the state of trance. At the auspicious moment i.e., just before the down the Pujari gives the first blow with this axe to the buffalo thrice obeying the direction of Lamba Jani. Then the madding crowd joins the torturous killing spree to cut the animal into pieces, which are shared among them. The head of the animal is offered to Darani Penu.

The main ritual ends with this. The remaining days, they spend in dancing, drinking, feasting, merry making and socializing with their near and dear ones.

### **Enda Penu Puja**

Enda Penu is revered as a dancing deity. Her seat lies in the village Batiguma. She is to be worshiped at any time according to her wish. However, the worship is invariably conducted during the months of October-December. This festival is a grand festival next to the *meria* Parab that involves participation of the Bejunis, the unmarried boys and girls and the villagers of a number of villages for a fortnight to a month.

It starts from the village where the deity appears in the dream of a Pat Bejuni and expresses her desire to visit some neighbouring villages. The Pat Bejuni being possessed by the deity announces her wish before her assistants and fellow villagers. The villages make necessary arrangements for the celebrations. It begins with the worship of the village deity, Koteiwali. There, the Pat Bejuni accompanied by fellow Bejunis, her assistants and unmarried village youths get into trance and starts dancing. In the meantime, the villagers prepare a schedule for the visit of the deity to different neighbouring villages on different dates. Accordingly, the dancing party led by Pat Bejuni who is possessed by the deity moves from village to village in a procession where they are given grand reception. They cover 10 to 15 villages in one or two weeks in a circle and finally return to their own village completing the full circle. The villagers and the Bejunis of these villages also join the procession. They are entertained lavishly with food and drinks. While the dancing party makes rounds in the villages the unmarried youths collect rice in a winnowing fan from each and every family as a matter of custom. Their movements are called Enda Penu Trepha.

On their return to their native village the villagers organize a festival called Enda Penu Jatra. During this festival, they worship Koteiwali with the sacrifice of a fowl and pigeon and also appease Jatra Kudi Penu by sacrificing a buffalo. This celebration concludes with a grand feast attended by the whole village and the guests.

### **Balikorepa**

It is observed at the village level in every three years to solicit the protection of Darani Penu for Kosla and *ragi* crops. It is held in the month of April for 8 days in which Bejunis play important role.

It starts on a Wednesday. Near the seat of Darani Penu a wooden structure is raised and shaded with green branches. Below the shade a rectangular sand bed is laid. The Bejunis conduct rituals under the structure and worship the deities offering steam cake made of *ragi* powder, incense, resin, and flowers. The Pat Bejuni along with other Bejunis chants verses and goes into trance. Then she dances to the tune of music and answers questions. At the end of the ritual green

gram and maize seeds are sown in the sand bed and watered for germination. This ritual is called Dongabali. The rituals are repeated for days together in the evening and morning hours. Bejuni in charge of the rituals observes fasting through the day and takes food during night only. In the mean while when sprouts come out of the bed, people consider it a good omen indicating supernatural blessing and become very happy. They take proper care of the seedlings till the 8<sup>th</sup> day. On the closing day, they offer these seedlings to Jatrakudi Penu. There they sacrifice a fowl, a pigeon and a goat to please the deity and consume the meat in a feast.

### **Bichahopan**

It is a week long agricultural festival held in the month of Chait (March-April). It is observed to ritualize seeds of various crops before sowing in the field. The deities worshiped during this festival are Darani Penu, Hira Penu and Sita Penu. It is held both at the village level and the individual level. Jani, Ichan Jani, Pat Bejuni and other Bejunis take an active part in the ritual. While the Jani collects crops from every family and conducts rituals at the seat of Darani Penu sacrificing a fowl and pigeon there, the Bejunis render services to individual *dongar* cultivators by conducting rituals in latter's *dongars* to appease Hira Penu and Sita Penu with the sacrifice of a chicken.

In the evening hours of the festive week another ritual performance is held. A young boy carrying a string cot over his head moves around the village dancing to the tunes of the drums encircling the seat of Darni Penu and women throw turmeric water over him. Others join the dance by throwing crops at each other. As a result the village street is littered with a variety of crops, which the Dombs collect in the morning.

Also during this festival communal hunting expeditions are organized. Before the expedition, the weapons such as bows, arrows, swords, axes, guns etc are ritualized before the village deity. If the hunting party returns to village after successful hunt, the celebrations reach a feverish pitch. The kill is shared among all land women are forbidden to share the meat.

### **First Fruit Eating Rituals**

The Dongria Kandha observes, some seasonal festivals associated with the first eating of seasonal fruits and various crops harvested from their *dongars* in succession. Puna padi is one of such ritual connected with the first eating of Kosala, Arka, Jana and Ganthia crops after offering the same to Jatrakudi Penu and ancestral spirits.

### **Puna Padi**

It held in the month of Kartika (Oct-Nov) at community level. The Bejuni of the village officiates in the ritual. A day before the observance of the ritual, the temporary thatch of Jatrakudi Penu is repaired and new bamboo-splits are



replaced by the Dhangdas (youths) of the village. Three of the Dhangidis (maidens) go from door to door for collection of new crops and pile them up in front of the *penu* and watch them for the whole night.

Next morning, after the arrival of the Pat Bejuni along with three other Bejunis, three Dhangdis carry three new pitcher-full of water from the stream and place them separately on the pile of various crops. The Bejunis start their chorus and the Pat Bejuni gets into trance. She gets into trance three times, and each time when she regains consciousness, she pours unboiled rice from her winnowing fan into the water filled pitcher. It is believed that three dreadful disciples of Jatrakudi Penu are satisfied by that. Ultimately the Pat Bejuni is spirit possessed for the fourth time indicating the presence of Jatrakudi Penu. Other Bejunis then start reciting incantations forcefully and throw burning incense on the pile of crops. The Pat Bejuni after regaining her senses, sacrifices a pigeon and two fowls one after the other in the name of Darani Penu, Jatrakudi Penu and for her disciples respectively

The relatives, who are present on the spot, also offer animals for sacrifice. It is called Bopani.

Ultimately a buffalo, brought for sacrifice, is tied at a tree by the Barika. The Pat Bejuni stands over it and starts dancing. In the meanwhile, three other Bejunis throw crops from the pile at the buffalo. While dancing the Pat Bejuni is again spirit possessed, which is indicative of the fact that the Jatrakudi Penu is asking for food. Immediately after she regains her senses, the buffalo is slaughtered by the Barika and blood is sprinkled over the pile of crops. The meat of all the birds and buffalo is cooked separately which are eaten by the villagers in a feast. After this usually crops can be sold or eaten.

### **Conclusion**

In the tribal society beliefs and practices connected with religion and shamanism go side by side. So it cannot be separated. It is true that shamanism is strongly linked with their socio-economic and religious life.

The Dongria shamanic functionaries like the Beju and Bejuni play most important role in their respective societies. They receive great respect as experts in performing magico-religious rituals and festivals. It is believed they stand between supernatural agencies and people. They are capable to carry message of people to gods, spirits and ancestors and get their blessings in the shape of prosperity, peace, good harvest, good health etc. for individuals and society.

Shamans are part and parcel of the Dongria Kandha society. They still have preserved their values and traditions to great many extents from the influence of advanced cultures and societies. Yet there are magnitude of factors slowly and steadily shaking their age old magico-religious importance, utility and its spiritual significance.

Usually factors which disturbed their traditions, more or less are development interventions, spread of education, visit of outsiders, actions of voluntary organizations, invasion of mass media, etc. It is found that most of younger generation showing interest in modernization while older people still like to follow their tradition. However belief in magico-religious tradition still exists. The services of shaman and shamanin are still in demand for various purposes.

Religion is a cultural system. The understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of a society would require a sound knowledge of its culture. On the other hand the study of the religious system of a society would provide some understanding of its society and culture. In the Dongria society, their shamans continue to retain their stronghold in the supernatural domain despite the acculturative impacts of the modern agencies of change. Hence, the study of shamanism in their society is needed to get some idea about their social system and way of life, which will ultimately help, in effective development intervention.

### References:

- |                                |        |   |
|--------------------------------|--------|---|
| Das Patnaik, P.S.              | (1972) | Bejuni, Their Initiation into Shamanhood: <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol-XIV, No.1, pp.11-20.   |
| Nayak, P.K.                    | (1989) | <i>Blood, Women and Territory; An Analysis of Clan Feuds of the Dongria Kandha</i> , Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, pp. 155-171. |
| Patnaik, N & Das Patnaik, P.S. | (1982) | <i>The Kondh of Orissa: The Socio-Cultural Life and Development</i> , Tribal and Harijan Research cum Training Institute, Bhubaneswar.  |
| Spradley, J.P. & D.W. Mearns   | (1975) | <i>Anthropology; The Cultural Perspective</i> , New York, John Wiley & Sons Inc.  |
| Trask, W.R.                    | (1964) | <i>Shamanism: Archaic Technique of Ecstasy</i> , Princeton University Press (Translated from Mircea Eliade).                            |
| Tribes of Orissa               | (1990) | Harijan and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, pp.245 - 54   |
| Thurston, E                    | (1909) | <i>Castes and Tribes of Southern India</i> , Vol-VIII, Madras.  |
| Watts, Neville A.              | (1970) | <i>The Half Clad Tribals of Eastern India</i> , Orient Longmans, Bombay.  |
| Elwin, V.                      | (1957) | <i>Tribal Myths of Orissa</i> , Oxford University, Press, London.   |

# ETHNIC HEALERS AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDH OF ORISSA \*

A. K. Gamango <sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

The Dongria Kondh is a primitive and backward section of the Kondh tribe. Through their age-old experience, they have evolved certain traditional mechanisms and institutions to meet their needs in everyday life. They have evolved their socio-religious and economic organizations and institutions for achieving different objectives. Religion is one of them, which plays a significant role in establishing peace, harmony, and solidarity in their society and guides them to follow the right path for prosperity.

Their age old institution of shamanism still has a powerful influence on them and their male and female shamans called *Beju* and *Bejuni* (*Pejni*) respectively are among the most distinguished and respected magico-religious functionaries in their society. They are primarily religious in the sense that they seek help from the divine or spiritual world, or they can be more magical in that they attempt to manipulate the spirit of the supernatural forces. Such people who have special religious knowledge either control supernatural power out rightly to facilitate others in their attempt to influence it. These specialists are called shamans and priests. Though, the priest and the shaman coexist in the Dongria society, the latter acts as a vehicle for communication between human and supernatural. He often establishes a personal relationship with the supernatural beings and/or knows the secret medicines and spells necessary to use supernatural power. On the contrary, the priests as religious specialists also mediate between people and super naturals but usually do not have powers to control the supernatural agencies. Thus according to Spradley and Mecurday, "Shamans control supernatural power, has no congregations, and direct rituals only when there is need for them. Priests mediate between people and the supernatural and lead congregations at regularly held cyclical rites" (1975; 454). "The shaman is a part time magico-religious specialist who is adept at trance, divination and curing. He derives his power directly from a supernatural

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 47, Nos.1&2, 2007, pp.139-149

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

source, usually through mystic experience, accompanied frequently by the use of hallucinations" (Olien, 1978; 378).

As described in 'Notes and Quarries in Anthropology', "The term shamanism has been applied generally for spirit possession of priests, and the manifestations have come to be called shamanism" (1952: 174). The shamanism being an archaic religious art is closely associated with religion. It has its own identity, value and jurisdiction in the realm of supernaturalism. The shamanic rituals and processes are mainly concerned with impersonal forces and powers living in natural and artificial objects. Shamanic performers call in the supernatural beings to act through charms and spells and adjurational observances. According to La Barre (1972:267) as quoted by Olien, "... the shamanistic belief system accepts nature as it is, as opposed to large states which transform the environment. The shaman merely manages the changing elements in it, such as life and death, the weather, and so on."

In the Dongria Kondh society certain category of religious functionaries such as *Beju* and *Bejuni* (*Pejni*) perform the act of shamanism. They have their own adopted spirits whom they regularly worship to get their favour and help in occult practices. They can communicate with spirits and deities who are believed to be responsible for causing human problems. In order to communicate with spirits, they get into trance through divination, prayers, offerings, oblation and certain rituals. In the state of trance they tell people about their problems and solutions by contacting the concerned spirits. They prescribe the remedy through the rice supplication process called *puchana*, which is an important part of the shamanic ritual. They advise and sometimes, forcibly demand performance of rituals and animal sacrifices to appease supernatural powers.

The most important characteristic of Dongria religion is faith in magic. Both white and black magic are part and parcel of shamanism. The later is rarely practiced openly as it is believed to involve risk of life. As a matter of fact, the Dongria Kondh reacts violently when they suspect any person practicing black magic. They believe that it is used to harm and cause death.

The Dongria Kondhs strongly believe that shamanism is a magico-religious art, which is gifted to certain persons by supernatural powers. Their success in learning and practicing the art depends upon supernatural will and sanctions. Becoming a shaman can be the result of a mythical experience, such as a vision or a period of special training or both. Practically, a shaman requires certain kind of training not in the religious doctrines which he interprets as a priest would, but in the methods he uses in his normal religious activities. Though in actual practice they learn the art from the veterans, they deny such learning and training and ascribe supernatural blessings to their practice. In reality the shamanic practices of the Dongria Kondh is a learned behaviour acquired by proper training and orientation to the trade by the persons having the interest and aptitude for such work. In the Dongria society, their shamans

continue to retain their stronghold in the supernatural domain despite the acculturative impacts of the modern agencies of change. Hence, the study of shamanism in their society is needed to get some idea about their social system and way of life, which will ultimately help in effective developmental intervention.

This paper is based on a study of magico-religious beliefs and practices among the Dongria Kondhs in some villages located in the Niamagiri hill ranges covering the Kurli area of Bissamcuttack Block in Rayagada district of Orissa.

### **The Dongria Kondh**

Like other primitive sections of the Kondh tribe, the Dongria Kondh are also shifting cultivators. Fruit bearing trees like mango, jackfruit and tamarind generally surrounds the Dongria Kondh villages. The seats of the two village shrines viz, the 'Darni Penu' (Mother Goddess or Earth Goddess) and her consort, 'Kotiasal' are established in a central place inside the village. There is also an open ground with seats of stone slabs earmarked for holding the meetings of their traditional village *panchayat*. The spinsters' dormitory called 'Adasbetta' located near the hill stream at one end of the village is another landmark of the Dongria Kondh village.

"The Kondh villages, ideally speaking are as much social entities as they are politically with huge measures of cohesion and continuity... The head of the village tribal council is also the headman of the village. Parallel to the secular position held by the village headman is the religious head called, 'Jani' who presides over all the religious functions organized by the people of the village. In some areas the leadership of both secular and religious functions combines with one person, which goes by one term 'Jani'. In addition to these secular and religious heads there is a functionary called, 'Dishari' who works as the medicine man in some areas and astrologer in other areas. In every village there is a peon called 'Barika' of Domb community who plays an important role in the village life. He calls the people to the meeting place when the village assembly sits, contacts officials on behalf of the village and acts as an interpreter of the people. The tribal council enjoys considerable freedom in conducting its day-to-day activities. The Dongrias culturally have many other distinguishing features. One of them is their clan organization...In this case the clan is not totemic as is usual in other tribes. It is rather derived from the 'Mutha' system, a territorial unit that was devised for administrative purposes during the British rule" (Patnaik, 1982; vi)

For their so many striking features, the Dongrias draw attention of the anthropologists and outsiders. As a tribal folk, they are simple, sensible and quick in observation. "In almost all activities the people of the Kondh community reveal a corporate life. They help each other in economic activities and drink, dance and sing all in congregation. Religious ceremonies and festivals are performed communally. Crime is rare, adultery is common and the individual behaviour is marked by honest and truthfulness. Ideally hospitable, exceptionally candid and

remarkably simple, the primitive section of the tribe particularly the Kutia and Dongria live in nature and fade away in its mystery. To the Kondh the nature is the greatest impeller, the scenery around forming the grand arena where the human drama of vicissitudes of the mortal life is staged”.

### **Religious Functionaries among Dongria Kondh**

There are number of magico-religious and administrative functionaries in a village. They operate in their respective domains of duties and responsibilities. They propitiate deities and spirits through different types of rituals. It is believed that progress, peace and prosperity of entire community are not possible to be handled by one deity. Thus they have adopted number of deities and spirits to meet their various purposes and the responsibility of appeasing them also have been distributed among several functionaries. During festivals and functions they perform rituals offering liquor and animals sacrifice, pray and invoke supernatural powers to get their blessings and protection. Among the Dongria the sacred functionaries are called, *Jani*, *Lamba Jani*, *Ichan Jani*, *Pujari*, *Bejuni* etc. Besides, there are *Gurumeni* and *Barik* who assist them whenever necessary. In certain occasions the household heads perform certain rituals to appease ancestral spirits and other household deities and spirits at the family level.

In brief, traditionally *Jani* the high priest is also the secular head of a Dongria Kondh village. He plays most important role in both the religious and secular spheres. He is the principal worshipper of *Darani Penu*, the Earth Goddess and commands great respect in the society. There is an *Ichan Jani* from the Jani's lineage to assist *Jani*. He prescribes and arranges items for rituals and assists Jani during worship. The *Jani* who has vast experience and officiates in *Meria* festival is called *Lamba Jani*. *Pujari*, a hereditary, functionary performs special duties in the *Meria* festival. He makes an umbrella out of bamboo and during rituals he joins with *Jani*. He also takes part in other communal festivals and functions. The *Bejus* and *Bejunis*, have special responsibilities in their society. They are experts in magico-religious rituals. *Gurumeni* assists Beju/ Bejuni in magico-religious performances. Besides, *Disari* is the medicine man of the Dongrias.

**Shaman (Beju) & Shamanin (Bejuni):** Shamanism is defined as “Precisely one of the archaic techniques of ecstasy mysticism, magic and religion in the broadest sense of the term” (Eliade, 1951; xix). As it is commonly believed, shaman is not simply a magician and a medicine man. “But beyond this, he is a psycho pomp, and he may also be a priest, mystic and poet.... This of course, does not mean that he is the one and only manipulator of the sacred, nor that religious activity is completely usurped by him. In many tribes the sacrificing priest coexists with the shaman, ... Magic and magicians are to be found more or less all over the world, whereas shamanism exhibits a particular magical specialty... By virtue of this fact, though the shaman is, among other things, a magician, not every magician can properly be termed a shaman. The same distinction must be applied in regard to shamanic healing; every medicine man is

a healer, but the shaman employs a method that is his and his alone. As for the shamanic techniques of ecstasy, they do not exhaust all the varieties of ecstatic experience documented in the history of religions and religious ethnology. Hence any ecstatic cannot be considered a Shaman; the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld" (Trask, 1964; 4-5).

The Dongria Shaman, more or less, fits into the above description. But in Dongria society the medicine man is called "Dishari" who practices herbal medicine. There are persons who only practice medicine and there are also persons who combine the work of shaman and medicine man. The female shamanins (Bejunis) do not come under this category as they only conduct preventive and curative rituals for treatment of diseases and other problems but do not prescribe medicines like the Bejus do.

**Bejus and Bejunis in Jakasika and Wadaka Muthas:** From the study at Dongria villages it is found that there may or may not be any Beju or Bejuni at a particular village. In such cases the Beju of nearby village serves the villagers. In the Muthas, such as Jakasika and Wadaka, the Bejunis outnumber the Bejus. It is interesting to note that there are only four Bejus against 19 Bejunis in Jakasika Mutha. The probable reason behind the Bejunis overwhelmingly outnumbering the Bejus may be that people rely more on the Bejunis than the Bejus. However, the Beju and Bejuni undergo the same process of training and initiation, deal with the same problems and conduct the same rituals. Further, the Bejus go a step ahead of the Bejunis by their practice of herbal medicines. Yet the people are more inclined to avail the services of Bejunis.

The Beju and Bejuni can come from any clan. The remuneration for their services is not fixed. They are paid in cash or kinds comprising a small amount of money rice, meat or head of the sacrificial animals and alcoholic drinks. They do not demand anything and are satisfied with whatever they get from their clients. Moreover their jurisdiction is not confined to any particular village or Mutha. They can render services anywhere when called upon to do so. The veterans among them who have vast experience in this line are elevated to the status of Pat-Bejuni (the chief shamanin). But among the Bejus there are no Pat-Bejus in Dongria villages of our study area.

**The Domain of Beju & Bejuni:** Like all other religious functionaries, shaman and shamanin play an important role in magico-religious life of the Dongrias. They understand their special socio-religious responsibilities and perform both religious and shamanic rituals with utmost care and sincerity. It is because knowingly or unknowingly if they neglect in their acts deviating the age-old traditions, it is believed that misfortune befalls on the society.

### **Various kinds of Shamanic Jobs undertaken by the Bejus and Bejunis:**

In fact shaman and shamanin are the representative of the people to whom supernatural powers have blessed to act as medium of communication between them and the humans. In that capacity they propitiate gods, deities and spirits on behalf of people. As they are specialists in divination by rice supplication process, in reciting incantations and dancing and in performing rituals, they try to find remedy to human problems by communicating with the supernatural. They play an exceptional role in defense of the psychic integrity of society. They are the champions to encounter the spiritual forces. They not only combat against demons and diseases but also against the black magic.

The Bejus and Bejunis perform large variety of shamanic rites at the individual family level and at the community level. While the Bejus combine the works of shaman and medicine man, Bejunis restrict their field of activities to shamanism only, though there is no difference in their shamanic practices. But interestingly people consider Bejunis to be more effective in this art and therefore Bejunis outnumber the Beju in Dongria Kondh villages. It may be for the reason that the Beju share time between practice of medicine and practice of Shamanism whereas the Bejunis are totally dedicated to shamanic practices.

### **Diagnostic and Curative Services for Illness**

So far as the diagnostic and curative services are concerned, the roles, functions and modus operandi of Beju and Bejuni differ. People accept the Beju as a physician; a practitioner of herbal medicine. The Bejuni is rather a witch doctor as well as a mental therapist. Patients come to her when the traditional medicine fails and involvement of supernatural agencies is suspected. Then it becomes the responsibility of the Bejuni to detect the troublesome spirit or deity, prescribe and conduct appropriate remedial rituals. The rituals are mostly directed towards appeasement of the deities and spirits by animal sacrifice.

As regards their traditional costume, the Bejus and Bejunis have nothing very spectacular except wearing red and semi red beads, vermillion marks on their foreheads and some heavy ornaments. They put on a chain of bells around their ankles, which jingles when they dance in trance. They hold a bunch of peacock feathers by waving which they drive out evil agencies. Another important paraphernalia is the winnowing fan with which they conduct rice divination.

### **Classification of Shamanic Jobs undertaken by the Bejus and Bejunis**

Various kinds of shamanic jobs undertaken by the Bejus and Bejunis to serve the individuals families and the village community have been classified below. It is evident from the tasks that their services are more demanded to deal with a multitude of problems at the individual level than at the community level. Nevertheless their special role and responsibilities to interact between the concerned supernatural agencies and the village community and obtain the



formers' favour in the interest of the latter during various seasonal festivals and rituals cannot be dispensed with in anyway. But both the Bejus and Bejunis undertake different kinds of shamanic jobs as discussed below.

1. For individual family they undertake diagnostic, curative & preventive practices for treatment of various kinds of illness such as to determine the cause and prescribe remedy for fever, various types of body aches and pains, small pox, chicken pox, unidentified diseases etc.

II. By exorcism they deal with Deities and Spirits to prevent and remove various kinds of diseases misfortunes and human sufferings (other than diseases), to ward off malevolent sprits causing trouble (including ancestral sprits), to appease benevolent ones to earn their pleasure and protection and to detect the spirit causing trouble at the individual level.

III. To serve the above purpose, Bejus and Bejunis perform shamanic rituals at individual family level in life cycle events.

### **Services rendered by Beju & Bejuni**

**(1) Life Cycle Rituals (pregnancy, childbirth, marriage & death)** - to prevent miscarriage, infant death and facilitate easy delivery, to identify the ancestor taking rebirth in the new born baby, to conduct puberty rites for girls to ward off evil spirits, preventive rites during wedding to protect the couple from malevolent spirits and detect the cause and agencies responsible for abnormal and unnatural deaths and prescribe ritual remedies to prevent mishaps.

**(2) Agricultural Rites and Festivals-** They officiate in Dongar Puja (November - December) at individual family level to get a good harvest, Kuteli Perpa (April-May) (Worship of Lahi Penu, Budharaja and Niamraja) to appease and seek permission for felling trees from the Dongar, Pidika (September-October) (worship of Jatrakudi Penu) to save castor from pests and insects and reap a good harvest and Mendo Puja /Mendo Dakli (December-January) (worship of Lahi Penu and Sita Penu) to start harvesting; and both at individual and community level festivals like, Bicha Hopa/Bihan Puja (worship of Darni Penu) (March-April) to start sowing and, Mandia Rani (July-August) (Worship of Koteiwali) to get a bumper Ragi crop and Balikorepa (April-May) (worship of Darni Penu) to prevent Kosla and Ragi crops.

**(3) Rituals and Festivals for first eating of seasonal crops and fruits-** They also perform rituals in Nuakhia/Marangi Laka (August-September) in which they worship Darni Penu, other deities and spirits to start first eating of newly harvested paddy and in Punahapadi (October-November) (worship of Jatrakudi Penu) for first eating of Kosla, Kandul, Jana, other seasonal crops and fruits at individual and community level. Besides they also officiate in other seasonal rituals and festivals like, Meriah (January-February) (worship of Darni Penu) for all-round prosperity and wellbeing of the village, Ghanta Parab (April-

May) (worship of Takrani Penu, Jatrakudi and Sita Penu) for fulfillment personal vows made to deities and spirits by animal sacrifice at village level and Enda Penu Puja (held as and when required) at village community level. In Salangi *puja* (May-June) (ancestor worship) to protect cattle and other livestock from disease and ill health and Male Manji (October-November) (Ancestor worship) the shaman and shamanin perform rituals for the well being of the family at the Individual family level.

### **Service to Individual Families**

To find out the services of Beju and Bejunis rendered to individual families, data have been gathered from two study villages, viz. Khambesi and Kurli in the year 2001-02.

As evident from data analysis of the shamanic practices, 3 Bejus and 5 Bejunis of Khambesi and Kurli villages have rendered various kinds of shamanic services to a total number of 146 individual clients belonging to both the villages. On an average each functionaries have served 18 clients during the last year. To analyze this information village wise separately, the four functionaries of Kurli village show a higher average figure of individual client service i.e., 21.5 each than that of their counterparts operating in Khambesi that is 15. The reason is that Khambesi is a large village as compared to Kurli and proportionately larger number of Beju and Bejunis are present in Khambesi. To be specific, there are 10 functionaries including 8 Bejunis and 2 Bejus working in Khambesi and only half of their number i.e., 1 Beju and only 4 Bejunis are performing in Kurli village. Based on the principle of demand and supply, the average figure of client service of the Bejus and Bejunis of Khambesi has come down as compared to that of their counterparts operation in Kurli.

If one looks data sex wise, the Bejunis of the both villages show a higher record of client service than their male counterparts. That is to say that, while the three Bejus have attended 49 clients with an average of 16 clients each, the 5 Bejunis have served 97 clients with a higher average of 19 clients each. This supports our finding about the higher demand for services of the Bejunis than the Bejus among the Dongria Kondhs since the former is believed to be more effective than their male counterparts.

Difference is also found in the level of individual performances of the functionaries. Among them the highest member of clients i.e., 28 have been served by Bejuni named Sonari Jakasika of Kurli and the lowest number i.e., 7 has been attended by the Bejuni named Maladi Kadraka of Khambesi. Among the 3 Bejus the highest (25) and the lowest (11) have been reported in cases of Daitari Kadraka of Khambesi and Namo Sikoka of Kurli respectively. Hence individual performances and rate of success of the functionaries' matters and the demand for their services vary accordingly.

The Bejus and Bejunis have rendered various kinds of services to their clients. These are classified into four major heads, viz. (i) diagnostic and curative services for illness, (ii) detection of trouble making spiritual agencies and troubleshooting either by appeasement through rituals and sacrifices or by getting rid of them through exorcism, (iii) conduct of certain life cycle rituals for prevention and protection of mother and child and married couple from harmful supernatural and (iv) performance of certain agricultural rites associated with stages of shifting cultivation and crop harvesting.

In these four categories of services the highest number of clients (90) has been covered under agricultural rites called Dongar Puja. The next in the order is diagnostic and curative rites for illness covering 43 clients. The services connected with life cycle rituals concerning child birth and marriage have been delivered only to 7 persons and the lowest number of clients i.e. 6, have received shamanic services relating to exorcism of trouble making spirits.

Analyzing the data village wise, the same trend is found. The service on agricultural rites covered the largest number of clients in both the villages. But the smallest numbers of clients have been served under exorcism in Kurli and under life cycle rituals in Khambesi. Also in both the cases the second highest number of clients has been served under the diagnostic and curative service category.

Comparing the performances of the 3 Bejus and 5 Bejunis of both the villages with regard to these four major categories of shamanic services, one finds that the 3 Bejus have served the largest number of individuals i.e., 29 out of total 49 under the diagnostic and curative services category on which they are more relied upon as compared to only 14 such clients (out of total 97) served by the Bejunis. The 5 Bejunis on the other hand, have performed agricultural rites for a majority of their clients (75 out of 97) as compared to only 15 persons served by their male counterparts under such kinds of services.

It is interesting to note that, in addition to their greater involvement in agricultural rites, the Bejunis retain their stronghold in life cycle rituals where the Bejus have no presence at all. But the situation reverses when it comes to dealing with the trouble making spiritual agencies involving exorcism. In this field, Bejus have a stronger presence than the Bejunis.

## **A. CASE STUDIES OF BEJU / BEJUNI**

### **I. Namo Sikoka: A Young Apprentice Beju of Kurli village**

In the village Panimunda, there is a Disari-cum-Beju named *Ado Sikoka*. When his wife died, there was no one to take care of his young son *Namo Sikoka*. So he was sent to Kurli to stay with his maternal uncle. Now the young child has attained his youth.

Two years ago, Namo fell ill and experienced dreams. He showed signs of fear and abnormal behaviour sometimes. His uncle called a Bejuni to treat him. The latter conducted divination and announced that two deities namely Simjodi Penu and Taku Penu are behind this problem. They want this young man to become a Beju.

Namo honored the divine wish. The people of Kurli also encouraged him to do so because, there are four Bejunis in the village but no Beju and so they badly need the services of a Beju. Since last two years Namo has started practice as a medicine-man. But he is still an apprentice as he is yet to enter into "spiritual marriage" with his tutelary spirit.

## **II. Mandika Nilamani of Kurli village**

She is an old woman of above 60 years. Her parents were ordinary people. They never wanted their daughter, Nilamani to become a Bejuni. But she was destined to become so. In her adolescence, she received divine indications; it came in shape of a dream followed by prolonged fever. As usual a Bejuni was pressed into service. The cause was detected. That was Niam Raja, Kula Kene and Panji Guru, the Penu who wanted Nilamani to become a shamanin. Her parents did not agree. The Bejuni warned them of dire consequences. They had to agree at last. Nilamani started her career by learning the art from the experienced female Bejunis and finally got married to her tutelary spirit. In course of time she married Chaita Mandika of Kurli village and lived with her husband. There she has been practicing shamanism for more than 40 years.

## **III. Maladi Kadraka of Khembesi village**

She inherited shaman hood from her natal family. Her mother was a shamanin. Her father was a Sisa, the assistant of the village priest, Jani and had knowledge of herbal medicines.

From her very childhood Maladi was exposed to magico-religious activities due to her family background and developed an interest towards this service. The supernatural sanction came to her at 14 years of age. Lodasoni Penu appeared in her dream and persuaded her to marry and adopt him spiritually. In her dream, she was asked to pass the ordeal of walking over piece of thread connecting two hills. She had to walk to and fro three times carefully avoiding falling down. Falling down means disaster not only in the dream world itself as for the consequent fatal injury and the attack of hungry wild animals waiting on the ground, but also for the imminent misfortunes in real life. She came out of the ordeal successfully but fell ill soon after. As usual, an expert Bejuni was called in and she detected the spirit responsible for this problem. Acting upon her

advice, her parents and Maladi herself decided to honour the wishes of Penu. They performed prescribed rituals to appease the Penu.

Maladi learnt the art form her mother as well as from the aged Bejunis. The next step was attainment of *bonafide* Bejuni hood by solemnizing spiritual marriage with Lodasoni Penu. In course of time the girl grew up and got married to Pokru Kodraka of Khembesi. Incidentally, her mother-in-law, Rupeli was the Pat-Bejuni in the village. Her mother-in-law's strong influences prevented Maladi to practice during the life time of the latter. After the latter's death, she filled up the vacuum by starting her practice as worthy successor of her mother and mother-in-law. Now she has reached her ripe old age. Surprisingly her physical activities and agility have not diminished proportionately. She is capable of dancing for hours together in the state of trance.

#### **V. Hundadi Wadaka: A Bejuni of Khambesi village**

She was a charming maiden of 15 years of the village Kota belonging to Sikoka Mutha. Her step mother was a Shamanin. The influence of step-mother on the girl was negligible. Like any other girl of her age, she was attending the village dormitory, meeting with her boy friends and dreaming about getting a sensible husband and leading a happy conjugal life. In this time, a dream came and changed her course of life.

A Penu visited the girl in her dreams and tried to win her heart. The innocent girl was mentally disturbed and confused. At first she felt shy to disclose the dream before her friends and parents. Sometimes she showed abnormal behaviour and also fell ill intermittently. Her parents were worried. They requisitioned the services of a Bejuni. The Bejuni went into trance and announced that Bira or Bhairo Penu is disturbing the girl. The deity wants to marry her so as to make her a Bejuni. The consequence of defying his wish might be disastrous. The girl and her parents were puzzled. Internally they did not want to comply but under the threat of the Penu's anger, they had to agree reluctantly. Hundadi was initiated into shaman hood first by apprenticeship and subsequently by spiritual marriage. After some days she was married to Driba Wadaka of Khembesi village and came to stay with her husband. There after she continued her practice as Bejuni in Khambesi.

### **(B) CASES OF PERSONAL PROBLEMS ATTENDED BY JAKASIKA ILLIME-BEJUNI**

#### **I. Problems Associated With Infant Mortality**

The three months old baby son of Jakasika Syama suffered from fever and passed away. Parents suspected displeasure of spirits behind this

mishap and solicited the help of Bejuni, Jakasika who conducted 'Thana Puja' ritual near a stream. There she identified the malevolent spiritual agencies responsible for the misfortune and to appease them she sacrificed a goat, a pig and a pigeon supplied by the client.

## II. Prevention of Crop Failure

Jasika Illime in spite of being a reputed Bejuni of Kurli village once suffered from the misfortune of crop failure. Her family members faced hardship of food scarcity during that year. She decided to find out the cause of misfortune and detect the spirits and deities responsible for this. Hence she performed the *Malemanji* ritual in her house. She got into trance and discovered that household deities and ancestral spirits are displeased for being neglected. To please them she sacrificed a fowl and a pigeon and hoped that the misfortune will not visit them again in the next year.

## III. Diagnostic & Curative Action for Illness

1. Surendra Kadraka of Kurli village regularly goes to work in his Dongar. One day while working there he felt uneasy and sick. His sickness was prolonged and did not respond to the herbal medicines prescribed by the Disari. His case was referred to the Bejuni, Illime Jakasika for diagnosis. The Bejuni and her assistant Gurumeni came to Surendra's house. Looking at the sick man, she suspected mischief of some Penu. There she drew a square with rice powder in the main room near the seat of the ancestral spirits, kept rice in three piles in the square and chanted verses. In the mean while the Gurumeni dropped some wine in the square, time and again. There they burnt incense and resin. The Bejuni started the process of divination by putting rice in her winnowing fan to identify the spirits causing trouble. While chanting incantations gradually she got into trance and began answering questions put by the Gurumeni. She revealed that Kalia Sundari Penu was mainly responsible for the problem. The spirit while wondering hungrily in the hills found Surendra alone and entered into his body. Then the Bejuni asked Gurumeni to sacrifice of a fowl, a goat and a pigeon to satisfy the hungry spirit and then request it to leave the patient. It was not possible to arrange the animals immediately. The family members of the patient promised to arrange it at a later date. However to manage the situation they sacrificed a chick to the spirit. The Bejuni waved peacock feathers thrice over the body of the patient and requested the deity to leave his body. The Bejuni was remunerated with ½ kg of rice, Rs.2/- in cash and the head of the chick. Later, the family fulfilled their commitment to the spirit during the next Dongar Puja.

2. Asi, the 8 months old baby son of Saiba Jakasika suffered from high fever for few days. His conditions become acute as he developed feets and

fainted due to high temperature. His parents panicked and knocked at the door of the Bejuni, Jakasika Sonari to save the baby. The later responded immediately suspecting the involvement of ancestral spirits and she conducted rituals at Tulimunda, the seat of ancestors inside Saiba's house. She announced that the ancestor's spirits have taken an interest on the baby and wanted to play with the child. Appropriate rituals and animals sacrifice is required to please them. Saiba vowed to comply after arranging the finance. The Bejuni communicated this to ancestral spirits and swept her peacock feathers over the body of the baby to remove the spirits. After sometime, Saiba honoured his commitments made before the spirits with the help of the Bejuni. She performed rituals and sacrificed a fowl and a goat to appease the spirits. He also paid the customary fees to the Bejuni. It was comprised of Rs.5/- in cash, some quantity of rice and heads of slaughtered animals. Now his son is cured.

3. Bangari Kadraka a widow of village Kurli aged 40 years fell ill. Even after taking herbal medicines from Disari she did not get relief. Then she thought that her sickness might have been caused by unhappy supernatural agencies. She approached a Bejuni, Sonari Jakasika. Sonari went into trance and found that Bangari's deceased husband's spirit has entered into her body and effected the sickness. The spirit will be pleased and leave her body by animal sacrifice. Bangari made promise to arrange the animal sacrifice latter, after arranging funds. After her recovery she fulfilled her promise by sacrificing animal. She offered the blood of a fowl and a pigeon to the spirit.

## Conclusion

Though not within their easy reach, today modern allopathic medicines and treatments are being made available to the Dongrias. They are slowly understanding the need for modern health care. Of course, in the last stage of diseases, when their magico-religious treatment fails, they go for modern treatment. In this context the fore-going discussions will help the tribal health development administrators and medicos to know the common health care needs of Dongrias and the indigenous method of magico-religious treatment by their ethnic healers. The knowledge of herbal remedies of the Disari, the medicine-man of the Dongria village, need to be documented for its better use. It is also expected that the Dongria ethnic healers may be invited to participate in the modern health projects introduced by Government and different voluntary organizations in preventing and curing diseases of the Dongria Kondh. For this the ethnic healers may be empowered through training in modern health practices and be provided with tool kits. Those, who are suitable among them, may also be given the chance to serve as Village Health Workers or ASHA in different health care projects.

## References

- Balikci Asen (1963) Shamanistic Behaviour among the Nestsilk Eskimos, *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol.19, pp.380-396, The University of New Mexico,
- Das Patnaik, P.S. (1972) Bejuni, Their Initiation into Shamanhood: *Adibasi*, Vol. XIV, No.1, pp.11-20.
- Friedl, J & J.E. Pfeiffer (1972) *Anthropology: The Study of People*, New York, Haper & Row.
- Majumdar, D. N & T.N. Madam (1986) *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, Mayur Paper backs, Noida.
- Nayak, P.K. (1989) *Blood, Women and Territory; An Analysis of Clan Feuds of the Dongria Kondha*, Reliance Pub, Delhi
- Olien, Michel D. (1978) *The Human Myth; An Introduction to Anthropology*, New York, Harper & Row.
- Patnaik, N & Das Patnaik, P.S (1982) *The Kondh of Orissa: Socio-cultural Life and Development*, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.
- Patnaik, N (1981) *Primitive Tribes of Orissa & Their Development* (Report, Unpublished), THRTI, Bhubaneswar.
- Royal Anthropological Institute, London (1952) *Notes and Querries in Anthropology*, Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Spradley, J.P. & D.W. Mecurdy (1975) *Anthropology; The Cultural Perspective*, New York, John Wiky & Sons Inc.
- Trask, W.R (1964) *Shamanism: Archaic Technique of Eortary*, Princeton University Press (Translated from Mircea Eliade)
- Weber, M. (1922) *The Sociology of Religion*, (Translated by Ephraim Fischhoff) Methuem & Co Ltd; London.



# HERBAL MEDICINES OF DONGRIA KONDHS \*

*N. Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

*F. Bara*<sup>2</sup>

*A. Mall*<sup>3</sup>

Tribal concept of disease and treatment, life and death is as varied as their culture. Accordingly, the tribal society is guided by their traditions and customs to which every member of the society is expected to conform. The fate of individual and the community at large depends on their relationship with unseen forces which interfere with human affairs. If men offend them, the mystical power punishes them by sickness, death or other natural calamities.

The Dongrias believe that diseases are caused by the evil spirits. They become angry and do harm if one has not propitiated them properly. Thus to a Dongria mind, the real enemies of human health and prosperity are the angry Gods and the evil spirits. The usual theory of disease in the Dongria society is that it is caused by the breach of some taboo or by the anger of hostile spirits and ghost of the dead. Sickness is the routine punishment for every lapse and crime done by them. Accordingly, they have taboos and prayers. Invoking the blessing of Gods and propitiating the evil spirits are necessary to have a smooth and healthy life. The Jani or the village priest in addition to his religious functions acts as mediator between the people and the mystical power. He prays and worships offering sacrificial animal, alcoholic drink and blood of sacrificial animals. By these he tries to maintain a good relationship between the people on the one hand and the mystical power people on the other, which intervene human affairs. Thus magico-religious treatments of diseases caused by supernatural and human agencies are resorted to by the Dongrias.

## Traditional Method of Diagnosis

When illness continues for a long period, the Dongrias consult a 'Beju' or 'Bejuni' who performs the ritual, a process of diagnosis named as 'Puchuna'. The 'Beju' or 'Bejuni' who calls *puchuna* passes into a state of trance, calls all the Gods,

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVI, No- 4, 1986, pp.1-4.

<sup>1</sup> Director, THRTI

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, THRTI

<sup>3</sup> Research Assistant, THRTI

spells automatic flow of mantras and is enlightened by the one, responsible for causing the illness and the kind of animal that must be sacrificed. He puts the *puchuma* rice (*arua* rice specially prepared by the Bejuni for the particular client family) on a Winnowing fan kept for the purpose. He examines rice, utters *mantras* and the affected person is made to touch it while names of different Gods and deities are called. Then, finally he tells the cause of the disease and specific vow to be made. Puchuna is sometimes called for twice or more if the disease is not cured for a long period.

‘Lodang’ is a *puja* offered to the specific deity after a person is cured. The vowed sacrifice is offered for the cured person. The Beju or Bejuni again performs all the rituals. Arua rice, Bel leaves, vermilion, winnowing fan, Mandar leaves, fire pot, oil light and promised sacrificial animal are required for ‘Lodang’. In most of the cases the sacrificial animal is a hen. The cured person sits near the Beju during the Puja that takes two to three hour’s time. He holds the animal and makes it eat a few grains of the ritual rice from his palm. On the following morning the sacrificial animal is taken to the hill stream. After some rituals the animal is killed and the blood is offered to the specific God or deity.

Besides the supernatural causes, the Dongrias also believe in natural causes of some common diseases like fever, cold, cough, headache, stomach pain, toothache, cut, burn, snake and insect bite, etc. yet their emphasis on the supernatural puts a low threshold on the awareness of disease and pain, encouraging them to tolerate and accept. They do not care much for the common diseases unless it becomes very severe inflicting acute pain to the affected person. The herbal medicines used by the Dongrias for the treatment of some of their diseases are given below.

### **Fever (Jara)**

Dongria term for fever is ‘Nomberi’ which is recognized by the general symptoms of rise in the normal body temperature and pulse beat. Fever is the most common disease. They believe in two types of fever namely ‘Nomberi’ and ‘Dadi’ or ‘Pali nomberi’. The medicine man is the only person who is supposed to collect the medicinal plants and prepare medicine out of them. He is specially equipped with the knowledge of diseases and medicines required. The medicines are not preserved as they believe that fresh collected plants are more effective than dried ones.

The leaves of *Sapta (B-Nyetanthes arbortristis)*, Gadapunga Bhuinimbo (*Md. Plant Agathotes*) Plant and root of ‘Pitakerandi’ are pounded together to extract juice. This juice is heated to make Luke-warm. About half a cup of this juice is orally administered daily in an empty stomach early in the morning till the fever is cured. ‘Chagrikoda’ root is also grinded and anointed on the whole body which acts as a substitute medicine for fever.

### **Cold (Thanda)**

The Dongria term for cold is 'Losom'. It is recognized by the symptom of heavy flow of watery cough like substance from nose, giddiness and feeling of restlessness and cold sensation accompanied by aching of the limbs.

Continued and severe cases of cold compel the Dongrias to use medicine. The skin of *tarlu* seeds and root of 'Ketkaya' plant is mixed and made paste. The paste is then diluted in water and 2 to 3 spoons of this diluted water is orally administered twice a day till cured.

The bark of drumstick (*B: Moringa pterygosperma*) tree is grated and boiled with water. The steam of this boiling water is inhaled for some time and then the cooled water is filtered to be orally administered.

### **Cough (Kasa)**

The Dongria term for cough is 'Tanha'. It is recognized by cough, cold and irritation in the throat. Whatever it continues for longer period and becomes acute, they use different kinds of herbal medicines.

The juice of 'Mania' bark and Ginger is pounded together and the juice is squeezed on a small dish. About 2 to 3 spoonful of this juice is orally administered daily once for 3 to 4 days.

About 2 spoonful of juice extracted from Mania and Keta (*B: Feronia elephantum*) bark and the root of Ranisilaha (Pipoli creeper) is orally administered to the patient for 4 to 5 days. In some cases half burnt Ginger is chewed by them. Mixed juice from Holy Basil (*B- ocimum sanctum*) leaf, Ginger (*B- Zingiber officinale*) and Honey also act as a medicine for cough. Harida (*B-Terminalia chebulia*) fruit is boiled and made luke-warm and then about half a cup of this water is orally administered to the patient suffering from cough.

### **Headache**

The Dongria term for headache is 'Kapadabisa'. They use some herbal medicines in case of repeated occurrence of severe headache. The root of 'Chapi' creeper is pounded and rubbed on the forehead. The juice of Begunia (*B-Vitex negunda*) leaves if anointed on the forehead heals headache. Bichhuati stinging nettle (*B-Tragia involucrata*) seeds are also applied as substitute medicine, but it gives a burning sensation for some time.

### **Jhada**

The Dongrias use only one medicine for Hinjupata (Dysentery) and Baheni turkey (frequent loose and watery motion). Raw curry plantain with its peel is burnt, peeled and given to the patient.

Blood dysentery is called 'Netripota'. Tadihiru and Kumunditadihiu, (two different types of plantain roots) are pounded and the juice is squeezed and

mixed together. About half a cup of the juice is orally administered daily to the patient in an empty stomach till cured.

Petaphampa (gastritis) is named as 'Pungawainga' by the Dongrias. About half a cup juice of 'Kurei' and 'mango' (*B-Mangifera indica*) bark is orally administered for one or two times.

### **Vomiting**

The Dongria believe that vomiting is caused by the possession of an evil spirit, indigestion, stomach trouble, poison intake, excessive drinking and morning sickness.

When vomiting is caused by possession of an evil spirit 'blowing and whiffing' is restored to. This is their traditional method of treatment and Beju or Bejuni is summoned for the purpose.

Vomiting when caused by indigestion, salt water is given to the patient. Lemon juice is mixed with it whenever available. When vomiting is caused by stomach trouble, 'Kunduri' (*Kalanchoe Pinnata*) leaf juice is orally administered.

If a person is orally poisoned the Dongrias resort to immediate vomiting. For this purpose they pound the root of 'Gadgadi', squeeze the juice and orally administered it to the affected person.

Excessive drunk person also needs immediate vomiting. Old tamarind (*B-Tamarindus Indica*), preserved for 2 to 3 years is kneaded with water and the liquid is orally administered. Thick 'Gur' (molasses) water also helps vomiting and consequently sets the patient at ease.

Vomiting caused due to morning sickness requires no treatment.

### **Stomach Pain**

It is called 'Patobish' by the Dongrias. The roots of Patalgaruda (*Cogenaria vulgaris*), Giripoyou and Kumundihiru is pounded, the juice is squeezed and heated to luke warm. About half a cup of this mixture is orally administered daily in an empty stomach till the patient is cured.

### **Ear Pain and Infection**

The extracted juice of Salap (*B. Caryota urens*) root is heated to luke warm and put in the ear. Alternatively, heated Arakha (*B-Calotropis Procera*) leaves are pounded and the juice is squeezed in the infected ear of the patient.

### **Eye Pain and Infection**

Warm turmeric water is made cold; lemon juice is mixed with it and applied on the eye. Only lemon juice is also applied by the Dongrias to avoid all kinds of eye diseases. Onion is also applied to eradicate eye infection.

### **Mouth Infection (Infants)**

Powdered Kosula rice (*arua*) is made into a paste with *alatilata* root juice. This paste is rubbed inside the mouth of the child.

### **Toothache**

Seeds of Bhejibaigono (*B-Solanum kanthocarpum*) mixed with castor oil is put on a hot iron dish and the smoke is inhaled by the patient. They also apply Arakha latex or Dimbiri latex on the affected teeth.

### **Sore of Wound (Gha)**

Cocoanut coir is burnt and the ash is made into a paste with coconut oil. This paste is anointed upon the sore which heals it slowly.

### **Sprain**

The Dongrias apply lukewarm turmeric paste fried with castor oil for 3 to 4 times a day. The heated paste Bisalyakarani (*B-Tridax Procumbins*) also heals the sprain.

### **Bone Fracture**

Tender part of 'Hadasikuta' creeper, 'Marasureli' bush and 'Black gram' are grinded to a paste and applied evenly on the fractured portion, 'Marilating' which is prepared with bamboo twigs and rope is plastered upon it.

### **Cuts**

Frequent incident of minor and major accidental cuts are reported in Dongria villages which results in heavy bleeding. To stop bleeding and to heal such wounds they use different creepers as herbal medicines.

The roots of old 'Lahatalichi and 'Karnihada' creepers are grinded and pasted upon the cut. This stops bleeding immediately and also lessens the pain. For healing the wound, the Dongrias anoint the juice of Kirpilata (Bisalyakarani) and Giriludadinga leaves. Sometimes dried leaves of Kirpilata and Giriludadingaare Lahatalichi' creeper are powdered and applied on the cut for quick relief.

### **Insomnia**

For sleeplessness 'Lazadading' (*B. Mimosa pudica*) juice is orally administered. They also believe that if a part of the creeper is kept on the bed it induces sleep.

### **Pilehi (Pleha)**

The juice of parasitic plant grown upon a Dimbiri (*Ficus glomerata*) tree cures *pilehi*.

### Jaundice

The Dongria believe that seven *mantra* salt if chewed then the patient is cured. Besides this they use the juice of 'Mundemera' bark. The juice from Kaincha (*B- Abrus precatorius*) roots is another substitute for this disease

### Leprosy

It is quite unfamiliar disease to the Dongrias. Very recently a few cases of this disease have come to the notice. 'Bhramaramari' tree a rare available is only recognized and found by the medicineman who uses its roots for medicinal purpose. This tree is found in the dense forest upon the rocky place.

### Snake-Bite

Turmeric (*B- Curuma longa*) and *patalgaruda* (*M-cogenria vulgaris*) roots grinded to paste and anointed upon the spot of bite. The extracted juice from the same is also orally administered. Gada (*B-pterosperrum heyneanum*) root is one effective substitute for snake-bite. The extracted juice from the root is orally administered and at the same time a piece of the root is also inhaled by the person.

### Scorpion and Insect bite

Salt and Turmeric (*B- curuma longa*) paste is anointed over the stinged spot. For other insect-bites the affected portion is given a heat fomentation.

### Bleeding from Nose

Dry cow dung is burnt and its smoke is inhale by the patient.

### Paralysis

Root of 'Dombadohendalaha' and 'Penuhepari' (*B- Asparagus race mouse*) and 'Penupapeni' is pounded and the Juice is orally administered.

### Menstrual Problems

Among the Dongria girls puberty comes only after the age of 16 to 18 years. Usually their menstrual flow continues for 4 to 7 days. Irregularities in this cycle are not considered a disease. Whenever there is excess discharge or the flow continues for more than normal period they consult a medicine man who gives some herbal medicines to check it. The juice extracted from the roots of 'Dinjinipuyou', 'Dindtnihiru' 'Peakapongadaki' (*B- Rauwolfia Serpentina*), is administered orally which helps to cure such disease.

### Menopause

Menu pause occurs within the age of 45 to 50 years. Those who desire earlier menu pause consult a medicine man. Equal quantity of 'Karkati' (*B-*

*Momordica disica*), “Dinjinipuyou”, ‘Dindenihiru’ and ‘Peankapongadaki’ roots are pounded and the extracted juice is orally administered to the woman who desires earlier menopause.

### **Medicine to Induce Complete Barrenness**

The Dongrias believe that if seven Kanicha (*B- Abrus Preeatorius*) seeds are cut by a woman she never conceives after that ‘Bonobeto’ (*B-Calamus tenuis*) is an effective herbal medicine used by Dongrias. This root is pounded and the juice is squeezed for the medicine. Oral administration of about half a cup of this juice induces complete barrenness.

### **Delivery**

Oral administration of Mutha (*cyperus rolundus*) root juice helps quick delivery.

3 years old ‘Castor’ (*Recinus communis*) bark, ‘Bitter gourd’ (Kalara) and ‘Bajramuli’ roots are pounded to extract juice. This mixture is orally administered which helps quick falling of placenta. Long preserved ‘Padma’ (*B-Nymphaea lotus*) red and mixed with wheat flour also acts as a substitute medicine.

### **Conclusion**

The folk medicines of the Dongrias are practiced by their traditional medicinemen called ‘Disari’ and magico-religious healers i.e., the shamans called ‘Beju’. “Dishari” practices herbal medicine. They are the persons who only practice medicine and there are also persons who combine the work of shaman and medicine man. The female shamanins (Bejunis) do not come under this category as they only conduct preventive and curative rituals for treatment of diseases and other problems but do not prescribe medicines like the Bejus do. According to Trask (1964; 4-5), every medicine man is a healer, but the shaman employs a method that is his and his alone.

With the introduction of allopathic medicines the importance of some herbal medicines are declining slowly. Gradually with development and modernization as well as availability of the medical facilities, they are entering into the system of modern health care. Of course, in the last stage of diseases, when their traditional herbal and magico-religious treatment fails, they go to the hospital at Bissam-Cuttack for allopathic treatment. Yet they still have faith on their age-old traditional system of ethno-medicine which is easily affordable and accessible as well as culturally acceptable to them than the modern medicine that is not culturally and easily accessible affordable and acceptable.

# CHAITI PARAB IN MAA MAJHI GHARIANI TEMPLE \*

*Jyoti Prakash Rout* <sup>1</sup>

*Kalpana Patnaik* <sup>2</sup>

The district of Rayagada is very rich in cultural heritage and has its own charm possessing a strange combination of the autochthonous tribal, Oriya and Telugu cultures in an osmotic integration. One can find a synthesis of the religious beliefs and cultural celebrations performed at Rayagada as per the prevailing tribals, Hindu, Telugu and Christian practices. Although, the religious beliefs and social practices of tribals are different but in reality they do not differ much from each other. Common features, like totemism, polytheism, occultism, etc. mark them exhibiting unity in diversity.

Among the tribes inhabiting Rayagada region of the remote mountainous wilderness of the Eastern Ghats of South Orissa there is a fascinating *kuvi* speaking tribe called, the Dongria Kondh, a primitive section of the Kondh tribe. Being the denizens of hills, forests and highlands (*dongar*), their neighbors call them Dongria but they call themselves '*Dongria kuan*' or "*Drili kuan*". Dongrias inhabit in the Niyamgiri hills slopes. This primitive tribe has proved that skill, ingenuity and perseverance of the community can tame any rugged terrain without the application of any improved technology.

The Dongria villages are found in the hill slopes/ hilltops or valleys in a tangle of thickly wooded hill ranges. The village site is chosen upon the availability of sufficient sloppy land for *podu* cultivation with perennial source of water.

The eco-system has made the Dongria to be shifting (*podu*) cultivators. They call the shifting land as *haru* where they grow the crops such as cereals, pulses, roots and tubers, fruits and vegetables. Shifting lands (*haru*) owned individually are cultivated for 3 to 4 years and left fallow for about five years for recuperation. Dongria take advantages of favorable climatic condition to grow citrus, mango, banana, pineapple, ginger and turmeric plantations on the hill slopes and hilltops.

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXVIII, No.3, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2008, pp.45-49

<sup>1</sup> Former Joint Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar



Generally, Dongria Kondh houses have low thatched roofs, which are about 2 to 3 feet above the ground. The houses are of rectangular type, which consists of a spacious room and another small room (*Dhapa*) at the back with verandas in front and back. The Dongria are both vegetarian and non vegetarian who generally consume food thrice daily prepared from seasonal cereals, pulses and vegetable available in kitchen garden and shifting lands. They take fish, chicken, buffalo meat, pork and beef and consume *mahua* liquor (*Irpi kalu*) and sago palm juice (*mada kalu*). Liquors are used as a medicine, ritual offerings and to entertain friends and relatives. Liquor is indispensable and it is a part of their life.

Earth goddess (*Darani Penu*), the Supreme deity is accommodated in a thatched shrine (*kuddi*) in the village and close to it, stands a beautifully designed consort (*Jhankad* or *Kotebali Penu*) of Darni Penu.

The girl's dormitory (*Da-Sha-Hada* or *Hada-Sala*) lies close to the hill streams where un-married girls learn about the life ways before entering into family life. This is preparatory home for unmarried girls. The boys build the structure where as the girls maintain it. They help each other in economic activity, and drink, dance and sing in all religious festivals and social ceremonies performed communally.

Dongria men and women are fashionable in their personal adornments, which makes them attractive and distinctive. Dongria girls make *Kapada Ganda*, beautiful embroidered shawls. It is a fine piece of needlework in which bright coloured threads, like red, yellow and green are used. The younger girls in the dormitory learn needlework and the art of playing *goani*, the traditional musical instrument from the elders.

The Dongria men and women sing songs and dance in all ceremonial and festive occasions. Men play the musical instruments and women locking their hands behind each other dance in a line in front of the male drummers. They wear their colourful costumes during dancing. Young women do not dance in front of elders. They observe a number of rituals and festivals round the year to appease their deities and spirits and enjoy life. Their festivals are celebrated with pomp and ceremony.

Chait Parab or Chaiti Parab is celebrated in Rayagada district for the entire month (March – April) by the tribal communities including the Dongria Kondhs. Every body enjoys the festival with the warmth but the tribals go gay. This is a post-harvest festival. After harvesting the Dongria like to spend time leisurely with fun and fantasy. The heat rises in the day whereas humidity mounts at night. The entire month is teamed with various other occasions, like *Danda Nacha*, *Jhamu jatra*, *Usha kutir* etc. All these festivals symbolize the festivals of punishment, penance, fertility, hunting and excitement. Chaiti Parab follows the Makara Sankranti festival. Maa Majhi Ghariani festival also a part of Chaiti Parab is observed exclusively among the Kondh in Maa Majhi Ghariani temple. The whole of the month of Chaitya is celebrated amidst festivity among the Dongria Kondh. Dancing and merry making is the chief pastime of the Dongria Dhangidhis (unmarried girls) and Dhangadas (unmarried boys). The Dongria boys visit village-

to-village singing for the girls to choose them as their life partners. The elderly men and youths go out into the forest for community hunting. Non-tribals also participate in the festival and enjoy it.

Maa Majhi Ghariani is a tribal Goddess appeased by each and every Dongria for fulfillment of their long cherished wishes and success in all their endeavors. The origin of the temple abounds in several myths and stories - a blending of fact and fiction. A popular belief about this goddess is that She was a presiding deity of the palace of a tribal king, named Rai Jani who had ruled this area long ago. Traditionally, it is believed that Rai or Jani, a Kondh Chief ruled Rayagada area. The ruler of Nandapur always wanted to conquer Rayagada to expand his kingdom. But the king failed to capture in spite of continuous fight. Subsequently Rai Jani was defeated in the open war. But he continued guerilla warfare to trouble the ruler. As a tribal chief he was well acquainted with the jungle roads. The incessant war caused political and economic hazards for Nandapur Empire and more over the victory had created more problems than benefits. Ultimately the king had to sign an agreement with Rai Jani. As per this agreement the place was named as Rayagada. The name Rayagada is derived from two words, such as Raya+Gada. Raya or Rai is the distorted form of Raja (king) and *Gada* or *Garh* is the fort. Thus Rayagada means "fort of the king".

The goddess Maa Majhi Ghariani was said to be installed in the central part of the palace and worshiped devoutly by the king and the inmates. She is known as the goddess of the centre house - "*Majhi*" or "*Madhya*" meaning centre and "ghar" or house or room means occupants and the name of the goddess has become Majhi Ghariani. The Telugu people call her Maa Gouri. There is no second opinion that the temple is an embodiment of tribal culture and mode of worship.

Today the abode of the deity is located at the southeast end of Rayagada town on the bank of river Jhanjabati. Once upon a time it was dense forest the remnant of which is seen now around the temple. The eternal sweet water spring down below the eastern side of the temple called Kiajharana, rushing from the girth of the nearby hills is believed to be the mother's gift to her devotees.

This tribal goddess, Maa Majhi Ghariani has been assimilated into Aryan fold. She is the presiding deity of the entire district and thousands of pilgrims from far off places and neighboring States visit the sacred place for worship. However, some tribal elements continue to exist with the seat of worship. The priest of temple is a non-Brahman. The Paika performs the daily rituals.

Like other *shakti pithas* of the state, animal sacrifice is performed here in a large scale. *Lilika chheli*, a type of goat having beard is sacrificed on the Durgastami day in this temple to commemorate the death of the king Rai. It is believed that after the death of Rai Jani as per his desire, his 108 queens had sacrificed their life in the *kunda* known as "*Sati kunda*" located at the northern side of the temple. It is still believed that the soldiers (Paikas) of the Kondh king continued to live in Biragada

and are still guarding the entrance to the fort, even today. The ritual of putting stones (*Jarapathar*) near a tree at the northwest side of the temple on one side of the main road - a tribal ritual of offering homage to the goddess is still in vogue. Since then the goddess was installed at the centre of the fort. Hence, at the time of the installation it must have been the centre of the town though, at present, Rayagada town has expanded in a different direction with the temple at one end.

Another story behind the nomenclature of Rayagada is derived from a big fort built in the medieval period. The fort was built by Biswanath Deo (1521-1571), the Raja of Nandapur in view of strategic significance of the place. The fort was mainly intended for warding off the Muslim attacks. The remains of high defense walls are to be seen. A black stone slab located within the fort known as "*Jani Pathar*" is believed to have been used for human sacrifice. The mud fort became very famous when his own son imprisoned king Vikram Deo of Jeypore in 1849 AD. A big cannon recovered from the fort area is now kept in the local police station.

Quite interesting and popular is the hearsay about the evolution of this ruined palace temple. During 1930s when the construction of the railway bridge over the deep gorge on river Jhanjabati was in progress, the engineers faced a lot of problems in spite of perfect planning and meticulous execution. The pillars erected to support the bridge were crumbling mysteriously and the cause was unknown. One day the engineer (site-in-charge) had a dream that the problem was caused by the anger of a goddess abandoned and buried nearby. An oracle advised him to install the idol of the goddess and start worshipping her so that the bridge can be completed without any problem. The idol was traced and installed in a hut and the construction workers started worshipping it every day. The efficacy of the prayer to this goddess resulted in the completion of the bridge without any further problems. This bridge and engineering marvel were perhaps due to divine intervention. The visitors to the temple make it a point to enjoy the beauty of this gorge also.

Stone, brick, cement, sand etc. have been used for the construction of the new temple by the Railway Department after acquiring the lands from the Endowment Department, Govt. of Orissa while laying Railway lines to Western Orissa (the materials used for the construction of the old temple in the past is not known or recorded any where). At present, a nine-member Trustee Board constituted by the Endowment Department of Orissa, manages the temple. The members of the Board provide ample amenities to the pilgrims and manage the temple activities well.

**Chaiti Parab** is the annual festival observed for five days. It starts from 11<sup>th</sup> day of (bright fortnight) *Suklapakhya* and ends on the day following Poornima (full moon) of the month of *Chait* in Maa Majhi Ghariani temple. During the festival sword of the deity is taken out in a colourful procession with the drumbeats and full of devotional songs and dances. The head priest carries the sacred sword on his head and moves around the town with the procession to ward off the evil spirits

from the village and from each and every household. The procession moves house to house, so that the devotees could feel the presence of the deity at their doorsteps.

*Chaiti Parab* is observed for glorification of spring season and a period of plenty after the harvesting. The people believe this as the festival of amusement and fertility. The tribals of Rayagada participate in this festival in this temple with full devotion. Dancing and merry making are the chief pastimes of the tribals (Dongria Kondhs) during this *Parab*. Each day is celebrated with dance, songs and music.

At present it is seen that on every Sundays and Wednesdays the devotees have to stand in long queues for hours together to have a *darshan* of the deity, the Maa Majhi Ghariani. Devotees accept it for the heavenly bliss experienced by them on getting the *darshan*, which is inexpressible. The fulfillment of their wishes prompts them to offer anything to the goddess. There is a belief that offering sacrifices with devotion could bring them prosperity and peace.

During 21st century, the *Chaiti Parab* among the tribals has undergone a lot of change. The practice of group dance by tribal maids and youths are less prevalent. It was called *Dhangada Nachha* i.e. the betrothal dance among tribal young men and women. This has been converted into worship of Gram Devati on each Tuesday of Chait month. Previously only the tribals used to celebrate this festival but, at present, the non-tribals are participating more in number. There is no more hunting expeditions since the mountains have become bald and jungles are empty of games and now the conscious tribal girls do not agree to dance in the street. The causes of such change in the exotic Chaiti Parab are manifold, such as ecological imbalance, religious conversion and impact of modernization etc.

#### References:

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Pillai, D.S.                | "Maa Majhi Ghariani Temple", Cultural Heritage of Orissa. Volume- IX, Rayagada District, p 178, 2007, State Level Vyasakabi Fakir Mohan Smruti Sansad, Bhubaneswar. |
| Patnaik, Sabita             | Saktism, <i>Cultural Heritage of Orissa</i> . Vol- IX, Rayagada District  |
| Rath, S.                    | Bissamcuttack : Society and Culture, Cultural Heritage of Orissa. Volume- IX, Rayagada District   |
| Das, H.C.                   | Forts and Strongholds, Cultural Heritage of Orissa. Vol.- IX, Rayagada District   |
| Patnaik, A.K.               | History of Rayagada, Cultural Heritage of Orissa. Volume- IX, Rayagada District   |
| Ota, A. B. & Mohanty, S. C. | Dongria Kandha, SCSTRIT, Bhubaneswar, 2007.   |

# DUNA : ITS IMPLICATIONS IN THE DONGRIA KONDH CULTURE \*

*P. S. Das Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

As the name signifies, 'Duna' is a bamboo-made money container, largely used among the Dongria Kondhs of Orissa and is considered as a key cultural device to achieve prosperity in both social and economic level.

Numbering about 6,000 in population the Dongria Kondhs inhabit the lofty Niyamgiri hill ranges in the district of (undivided) Koraput. From the point of view of cultural peculiarities they occupy a very special place among Orissan tribes. One can see in the Niyamgiri hills vast stretches of land in the hill slopes under banana and pineapple plantations amidst jack-fruit trees which the master hands of the Dongria Kondh have raised. Expert horticulturists as they are, the Dongria Kondhs have proved that the skill, ingenuity and perseverance of man can tame any rugged terrain without even the application of any improved technology for the prosperity of mankind.

Like any other tribe, the Dongria Kondhs form a species by themselves as far as their social organization and cultural pattern are concerned. Almost a century and a half ago, this tribe featured very prominently in the report of Mr. Russell for their heinous practices of female infanticide and human sacrifice. Their superstitious beliefs and practices made the tribe known to the administrators as well as academicians. Preparation of the Duna among them is one of such peculiar beliefs and practices.

It is to be mentioned here in brief the details of Duna's conception to appreciate the cultural sanction lying behind it. Every Dongria has in his house one or more Dunas which is either inserted at the roof of the kitchen or buried in his swidden. Duna is a money container, about 01' in length, made of bamboo, one side of which is kept open and the other side is closed with clay to protect the paper notes from insects. It is an apparatus for saving money. Any lump-sum earning is hoarded in this bamboo socket instead of being spent until the socket is packed up. Once it is packed up a tattered piece of cloth is covered round the opening over which clay is plastered upon a *siali* leaf. Subsequently, it is baked in the fire to

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXII, Nos. 1-4, Nos. 1-4, 1982-83, pp.1-3

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute (THRTI now SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar

protect it from decay when it comes in contact with the soil in the pit in which it is buried i.e., mainly near the seat of *muldei* (Ancestor's-spirit) or near the small hut (*ladi*) constructed in his own swidden for watching the crops.

Once it is buried, it is revered as Sita Penu (Goddess Laxmi) and its owner is tabooed against opening it spending a pie from it during the life time of a person. It is believed such money represents Sita Penu; the Goddess of wealth and to spend money out of it may cause grave loss to the family.

Each Dongria Kondh family have one or two or more such containers, which are buried secretly by the head of the family without letting any other members of the house to know about it. Once the fact is disclosed, the owner loses the entire wealth and thereby his virtues to be a good man are lost. If the fact is kept undisclosed, the owner passes his life time happily as this treasure brings peace, prosperity and wealth for him as well as his successors.

This conception of Duna among the Dongria Kondh has its tremendous impact on the socio-economic life of the community.

### **Impact on the Social Life**

The entire Dongria community is divided into various clans, such as- Niska, Kadraka, Huika, Pengeska, Wadaka, etc. Niska claims to be the superior to all the clans as it is believed that almost all its predecessors possessed at least 5 Dunas. It is also believed that their mythical Ancestor King - Niyam Raja who created this clan handed over such Dunas to the members of this clan. He commanded them to bury these Dunas in their respective swiddens to bring peace and prosperity for their posterity. As the story goes only five families of Niska clan who lived in that vast wilderness could produce bumper crop without knowing any technicalities and technology of agriculture. Subsequently, other clans inherited such conception of the Niyam Raja to be more prosperous in their socio-economic life.

In the Dongria Kondh Society birth of a daughter is cherished very much because she is considered to be an asset of the family. She occupies a key position in the family and virtually accomplishes all the tasks concerning to her home and outside. It is believed that if a man possesses at least two Dunes he becomes father of 2 daughters for which he is boastful of himself. Because right from the birth of a daughter in a family, the girl's parents are contacted in advance by the parents of the prospective grooms for marriage. In addition to that, the boy's parents compete among themselves to make payment of higher amount of bride price to acquire the girl as the daughter-in-law of their house.

While leaving her natal family after marriage, the daughter is only entitled to receive one Dunas from her father which she hands over secretly to her husband to begin their new family of procreation. Her husband never discloses the fact to anybody and inserts it at the roof of his newly constructed house. This gives an impetus to the husband to start hoarding of his own money in a new Duna of his

own for his socio-economic prosperity. When it is filled up the earlier one is buried somewhere else and the second one is replaced at the roof of his house. In case, the married girl does not bring such Duna to her neolocal family, her husband is believed to face a disastrous economic situation.

Though, divorce is permitted for marital incompatibility in Dongria society, it is hardly seen in such family where the daughter-in-law brings her father's Duna with her. They believe that the force and magical power of Duna patch up marital dissensions and mal-adjustments of the couple. Even in the worst situation if the husband dies without any heir, his younger brother marries the sister-in-law so that, the magical force of the Duna does not go away from the house. At the funeral of the head of the family, the last Duna kept at the roof of the house is thrown into the pyre. It is believed that the burning of the Duna in the pyre increases the virtues of the deceased and paves his way directly to the abode of Ancestor-spirits.

### **Impact on Economic Life**

Considering Duna, a supernatural device to bring opulence and wealth to the family, it is buried in the swidden. It is unaccounted money hoarded for all times to come in the bamboo tube. In the olden days, the people of the community used to hoard coins. But during my study in the year 1974, the people used to hoard new currency notes of various denominations. The people say that the funnel contains about Rs. 500 to Rs 1,000 worth of currency notes and the coins worth of Rs. 100 to Rs 200. Whenever any crop is sold, the cash received in the form of currency notes and coins directly goes to the Duna except a few coins which are kept aside to meet the family consumption expenditure.

This hoarding of money has led the people to incur loan as and when required. Even during emergency the money kept in the Duna is never extracted to be spent rather; loan is incurred to solve the problem. This has indirectly pushed the entire community in the doldrums of loan and become victims of socio-economic exploitation by the dishonest local money lenders. Their Domb neighbours taking advantage of the situation advance loan and exploit the Dongrias. Under no circumstances, even when a Dongria person dies and his or her funeral is to be performed on the next day, a pie is taken out from his Duna. It is firmly believed that, once the money goes to the Duna, it becomes the property of Sita Penu. Sita Penu has given the land free of cost to the people and She must therefore, be paid in coins (now, currency notes). If neglected, the wrath and arrogance of Sita Penu may bring colossal loss to the family. This is the belief deeply rooted in the Dongria culture for which the Dongrias keep the bulk of their hard earned money in their Dunas and fall prey to the cunning Domb money lenders at the time of need.

### **Impact on Religious Life**

On the full-moon day in the month of December (Push) after all the crops are harvested, goddess Sita Penu, represented by a dry gourd (*tumba*) and the Duna is worshipped ceremoniously by the housewife of the concerned family at the

eastern side of the courtyard of the house. For seven days, Duna is kept inside the dry gourd as a token of reverence to Sita Penu and then again it is inserted at the roof of the house.

The Dongria female shamans (Bejunis) who are mostly widows are believed to have acquired two such Dunas from their husbands - once during marriage and another during their course of training for shaman hood. Even after ten years of marriage if a woman does not beget any child, she prefers to be female shaman and undergoes training under a Pat Bejuni (Head female shaman). During her life time, if she cleverly acquires two Dunas from her husband, she is believed to beget child in her next birth.

During Meriah festival, the Jani (Priest), who summons Earth-Goddess (Dharani Penu) on behalf of the people is only entitled to bring his own Duna and worships it along with Meriah animal. Since he is considered to be the most pious and virtuous, he alone is allowed to do so, and solicits benediction to be Jani again in his next birth. Since other people cannot do that as per prevailing custom of the society, they invite Jani to their respective houses to have his auspicious touch over their respective Dunas, which are buried secretly on the day of Meriah festival. This day is considered very auspicious and a Duna buried on this day brings fabulous wealth and fortunes for the family.

Occurrence of repeated deaths in a family is ascribed to non-possession of Duna by the head of the family. The causes of unnatural deaths such as - murder, suicide, snake-bite, attack of wild animals and victim of small-pox, cholera, labour pain etc. are ascribed to the expenditure of money from the Duna in emergency situations. In such rare and unavoidable circumstances when it is felt inevitable to open a Duna, to save the concerned family members from such fatal mishaps the services of about half a dozen expert Shamans along with the Jani are sought for to worship to satisfy Sita Penu with adequate rituals and sacrifices, after which they prescribe opening of the Duna. The family members are cautioned to make good the amount of money spent from Duna immediately.

### **Impact on Political Life**

The traditional leaders in the Dongria society are Mandal, Jani, Bishmajhi, Pujari and Dishari. Mandal is the Mutha or territorial head. A Mutha territory comprises about 8 to 10 Dongria villages. Jani, Bishmajhi, Pujari and Dishari are village leaders. It is believed these leaders could achieve such status only because they possessed Dunas in their previous birth. The following leaders are believed to have possessed varying numbers of Dunas in their previous birth as given below.

Mandal	.. 7 Dunas
Jani	.. 5 Dunas
Bishmajhi	.. 4 Dunas
Pujari	.. 4 Dunas
Dishari	.. 3 Dunas



The Mandal, who has achieved the highest status, is considered the most blessed son of Sita Penu. He is therefore, highly respected and his command are treated as the command of Sita Penu. Similarly other leaders are respected in the village and due importance is given to their decision. Even if the new leadership pattern has emerged after imposition of the democratic election and statutory *panchayatraj* system after independence, the election of modern leaders is considered on the consideration of possession of Duna by the candidate.

### **Persistence and Change:**

Thus this cultural element is so deep-rooted that, the Dongrias can forego his food but not this sanction. To survive, this sanction is to be followed to keep their social structure intact. It is a fact that there are various external agencies to influence them and their culture. From the year 1964, the Government and non-Government agencies are working in the Niyamgiri hills to develop the Dongria and to bring them at par with the society at large. But they have not been able to influence this aspect of their core culture which remains still intact.

This is substantiated by seven case studies, collected during the 1980 from the villages-Kadragumma, Hundiiali and Tuaguda. In 05 cases, the young Dongria Duna holders in the age-group of 35 to 45 have been able to hoard idle money in two Dunas each. Now they are said to earn more by cultivating more cash crops and selling their surplus and for that matter, their number of Dunas may increase depending upon their life span. It is because now, surplus commodities are sold for hard cash in the Fair-Price centers established by government in their area. This cash income goes to the Duna instead of being spent extravagantly. In the remaining two cases, the subjects have not yet started, because they are teenagers.

But the question arises here is that, can we have realistic development planning for this tribe, who really earn by hard labour but keep the money idle and unutilized for their age old beliefs and practices? The average annual household income of a Dongria during the year 1964 was Rs.507 which has doubled to Rs. 1,037 during the year 1974. With this extra income, they would have been more solvent. But are they so? Where does the extra money go? It goes to their Dunas.

Yet there is a silver lining in the sky. With spread of education, awareness and reach of mass media and the impact of onslaught of the powerful waves of change and modernization in these days as well in the imitate future, there will be positive change of mind set, attitude and the world view of the Dongria in which they and more particularly their younger generation may come up to make the best of both the worlds – traditional and modern.

# CONCEPT OF DEBT AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDHS \*

*P. S. Das Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

The subject of primitive economy has not been popular among the social scientists as yet. Very little work has been done so far by the economists and anthropologists in this field. Indebtedness, one of the important aspects of primitive economy has also not been properly investigated.

All primitive societies have some sort of economic organization. What all societies have in common are that they make use of natural resources, technology, division of labour, use of markets and some form of money. But the specific institutionalization of these may vary radically.

The credit system and its concept have not been properly attended to both by the economists and anthropologists though the credit structure is studied in a stray manner among the aboriginals of Australia, New Guinea and Africa. Credit, as it functions in the ordinary and ritual exchange of a society having a relatively complex economic structure has not been studied systematically as yet. In India, it is almost a virgin field for research. To quote Herskovits "Markets and middlemen are frequently encountered in non-literate societies as aids to business enterprise of various sorts." (Herskovits, 1952) It is a challenging problem for the scientists, the administrators, the philanthropists and the social workers that the tribals are heavily indebted and they are outright exploited by the middlemen at the cost of their simplicity and ignorance.

In the year 1966, while undertaking a study on the school-going children among the Dongria Kondhs, one of the primitive sections of the Kondh Community, I had an opportunity to observe the credit relationship between the two communities, the Dongria Kondh and the Domb, a Scheduled Caste community. About thirty-six persons belonging to both the communities confronted the then Special Officer, Tribal and Rural Welfare Department, Orissa to discuss the debt position of the Dongria Kondh and to liquidate their

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVIII, No.2, 1988, pp. 11-15

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, 751003

outstanding debts. During the discussion, the Dongria Kondhs put forth animated allegations against the Dombs daubing the latter *as* Patkars (cheats). From this, an onlooker would get an impression that both the communities' retreat daggers drawn towards each other. But to my utter surprise, it was found out that the same Dongria Kondh who was so animated in his accusation against the Dombs, again approached the same persons later for loan on the strength of their ritual relationship of Sai (bond-friends). This contradiction in human behavior poses a problem which prompted me to undertake the present study. Another factor of my interest was introduction of Purchase-Sale and Fair-Price Shop Scheme in the Dongria area by Government at that time. The scheme was introduced primarily to protect the tribals against the exploitation by the money-lenders. It was believed that by introducing such a scheme the tribals would take advantage of it and get fair-price for their products. It was anticipated that this would eradicate indebtedness from among them and ensure their better economic condition. But the findings were just opposite of the objective which could not be attained as the Dongria Kondhs could not be conclusively persuaded to free themselves from the network of their traditional socio-economic relationships with their money lenders.

In view of the specific limitation of this problem, the following hypotheses were formulated for undertaking the study. First, the credit relationships of the Dongria Kondhs encompass a composite series of activities both economic and non-economic. Secondly, the concept of debt has a different cultural connotation for the Dongria Kondh which is to be discussed here in this article. They do not go by the modern concept of debt. Anything borrowed either in cash or kind at the time of need is not considered to be a loan. Similarly anything extracted in exchange of this timely help either through fair or foul means is not considered to be undue for the Dombs. These feelings are the outcome of a network of symbiotic relationships between the Dongria and the Domb established since the past.

This reciprocal relationship has been historically evolved and has structurally resolved the apparently conflicting interests of the two communities. The Dongria Kondh economy is so organized that the allocation of labour and land, the organization of work in production process and the disposition of produced goods are expressions of underlying kinship obligations, tribal affiliation and religion and moral duty. In such an economy the bulk of resources and products are transacted in non-market spheres, when their economy different from our own are analyzed, the concepts prevalent are different to their structures or performances. Indebtedness, which is an economic behaviour is largely governed by different principles of organizations, different sanctions, different institutionalizations of economic mechanisms and different moral values for judging worth and performances. This economic transaction cannot be understood without the social obligation. The entire economic motive—why the Dongria Kondhs borrow from the Dombs alone but not from other sources, is

only due to certain non-economic relationships which motivate the Dongria Kondh to borrow from the Domb. The non-economic motives are patently incorporated into the economic models when we analyze the relationship between the two communities. As Ortiz (1927) says "Economic model can readily incorporate supposedly non-economic activities". However, to analyze this credit relationship, it is but indispensable to analyze the natural interaction of social, cultural and economic activities, institutions, roles and relationships within the society – the entire social process.

The vast area of 250 square miles, studded with sky-scraping hills, surrounded by lush green forests is called the Niyamgiri hills – the abode of the Dongria Kondh, one of the most backward tribes of Orissa. The Niyamgiri hill ranges are situated in the Bissam-Cuttack police-station of Gunupur and Rayagada Subdivisions in the district of (undivided) Koraput. Almost a century and half ago, the British officials (Macpherson, 1852&Campbell, 1864) reported about this tribe very prominently for their heinous practices of female infanticide and human sacrifice. Another scheduled caste, locally known as the Domb also reside with the Dongria Kondhs. Almost all the villages are exclusively inhabited by these two communities. The Dombs are immigrants from the plains of the districts of Balangir and Kalahandi and have permanently settled in the Dongria Kondh area.

The Dongria Kondhs are primarily shifting cultivators. Other than millets and cereals which they produce from their swiddens, they are also renowned tribal horticulturists of the Niamgiri hills. Almost all of their economic activities, social relationships and religious practices are integrally connected with shifting cultivation and horticultural practices.

Indebtedness is the most acute and complicated problem among the Dongria Kondh. Ordinarily they glean and reap adequate amount of food crops to live in primitive affluence. This balance with nature is seriously dislocated by the economic process for their perpetual indebtedness.

Since the past, the Dongria Kondhs are being perpetually exploited by their Domb neighbors resulting in a severe deficit in their budget of individual families. The accumulated debts always exceed the economic input of the indebted families. A small survey of 22 families during the year 1982-83 reveals that the *per capital* annual loan (including both current and old) is Rs. 72.90 only.

### **A Case Study**

Wadaka Paji of village Gartoli, borrowed Rs. 6/- and 8 Manas (1 Mana = 1 Kilogram) of Kosla rice in the month of July 1981 from Sikoka Basu (a cousin) of the same village. The purpose was to repay his outstanding loan received earlier from Palkia Kandapani, a Domb of the same village. In the year 1979, Paji had incurred loan from the Domb in order to meet the expenses towards

performing a shamanistic ritual for the treatment of his ailing child. Against this loan he had mortgaged three of his jackfruit trees.

When Paji delayed the repayment, Palkia got annoyed and demanded 2 more jackfruit trees with fruits towards interest accrued there upon since 1979. To repay the loan of Kandapani, he approached his own cousin, Basu and borrowed Rs. 6/-. Basu extended the loan with an understanding that Paji should repay it at the time of his the next harvest in kinds with 25 per cent interest.

Pajire paid the principal amount of the loan to the Domb but not the interest for which he could not release his 5 jackfruit trees.

In the year 1982, Paji paid back 12 ½ Manas or (12 ½ Kilograms) of Kosla-rice to Basu, his cousin as per the contract but could not pay the cash loan. In lieu of that, he gave 6 numbers of plantain trees.

In the year 1983, when Kandapani demanded interest, Paji gave 2 more jackfruit trees towards the interest. On enquiry it was ascertained that Paji died in the same year and his son Wadaka Drimba paid interest for one year only to Kandapani and got released 2 of his jackfruit trees. Thus even Paji's son could become free from the loan incurred by his father.

However, in English Dictionary, debt means "something owed to another, a liability and an obligation". In Encyclopedia Britannica, debt is defined as, "a definite sum due by one person to another". In general use it means that something not owned by the user but temporarily taken from another for use with the understanding of returning the same either with an excess over it or without any excess. To the Dongria Kondhs anything taken for use and given back after some time is not considered as debt. It is rather conceived as a kind of mutual give-and-take relationship. The case cited above makes further clear the usual conception of debt among them. Some of salient features of the Dongria debt system are detailed below.

1. A Loan is sought for when needed. Loans are contracted when a person is not able to meet his normal requirements from his own income or when unforeseen events demand extra expenditure.
2. A loan is incurred either in cash or in kind or both.
3. The standard for determining the time limit of a loan depends on the creditworthiness of the debtor and the financial standing of the creditor.
4. (a) The rate of interest is determined in every case by mutual agreement between the two parties depending upon on the personal relationship between the two parties.  
(b) In case of a breach of contract or if the loanee becomes a defaulter, the rate of interest is enhanced from the rate originally contracted. This

enhanced rate of interest is collected either in cash or in kind but in most cases in kind. The Dongria Kondh creditor may be liberal towards another Dongria Kondh defaulter whereas, the Domb creditor does not.

- (c) It is also evident that instead of interest being charged, an excess interest (*faida*) is collected in kind along with the principal amount. It so happens when the creditor is a Domb and the debtor is a Kondh. In such cases the creditor makes a pre-calculation of his profit and accordingly contracts assets to be mortgaged. The debtor too, does not mind to part with such assets. The feeling is that when the debtor is immediately helped, the creditor must be helped in the long run.
  - (d) The debtor may be exempted from paying the interest in case he can please the creditor with humility or establishes a good relationship be it the Dongria Kondh or the Domb.
5. (a) Almost all the loans are sought on oral contracts. No written document is maintained either by the Kondh or the Domb creditor. Records are maintained only for the transactions with statutory credit agencies like Banks and LAMPs.
  - (b) The Domb creditor does not maintain any records for two reasons: firstly in the absence of a written document he could easily exploit the illiterate Kondh and secondly in the changing context of growing awareness his identity as money-lender can never be disclosed.
  6. (a) All loans are obtained for a specific purpose which is considered as urgent in nature. In almost all the cases, the purpose is clearly revealed by the debtor to the creditor.
  - (b) The rate of interest also varies according to the acuteness of the requirement. The more urgent the need, the more is the rate of interest. The Domb, creditor always takes advantage of the urgency of the Kondh. This is because lending is considered as a reciprocal obligation by the Kondh creditor where as for the Domb it is a profitable business transaction. Usable personal assets like, cropped-field, plantains, trees of economic value are kept mortgaged by the creditor for getting a loan. The creditors in general and the Domb creditors in particular make use of those mortgaged productive assets and earn a living –fully or partly out of it.
  7. If the debtor is not well known to the creditor or the creditor has doubt on the integrity of the debtor, personal surety is sought for extending a loan. This practice is more frequent among the Kondh debtor and creditor than among the Kondh debtor and Domb creditor. It is because, the Domb creditor is cunning enough about how he can collect

his amount from the Kondh even in the worst situation and secondly, he wants to keep the transaction secret between him and the debtor. Whereas, the Kondh creditor when extends loan to another Kondh, he bears in mind the fact that personal surety is a must because he cannot rely his own men as they are bound to one another in such a way that at some or other level there may arise a rift between them.

8. Any advance payment by the creditor to the debtor for any purpose is also considered as loan.
9. Repayment is made if loan is taken. Payment is made before or just after the expiry of the term. As is evident, repayment should be made in full but not in installments which is considered to be a defaulting act by the debtor. Recovery by installments is not grievously viewed but the debtor thereby loses his own right over his leased out property. On the other hand the creditor is put to a favorable position by not losing his claim over the mortgaged property and goes on enjoying the benefits for years together until the final repayment is made.
10. A compound rate of interest (*faida*) in excess of the repayment of loan is also given by the debtor while repaying loan. It may be taken forcibly without the consent of the debtor.
11. Loan is also brought from the Government Agencies. It is received mainly in cash.
12. Government loan is interest free for the; Dongria Kondh.
13. A Bond-paper loan agreement is executed by the Government before extending the loan.
14. Government loan is disbursed before a witness -who belongs to the debtor's community.
15. An asset register is maintained by the local Government agency against the loans advanced to the Dongria Kondh.
16. Thus, all these above mentioned transactions constitute a 'Debt' for the Dongria Kondh.

Thus, loan according to the Dongria Kondh can be broadly defined as follows - Loan embraces all types of transactions whether cash or kind which a person receives as per his requirement either from a Domb, a non-tribal creditor or from a tribal creditor or from the Government Agency for a specific period and for a specific purpose; either orally or executing written document, with interest or without it, either by keeping mortgages or without doing so, either by giving

excess (*faida*) for default in repayment or without that, either by personal surety or without that and it must be repaid within the stipulated time either partially or fully or in excess without breaching the contract. If these elements are not present in any transaction the Dongria Kondh is reluctant to accept it as debt.

So far as the legal definition of loan is concerned, it is as follows - An advance whether of money or in kind on interest made by a money-lender having dealt the transaction on a document bearing interest executed in respect of past liability any such transaction which in substance, is a loan (Orissa Money lending Act, Section 2 of Act of 1969—as amended by Act-XVI11 and XVII of 1949 and XVIV of 1951 and Regulation V of 1949 and 1951 and Rules up-to-date). What amounts under the Act—(i) An advance in money or in kind, (ii) The advance must carry interest and (iii) There must be a condition of repayment.

If the conception of loan as prevalent among the Dongria Kondh is compared with that of legal definition of loan, we find that loan according to the Dongria Kondh is an advance either in cash or in kind but it is necessarily not extended always with interest. In the Kondh society loan is also extended free of interest when the transaction takes place within the Kondh community and between the Kondh and the Government Agency. Secondly, no written agreement is made when the transaction takes place- within the community or with the outsiders; that is, the Domb, except with the Government Agency. Thirdly, a condition of repayment though involved in the transaction, is not legally followed or strictly adhered to, especially when the transaction is made with the Domb. Thus, the tribal conception of loan is different from the legal conception of loan. However, the Dongria Kondhs have a limited view of incurring loan which is confined to their own society and culture. The communities living in the hills have further narrowed the scope of understanding loan in the context of wider society.

The Dongria Kondh has his way of consideration of incurring debt within the bounds of the socio-cultural ties among them and between them and the Domb and nobody else. That is why the Kondh is reluctant to approach any other Agency for loan as he considers it undignified and undesirable. The Kondh believes in maintenance of socio-economic ties than the temporary economic relationship with the creditor. Without the socio-cultural consideration which is of paramount importance for their life and living in the rugged hills far away from the modern society, the Dongria Kondh hesitates to seek loan from external agencies.



# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDEBTEDNESS AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDH AND THE JUANG \*

*Arati Mall* <sup>1</sup>

*Trilochan Sahoo* <sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The term of indebtedness is synonymous to borrowing, debt, loan and credit. As mentioned in New Webster dictionary (1981-487), "Indebted means being under or having incurred a debt required to pay a loan burden and indebtedness implies obliged by something received for which gratitude or restitution is due". 'Indebtedness' in broader connotation implies the feeling of gratitude for somebody's help, kindness that the debtor cannot pay back in equal amount in reciprocity. But the term is generally used to signify a sum of money owed to or deferred payment of goods and services received at present.

Though the meaning of these two terms 'debt and borrowing' appears to be the same and are used interchangeably from the layman's point of view, there is a little difference between these two. The dictionary meaning of the term 'debt' is 'bound to pay or perform for another an obligation'. 'Borrowing' means 'to obtain something as loan, trust or credit with the intention of returning the same or an equivalent to adopt from another source for one's own'.

Generally in debt the debtor pays back the principal along with the interest but in case of borrowing the debtor returns the exact amount taken from the creditor may be without any interest. Moreover, debt is used for long term loan and borrowing for short term. In case of borrowing if the amount (cash or kind) is small, the creditor, at times, does not mind if the debtor fails to return the same, which generally does not happen in case of debt.

The tribal society is a closed and simple one. Tribal indebtedness forms a part and parcel of their socio-economic and cultural behavior and credit practice indicates their economic life. The Scheduled Tribes in general and the Primitive

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXIV, Nos. 1& 2, 2004, pp.68-96

<sup>1</sup> Research Assistant, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

Tribal Group (PTG) in particular are at the level of subsistence economy. Expensive marriage ceremonies, birth and death rites and rituals and worships of gods and goddesses largely account for their indebtedness. These lead them to drown in debt. Their principal source of debt is local money-lenders. Often the tribals remain in debt to moneylenders in perpetuity, and after their death, their indebtedness is handed down to their descendants. Due to indebtedness some tribals lose their lands and fall victims to the practice of debt bondage and land alienation. Indebtedness thus becomes a form of exploitation of tribals by non-tribals and this has weakened the tribals' economic conditions.

The problem of indebtedness is primarily attributed to poverty of the tribals. It also reflects their under-economic malaise, i.e. lack of education, low purchasing/ bargaining power and lack of resources for investing in gainful activities and meeting culturally inevitable expenditures. The legal measures to restrict the activities of private moneylenders have failed to reduce the severity of the problem. This is due to ineffective enforcement machinery and lack of alternative source of credit for meeting consumption and productive needs. Lack of suitable National Policy to provide consumption credits to poor tribals have tended to make them dependant on unscrupulous moneylenders.

Indebtedness is a wide spread and chronic problem in tribal societies. It is very acute among Primitive Tribal Groups living in remote and inaccessible areas. The problems of indebtedness are economic and social in nature. The former aspect pushes the people into penury while the latter, explains the conditions, like social inequalities, deprivation and social and ritual obligations.

The study on indebtedness poses two important aspects to be discussed before unveiling the problem, as it would be seen from the field situation. The 'concept of indebtedness' and the transaction of 'money lending in tribal areas' needs through examination.

### **Money Lending in Tribal Areas**

To study the role of private moneylenders it is essential to understand the failures of various Government and Institutional credit agencies to extend loan to tribals. The transactions of traditional moneylenders are very simple and convenient to the tribal debtors. They are the nearest neighbors ever present in the scene. Whenever a tribal needs money for whatever reason, he first goes to the nearest local moneylender's house where he is always welcome. The moneylender advances him money without any conditions, sureties, guarantees and guarantors since an average tribal has very little to offer in this regard. But the moneylender recognizes his honest desire to fulfill his loan obligation out of his earning and that is treated as good surety against his loan.

On the other hand, institutional credit sources are situated at far off places from the tribal habitat. Again elaborate formalities, cumbersome procedures, like

security, guarantee and time lag between date of application and date of disbursement of loans that is too productive purposes only dishearten the tribals to borrow from these agencies. The poor tribal generally need loans for consumption and fulfillment of social and ritual obligations and the traditional moneylenders offer loan for such purposes instantly and unconditionally.

### **Findings of Earlier Studies on Tribal Indebtedness**

The earlier studies on tribal indebtedness show that it is a socio-economic phenomenon, and is too rampant among the tribes. The moneylenders have established a symbiotic relationship with their tribal clients. In spite of debt legislation, the fraudulent and evasive practice of unscrupulous money-lenders continues and that has reduced the effectiveness of the Government and statutory credit agencies. The non-institutional loan is taken either in cash or kind and the rate of interest is generally very high. The non-tribal creditors extract the major portion of the tribal produce from the fields and forest. At times, fresh loans are made to repay the old ones. With the spread of moneylenders' business the incidence of debt is high. The debt owed for non-productive purpose is substantially high among the tribals. Poverty pushes the tribals into indebtedness which in turn forces them to become bonded labour.

The earlier studies on indebtedness of the Dongria Kondhs a PTG of Orissa highlight the following points. The Dongria Kondhs borrow money for their inevitable traditional socio-religious obligations and to meet the requirement of food and drinks. Under the guise of ceremonial friendship the Domb neighbor maintains a symbiotic relationship with the Dongria Kondhs and exploits the former in the process of economic transactions. The contracts between the Dongria Kondh and the Domb are established through annual lease of fruit-bearing trees by the former, partly for cash and partly for few bottles of liquors. The price of the produce offered to the Dongria Kondh is lesser than the prevailing market price.

The earlier studies on indebtedness of the Juangs, another PTG, though appear to be few, highlights the following aspect. Very often the Juangs are unable to repay and free themselves from the clutches of the moneylenders. In the process, they lose all they own, their lands and houses. The after maths of indebtedness lead to land alienation and loss of property of the Juangs.

### **The Present Study**

The earlier studies suggest further study on the issues, like understanding the socio-economic implication and indentifying the problems. With this backdrop, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar had conducted a comparative study on indebtedness among the Dongria Kondhs of Raygada district and the Juangs of Keonjhar district in the State of Orissa. This paper is a concise form of the comparative study on indebtedness of the Dongria Kondhs and the Juangs by the first author conducted during 2000-01 under the guidance and supervision of Prof. (Dr) P. K. Nayak, the then Director and Shri B.B. Mohanty, Deputy Director of the Institute.

The study was conducted among the Dongria Kondhs of DKDA, Kurli area in Bissam-Cuttack block of Rayagada district and among the Juangs of Gonasika area of Bansapal block in Keonjhar district of Orissa. The objective of the study were to find out the social and economic aspects of indebtedness, its magnitudes and impacts on the lives of both the PTGs and to evolve a comparative profile of the system operating among both the PTGs in their respective areas.

## INDEBTEDNESS AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDHS

### Study Area and the People:

The Dongria Kondh constitutes a primitive section of the Kondh tribe of Orissa. They inhabit exclusively in the forest-clad Niyamgiri hill ranges, lying in the boarder of Rayagada and Bissam-Cuttack Police Stations. The study village Kurli is situated at an altitude of 3000 ft. above the sea level and is surrounded by hills. The village comes under Kurli Gram Panchayat of Bissam-Cuttack block of Rayagada district. It is one of the adopted villages of Dongria Kondh Development Agency and comes under Gunupur ITDA. The Dongria Kondh and the Dom, a Scheduled Caste community, live together in the same village. The Dongria Kondh males, like their female counterparts keep long and use varieties of hair clips.

As per the survey, the village Kurli comprises 105 households and 537 persons. Of the households, 70 belong to the Domb caste and 35, to the Dongria Kondh. The Dongria Kondhs constitute one third and the Dombs two third of the total population of Kurli village. Therefore, at the village level the Dombs are numerically preponderant over the Dongria Kondhs.

The Domb is the immediate neighbour of the Dongria Kondh. Nayak says, "previously in a Dongria Kondh village only one or two Domb families were allowed to stay with the Kondh to render some traditional services like acting as messenger (Barika) and/ or acting as sweepers and cattle herders for all the villagers" (1989: 188). The Dombs are, therefore regarded as helping hands to the Dongrias for management of their essential services. Sometimes they are also tied to them as ritual friends. The Dombs carried out petty business on fruits and forest products of the Dongrias. As their number increased they practiced their trade in the hills and started the business of money lending taking lease of fruit-bearing trees or orchards of the Dongria Kondhs and in course of time, have developed their relationship as the creditor to Dongrias. The Dombs sometimes act as intermediaries in settlement of quarrels that take place among the Dongrias or between the two communities. Besides, they also take the responsibility of collection of cash/kind from each individual household for arrangement of feasts and festivities.

### Dongria Kondhs' Concept of Indebtedness:

The Dongria Kondhs use the terms, *Rina* for loan and *Adi* or *Kantari* for interest. They consider loan from non-institutional source i.e. Dombs as borrowing

rather than loan. According to Das Patnaik “anything borrowed either in cash or kind is not considered as loan. Similarly anything extracted by the creditor from time to time or in future in exchange of this temporary help at present either by fair or foul means is not considered to be undue. These feelings are the outcome of a network of symbiotic relationship established with the creditor since past. It is considered as mutual give and take” (1990: 28-41). To them ‘Indebtedness’ is generally an economic transaction tied with social obligation especially with Domb. Further the epic views of Dongria Kondh about loan is; “to Dongria Kondh ‘loan’ embraces all type of transactions, whether cash or kind which a person brings as per his requirement either from Domb, a non-tribal creditor or from a tribal creditor or from a Government Agency for specific period and for specific purpose, either orally or executing written documents with interest or without paying any interest, either by keeping mortgage or without keeping any mortgage, either by giving any excess (*faida*) or without giving any excess, either by personal surety or without any personal surety and it must be repaid within the stipulated time either partially or fully in excess without breaching the contract” (Pattnaik & Mohanty, 1990:28-41).

But the views of Das Patnaik are not applicable to transaction with non-institutional sources and institutional source. Loan does not embarrass economic transaction with non-tribal or tribal creditors. Loan embraces economic transactions with Government agency or institutional and is found with execution of written documents, which carries a fixed rate of interest, and with personal surety. The loan amount is always paid in cash. In case a person fails to repay the loan within stipulated time, it becomes compound, merge with the principal amount of loan.

The Dombs, constitute the main non-institutional loan source. The Dongrias do not think that they are in debt when they receive cash/kind from the Dombs in exchange of their orchards or fruit trees. Sometimes they also take advance (cash/kind) from the Dombs at the time of their necessity on the condition to give them fruit orchards. Though exploitation exists in the process of the transactions, it is in a disguised form of mutual help and social relationship. The Dongrias do not feel shame or think themselves as debtors and the Dombs, as creditors. In their view it is mutual exchange and the extraction of Dombs from them is due to foregoing the use of his money/article at present. On the other hand, they feel themselves to borrow from their relatives or kins group as in exchange of loan amount; the creditor does not receive anything. Thus borrowing from kin groups or blood relation is a rare incidence, which takes place in dire necessity when the Dongrias fail to get the required amount from the Dombs in exchange of their orchards.

#### **Extent of Indebtedness among the Dongria Kondhs:**

According to the survey out of total 35 Dongria Kondh households, 26 (74 %) households are indebted. Most of the households have incurred loans from more than one source (see table below).

**No of Households incurred Loans from difference sources**

Sl. No.	Source	No. of Indebted Households		Total Indebted Households
		Previous loan	Current loan	
1.	Non-Institutional	13	7	20
2.	Institutional			
	i) Bank	2	2	4
	ii) Co-operative Societies	4	7	11
<b>Total</b>		<b>15 *</b>	<b>14 *</b>	<b>26 *</b>

Total number of indebted households is not equal to the total number of households, as one person has taken loan from more than one source.

The total loan amount of 26 Dongria Kondh households comes to Rs. 2, 53,450/-. Out of the total loan amount, Rs.1, 57,950/- (62.32%) has been taken from non-institutional sources and Rs. 95, 500/- (37.68 %) from institutional sources. Further Rs. 1, 02,150/- (40.30 %) is taken during the year 1999-2000 and the reaming loan amount of Rs. 1, 51,300/- (59.70 %) has been standing from the previous year. Out of institutional loan, Bank loans constitute (19.73 %) and loan from co-operative society (17.95 %). Loans from non-institutional source include the Dombs, own community members (Dongria Kondhs) and community fund whereas loans from the institutional sources include Niyamgiri Fruit Growers Co-operative Society and commercial banks. The average loan outstanding per household is Rs. 9748/- (see table below).

**Total Loans of Dongrias of Kurli Village from different sources up to2000**

Sl. No	Loan from Different Sources	Amount of Loan (in Rs.)		
		Current Loan	Previous Loan	Total Loan
1.	Non-Institutional	39,150	1,18,800	1,57,950(62.32)
2.	Institutional			
	i) Bank	32,000	18,000	50,000
	ii) Co-operative Society	31,000	14,500	45,500(17.95)
	Sub -total (i + ii )	63,000	32,500	95,500(37.68)
	<b>Grand total (1+2)</b>	<b>1, 2,150 (40.30%)</b>	<b>1, 51,300 (59.70%)</b>	<b>2, 53,450 (100.00%)</b>

**Causes of Indebtedness**

The Dongria Kondhs spend lavishly while observing social functions like marriage, birth and death rites, religious ceremonies etc. Besides, they are often involved in clan feuds, which arise out of child betrothal and dormitory system and due to stealing of *salap* juice or fruit from the other's trees. To settle the disputes,

they require spending a lot of money towards payment of penalty. Further the poor section among them having no horticultural plots is forced to borrow in cash and kind for their consumption. The specific purposes for which they incur loans include the following:

- ☛ To meet the expenses of feast to be arranged for the kinsmen, relatives and villagers during birth and death rituals, marriage ceremonies and festive occasions including the payment of bride price and festive occasions.
- ☛ To meet the expenses of settling a conflict arising out of clan feuds due to breach of betrothal and forcible capture of bride for marriage and stealing of sago palm liquor and fruit of an individual of a clan by another person of a different clan.
- ☛ To bear the heavy expenditure for celebration of *Meriah* festival communally held in which buffaloes are sacrificed before the *Dharani Penu* for a bumper crop and for purchase of cattle to be sacrificed before their traditional deities.
- ☛ To meet the expenses of cultivation of horticultural crops. Persons having large number of orchards sometimes employ co-operative labour to take up different works connected with horticultural plantations.
- ☛ For expenditure towards construction and repair of houses, inevitable treatment of chronic diseases, investment by way of purchasing agricultural lands in the plains, repayment of old loan and even payment of LIC premium amount.
- ☛ To meet expenses of day-to-day consumptions during the lean season mostly the poor people having no horticultural plots borrows both in cash and kind for meeting the day-to-day necessities.

### **Purpose of Indebtedness**

The study shows that out of 35 households at village 'Kurli', 26 (74.29%) households have incurred loan for more than one purpose. It reveals that maximum number of persons, 19 (73.08%) have taken loan for celebration of marriage and other festivals and rituals. For consumption and shifting cultivation / agricultural purposes 8 (30.71%) persons in each case have taken loan. Only one (3.85%) person in each case had taken loan for repayment of old loan and payment of fine, treatments of diseases, construction of houses and for education of the children.

Utilization of Former and Current Loans by Dongria Households of 'Kurli' Village

Purpose	Non-Institutional Sources		Institutional Sources				Total		
			Bank		Co-op Society				
	Current Loan 1999-2000	Previous Loan	Current Loan 1999-2000	Previous Loan	Current Loan 1999-2000	Previous Loan	Current Loan	Previous Loan	Total Loan
Consumption	4,100	5,350	-	3,000	-	5,000	4,100	13,350	17,450 (6.89)
Celebration of marriage, festivals/ rituals	25,300	67,650	-	15,000	7,000	-	32,300	82,650	1,14,950 (45.35)
Shifting cultivation, Agriculture	9,750	7,900	12,000	-	14,000	9,500	35,750	17,400	53,150 (20.97)
Payment of old loan	-	-	-	-	10,000	-	10,000	-	10,000 (3.95)
Payment of fine	-	3,000	-	-	-	-	-	3,000	3,000 (1.18)
Self Treatment	-	25,900	-	-	-	-	-	25,900	25,900 (10.22)
House Construction	-	-	20,000	-	-	-	20,000	-	20,000 (7.89)
Children's Education	-	9,000	-	-	-	-	-	9,000	9,000 (3.35)
Total	39,150	1,18,800	32,000	18,000	31,000	14,500	1,02,150 (40.30)	1,51,300 (59.70)	2,53,450 (100.00)



The table below shows that out of total loan amount, 55.28% was spent on rituals and ceremonies, 11.05 % on farming, 6.88% on consumption, 3.55 % on children's education, 3.95 % for old loan repayment, 1.18 % for payment of fine, 10.22% for treatment of diseases and 7.89% for house building. Loan amount spent on different purposes are given in case studies.

- Current loan (40.30%) is less than previous loan (59.70%)
- The current loan from institutional source (Rs. 32,000/-+Rs. 31,000/-) is more than non-institutional source(Rs. 39,150/-)
- Though loan is obtained from institutional source for productive purpose, like cultivation, horticultural plantation, etc. it has been utilized for non-productive purposes like consumption and celebration of marriage, rituals, etc).
- A portion of loan amount from non-institutional source has also been utilized for productive purpose like shifting cultivation and agriculture.
- Total loan (current + previous) from both the institutional and non-institutional source shows that a major portion (45.35 %) has been spent in the festival, marriage and rituals.
- Loan from non-institutional source has been decreased by approximately 3 times the previous loan amount.

**Utilization of Loan Amount (source wise) by Dongria Households of 'Kurli'**

Purpose	Private loan		Bank		Co-op Society		Total	
	No	Amount (In Rs.)	No	Amount (In Rs.)	No	Amount (In Rs.)	No	Amount (In Rs.)
Household consumption	6	9,450 (5.98)	1	3,000 (6.00)	1	5,000 (10.99 )	8	17,450
Rituals & Ceremonies	14	92,950 (58.84)	1	15,000 (30.00)	3	7,000 (15.38)	18	1,14,950
Podu cultivation / Agriculture	3	17,650 (11.18)	1	12,000 (24.00)	5	23,500 (51.65)	9	53,150
Payment of Old Loan	-	-	-	-	1	10,000 (21.98)	1	10,000
Payment of Fine	1	3,000 (1.90)	-	-	-	-	1	3,000
Self treatment	1	25,000 (16.40)	-	-	-	-	1	25,900
House building	-	-	1	20,000 (40.00)	-	-	1	20,000
Children's Education	1	9,000 (5.70)	-	-	-	-	1	9,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1,57,950 (100,00)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>50,000 (100,00)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>45,500 (100,00)</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2,53,450 (100,00)</b>

*(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)*

- The loans from both the institutional and non-institutional sources have been utilized for both productive and non-productive purposes.
- 36% of the Bank loans have been utilized for non-productive purposes.
- Similarly, 48.35 % of total loan from co-operative society has been spent on non-productive purposes (out of these 21.98 % have been spent for repayment of old loans taken from non-institutional source).
- Of private loan, 66.72 % have been spent for non-productive purpose, 16.40 % on health and 5.70 % on education.

### Sources of Credit

As said earlier the Dongria Kondhs borrow from the institutional and non-institutional (the main source) sources which are the following:

- i) *The Neighbor*: The Dombs, the immediate neighbor of the Dongrias, are their principal providers of credit. They help each other at the time of necessity. The Dongria Kondhs possess Donger lands, whereas the Dombs are landless. Traditionally, The Dongria Kondhs were the patrons and the Dombs were the clients, but gradually by virtue of their skill, knowledge and expertise in trade and business and outside contacts, the Dombs emerged as a major trading community. They started supplying Dongria Kondhs their day-to-day necessities, like salt, dry fish, kerosene, oil etc. in exchange of food grains. Gradually the Dombs became rich and emerged as creditors. At times the Dongria Kondhs borrow money and animals (for sacrificial purposes) from the Dombs to meet their ritual urgencies.
- ii) *Community Members*: The poorer sections among the Dongria Kondhs borrow from the well-to-do section mostly in the shape of kind, like food grain, seed etc. in small quantity for a shorter period. The borrowed articles are returned at the quickest possible time, preferably after of the harvest. In case of seed loan, double the amount (100% rate of interest) of the seed is returned after date of maturity, which is not applicable to food grain loan. According to the survey, out of 26 Dongria Kondh households, (7.59%) have borrowed from their own community members.
- iii) *Community Fund*: The Dongrias also take loans from the community fund called, 'Kutumb Taka' or 'Kutumb Manjiga' at the time of need. This fund is raised through co-operative labour, by selling fruits of the trees owned by the village community and collecting grains from individual households. They select a person as the custodian of the community fund from which the needy households take loan. The borrower repays the loan without paying any interest. The survey reveals 3 (11.54 %) cases of borrowing from the community fund amounting to Rs. 4,000/-.

Besides the above sources, the Dongria Kondhs also depend on loans from the institutional source, which includes the following:

- (i) **Co-operative Society:** A co-operative society, named “Niyamgiri Fruit Grower’s Co-operative Society” (NGFCS) was registered on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1979 by the Micro Project (DKDA, Chatikona) for marketing of their horticultural produce and also to supply them necessary consumption articles and to advance loans for improvement and expansion of horticultural fields and for agricultural purposes. The main purpose behind establishing such a society was to save the Dongria Kondhs from the clutches of exploitative Dombs and the local traders. The headquarters of the Society is located at Chatikona and to provide credit to its members for horticultural and agricultural activities. Besides, it also looks after the marketing of the surplus agricultural and horticultural produce by purchasing it from the members at a reasonable price. The survey reveals that as many as 10 (previous loan 4 households+ current loan 6 households) have taken loan from the NFGCS.

#### Loan from Institutional Source

Years	No. of Loanees	Loan Amount (In Rs.)	Repayment of loan			Loan outstanding till Nov. 2000		
			Principal	Interest	Total	Principal	Interest	Total
1987-1995	19	16,000	3,372	6576.5	9948.5	14,118	8735.31	22853.31

(Source: DKDA/NFGCS, Chatikona Office)

It was found that out of 35 Dongria families of Kurli village, 19 have taken loan for agricultural purpose from the NGFCS. Of them, 5 are males and 14 are females who have taken it from their respective branches of the NFGCS. The total loan given to them during the 9 years amounts to Rs. 16,000/- of which the repaid amount is Rs.9948.50/- (Rs.3372/- principal and Rs. 6576.50/- interest). The loan outstanding during the period of survey is Rs. 14,118/- that is more than 4 times, than the repaid principal amount. Outstanding interests are also much more than the amount of interests already paid to the society.

The above data reveals that the capacity of Dongria Kondh for repayment of loan seems to be poor. This is either due to low productivity or misutilisation of fund. The other reason which prompted them not to repay the outstanding loans is that they were misguided that they would be exempted from the total loan amount after a long time gap which had already happened in the year 1964-65, as per the government decision, whereby these poor tribal farmers were exempted from repayment of debts due to drought conditions.

- ii. **Commercial Bank:** Besides the co-operative society, a branch of the Panchabati Gramya Bank located at Bissam-Cuttack caters to the credit needs of the people by providing loans to the needy Dongria Kondh families to meet the expenses of cultivation and horticultural plantation. In the study village only as 4 (15.38%) families have been advanced loans by the Bank. A portion of the loan amount (36%) has otherwise been spent by the loanees, like meeting the expanses of marriage rituals and festivals and in consumptions. Generally Dongria Kondh shaving fixed assets like plain lands etc, who could pledge security, have availed loans from the Bank.

### **Process of getting Loan & Security for Credit**

The Dongrias do not require intermediaries while taking loan from the known creditor. But while taking loan from the creditors staying in other villages and personally unknown to him intermediaries, witness or written documents are required. This rarely happens because Dombs of the same village rarely give a scope to their debtors to go to other villages for loans.

Previously the Dombs were the traders of horticultural produce of the Dongria Kondhs. With the development of horticultural orchards and phenomenal increase of fruit production and spices like turmeric and ginger in the Niyamagiri hills, the Dombs emerged as trader-cum-creditors. The Dombs also became richer due to their monopolization as the only trading community in the locality. Taking the advantages of the symbiotic relationship between the Dombs and the Dongria Kondhs, the former developed a business motive. Dombs gave advance of the cash and kinds, like buffalos, goats, hens, pigs, rice etc. to the Dongria Kondhas against the temporary pledging of different types of the latter's orchards like turmeric, pineapple, oranges, fruit trees, like mango, jackfruit and cereals or pulses, like *jhudunga*, *kandula*, etc.

At the outset of functioning of the Micro Project and the Co-operative Society, the monopoly of the Domb traders seemed to be reduced. But latter due to malfunctioning of the Co-operative Society once again the Dongrias came back to the clutches of the Domb moneylenders. With the expansion of their area of horticulture, most of the Dongria Kondh families are notable to take proper care of their fruit-orchards and prefer to enter into a type of transaction with the Dombs in which they mortgage their orchards for a temporary period against cash advance mutually agreed upon by both the parties. The types of crops and the period of lease determine the value so fixed for particular orchard. Such type of transaction is made through oral agreement between both the parties based on mutual trust and belief. But now-a-days, in some exceptional cases, the Dombs are insisting upon written agreement due to distrust on Dongria Kondhs. The field investigation reveals two to three such cases where particular orchards/fruit trees of one Dongria Kondh have been mortgaged to more than one Dombs (see case studies 13 & 14).

While borrowing from the community members, they prefer their own clan groups and consanguinal kin. Since the clans members are morally bound to help and trust each other, usually the question of demanding any security for any amount of loan borrowed from community members does not arise.

While advancing loan, the co-operative society also does not insist on any security from its Dongira Kondh loanees and member beneficiaries. To obtain loan from Panchabati Gramya Bank or from any Commercial Bank located nearby, the security in the form of fixed assets, like own land, house site, gold etc. are to be pledged, failing which no loan will be sanctioned.

### **Rate of Interest**

The system of indebtedness that operates among the Dongria Kondhs is quite peculiar and unique and such system is not found in any other tribal communities. It is a kind of economic transaction, which does not involve payment of interest in cash. The Domb being very clever apply a method of taking lease of fruit orchards/fruit bearing trees on payment of contractual amount either partly or fully for a certain period of time, when the Dongria Kondh need money. In such type of transactions, the Dongria Kondhs being very simple and having unsound knowledge regarding the market price of their produce are cheated by the Doms. As for example, an orange tree yielding 1500 fruits was leased for a single bottle of liquor for a year and turmeric field worth of hundred rupees of harvested crops was leased out for a few bottles of liquor or about Rs. 10/- (Aparajita, 1994:163). During the field study such types of transactions were also noticed. The pineapple/orange/turmeric field worth of Rs.10,000/- Rs.15,000/- was leased out to Domb traders for Rs. 4000/- Rs.5,000/-. However, the Domb bears certain amount of risks that in case there is any failure of crops due to some reason or the other, in that particular plot which is taken on lease, the Dongria Kondh is not obliged to return the money taken in lieu of the crop. In such a situation, the Domb insists upon taking the same plot of land for another period on lease in order to compensate his loss on the basis of fresh agreement.

Thus the rate of interest calculated in terms of cash is 2 to 3 times (200% to 300%) more than the amount of loan taken by the Dongrias. But as the interest is not paid in cash or kind directly to the creditor, the Dongrias do not feel its burden as it happens in case of loans from institutional sources though the rate of interest is quite lower than that of the non-institutional sources. Loan taken from *Sahabuti* fund is returned with addition of extra rupees varying between Rs10-20 as per the condition made with the member. Well-to-do Dongrias also advance loan in shape of seed, food grains, and small amount of cash to their needy community members. Seed loan carry 100% rate of interest

where as other loans including cash loan are interest free. In cash of loan from institutional sources the rate of interest is 12.5 % per annum.

### **Repayment of Loan**

In Dongria Kondh society, the son or legal heir inherits the debt liabilities of his deceased predecessor. Extending loans to Dongria Kondh are more or less secured as loans are advanced against pledging fixed assets, like orchards or standing crops. So the Domb never bears any risk of uncertainty of repayment of loans. However, at the end of the lease period if the mortgagee wants to extend the terms on the ground that the loan could not be recouped due to crop failure or some other reason, he has to enter into a fresh contract with the son or legal heir of the deceased loanee. Otherwise the loanee or the legal heir regains the possession of the pledged land. In case of any dispute in the loan transaction, the matter is referred of the village council for settlement.

Loans from Community Fund and community members are repaid as per the terms and conditions fixed at the time of taking the loan. Loan from institutional sources (Bank) if not repaid in due time, notice is sent to remind the loanee and if the loanee fails to repay then, the principal is merged with the interest and it becomes compound. After the date of maturity, the security of the loanee comes under the possession of bank. In case of Co-operative Society, the loan, amount is added with interest. Form the survey it was found that loanees of the year 1985 had not repaid the loan amount yet.

### **Limitations of Borrowing**

The Dombs creditors as per Hindu belief and ideology do not lend on Monday and Thursday. However, this restriction is not followed very strictly. The Dombs lend everything like rice, salt, chilly etc, animals like buffaloes, goats, etc to the Dongrias, whenever he is in need, may it be at midnight.

A peculiarity among the Dongria is that they hesitate to borrow from their own relations or clan groups. In a Dongria Kondh family one brother may be well to do having property more than his requirements. His own poor brother neither does ask him money nor does he lends to his poor brother at the time of need on the belief that he may not return the same. The Dongria also feel shame to borrow from their clan groups or relatives as the lender would not mortgages anything and this lowers the prestige of the debtor. Under unavoidable circumstances, when they fail to get a loan from the Dombs, they may approach a relative for which he does not have to pay interest while making payment of the principal amount. This perhaps happens rarely.

Institutional sources, like Niyamagiri Fruit Growers Co-op Society and Banks extend short-term loans to Dongria Kondhs for production purposes. But as most of the Dongria Kondhs require money for non-productive purposes

and institutional sources have their own constraints against advancing such loans, the borrowings from non-institutional source is resorted to.

### **Literacy and Indebtedness**

Literate Dongrias seem to be aware of the economic transactions with the Dombs. They have developed the bargain powers while leasing orchards and standing crops and taking right decision in fixing the price of their orchards. Out of 35 heads of households of the Dongrias in Kurli village, 28 (80%) are totally illiterate. On the other hand, the creditors (Dombs) are highly literate and educated. This may help the latter to cheat them. As per the table below all the Dongria Kondh literates (including just literates) have incurred loans where as from illiterate mass, 19 (68%) out of 28 head of households are indebted. As the literate Dongria Kondhs know little arithmetic calculation they use to bargain the price against pledging their orchards. Therefore, the education has enhanced the bargaining power of the Dongria Kondhs.

As revealed from the following statement among 26 debtors who are the head of the families. 19 (73.08 %) are illiterates, 6 (23.08 %) are just literate and only 1 (3.84%) have studied up to primary level. Among the illiterates the extent of indebtedness is 68% where as among the literates it is cent percent.

#### **Literacy and Debt among the Dongria Kondhs at Kurli village**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>Total number of Households (HHs)</b>	<b>No of debtors &amp; % to total Indebtedness</b>	<b>Percentage of Indebtedness in Educated HHs</b>
1.	Illiterate	28	19 (73.08%)	68%
2.	Just literate	6	6 (23.08%)	100%
3.	Primary	1	1 (03.84%)	100%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>26 (100%)</b>	<b>74%</b>

### **Income and Indebtedness**

The table below presents the grouping of families in different income ranges and their involvement in debts. It reveals that 66.66 % are below poverty line (BPL) and the rest, in the APL category. But the percentage of debtors (82.35%) is more in APL families than the BPL families (66.66%). This may be due to high expenditure in rituals and festivals for social prestige which is a status symbol in the Dongria society. Thus Dongria families in higher income groups have developed tendency to get into debt for incurring higher expenses in these rituals and festivals to achieve higher social status and prestige.

**Income Range and Indebtedness among the Dongria Kondh of Kurli Village**

Sl. No	Annual Income Range	No. of Total Households	No. of Debtors	Percentage of Debtors
1.	Up to Rs. 5,000/-	4	1	25.00
2.	Rs. 5,001/- to Rs.10,000/-	8	5	62.50
3.	Rs.10,001 to Rs. 15,000/-	6	6	100.00
<b>Sub Total (BPL HH)</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>66.66</b>
4.	Rs.15,001/- to 20,000/-	9	7	77.78
5.	Rs.20,001/- and above	8	7	87.50
<b>Sub-Total (APL HH)</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>82.35</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>74.29</b>

The frequent contacts of the Dongrias with Micro Project (DKDA) Officials, researchers, academicians, businessmen and the venders make them aware of getting more profit through sound investment (i.e. purchasing paddy land at plains, raising orchards etc) and to avail loan facilities at a lower rate of interest from the available institutional sources. Therefore, a few of them have obtained loans for purchasing paddy lands and payment of LIC premiums, which shows their foresight for future security. As observed, even some of them have taken mutton on credit from the Dombs on eve of *chhadakhai*, the day following *Kartik purnima* observed by the neighboring castes.

**Savings of Dongria Kondhs**

Previously the Dongria Kondhs used to hoard their money without saving. In order to hoard, the Dongrias used to dig a hole in the floor near the hearth inside the kitchen and putting notes and coins inside an earthen pot, locally known as *birgadoka* sealing it properly they were burying the same under the earth and plastering the floor maintaining safety and secrecy. Another way to hoard money was that money is kept in a bamboo pipe (*duna*) and tightly sealed by clothes, it is either hidden under the soil or hung from a nail on the wall of the house at a greater height on the wall. At the outdoors, the Dongria often hide their money kept in *duna* under the ground near a tree where watch shed is constructed in the swidden field. Before his death the Dongria male discloses about the location of his *duna* before his son or wife.

Now there is a drastic change in the saving pattern of the Dongrias under influence of modernization. Now many of them have LIC policies for future security. Out of 35 households, 8 (22.86%) households at Kurli village have LIC policies the amount of which varies from Rs.15, 000/- to Rs.80, 000/-.



They are paying the LIC premium by selling their produce or by mortgaging their orchards. Besides, a few of them who have extra incomes have developed the habits of saving in the local banks.

#### **A Resume of Dongria Kondh Indebtedness**

- The Dongria Kondhs to a large extent (77%) depend on loans from non-institutional sources than from institutional sources.
- The Domb creditors take the advantage of the symbiotic relationship with the Dongria Kondh debtors and become the key players in the network of Dongria Kondh economy.
- The local customs of Dongria Kondh (like bride price payments, feuds, elopement with girls for marriage etc) drag them to debt net and therefore, open the way of exploitation.
- The loans of Dongria Kondhs from institutional sources meant for agricultural purpose is utilized for non-productive purpose, like payment of bride-price, domestic consumptions and such other emergency needs.
- The loan from the non-institutional source carries different rates of interest. Except seed loan, which carries 100% interest, the borrowing from the community members is interest free.
- Irrespective of their income ranges, the Dongria Kondhs are indebted. The percentage of loanees in higher income groups is found to be more than that of lower income group.
- The prodigality of the Dongria Kondhs gives more scope to the Domb creditors to exploit the former. The Domb LIC Agents have gained the confidence of the Dongria Kondh customers and help them to be LIC policyholders by extending credits to them.
- Dongria Kondh people are most often pulled into the trap of the debt for raising their social status by spending more than their earnings.
- Illiterate Dongrias often get scared of literate Dombs because the Dombs may drag them to the court of law or police station on any false allegation.
- At times the indebted Dongria Kondhs work in the mortgaged dongars for clearing the debt amount of Dombs.
- Despite many debt legislations, economic development programmes, Government measures for exemption of the agricultural loans and expanding further loans from institutional sources, the propensity of the Dongria Kondhs has not stopped them to get new loans from the private creditors. Overtly they have become habitual debtors.

## INDEBTEDNESS AMONG THE JUANGS

### Study Area and the People

The Juangs are a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) exclusively found in Juangpirh of Keonjhar district and Pallahara subdivision of Angul district of Orissa. Linguistically, Juangs are Munda(Austro-Asiatic) speaking people and racially belong to Proto-Australoid stock. Juang settlements are scattered, hidden inside hills and forest of Gonasika region. They eke out a subsistence pursuing shifting cultivation and collecting minor forest produce. The Juang village community owns and manages all the productive and useful natural resources, like swiddens, forests, grazing land, and habitation sites etc, which lie within their village boundary. Another important feature of the Juang society is their traditional youth organization and dormitory called, 'Magang' or 'Mandaghar'. The Majang serves as a community house for the youth, court house for the elders and *barabhai* (the traditional council of village elders and leaders), guest house for visitors, cooperative store for storage of common grains, place for keeping musical instruments, a venue for communal rituals, cultural center for dance and music and a museum of Juang art and crafts.

The study village Kadalibadi is situated at an altitude of 290 ft. above the sea level and is surrounded by hills and forests. The village comes under the Gonasika GP in Bansapal block of Keonjhar district. It is one of the adopted villages of the Micro Project namely, Juang Development Agency (JDA) and comes under Keonjhar ITDA. The Bathudi and the Bhuyan tribe are found living in close proximity to Juang. The Juangs and Gouda (milkman caste) inhabit the study village, Kadalibadi. Both the ethnic groups live in separate wards.

The study village consists of 48 households of which 36 belong to the Juang and 12 to Gouda community. The total population of the village is 243. The Juangs constituting the four fifth of the total population of the village are numerically dominant over the Goudas. The sex ratio at village level is 1077 for the Juang 1277 for the Gouda. The household and population composition of the Juang and the Gouda of Kadalibadi village is given below.

**Composition of Households and Population of Kadalibadi Village**

Sl. No	Community	No. of Households	Population		
			Male	Female	Total
1.	Juang	36 (75.00)	95	99	194 (79.84)
2.	Gouda	12 (25.00)	22	27	49 (20.16)
<b>Total</b>		<b>48 (100.00)</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>243 (100.00)</b>

(Source: SCSTRTI Survey, May 2001-02)

### **The Neighbors**

The Bhuyan and Bathudi live side by side with the Juang. Besides, in each Juang village there are two or three Gouda families brought by the Juang to supply them milk and milk products for communal rituals and to tend their cattle. Now the Gouda population is gradually increasing and they have started living in separate wards. Besides the Gouda, the Pano, Chasa, Teli castes are also residing in the area. They are playing the role of intermediaries, traders and moneylenders and supplying paddy, rice, animals, like goat, hen, pig and buffalo to Juangs at the time of their need and charging exorbitant rate of interest. Besides, they are carrying on petty business by supplying the Juangs their day-to-day necessities at a higher rate than the prevailing market rate and simultaneously cheating them in weights and measures.

### **The Juangs' Concept of Loan**

To a Juang, indebtedness means taking loan, which he has to pay back in future. They make a little difference between loan (*thika*) and mortgage (*bandhak*). In case of *thika* (loan), the land is mortgaged for a certain period against an advance and the creditor takes the produce of the land. After the expiry of the loan period, the debtor gets back his land. In this case, loan amount is not paid back. In case of mortgage (*bandhak*), the same process is followed, but the debtor has to clear the loan and interest amount before getting back his mortgaged land. Unless the debtor repays the loan amount, the creditor does not return the land and keeps the land under his control beyond the period of agreement. The Juang prefer *thika* than *bandhak* unless acute necessity arises.

### **Beliefs associated with Lending/Borrowing**

In the Juang society, all articles and properties, except house can be mortgaged. They usually borrow both in case and kind. Among the kinds are paddy, rice, salt, chili, oil earthen pots etc, different domestic animals like hens, goats, pig, bullocks, etc. which are borrowed from other caste people and also from their own kinsmen which are paid back after certain period.

The Juang follow certain injunctions while extending loans to their villagers or kinsmen. They do not lend either paddy or rice on Thursday because they believe that Goddess Laxmi (Goddess of wealth) would get angry and may leave their house. They do not lend lime (*chuna*), turmeric or wood at night to kinsmen because of the belief that young babies would cry at night if such articles were given. They also do not lend salt at night on the belief that tear would appear in cow's eye, which is an inauspicious sign. They also do not extend anything as loan in *Akshya Tritiya* festival - the first showing of seeds in the field at the beginning of the monsoon.

### Extent of Indebtedness

The survey of Kadalibadi village (2001) reveals that all the 36 Juang households have borrowed Rs. 32,398/- from different institutional and non-institutional sources. The average loan per household was Rs.900/- Out of 36 households, 26 (72%) had loans outstanding prior to the year 2000-2001. During 2000-01 all the 36 households had taken loan. The average amount of loan of 36 households during this year was Rs. 9,200/- whereas, the amount of previous year loan outstanding was Rs, 23,198/-. The average amount of loan per household during the year 2000-01 and during the previous year it was Rs. 892/-. The extent of indebtedness of the Juangis given in the statement below.

#### Extent of Indebtedness among the Juang of Kadalibadi Village

Total number of Households	Indebted Juang Households (HHs)		Total amount of Loan (in Rs.)	Average Loan amount per Household (in Rs.)
	Number	Percentage		
36	36	100%	32,398/-	900/-

### Causes of Indebtedness

Although most of the Juang live hand to mouth, they do not like to borrow unless compelled to do so. The necessity of borrowing arises during sowing seeds, observation of rituals and festivals and for domestic consumption. The specific purposes are to meet the expenses (i) of birth and death rituals and marriage ceremonies, (ii) of agricultural activities, (iii) of day-to-day consumption during lean season, (iv) for construction /repair of houses and treatment of disease and often for paying LIC premium, purchasing land, wine and meat.

All 36 households of the study village have borrowed grains for sowing seeds in the field and for consumption purposes. The following Table shows different sources of loan and purposes of getting loan by Juangs of Kadalibadi village during the year 2000-01. Out of 36 households; all have borrowed for cultivation, 28 (77.78%) households for consumption purposes and 2 (5.56%) for marriage rites and festivals. Of all the 36 households, 30 (83%) have incurred loans from outside moneylenders. These loans are extended in kind comprising rice and paddy. The loan from privative sources comes to 49.4 *khandi* (720Kg) rice and 12 *khandi* (125Kg) paddy, whose money value is Rs. 6,700/-. Similarly loan from community fund consists of 44.9 *khandi* (625Kg) paddy worth of Rs. 2,500/-. The paddy loans from community fund were used for seed purposes. The total loan amount from non-institutional sources (private source and community fund) comes to Rs. 9,200/-.

### **Purpose of Juang Indebtedness (source wise) during 2000-01**

- Juangs have not availed any institutional (Bank) loan during 2000-01.
- All the Juang households have taken seed loan from the non-institutional source (community fund) and non-productive loan (consumption purpose and celebration of rituals) from private source.

### **Grain Loan**

The Juangs do not like to have loans in cash and kind. Loans in kind mainly comprise of rice and paddy. Loan is meant mostly for seed purpose and is usually taken from community grain bank at the *mandaghar* before sowing of seed starts. This is called as seed loan. This carries 50% rate of interest. The entire community is involved in the process. Besides paddy, the other kind of loan is rice loan. The rice and paddy are utilized generally in festive occasions, marriage ceremonies and ritual occasions.

For kind loans, they mainly go for non-institutional sources like the Gouda creditors and their *mandaghar*. During the 2000-01, 36 (100%) Juangs have taken kind loans amounting to 7045 qtls of paddy and 7.20 qtls of rice.

### **Source of Credit**

The Juangs mainly depend on the loans from the non-institutional sources like private moneylenders, employers, traders, relatives and friends. Lack of communication and an altogether different social environment stand as obstacles for availing any loan institutional facilities to the Juang at the time of their need. There is no credit co-operative society of *grain gola* in their village or nearby. Therefore, only those infiltrators, who live either in the village or near about and have intimacy with the Juang, advance loan to them.

According to the survey cent percent of Juang households have borrowed 37.46% of the total loan amount from non-institutional sources and only 20 (55.55%) have borrowed from the institutional sources and the amount constitutes 62.34 % of the total loan.

The Juang take loan from private moneylenders belonging to different castes, like Teli, Chasa, Gouda, Pano and Sundhi residing in their area. These creditor groups generally extend credits in shape of kind like paddy and rice and take back in more valuable cash crops like *til* (Rasi). All the Juang households of the study village have borrowed Rs. 9,000/- from the private money lenders. At the time of dire necessity when one does not get loan from any other source, go to the community members who are little above the poverty line. In this case the creditors charge 100% interest, which is twice of the normal lending interest rate. This is because the loan is advanced instantly neither observing any cumbersome process nor asking for any security.

## Purpose of Juang Indebtedness (source wise) during 2000-01

Purpose	Private source			Community fund				Bank loan		Total Loan Amount	
	No of HHs	In Kinds	In Cash	Total Amount (In Rs.)	No of debtor	In Kind	In cash	No. of HHs	Amount (Rs)	No.	Amount (in Rs)
Household consumption	28	46.4 khandi or 650 Kg rice @ Rs.8/kg+12 khandi or 125 kg @ Rs 4/kg.	-	5700/-	-	-	-	-	-	28	5700/-
Celebration of marriage, festivals, ritual etc.	2	5 khandi or 70 kg rice	440/-	1000/-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1000/-
Shifting Cultivation/ Agriculture	-	-	-	-	36	625 kg Paddy	-	-	-	36	2500/-
Total	30	720 kg rice+125 kg paddy	440/-	6700/-	36	625 kg paddy	-	-	-	36	9200/-

Total no of indebted households is 36 as they have taken from multiple sources.

It is a traditional practice that in a Juang village the community fund is kept in shape of paddy in their *mandaghar*. The paddy is loaned to the needy families, mainly to be used as seed for agriculture as well as for consumptions purposes. A selected literate Juang person maintains the record of transactions. The loan amount is repaid with 50 % rate of interest. At the village Kadalibadi, all the Juang (36) households have borrowed seeds from the community fund amounting to 625 kg of paddy.

### **Process of Getting Loan**

When a Juang approaches a non-Juang creditor for loan, he generally takes some gift with him to the creditor, but it does not happen in all cases. If the creditor is staying at a distant place, sometimes the needy Juang go in a group with some gifts like hen, goat or any other rare variety of agricultural produce like *suturi dal*, *pejuabiri* (a good variety of black gram), different types of minor forest produce to present these the creditor to please him and get the loan easily. The creditor keeps note of their names and extends loan. Sometimes, the Juang takes the help of intermediaries to get loans from the creditor easily. The intermediary usually does not charge anything for the help, but debtor may show him hospitality by offering a bottle of liquor or tiffin. With the development of communication facilities, some businessmen of Keonjhar are coming to the area to extend loans in kind, like rice and paddy in lean seasons and collect the same along with the interest after the harvest.

### **Security for Credit**

The Juang do not borrow a lump sum amount. They ask for loan in small amount or quantity according to their needs. Majority of them have hardly any surplus agricultural produce before two to three months of the harvest. So when a Juang badly requires a loan, he surrenders his claim over future yield of his land as a security against the loan to the Sahukar. Most of the villagers have taken loan from the people belonging to Gouda or Sundhi caste of the same village or nearby village by mortgaging their cultivable irrigated paddy lands.

Thus exploitation takes place at the time of bargaining when the creditor wants either to take more acres of land or more productive/ fertile land or land for a longer period over and above the due against the loan amount. Often, the creditor does not agree to return the land if he gets more profit out of it. Those types of temporary land alienation cases are found in the Juang area where the mortgaged lands are cultivated by the creditor who belongs to other caste (see case study). In case the creditor extends loan without any security and the debtor fails to repay the same, his household belongings or cattle are either taken away by the Sahukar or are sold off on the spot to recuperate his loan amount. But this usually does not happen, if the creditors belong to their own

community. Sometimes, the debtor has nothing to offer as security, except his labour and work as *goti* (bonded labour) in the house of the creditor.

### **Rate of Interest**

Ordinarily the rate of interest charged by the creditors varies from 50% to 100%. In majority cases loans are advanced against security of land. Usually the outsiders charge 50% interest but if the price of goods is calculated by exchange value; the interest may exceed 100%. The economically better off Juang creditors who are rarely involved in lending business, charge 100% interest. This is because the debtor gets the loan from them easily and immediately without going to a distant place and without involving in any cumbersome process. Again the getting of the loan amount does not involve any bribe or gift, which sometimes he has to pay to other community members for getting the loan and also run several times to the creditor's house for the purpose. It does not happen for the loan taken from a community member.

### **Duration and Repayment of Loan**

Most of the Juangs live almost at the subsistence level. They frequently resort to loan after four to five months of their harvesting which they usually repay soon after the harvest. So during the month of May-June they take seed loan from the community grain fund and during July-August they approach the moneylenders to get new loans to celebrate various festivals and rituals.

Generally the Juangs repay their loans in kind. In village Kadalibadi loans are repaid in kinds of *til*, a cash crop, usually exchanged with the paddy in the ratio of 1: 1: 5. But for loan repayment, the exchange value of paddy and *til* is in the ratio of 1:2. Thus they pay 200% interest when for the loan taken from outsiders. Creditor's investment at the time of debtors' dire need fetches him a huge profit. The bank loan is repaid in cash with 14% rate of interest.

During 1999-2000, out of 36 indebted households, only 10 (27.78%) had repaid their loans amounting to Rs.21, 880/- (50.75%). The striking aspect of their loan repayment is that some of the old loans are renewed by new loans and most of the loans are repaid in kind leading to exploitation.

Out of 36 Juang loanees, 30 (83.33%) have repaid Rs. 5,700/- as against the total amount of loans (Rs. 8,700/-) from the private source. The loan recovery in case of community fund has been reported to be sent percent whereas loans from the bank have been partly paid (36.31 % of the loan amount). The reason of such perpetual indebtedness among the Juangs reflect their socio-economic and psychological conditions.

Loans are incurred by mortgaging cultivable lands to the creditors living in nearby villages. Sometimes the creditor becomes unwilling to return the land as per the agreement. Temporary land alienation cases are found



among the Juang where the creditors are found cultivating the land of the Juangs. Some of the land alienation case studies collected confirms this.

### **Literacy and Indebtedness**

It is presumed that acquired social abilities change the people's behavior especially in economic sphere. Education is believed to be the key to development, which brings about socio-cultural changes and generally plays positive role in distracting people from being indebted, unless they presume a higher return in capital investment by incurring loan.

But paradoxically, literacy has little role to wean the Juangs away from indebtedness. This is because of shrinkage of economic resources and avenues by way of shrinkage of landed property through land alienations, eviction of sharecroppers etc. There is no distinction between the literate and illiterate persons as irrespective of their educational level as all of them are in debt and are victims of exploitation. The table below reveals that out of 36 households, 15 (41.67%) are fully illiterate and 21 (8.33%) are just literate, 16 (44.44%) have education up to primary level and 2(5.56 %) up to secondary level. Among all these categories the percentage of indebtedness is 100.

#### **Educational Level and Indebtedness of the Juangs of Kadalibadi Village**

Sl. No.	Educational Qualification	Total No. of Household	Debtors Household	
			Number	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	15(41.67)	15(41.67)	100
2.	Just literate	3(08.33)	3(08.33)	100
3.	Primary	16(44.44)	16(44.44)	100
4.	Secondary	2(05.56)	2(05.56)	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>36(100%0)</b>	<b>36(100%)</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Income and Indebtedness**

Irrespective of their incomes all the Juang households of Kadalibadi Village are found to be indebted. The table given below explains that. It shows that the annual income of all the 36 households at Kadalibadi village is less than Rs.10, 001/- and thus they belong to BPL category. Among them 26 (72.22%) are within annual income up to Rs.5000/-and only10 (27.78%) come under income range of Rs.5000/- Rs. 10,000/-.

#### **Income Range and Extent of JuangDebt at Kadalibadi**

Sl. No.	Income range (in Rs.)	No. of Households	Debtor households	
			No	Percentage
1.	Upto 5000	26(72.22 %)	26	100
2.	5001-10,000	10 (27.78%)	10	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>36(100%)</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>

### Savings of the Juang

Majority of the Juang live below the poverty line. They spend whatever they earn. It is a customary practice among the Juangs that after harvesting, the community save the paddy in the seed bank of their *Mandaghar*. The circulation of money is very limited among them. They usually put the cash in a small cloth and put it in the wooden plank in the thatched roof. The well-to-do Juangs often keep their money in banks. During our study in Kadalibadi village, no such case of saving of the Juangs was reported. This explains their abject poverty.

### A Resume of Juang Indebtedness

- The Juangs by and large depend more on loans from non-institutional sources. At times they borrow from institutional sources. But due to repayment of outstanding loan, they revert back to the private moneylenders to meet their expenditure in the dire necessities.
- Most of the loans are used for non-productive purpose like consumption, ritual expenses including the payment of bride price and social obligations.
- Loans are incurred in cash and kind like rice and paddy. Paddy loans for seed as well as for consumption purposes carry 50% rate of interest.
- The repayment of loan by households is 50.75% and the households who repaid loan is 20.78%. The most striking point of the loan repayment by Juangs is that some of the old loans are replaced by the new loans and most of the loans are repaid in kind leading to their economic exploitation.
- All the Juang households reported to be indebted in previous year are also found to be indebted in the succeeding year. This explains perpetual indebtedness of the Juang due to poverty and socio-psychological network.
- The rate of interest charged by non-institutional sources varies between 50% -200% while that of the institutional sources is around 14% per annum.
- At times, barter operates during the transaction of kind loan. Repayment of paddy loan is made in exchange of cash crop, i.e. til, which is largely produced by the Juangs in the hills.
- All the Juang households of different income ranges and educational level are indebted. Thus income and education have no impact on indebtedness.
- The custom of saving of grain seeds at *mandaghar* as community fund has been quite useful for providing paddy seeds to the needy Juang farmers as well as security against their food insecurity during the scarce season.
- Loans are also taken by the Juangs on pledging small chunks of lands. In some cases pledging of land leads to land alienation of the Juangs.

### **Comparative Study of Indebtedness among the Dongria Kondh & the Juang**

The problem of indebtedness between the Dongria Kondh and the Juang as discussed in this paper speaks of two distinctive aspects of indebtedness between the two Primitive Tribal Groups. The Dongria Kondhs are a primitive section of the Kondh tribe of Southern TSP area of Orissa. They dwell in the Niyamgiri hill ranges of Raygada district. The Juangs dwell in Gonasika hills of Keonjhar district in the northern TSP area of Orissa. Dongria Kondhs are indulged in clan feuds frequently and thus appear to be aggressive in nature whereas the Juangs are known to be simple and mild in nature.

The Dombs are the immediate neighbor of the Dongria Kondh. The Juangs live along with the neighboring communities, like the Pano, the Sundhi and the Gauda. In Dongria Kondh area, the Dombs are numerically preponderant, almost double in number whereas in Juang area it is just the reverse, the number of Juang people, the debtors, are more than the Gauda people. The Dongria Kondh's social relationship with the Dombs is more intimate and cordial than the creditor-debtor relationship between the Juangs and the Gaudas. These caste-groups, like the Dombs and the Gaudas act as the creditor and lend money and goods to the Dongria Kondhs and Juangs respectively at the time of the latter's need at exorbitant rate of interest.

The Dongria Kondh claiming of royal affinity with the Niyamgiri King refrains them to be involved in the derogatory works, like watch and ward of the orchards and selling of the produce at the market. On the contrary, the Juangs have neither such royal feeling nor such propensity for the work. Both the tribes are victimized by the economic exploitation of the creditors through the process of credit transactions. It is found that the extent of exploitation is more in case of the Juangs than that of the Dongria Kondhs.

Both the PTGs pursue uneconomic shifting cultivation and use primitive technology and tools. Economic awareness of the Dongria Kondhs is much more than that among the Juangs. The Dongria Kondhs are economically better off in comparison to the Juangs, because most of the Dongria Kondh families are owners of the orchards. Because of their royal affinity and lack of time to give proper attention to these orchards, they mortgage the same to the Dombs for temporary period and get money in lump sum, which is considered as their extra income. They do not think it as a loan but an economic transaction. But most of the Juang families possess small chunk of land. They are forced to mortgage the same to get loan to meet their necessities. In case of urgency, the Juangs voluntarily present some gifts to the creditors in order to get loan. The Dongria Kondhs rarely present gifts to their creditors.

Both the groups take loans from private sources, community fund and banks. For the Juang, community fund and private moneylenders are the major

source of loans whereas for the Dongria Kondh temporary sale of orchards to Dombs constitute major source of getting money. The Dongria Kondh prefers to take cash loans whereas the Juangs prefer taking loans in kind. In Juang area usually 50% rate of interest is charged for the loan extended for one year whereas in the Dongria Kondh area they do not have any fixed rate of interest. The rate differs depending upon the bargaining capacity of the parties.

The Dongria Kondh are economically better off than the Juangs. It is found that 48% of the Dongria Kondh families of the study villages are living above poverty line whereas all the Juang households of the study village are found below poverty line. But irrespective of their financial conditions, all the Dongria Kondh and Juang families in the study area are found to be indebted. The Dongria Kondhs utilize the loan amount mostly in different social functions and rituals whereas the Juangs utilize the same for the consumption, purchase of daily necessities and for agricultural expenditure.

Awareness of Dongria Kondhs in the matter of knowledge in simple arithmetic, cheating and exploitation is more than that of Juangs. In case of indebtedness the bargaining power always lie with the creditors as it happens in Juang area. But in the Dongria Kondh area the reverse happens. The debtor's bargaining power in valuation of orchards to be mortgaged is much stronger unless otherwise he is in dire necessity of money.

The saving propensity of the Dongria Kondhs differentiates them from that of the Juangs, who mostly live below poverty line and have no attitude towards savings. It is important to note that besides their traditional way of saving secretly, many of the Dongria Kondhs have long-term LIC policies and some of them have incurred loans for payment of their policy premiums. The Juangs have neither the means nor any attitude for savings.

Though there is a great difference in the process of indebtedness between these two Primitive Tribal Groups, both of them are exploited to a great extent by the creditor communities. Thus the root cause of this basic problem is to be eradicated to protect them from exploitation.

### **Some Suggestions**

Indebtedness among the tribals cannot be seen in isolation from the network of the other economic and social interactions. External forces play a vital role in controlling and influencing the economy of the Dongria Kondhs and Juangs. Being economically backward sections, they often become victims of exploitation. Indebtedness among the tribals has become almost a ubiquitous factor because whatever economic benefit is brought to the tribal villages to fight against their poverty, it gets ready outlet through various ways of indebtedness. Moreover, prevalence of many of their traditional belief and

practices brings about many such economic and social maladies. As a result they suffer from under development. In most cases they possess uneconomic land holdings and lack entrepreneurship for taking up commercial cropping or establishing themselves as traders. It is a common experience that in several cases tribals become the victim of their backwardness.

Most often deficit of cash and kinds seriously handicaps them to manage the food insecurities and their socio-cultural needs like meeting the cost of domestic consumption, rituals and ceremonies. Institutional finance has been inaccessible and inadequate to eliminate the non-institutional finance in their areas. Further, institutional finance fails to meet the credit requirements of the Dongria Kondhs and the Juangs due to lack of assessment of their credit needs and consumption loans. As a result the poor tribals have no alternatives but to depend largely on private lenders. This leads to falling of Juangs and Dongria Kondhs into clutches of moneylenders- the Gaudas and the Dombs respectively. The credit provision of common fund of Dongria Kondh and Juang Mandaghar is meager and inadequate to meet their dire needs.

All the plans for development have greater chances for success if the relevance of cultural and social factors are integrated into planning. Thus credit through micro finance (provision of small working capital to self-employed) can help them, especially their women folk to take up farm allied activities of Dongria Kondhs, like processing, packaging and marketing of turmeric, ginger, pineapple, lemon, orange and forest based cottage industries, such as broom making, mat making, leaf cup and plate making of Juangs. This can be made possible by formation of Self Help Groups of 10-20 women and inculcating in them the habit of regular saving and rotating the saving amongst them for productive and non-productive purposes (consumption) under the self Help Group Bank linkage programme of NABARD. The existing DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas) groups in Dongria Kondh and Juang areas may be strengthened and the new ones may be organized taking 10-15 women into groups for effective utilization of credit under DRDA and ITDA programmes.

The project authorities of JDA and DKDA and their concerned ITDAs should know the tribal traditional ways of solving the food crisis in the lean period and may take effective steps to ameliorate the situation. The Juangs are used to save and store grains in their '*Mandaghar*' and distribute the same among needy people to tide over the food crisis. ITDA/ Micro Project authority should come forward to provide financial assistance for promoting the activities, like more procurement of grains and storing them in the '*Mandaghar*' of Juang and '*Kudi*' of Dongria Kondhs for distribution of the same to poverty stricken people during crisis period and recover the same after harvest.

The Dongria Kondhs and the Juangs may be saved from the debt net. To make them free from the clutches of private moneylenders, like the Dombs and the Gaudas, we may take care of the following facts.

- Steps may be taken to identify the poverty-stricken villages in the Dongria Kondh and Juang areas and to establish Grain Banks along with formation of new SHGs and DWCRA groups and to strengthen the existing ones.
- Awareness campaign and publicity of various protective and legislative measures against tribal exploitation may be organized in remote tribal areas. Preferably, the campaign should be in tribal language using folk songs, street plays, dance and music through the participation of the tribal artists.
- Special efforts may be made for awareness creation among them about the Money Lending Act, establishment of market Intelligence cell in areas where barter economy is gradually changing into money economy and awareness building about the change in price of different tribal produce.
- The local tribal development agencies may extent support to the Dongrias and the Juangas with the extension services, like training for up-gradation of agro-forest-based livelihood activities, input supply and market support.

### Bibliography

1. Aparajita Upali      1994      *Culture & Development; Dongrias of Niyamgiri*, pp.163-170, Delhi, Inter India Pub.
2. Basu, S.K.              1974      *Indebtedness among the Tribals of West Bengal, Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute, Govt. of West Bengal Calcutta*
3. Census of India        1961      *A Village Survey. A Monograph on Village Daanla (In Sadar Sub-division of Keonjhar dist)*
4. Das Patnaik, P.S.      1988      *Concept of Debt among the Dongria Kondhs, Adibasi, Vol. XXVIII, No.2, pp. 11-15*
6. Das Patnaik, P.S.      1990      *Dongria Kondh of Orissa- Then and Now, Adibasi, Vol. XXX, No. 2 & 3, pp. 28-41.*
7. Goitonde, M.G.        1982      *Tribal Economy; some indication from the All India Debt and Investment Survey-1971-72, Economics of the Tribes and their Transformation (Ed) K.S Singh, pp. 34-39, Concept, New Delhi.*
8. Govt. of India         2001      *Report of the Working Group for Empowering the STs during the 10th Five Year Plan (2002-2007) Ministry of Tribal Affairs , New Delhi*

9. Govt. of India                      2001                      Report on the Steering Committee on Empowering the Scheduled Tribes for the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2002-2007) pp. 40:41
10. Govt. of India                      1989                      Report of the Working Group on Development & Welfare of STs during 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (1990-95), Ministry of Welfare, New Delhi.
11. Mishra, B.                              1992                      Problems of Tribal Economy in Orissa, *Adibasi*, Vol. XXXII, No. 4, pp. 20-22.
12. Mohapatra, K. &                      1973-74                      Report on the Survey on Indebtedness among the STs of Parlakhemundi Sub-division in Ganjam dist, *Adibasi*, Vol.15, No.1-4, pp.33-74
13. Mohanti, K.K (ed)                      1991-92                      *Development Handbook for the Juang of JDA Area, Gonasika, Keonjhar district* (An Action Plan based on Techno Economic Survey), Welfare Deptt, Orissa.
14. Nag, D.S.                                1958                      *Tribal Economy*, pp. 288-337 Bhartiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangha, Kingsway, Delhi
15. Nayak, P.K.                              1989                      *Blood, Women and Territory*, pp. 126-128, Reliance Publishing House.
16. Nayak, R &                              1993                      *The Juangs, A Hand Book for Development*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.
17. Pravathamma, C.                      1984                      *Scheduled Castes and Tribes- a Socio Economic Survey*, pp. 146-170, Ashish Pub., New Delhi.
18. Patel, M. L.                                1992                      *Economic Constraints of Tribal Development; Tribal Transformation in India*, Vol. II, Inter India Pub, New Delhi. Choudhury, B (Ed)
19. Pattnaik, N.                                1989                      *The Juang*, Popular series on Tribes, THRTI.
20. Pattnaik, N. &                              1982                      *Financing and Credit Facilities, The Kondh of Orissa*, pp. 116-123, THRTI, Bhubaneswar.
21. Rout, S.P                                  1969                      *Handbook on the Juang, Adbasi*, Vol. X, No. 3, 1967-68 THRTI, Orissa.
22. Sharam, S.L.                              1992                      *"Tribal Development: Perspective and Issue"*, Tribal Transformation in India, Vol.- II, Inter India Pub, New Delhi , Choudhury, B (ed)
23. Singh, K.S.                                1982                      *Economics of the Tribes and their Transformation*, pp. 34-39, Concept Publishing Co. New Delhi.
24. Vyas, N.N .                                1980                      *Bondage and Exploitation in Tribal India*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur.

# LIQUOR AMONG THE DONGRIA KONDH OF ORISSA\*

*P. S. Das Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

The Dongria Kondh are one of the most primitive and backward tribes of Orissa. They are easily distinguished by their very quaint attire; the males clad in loin cloth wearing nose rings over their moustaches and sometimes in addition, a sharp and polished white bone thrust through the cartilage of the nose, two long and curved daggers hanging down the thighs and by their proud and dignified bearing. They are a sub-tribe of Kondh numbering about 5,618 who have not been enumerated separately by census. They live on the top of the Niyamgiri Mountains which lie in the Kalyansinghpur, Bissam-Cuttack, Muniguda and Biswanathpur Blocks in the Koraput district and in the adjoining Lanjigarh area of the Kalahandi district. They maintain themselves by growing a lot of plantain, jackfruit, orange, pineapple, turmeric and castor all of which they make over to the people of the Domb caste for a song, a few pegs (drinks) of illicitly distilled liquor, or a few rupees or their usual requirements of salt, tobacco, dried fish, clothes, ornaments, etc. Shifting cultivation, being their main occupation they grow millet, *kosla* and *kandul* (red gram) which they consume. As the mountains are sparsely populated and the Dongria Kondh owns the entire hill slopes demarcated by unwritten tribal custom among the different villages there and are traditionally reputed as fruit growers they should, in the fitness of things be rich but they live in ramshackle huts in poverty and squalor. The Dongria Kondh are poor because they are not able to market their produce at any reasonable price. Some people of the Scheduled Caste, Domb (also called Pano elsewhere) generally hailing from Kalahandi have settled down among them on the hills and taking advantage of the inaccessibility of the area, the simplicity of the Dongria Kondh, their ignorance, superstition, weakness for drink, lack of credit facilities, their isolation from the rest of the world, have been exploiting the Kondh to an unimaginable degree and carrying away all the produce from their trees and their fields.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XVI, No. 3, 1976, pp.52-57

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, THRTI, Bhubaneswar



Whatever may be the fact, the high terrain on which the Dongria Kondh inhabit, the topography, the climatic factor, etc. have shaped their living conditions and made them addicted to liquor. The very flavour of Mahua-liquor (*Irpi Kalu*) and sago palm juice (*Mada-kalu*) make the Kondh almost wild. Liquor has special charm for them. Except a few, all are habituated to drink and will avail any opportunity irrespective of the distance of either liquor shop or sago-palm-trees and conditions of the purse. They are so much addicted to it that they can forego their meals. For example, an old man of Kurli village said “*salpa* tree is more than my wife; I can forego my wife but not the *salpa* tree.”

### Types and Processing of Liquor

Liquor is locally called Kalu. Various kinds of liquor are brewed domestically such as *Arckhi-Kalu* (Mahua liquor), *Amba-Kalu* (Mango liquor), *Panasa-Kalu* (Jackfruit-Liquor), *Kadali-Kalu* (Plantain liquor) and *Guda-Kalu* (Molasses liquor). Sago palm juice (*Mada-Kalu*) - an intoxicated drink is collected from locally available sago-palm-trees.

Arkhi is secretly brewed, but not in large scale. Domestic brewing being prohibited, the Kondh are afraid of local preparation and therefore, depend upon the market and their next door neighbours, the Domb. The Domb are experts in brewing Arkhi and make it a professional source of income. Some of the Domb purchase Arkhi from the licentiate liquor shops at the foot of hills and resell it in their respective villages at a higher cost. The Kondh also on special occasions like *Mandia-Rani* festival *Meria Parab*, marriage and death ceremonies etc. brew Arkhi secretly with the help of the Domb.

Mahua is purchase at the rate of 75 paise from the local market or collected from the forest. About 5 to 6 kg. of Mahua is soaked in water in an earthen-pot for a week or until it is fermented after which it is rinsed and kept in another pot. About a bucket of water is poured and another clay pot is dumped over it. The pot at the bottom is entirely plastered at the outside with clay. An oven is prepared at the bank of the stream and both the pots are placed over the fire. A hole is made at the body of the pot placed below through which one end of a hollow bamboo is inserted. Another end of the bamboo is similarly inserted in another pot placed on the ground beside the fire-pot. Inside those pot herbs of *Badhuni* (Broom-stick), roots of *Paintira* tree are kept and a napkin is covered over the rim of the pot. Clay is besmeared over that pot also. Thus with proper heat smoke is formed which does not get an outlet to go out but passes through the hollow bamboo to the other pot placed nearby. Cold water is sprinkled over the body of the pot to cool the heated smoke which ultimately turns into water and becomes liquor. It gets more intoxicated with the addition of various herbs and roots, stated earlier.

The same process is adopted while preparing liquor from other types of fruits and molasses. Fruit-liquor is prepared out of ripe variety and only after

extraction of juice. More the Juice is fermented, the more it is intoxicated. The same roots and herbs are also added to it make it palatable and more intoxicant. Liquor from the fruits and molasses is prepared only by the well-to-do families and as such it becomes a luxury alcoholic drink. Sometimes, a few families prepare this type of seasonal liquor and sell it to others, if there is any surplus.

*Duri Kalu* (Beer) is prepared out of rice, *ragi*, *arka* and *kangu*. Raw seeds are powdered and diluted with water to make a paste. The paste being covered in a *Siali* leaf-cup is kept hanging for a fortnight to make it dry completely. Within this estimated period the paste dries up which can be broken into pieces. Each piece is again made powder and soaked with water in a container for 8 to 10 days. This process enriches the alcoholic value and makes it more sour. Thus after 8 to 10 days sediment is formed at the bottom and the water over it which is used as *Duri-Kalu*. When the first stock is exhausted again water is poured and kept for 8 to 10 days. Thus the process continues for two months after which the sediment loses alcoholic value.

Except these country-made liquors, Sago-Palm Juice (Juice of *salpa* trees) is used as intoxicant. *Salpa* trees wildly grow on the hill tops and are possessed individually according to the customary division of hill terrains. These trees are considered prized possession of the family inherited across generations. Trespassing into any body's tree is seriously viewed to the extent that the trespasser may risk his life. The shoots of the tree come out during October-November and lasts until March-April without being withered away and within that period ample juice is available from each shoot. Each shoot is cut and the juice trickles down in a container, tied beneath it. The juice with the increasing heat of the sun becomes more alcoholic and intoxicating. Moreover, to add more alcoholic value to it, roots of *Kosla* plant, *Kanikutra* plant and broomstick plant are added to it. The entire process gives a tremendous alcoholic relief and at the same time fulfils the appetite of the consumers, as it is told.

Toddy-tapping is not a common practice in the area because of lesser growth of such trees. Moreover, the local people are not conversant either in climbing the trees or in tapping the toddy. The experts are therefore, called upon payment of wage to tap the toddy from the few trees mainly found in the forest.

### **Customs, Norms, Beliefs and Practices associated with the use of Liquor**

Consumption of liquor in any form is not socially prohibited irrespective of sex and age. A child picks up the habit, when he develops senses. It is a common practice approved by the society. *Mahua* liquor is considered to be the bit alcoholic drink and taken throughout the year irrespective of sex. Fruit liquor is seasonal and taken only by those who can afford to prepare or afford to purchase at the rate of Rs.2 per bottle. Beer is taken only during harvest of various crops. Sago-palm juice is taken for four months.

Usually the male members are habitual drinker and consume more. The women drink only during harvest and on social feasts and festivals. Children, above six years of age, generally drink sago-palm juice and casually drink Mahua liquor.

During and after harvest, the people celebrate most of their social and religious functions and therefore consume liquor to a large extent. But its consumption goes down during lean months when the people face economic distress. Despite paucity of fund, the habitual drunkards do not hesitate to drink by incurring loans or mortgaging their cropped field and fruit bearing trees.

Liquor is always taken in a group. The eldest one serves it to others in leaf-cups. From his share the eldest member first offers a little of it to the Mother Goddess (*Basumati*) by pouring it on the ground. Then he trickles the liquor thrice in his fingers above his head. Thus he offers it to *Niyam Raja*, the great God of Niyamgiri hills. Then only he touches the leaf cup on his forehead and drinks. Once he starts, other follows him. Even in individual consumption the same norms are observed. In case of sago-palm juice, the owner of the tree first sips to prove that it is not poisonous and then offers it to the participants. In case of trespassing, the defaulter is assaulted. It is believed that, if the trespasser dies after taking sago-palm juice he becomes *Dumba* (ghost) and harms the owner.

Liquor is a must in all the Kondh worship. There is hardly any religious ceremony or ritual in which *Mahua* liquor is not used. Each family believes that liquor is not only a religious necessity but a means to please gods. The priest must drink well before communicating with the spiritual world. Liquor is, therefore, offered to gods as well as to the priest.

Liquor is an important item in all the ceremonies connected with death. On the day of *Dasha* (10th day of the death), mourners assemble and drink with fullest content.

Liquor has religious and social significance in the marriage ceremony too. It is a prestigious item both for the parents of bride and groom. It is included in bride price's item and on the other hand the bride's father also entertains large number of guests with liquor. Barrels of liquor are consumed in the marriage ceremony. Liquor is offered to *Niyam Raja*, *Sita Penu* and other deities in the marriage ceremony. The leaf-cup containing liquor moves round, round and round till everyone has drunk to his full capacity. Their financial conditions determine the quantity to be supplied. On average Rs.150 to Rs.200 are spent on liquor at the time of marriage by both the parties.

Mahua liquor has a still more important place in the Kondh's social life. A leaf-cup-full of liquor is a medium of social intercourse. It creates and sustains friendship. It is through which *Sai* system of bond friends is made and two friends became bosom to each other. Old friends' accidental meeting culminates in a

mutual exchange of liquor cups. A casual meeting between the two strangers at the liquor-shop may lead to permanent friendship. A happy drink is the best form of friendship between strange neighbours or friends. All hospitality and reception have got no meaning without liquor. Liquor is an energetic solace for all dances and festivals. All the Kondh dances therefore begin with drink. Not only men, but women also drink to enjoy the happy moment. It is the main item in tribal feasts. In the Panchayat meetings, the participants are more keen for drinking than to the usual proceeding. The whole village, however, meets the expenditure on drink in case the Panchayat has to decide an inter-village dispute. In most of their verdicts the Panchayat awards penalty of a communal feast and drink.

In actual practice magic and drink are interlinked among the Kondh. A *Dishari* (magician) or a *Bejuni* (shaman) must drink excessively, for it is believed that a magician invokes his mysterious wisdom and probes into the world of evil spirits with the help of liquor. Most of his magical operations are preceded by drink. He is not paid in cash but in the form of liquor.

Mahua liquor is used as medicine to cure various diseases. The Kondh believe that diseases are caused not due to any infection or contagion, but due to the wrath of various deities and spirits who are looming in nature. In order to prevent or cure these natural diseases, benevolent gods and goddesses must be propitiated and appeased. To appease them liquor is indispensable.

Thus liquor plays a vital role in the tribal life. The Kondh believe that sago-palm juice and Mahua liquor has got food value. Fresh distilled liquor has got more food value. Liquor is an energetic stimulant which breaks the monotony and a food which satisfies the starving belly. It is a recognized means of relaxation and lessening of stress and strain. Being shifting-cultivators, they undertake enough of hazardous jobs. They ransack the forests to eke out their livelihood. They ascend and descend the hill-tops for visiting market centers. All these strains are to be lessened and liquor is therefore, a charming energetic drink for all these strains.

### **Drinking and its Effect**

About 82 per cent of the families surveyed, were found having deficit budget, though it has not been possible to establish any direct relationship between debts and drink yet it is obvious that if expenditure on liquor could be reduced, many families could balance their budget. I recorded 92 transactions of the Dongria Kondh with the Domb. Nearly 68 i.e. about 73 per cent of the transactions were made for liquor. The Domb illicitly distilled liquor, offered it to the Kondh and took leases of jack fruit trees, and sometimes pine-apple gardens in return of liquor. In one instance  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre of turmeric field was leased out for a year in return for 25 bottles of liquor. In another, 12 jack-fruit trees were leased out for a year for 7 bottles of liquor. In yet another instance  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre of pineapple garden was leased out for a year in return for 10 bottles of liquor. In majority of

the cases, liquor has been sought in exchange of jack fruit and orange trees. The village streets are occupied by the Domb with tins of liquor during market days. They secretly sit at the back of the bushes and entice the Kondh with liquor bottles. All the surplus produces brought by the Kondh are knocked off by the Domb in exchange of liquor. The Domb are well informed of each feast and festival of the Kondh. They therefore, before the commencement of any function of any family in the village, make a contract with the family head to supply the required quota of liquor. The Dongria mortgages his fruit-bearing trees, orchards or turmeric field in this deal and at the time of harvest, the yield is carried away by the Domb.

I recorded seven cases of accidents with sustained vital injuries caused by taking liquor. Of course, there was no case of death. But out of seven cases, three cases were grave; the injured persons become invalid.

I recorded five cases where trespassers have been assaulted. Especially one case requires mentioning. It was a chilly night in the month of December. I had to open the door of my camp at the screaming sound of a man. I flashed my torch over him and found with astonishment that his entire body was in pools of blood. The pharmacist in charge of Primary Health Centre was called upon who rushed in and gave all possible medical relief. The victim was Tode Zakiska who trespassed for sago-palm juice and was assaulted by his uncle, Kona Zakiska of village Khambesi. When Tode was drinking the juice stealthily, Kona's son Budda saw it and intimated the matter to his father. Both father and son charged Tode for his fault but the latter did not admit. There were some altercations and ultimately Tode was severely assaulted with the axe (Tangia). The matter was reported to the police. Two police constables appeared in the village on the next morning who arrested both the alleged and the victim. The case was decided on the way to the police-station with the intervention of village messenger (Barik). They were released. It was told that Rs. 120 was bribed to the police and the Barik got Rs.38 as commission. Again an emergency meeting was convened in the village. Both the alleged and the victim were fined Rs.80 i.e., the cost of a buffalo for a community feast. The buffalo was supplied by the Barik and a feast was organized and the matter came to an end with the rapprochement of both the victor and the vanquished. Such instances of violence for taking Mahua liquor and sago-palm juice are frequent. There are also instances of inter-group fighting, over the issue of taking liquor.

Thus the social evils of drink are glaring among the Dongria Kondh. The erotic effect of alcohol leads to many maladjustments in the family. Moreover, the liquor-dealer is often a money-lender, who also procures the surplus forest and agricultural products of the tribals. He is interested mainly in keeping the tribals as an easy prey to his tricky dealings. However, alcoholic drink is a great social evil, which is gradually eroding the economy of the community. But without that the community cannot survive. It is a fact that the tribals do drink

and drinking in the tribal culture is a must but not an alternative choice, as it gives them nourishment and zest in life. It is therefore, necessary that the Anthropologists and the Administrators should seriously think of this problem.

To combat this liquor-dealing-monopoly of the Domb, any Public Marketing Agency, may act as wholesale supplier of liquor to the tribals. The Domb may be appointed as Commission Agents to deliver liquor to the tribals at a rate fixed by the centre. This may reduce exploitation to some extent. In the meanwhile a team of workers may be appointed to analyse the benefits and potentialities of the drink usually purchased by the tribals. Through research an unharmed drink or drug may be invented to substitute alcoholic drink to solve the liquor problem of the tribals.

# **DONGRIA KONDH LABOUR COOPERATIVES: THEIR RELEVANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS \***

*T. Sahoo* <sup>1</sup>

*P. K. Nayak* <sup>2</sup>

## **Introduction:**

Tribal societies in general are known for their high sense of social cooperation among themselves. At various institutional levels, people interact intensely and cooperate with one another. They exchange labour with collective and cooperative spirit. Labour cooperatives serve a great deal purpose of their socio-economic, political and religious life and living. In their case, the egalitarian mode of living based on the principle of reciprocity and equivalence prompts them to depend upon mutual help and cooperation. They organize themselves into multiple social groups and divisions, which facilitate the levels and contexts of their cooperation.

The Dongria Kondhs claim royal ancestry and feel proud of their royal origin and that in fact guides them not to work for others mostly for outsiders, as paid-labour. The Dongrias are basically swidden cultivators. They grow crops in the hill slopes with the help of simple technology. For swidden cultivation they need more number of working hands. Family provides the labour to the labour cooperative and it constitutes the smallest unit of labour cooperative.

The traditional politico-religious institutions regulate the functioning of the labour cooperatives. Non-conformity to the norms of the labour cooperative is severely dealt with. Any deviant or delinquent is subject to trial in the village/tribal council. Meriah, a clan-community level festival requires expensive sacrifices of animals and fowls and the labour cooperatives contribute to meet the expenses on this occasion.

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. 42 & 43, Nos. 1&2, 2002-03, pp 64-82

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Director, , SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

The Dongria labour cooperatives take cognizance of the fact that their children at an early age of 9 to 10 years can become bona fide members of the labour cooperative. Socio-economically they are treated as quite mature. At this early age they come up and engage themselves in all sorts of labour activities. The children prefer to work under labour cooperatives rather than going to school and they feel nostalgic about it. This is one of the reasons why enrolment of tribal children in schools is low and dropout is high.

In recent years, the Dongria tradition of labour cooperative is being misused by their neighbours and outsiders, there seems to be a shift from overt cooperation to covert exploitation. The value of mutual help and cooperation is getting eroded and slowly, labour goes to market through sales and purchases and through growing contractual relationships. The system has its utility for the tribal society. On the one hand it serves the purpose of the society and on the other it nourishes strong bond of relationship and maintains social solidarity.

The Kondh is numerically a major tribe of Odisha and the Dongria Kondh constitutes a 'primitive' section among them. Labour Cooperatives are very effectively functioning among the Dongria Kondhs. The Dongrias continue to uphold their traditional value of group solidarity and mutual help through exchange of labour.

### **Definitions and Explanations on Labour Co-operatives:**

The New Webster's Dictionary of Current English Language (1981:523) defines labour as "persistent, exertion of body toil for the sake of gain or economic production, those engaged in such toil considered as group or class". The labour force is that part of the population which is contributing to the production of goods and services, which is in the work force; as distinguished from the dependent population (Faris:1988). Labour force includes the totality of labour of a society or a community. The pattern of labour explains how labour force operates in a given society. Hence the labour cooperatives may be understood as a pattern of labour. Labour cooperative refers to an institutionalized, conventional and collective works of tribal society, performed voluntarily on mutual exchange of help and labour. In other words, it may be defined as a combined work of a group of labourers in a tribal society traditionally governed by mutual help and exchange of labour.

The work of Horskovits (1974:88-108) pictured it as 'labour partnership' in works and activities or reciprocal willingness to work or even exchange labour for works. In his discussion on pattern of labour in pre-literate society, he gave different synonyms to labour cooperative. They are 'work-group', 'festival labour', 'working-bees', 'labour-helper', 'reciprocity-labour' or 'exchange labour', 'guest labour' and 'voluntary-workers'. The tribes experience it as a labour congress in which the motive is mutual help, sustaining group solidarity. This



tribal tradition and custom that governs the mutual help and obligation conforms to a 'pattern' which varies from society to society.

According to Horskovits, "...the co-cooperativeness characterized the activities of non-literate people constitutes one of the most striking aspects of their patterns of labour. Cooperative work is done by groups of all sizes, comprehends all kinds of tasks. We refer to that sort of co-operation which acts as a factor in furthering the productive processes the voluntary association of a group of men or women where objective is the completion of a specific, definitely limited task, with which they are simultaneously concerned. Cooperative organizations of this kind, free or compulsory, temporary or permanent, organized or informal, are found everywhere in the non-literate world" (1974:99-100). Nayak says, "Labour cooperatives are nothing but collection of young men and women organized in groups to help each other at the time of strenuous work in each other's fields" (1989:128-130).

### **Socio-cultural significance of Labour Co-operatives:**

Among the Dongrias, land is allocation of *dongar*, the swidden land which is customarily made in the village council, which has remained very forceful even today. Individual households enjoy rights over land and at the same time discharge obligations towards the village community. Similarly, labour is governed by community rules and customary practices. The multiple of social groups and institutions help articulate the labour relationships.

The labour pattern of Dongria is much more influenced by their royal origin "the Dongrias claim to be the descendants of the Niyam Raja and consider it below their dignity to work as wage earners" (Aparajita, 1994:116). Factors like swidden cultivation which is labour intensive, hill terrain ecology, forest dependent economy and small-scale technological knowhow have also influenced the origin, development and sustenance of the pattern of labour relationship. The hilly and mountainous lands require more hands than a family provides to carry out swidden cultivation. 'Basically being swidden cultivators they come to each other's help during various agricultural operations. These tasks are not considered easy for a single household. Further these tasks have to be performed as early as possible within the scheduled time as season and suitable weather do not wait for them" (Nayak, 1989:128)

The cooperative system of management of labour can be said to have arisen out of the religious sentiment, the idea of self-governance and above all a feeling of strong bond of social relationship nurtured by a univalent ethnic identity of the Dongria. "They arise from tradition, sense of obligation coming out of one's position in a system of status relationship especially those of kinship and from religious consideration and moral motivations of many kinds" (Redfield, 1958:11).

“There is a sense of cooperation in that the neighbors and relatives always help out families that enable to do all the works due to illness or shortage of labourer” (Fernandes, 1987:74). “This system of labour organization shows the high degree of fellow-feeling that the people have towards each other and also the idea of self-government that exist among them”. (Nayak, 1989:28). Labour cooperatives, especially the “Sahabati” has a great contribution into religious performance in Meria festival of the Dongria. The fund collected from the Sahabati is utilized to celebrate the Meria festival and other community rituals with traditional gaiety. This not only helps upholding the social status of the kinsmen but also of the entire village community and the *mutha* organization. Thus the labour cooperatives are linked up with their religious, political as well as socio-cultural traditions besides being pivotally recognized as an institution serving the vital needs of economic activities.

The system believes in the principle of social equality. Every Dongria family can become a participant in several labour cooperatives. A member-family of one labour cooperative has equal rights to seek labour from other member families and at the same time has obligations to render labour. In labour terms, children above 9 years of age and women are considered equal to that of adult males. They have the same and similar work output. Any able bodied person irrespective of age and sex is allowed to participate in the activities of labour cooperatives. This basic value of equanimity and equality expressed in the membership of labour cooperative facilitates the member-families in fulfilling the obligations by sending a representative of the family as a labour to the labour cooperatives. In economic terms the labour cooperative costs less. The host Dongria family pays little, a nominal amount in cash. However, he has to feed the participants of the labour cooperative, and at times supplies them drinks if the nature of work happened to be arduous or strenuous. One’s personal economic gains are calculated not in pure economic terms, rather more in social terms on the basis of mutual obligation relationship. The payment made to the labour cooperatives goes to common fund and it is spent for a common purpose. Dongrias are obliged to contribute labour to the labour cooperatives. Any violation of the customary rules of the labour cooperatives is amenable to the adjudication of the village/tribe council. Besides, deviations are subject to both positive and negative sanctions. Labour cooperatives are free for all, yet the definite cooperative has its mandates and the individual member exercises his or her choices and decisions.

In *bati* system, an individual labour becomes a member of a labour cooperative by virtue of his or her social group identity and affiliation which may be familial, lineal, affinal, ritualistic or may be formed by age-set and age-grade institutions of both the sexes. While a group or an institution, at a social plain collects its members to a common cooperative pool the community reinforces the cooperative ties at a level of a decision-making body. The

cooperative allows children, expectant mothers, nursing mothers, old men and women to participate in the work on equal footing.

### **Earlier reference on Dongria Kondh Labour Co-operatives:**

Studies on labour cooperatives existing in tribal societies are very few and far between. Scanty references are found on related topics like employment, labour management, labour pattern, division of labour etc. That labour cooperatives are central to functioning of tribal societies

In his study on Dongria Kondh, Nayak mentions about labour cooperatives (1989,128-130). He used the concept of labour cooperative and described its function, purpose and significance. In Dongria language, labour cooperative is known as *punda*. Aparajita (1994;117) referred to labour cooperatives and viewed it as 'Bhuti' system. Patnaik and Daspatnaik (1982) and Nayak, Boal and Soreng (1990) in their respective works on the Kondh recognize labour cooperatives among the Kondh in general and Dongria in particular. Patnaik and Daspatnaik observed, "It is the tradition among the Dongrias that they share one another's labour in agricultural and horticultural works on a cooperative basis. Within the community when labourers are contacted to do any sort of work, both men and women participate in the pursuit not with a view to earn wage but to help a person who belongs to their won group. Of course the persons engaged are given food and paid a nominal sum of Rs. 5/- to Rs. 10/- for the labour. The person who engages them also works with others. In this way personal calls are attended and the amount thus collected is deposited with the Barika and spent in a feast" (1982:43:51).

Nayak, Boal and Soreng referred to labour cooperatives as constituting a Bati system among the Kondhs. They discussed, "Bati system is commonly used, whereby the same people are employed for planting, weeding, harvesting and thrashing, and payment of workers is in sheaves of grain. Every village has its own rule regarding the provision of rice meal. This matter is predetermined by tradition and is rigidly observed" (1990;210-11). They also pointed out the changes in Bati system and practice of wage labour.

### **The Study area and the People:**

The Dongria country is located over a high plateau ranging from about 1500ft to 4500ft above the sea level. Each Dongria Kondh village is situated in the center of a chain of hills of Niyamagiri. The physiography of the Dongria land is of three types such as *dongar*, *bhata* and *bado*. Dongar is high hill-land. In the hill slopes orchards are developed and turmeric, ginger small variety of chilly, varieties of millets like mandia, kosala, johna and suan are grown. Bhata is the fertile land at the foothills where paddy is cultivated. Bado is the more fertile kitchen garden where vegetables are grown.

The Dongria Kondh has been identified as a primitive tribe. They speak Kuvi, a Dravidian language. The Dongria have a patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal society. They have nuclear and extended type of families. They organize themselves into lineages and clans. Marriage by negotiation is ideal type and considered prestigious. The other ways of acquiring mates are marriage by exchange and marriage by service. In Dongria society a good deal of cooperation is expressed in every sphere of activity. Exchange of labour in agricultural and horticultural operations is found very common. In construction of a new house, men, women and even children contribute their labour. In return they are entertained with of a feast and made a nominal payment to the labour cooperative. Women labour is preferred in carrying out transplantation and weeding out operations. Clearing of forests, hoeing and sowings are done by men, and harvesting and thrashing by both men and women together.

They grow crops in swiddens by hoeing the land with hand. It requires more labour hours and manpower. They are expert horticulturist and grow fruits like pineapples, bananas, oranges, lemons, mangoes and jackfruits. Also they grow spices like chili, ginger and turmeric. Besides, they produce crops like millets (*suan, mandia, jana*) maize, paddy, pulses (*arhar*), *jhudunga* etc. collection of forest produce, rearing animals and wage earning supplements their earnings.

The traditional institutions such as village council, Da-sa-sika- the girls, dormitory and *punja* organizations play significant roles in keeping village solidarity that governs the cooperative behavior and management of labour. Mondal, Jani, Bismajhi, Pujari, Disari, Bejuni, Barika, Jhateni and Gauda are the village functionaries who play their socio-political and religious roles.

They propitiate Darnipenu, the earth goddess, and a number of other village deities, spirits and observe Meria festivals. Round the year they observe some or other rituals and ceremonies. The Domb are the immediate neighbor of the Dongria. They render traditional services like acting as messengers (Barika), sweepers (Jhateni) and cattle herders (Gauda). In the capacity of a messenger, the Domb, play a significant role in the system of labour cooperatives.

### **Work Force in the Study Village, Kurli:**

Village Kurli comprises 35 Dongria Kondh households. The Dongria population is 176, out of which 82 are males and 94 are females. The work force or the labour force of the Dongria society includes persons of either sexes both adults and children above 9 years of age. The workforce comprises 118 (67% of the total population). In the workforce, 54 (66%) are males and 64 (68%) are females. It includes 44(37%) children in the age group of (9-17) years and adults in the age group of (18-60) years. Among the child population in the workforce, 21 (48%) are boys and 23(52%) are girls. Among the adult population in the workforce, 33(45%) are males and 41(55%) are females. The workforce is presented in the statement below:

Workforce								
Children (9-17 Years)			Adults (18-60 Years)			Total		
Boys	Girls	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
21	23	44	33	41	74	54	64	118
48%	52%	37%	45%	55%	63%	86%	68%	67%

The level of literacy in the workforce is at 16.64%. Amount the males it is at 37% among the female it is at 3% only. The literacy level among the child population and adult population is at 30% and 12% respectively. All adult-females are non-literate.

### Labour Cooperatives: A Case Study of Village Kurli

Out of 35 Dongria households, 30 are members of labour cooperatives at Kurli village. As many as 25 households (71%) had availed the helps of labour Cooperatives, like Sahabati, Daasibati, Dhangadabati and Guta during March-November, 2000. They utilized Sahabati for 60 workdays and Guta for 8 work days Daasibati for 5 workdays, and only one household utilized Dhangadabati once for a workday.

The labour cooperative was utilized in the farms (in the *dongar*) for the purpose of different agrarian activities. The table below indicates that Sahabati was utilized for 17 times for cleaning and cutting *dongar*, 20 times for hoeing and sowing seeds, 15 times for weeding and 8 times for harvesting. Daasibati was applied for 5 times and all that are for weeding. For clearing of forests, Dhangadabati was utilized once and Guta four times. Besides, the latter was also utilized equal number of times for hoeing and sowing.

**Utilization of Labour Cooperatives during March-November, 2000 at Kurli village is given below:**

Types of Labour Co-operatives	No. of Households availed	No. of days Employed	Purpose			
			Cleaning of Forest	Hoeing & Sowing Seeds	Weeding	Harvesting
Sahabati / Kutumbati	25	60	17	20	15	8
Daasibati (Labour Group of Maidens)	5	5	-	-	5	-
Dhangadabati (Labour Group of Unmarried Boys)	1	1	1	-	-	-

Pundabati (Group labour)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dutarupunda (Labour Group of Old men)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gutta (Contract)	4	8	4	4	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>

Under all the above categories of labour cooperatives, 74 working days are invested out of which 22 days are for clearing of *dongars*, 24 days for hoeing and sowing of seeds, 20 days for weeding and 8 days for harvesting. It is seen that Pundabati and Dutarubati were not utilized at Kurli village. The Dongria people said that both types of the labour cooperatives have been abandoned.

Name of Labour co- operatives	No. of working days	Labour Type	No of Member-Labour		
			Male	Female	Total
Sahabati (Kutumbati)	60	Guest Labour	781	924	1705
		Host Labour	107	130	237
		Total	888	1054	1942 (79.15%)
Daasibati (Unmarried girls)	5	Guest Labour	-	90	90
		Host Labour	9	11	20
		Total	9	101	110 (4.48%)
Dhangadabati (Unmarried boys)	1	Guest Labour	1	3	4
		Host Labour	19	-	19
		Total	20	3	23 (0.93%)
Guta (Contract)	8	Guest Labour	104	168	272
		Host Labour	31	76	107
		Total	135	244	379 (15.44%)
Total	74	Guest Labour	904 (38%)	1182 (62%)	2086 (85%)
		Host Labour	148 (29%)	220 (71%)	368 (15%)
		Total	1052 (43%)	1402 (57%)	2454 (100%)

Host-labour: The labour of a member family who utilizes the labour co-operatives

Guest-labour: The members of labour cooperatives who are invited to work for the host.

The above table shows the utilization of service of members under different types of labour cooperatives of Dongria at Kurli for the period from March to November, 2000. According to the table the service of as many as 2,454 labours were utilized under labour cooperatives for various agricultural and horticultural operations. Out of them 43% were males and 57% females. Out of the total member-labour who served under labour co-operatives, 79% were for Sahabati followed by 15.44% for Guta, 4.48% for Dhangadabati. The helps of Sahabati were availed by the Dongrias mostly and frequently. Guta was utilized moderately while utilization of Daasibati and Dhangadabati were insignificant.

The sex ratio of members of the labour cooperatives was 1333 females per 1000 males. The labour cooperatives comprise of two types of member labour, host-labour and guest-labour, from both the sexes including the children. Out of the total member labour (2454), 368 (15%) were host-labour and 2086 (85%) were guest-labour. In all the types of labour cooperatives the females outnumber the males. Thus the females contribute more labour force to the labour cooperatives than that of their male counterpart.

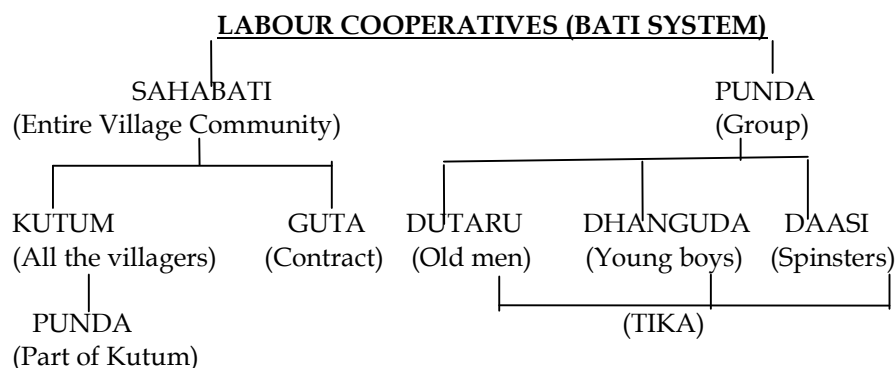
#### **Nature and Types of Labour Co-operatives:**

Bati system of labour cooperatives operates at village level. It is more operational in mountainous agricultural and horticultural activities. The different types of labour cooperatives found in the Dongria society are: Sahabati or Kutumbati, Pundabati, Dhangadabati, Daasibati, Kaddabati, Guta, Tika etc.

Research studies of Nayak (1989) and Aparajita (1994) reveal a fourfold typology of 'Labour Cooperatives' among the Dongria. These are:

1. Sahu or Satra Punda (the labour cooperatives taking all the Dongria households of a village as members)
2. Dutaru Punda (the labour cooperatives of an age set consisting of likeminded old persons)
3. Dhangada Punda (A group of young bachelor labour), and
4. Daasi Punda (A group of dormitory based labour)

As per the study labour cooperatives may be grouped under two broad categories: Sahu or Kutumbati and Punda. The former is labour cooperative for all the Dongria households in a village and the latter, small groups among the entire Dongria community of a village on the basis of sex, age-grade, and age sect. The typology of labour cooperative is diagrammatically placed below.



### Sahabati:

Sahabati comprehends all the works of the entire Dongria villages or settlement. The etymology of the word 'Sahabati' is a combination of two words, 'Saha' and 'bati'. Saha means the entire village and *bati* means labour group or workgroup. So Sahabati means the labour group or work group of an entire village. The Dongria also call Sahabati as Kutumbati. Kutumbati is like an extended family consisting of one member-labour from each family in a Dongria village. The members of the work group work in union in each other's swidden field for horticulture and agriculture purposes. The labour cooperatives consist of two types of labour. They are host-labour, who invites other labour for their co-operation at work, and the guest-labour, who work in the field for one of the member-labour. So in Sahabati system every member of a labourcooperative plays dual roles as a host-labour as well as a guest-labour.

The agreement of Sahabati is finalized in the Kudi, village community house, early in the morning in the presence of village council. A member as per his requirement requests village council for availing the help of labour under Sahabati. In the preceding day to the work, an announcement about the place and time for the work of a member labour is made by the Domb messenger in the evening. The itinerary of Sahabati is chronologically arranged keeping the requests of all the members of a village and the urgency of the work in view.

Sahabati is availed by a member for his work for a day only. In no case it is used in two consecutive days. It may be employed in alternative day, but for different members so that private work of each member can be attended during the intervals. In the allotment of works under the cooperatives priority is given to widows, old persons and persons whose crop condition would be worse if remains unattended. For employment of labour under Sahabati each Dongria family of the village send a labour of either sex or even children above 9 years to work. If any member fails to send a labour for the Sahabati, the head of the family pays a fine of Rs. 20/- per each day's work. Defaulters are asked to appear before the Tribal Council for adjudication of disputes and penal sanctions.



The Sahabati consists of both affinal and consanguineal relations of the Dongaria community and his neighbor. The host labour and his family members including children participate in the work either as active or passive workers along with the Sahabati workers. The Sahabati workers leave village for the Dongar soon after the Sunrise and return to village just before the Sunset. In between, they work hard amidst joyous songs and a dinner break.

The host-labour arranges a feast comprising of rice, *dal*, curry and gruel for Sahabati workers. The buffet type feast is served among the workers at noon. The distribution of food is equal for all the workers. At the end of the work *pejo* drink, a mixture of rice and *mandia* gruel is given to all the workers.

The host-labour pays a token money varying from Rs. 60/- to Rs. 200/- which is deposited at the fund of labour cooperatives and the amount along with the fine are kept with the tribal chief or any Dongria selected for the purpose. The accumulated funds are spent for Meriah festival and feast.

**Case Study:** At Kurli village for the period from April to November 2000, 25 families availed 60 days work under Sahabati. As many as 1942 workers, (888 males and 1054 females), participated as member-labour. There were 1705 guest labour, 237 host labour and 38 absentee labour. The fine money collected (and to be collected) from the absentee labour amount Rs. 760/-. The money deposited in Sahabati fund amounts to Rs. 12,000/-. The total fund credited to the account of Sahabati fund is Rs. 12,760/-.

Out of 60 days of Sahabati work 17 days invested for clearing of forests, 20 days for hoeing and sowing of seeds, 15 days for weeding and 8 days for harvesting. The service of Sahabati is opened only for its members. It is operating within the territorial limit of the village. In exceptional cases of Guta, contact with Sahabati for a piece of work at a high rate of wages, it works either for a member or for outsider. In case of latter the labour cooperatives charge high price, keeping the volume and magnitude of the work in view.

During the field enquiry the following cases of Sahabati were observed.

**Case Study-1:** Jakesika Shyam had utilized Sahabati thrice and Dhangadabati and Daasibati once each for the agricultural year (March-November-2000).

Shyam, a member of Sahabati at Kurli village, requested the Naik, the village chief for the help of the Sahabati. The Naik in consultation with the village elders decided to extend the help of Sahabati to Sri Shyam on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2000 in his swidden field for cutting Kosla crop and collection of *jhudanga*. A day before the work Shyam in accompaniment of few children announced about the time, place and purpose of the work before all the members of the Sahabati.

On the Scheduled date all the Sahabati members left the village after sunrise for the swidden field of Shyam to help cooperate in his work. Besides all the 30 Sahabati members, two labour of the host family participate in the work. The composition of the workgroup was of multi-clan in nature. The members of clans like Sikaka (2), Jakasike (24), Kadraka (2), Pusika (1) and Mandika (1) formed the workgroup. The work group comprised members like 16 males and 14 females including 18 children and 12 adults. Out of 18 child members, 5 were literate and out of 12 adult members, 4 were literate.

The workgroup began the work, cutting *kosala* crop and collecting *jhudanga* at about 8A.M. The female folk of the group while working sang an enchanting song. The translation of the song is placed below:

“O’ brother and uncle, let’s start a quick work,  
For enjoying feast at noon and to resume the work,  
And we have to complete it early to get home back”.

The host couple prepared food for the dinner in an open kitchen near the *dongar*. Two kids of the couple, the passive participants of the work, played besides the kitchen. The foodstuff for the feast comprised rice 3 *manas* (9.6kgs), *kandula* (*dal*) 1 *mana* (3.2kgs), *mandia* 1 *mana* (3.2kgs). The host couple supplied the foodstuff and prepared food like rice, *dal* and gruel, and served the food items among the members of the labour cooperatives.

At noon they invited the guest labour for the feast. In the intermission of the work, the guests got down and enjoyed the food served in buffet. Some guest labour consumed *salap* juice before taking their dinner and some of them baked their own dry fishes and ate them with the food. After lunch they resumed the work enthusiastically at 1P.M. The work was finished by 4 P.M. Then once again all the member labours gathered at the open-air-dinning space and consumed mixed gruel of *mandia* and rice. Then they got off for home.

Shyam had paid Rs. 60/- as Sahabatitaka or Kutumtaka. The work was incomplete as it was voluminous which needed more labour for completion. The host decided to engage his family labour to complete the remaining harvesting of crops. The wife of Shyam, who cooked and served the food to the guest labour in the worksite, had delivered a baby girl in the very next morning.

**Case Study-2:** Sikaka Maguru had harvested his Kosala crop with the help of labour cooperatives at Banakala *dongar* near Kurli village. It was a field of mixed crops measuring about 5.00 Acres of *dongar* land. the standing crops in the field were banana, caster, *arhar*, *janha* and *kosala*. Besides, there were fruit trees like pineapples and mangoes.

On 15<sup>th</sup> November 2000 Maguru requested a Dongria to make announcement (Hata or Hulia) for the work in accompaniment of the Dongria

boys. The next day a Sahabati comprising of 28 members moved up to the *dongar* for harvesting *kosala*. The Sahabati, labour cooperatives comprised members from three clans such as Sikaka (4), Jakasika (23) and Mandika (1). Out of 28 member-labourers, 16 males, 12 were females, 10 were children and 18 were adults. Besides them, the host couple along with their 5 months old baby (the passive participant) was present in the worksite. Only members of labour cooperatives who were absent in the work were charged with fine.

The members of the Sahabati began the harvesting of *kosala* crop at the *dongar* at 8 A.M. amidst the pleasure of song sung by the women. The work continued till noon. The host couple prepared the lunch down the *dongar* and near a stream. There was a lunch-break for half an hour. The lunch included rice of 3 *manas* (9.6kg), mixed curry of *jhudunga* (2.4 Ada / 1.5kg) and pumpkin (1no/3 kg), *mandia* gruel and rice powder (2Ada/ 1.5kg). The host couple distributed food among the member labour in leaf cups.

The guest labour resumed the work immediate after the lunch. The work continued till 4P.M. After the work, the host served gruel among the workers. Then all of them returned home. The Sahabati members decided that the *itinitaka* of Rs. 60/- and the fine money of Rs. 40/- (@Rs. 20/- each x 2 absentee members) would be collected latter.

**Case Study-3:** in the agricultural year Wadeka Katru of the settlement Kuruvallipadar had engaged the Sahabati of village Khambesi twice. The Sahanati of village Khambesi comprises 65 members. Each Dongria family of the village was a member in the Sahabati. It was divided into two groups. This arrangement was done keeping in view the labour requirements of all the families and the smooth management of time and agricultural works.

Katru had utilized the helps of a section of the Sahabati of Khambesi village, once for wedding and cutting grass and another for harvesting *kosala* crop in the swidden field at Aknajodi Dongar (hill) near Kuruvallipadar settlement during July and November, 2000 respectively. Katru had approached the village council for the cooperation of the Sahabati and engaged the village Barika, a Dom, to make announcement about the time and place of the work.

A section of the Sahabati comprising of 23 guest labours out of 30 members had participated for weeding and cutting grass in the *dongar*, at Khambesi village and 7 members were absent. Sri Wadeka had paid Rs. 200/- as *batitaka*. The Sahabati members collected fine money for Rs. 140/- (@ Rs. 20/- each x 7 absentee member) and the amounts were deposited with the village head. The host couple prepared a feast for the guest labour and distributed food like rice. Mixed curry and mixed gruel among them at the interval of the work at noon. After the feast, the guest labour resumed the work which went on up to 4pm. The host couple once again gave *mandia* gruel to all the guest labour at the end of the work before they return home.

It was observed that for the second time Katru had obtained the help of the Sahabati for the harvesting of *kosala* crop. There were 21 guest labour of Sahabati and 9 members were absent. Katru had paid a sum of Rs. 200/- as *batitaka* and the Sahabati members had collected Rs. 180/- (@ Rs. 20/- each) as fine from 9 absentee members. Like the previous work the host had given feast and a drink to the guest labour. The harvesting work continued from morning till sunset with a lunch break at noon. Besides the helps of the guest labour, 7 family members of the host participated in the above works.

For the village is a big one, its Sahabati has been divided in to two separate Sahabatis, one for each group of the villagers. Help of Sahabati is taken for all the agricultural activities like for weeding, cutting grass, harvesting of crops etc. in the swidden fields.

The village council approves help of the Sahabati as per the formal approach of a member. The announcement about the work is still done by the village Barika, a Dom. At times the Domb neighbor also participates in the labour cooperatives work.

#### **Pundabati:**

Punda means group. Unlike Sahabati, Pundabati is a small labour co-operative. Each Pundabati comprises 10-15 members. As many as 10-15 likeminded persons of a particular clan or even more than one clan form Pundabati. Pundabati allows both male and female members to work together at the request of a member. If the required volume of the work would be less and the member had finished his quota of working under Sahabati, he could invite Pundabati to get this work done. The work involves agricultural or horticultural activities in the *dongar*. For a day's work the *pundabati* money is Rs. 50/-. Every member has equal right to get the services of Pundabati. The Pundabati workers are given a feast and paid Pundabati money. The absentee need not have to pay fine. However, if any one remained absent from work his counterpart would reciprocate the same way. Pundabati money is spent on feast arranged by them.

Pundabati is no more seen operative in village Kurli. It is effectively functioning at Khambesi and Mundbali. Three Pundabati cooperatives are functioning at Khambesi and two Pundabati at Mundbali.

**Case Study:** Wadka Katru of Kuruvallipadar had availed the services of Pundabati of Khambesi twice during March-November, 2000. One Pundabati was for cutting trees and clearing bushes and another for harvesting *kosala* rice. The Pundabati composed of a 15-member team jointly with a 6-member host family participated in the work and cleared 4 acres of *dongar* land in 8 hours. The host gave them food at noon and drink of rice-millet gruel at the end of work. Rs. 20/- was paid to the Pundabati fund. Services of one more cooperative were utilized for harvesting *kosala* rice. Three out of 15 members of the Pundabati did

not attend the work. Thus among the 12 labourers, 4 were men and 8 were women. In the host family 2 were men and 4 were women. This family did not attend the work for the absentee labourers.

On both the occasions each of the respective host families had given provisions like rice (2 manas-6 kgs), *jhudanga*, *dal* (1 *adda*-750gm), pumpkin (one - 2.5kg) and *mandia*, millet (2 *addas*-1.5kg).

### Daasibati

Daasibati or Dhangidibati is the labour cooperative of the girl dormitory goes of 12 years of age or a little above. Girls or Dasasika, the girl's dormitory can also become members of Daasibati, usually a small work-group of 5 to 15 Dongria young girls, either of one clan or of more than one. It operates within one clan territory only. Each member of Daasibati helps another in work on reciprocal basis. Since girls are of tender age, light but tedious works like weeding, cleaning, fencing and harvesting are given to them, but not hard works like cutting the trees, digging the soil etc.

Kajari, the chief of the Daasika and Daasibati, coordinates the work. A member of Daasibati may avail the services of the cooperative for his own or for his family. Rs. 20/- to Rs. 25/- is paid to the cooperative fund. The Kajari keeps the account. Absentees do not have to pay fine but obviously do not get help from his/her counterpart. Daasibati, if required may extend services to non-members too. In this case the cooperative is paid double.

They work in the farm singing. In the intervals they share some dry food and condiments. One would feel as if they work in a festive mood. Rice and *jhudung* are served at lunch. The food is served equally in leaf-cups. The gruel is served twice; once immediately after the lunch and another at the end of work. The Daasibati fund is spent on feasts. Often they spend it on entertaining their respective partners from other villages attending festivals in the host village.

During March-November, 2000 Daasibati was engaged 5 times by 5 Dongrias in Kurli for weeding work. 110 boys and girls participated; 20 were host labourers and 90 were guest-labourers, and 101 were girls and 9 were boys. All the guest-labours (Daasies) were girls. A sum of Rs. 125/- was deposited in the Daasibati fund.

Jakasika Tenda of Kurli utilized Daasibati in Mitali Dangar for harvesting *kosala* in November, 2000. Ten Daasis participated in the work and 5 Daasis were absent. Tenda paid Rs. 20/- instead of Rs. 25/- to the Daasibati funds as 5 Daasis were absent.

In Khambesi and Hutesi Daasibati is not anymore functioning. In Kurli and Mundbali each only one Daasibati was functioning with 15 and 12 Daasies respectively. There could be no Daasibati without Dhangdibasa functioning.

A group of educated boys of Khambesi were opposed to the custom of visiting Dhangadas, Dongria boys to the Dhangidibasa in the night. They felt, it was encouraging immoral traffic. They refrained boys to sleep in the Dhangidibasa in the night and threatened to get their head shaved and cropped to the root if any such Dhangada who dared visit the Dhangidibasa. They formed a vigilant squad and chased the boys visiting the girls in the dormitory. Keeping long hair is considered precious for men. So the Dhangadas from other villages stopped visiting the Dhangidibasa at Khambesi. Thus the Dhangidibasa ceased to function, so also the Daasibati. After a gap of four years two Dhangidibasa resumed functioning but no more Daasibati.

### **Dhangadabati**

Dangadabati is the labour cooperative formed by Dongria young men, who are fit for hard works like felling trees, carrying logs, hoeing and digging pits in hills etc. the Dhangadabati workers get food and Rs. 50/- for a day's work. This cooperative is very important and functioning in most Dongria villages.

### **Kutumgutta**

A contract with the Kutumbati or Sahabati for a specific work is known as Kutumgutta. Keeping the volume of work to be done and the time that would be required the host family negotiates with the *kutumbati* about the amount to be paid for the work. On an average, if a work which requires 30 labourers for 3 days the price would be from Rs. 1000/-. The amount varies from village to village. There is no provision of giving food to the workers. The Kutumgutta work continues for two to three consecutive days or till its completion. After finalization of the contract with the Kuttumgutta the amount is paid in advance.

**Case Study:** Wadeka Nabaghan of Khambesi had made an advance of Rs. 500/- on 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2000 for fencing around his pineapple orchards which was scheduled to be done by Kutumgutta during January, 2001. Kadraka Rajis of the same village had made an advance for Rs. 500/- on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2000 to engage the Kutumgutta during December, 2000 for harvesting turmeric and sowing the seeds in the *dongar*.

### **Dutarubati**

Dutarubati is the old men's labour co-operative. Likeminded old men, small in number, often form a labour cooperative to help each other in their respective swiddens over drinks.

### **Kaddabati**

The labour cooperative invited by a person, who is not a member is called Kaddabati. Besides the feast and drink, the host has to pay double the money. In this case the attendance of all the members of the cooperative is obligatory.

### **Tika**

The contract for any type of labour co-operative, except the Kutumbati is known as Tika. The cost of Tika work for any labour cooperative varies from Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 5000/-. Money has to be paid in advance. Dongrias and Dombs can go in for Tika work. Under Tika work, the labourers are not given any food and implements required for the work. It is a contract for the work. At the approach of festivals and ceremonies the Dongria get tempted to accept more number of such works under Guta and Tika to earn money to meet the expenses on those occasions. The Domb neighbours engage the Dongria on Tika by luring them for buffalo meat and wine for which the Dongria have strong weakness. Often for meat and wine they work in Tika for a low price.

### **Kuli/Mulia**

The royal affinity of the Dongrias with the Niyamigiri king and the tradition of labour cooperatives had kept them away from getting engaged as Kuli, i.e., paid labour. Now-a-days, they engage and get engaged as Kuli. The prevalent wage rate for a Kuli for 6 hours of work is Rs. 25/- for men and Rs. 20/- for women. The Kulis are engaged usually in construction works of roads and buildings and the work in farms and fields. The Dongrias often borrow cash and grains and accept advance payments against a future work in the lean period. In such cases the cost of the labour becomes less by Rs. 5/-.

### **Cooperation within Family:**

In polygynous families co-wives perform household activities on the basis of mutual cooperation and sharing. In some cases, individual wives independently manage and maintain their own cultivated fields with the help of husbands. Often one wife does the household chores and another works in the field along with her husband and children.

After separation of an extended family brothers and sons continue to cooperate frequently in economic and ritual activities. Now houses are built by the collective labour of the extended family. When more labour is required for house construction, labour cooperatives are invited. For house construction and for certain agricultural work kinsmen are also invited who do not take wages.

### **Labour Co-operatives: Change and Dynamics**

Kaddabati, Kutumgutta, Tika and Kuli or Mulia are the examples to understand the dynamics of labour cooperatives among the Dongrias. Under the changing circumstances the Dongria have started working for money and the Domb neighbours engage them in various work. However, there seems to be some sort of continuity of the mechanism of traditional labour cooperatives. Acceptance of advance payment for a piece of work during busy agricultural season is becoming more popular. Cooperatives on contract basis like 'Guta' and 'Tika' and purchase and sale of labour in the name of labour cooperatives lead to

exploitations of the Dongria Kondh, which is beyond their control. The traditional value of mutual help and cooperation is slowly declining. Dongria labourers now go to market to work as Kuli and Mulia. At the same time of course labour cooperatives are still effectively functioning.

### **Using the Institution of Labour Cooperatives as a Development Input:**

Social science research translates knowledge into formulation of plans, policies and their practices in development intervention. Social scientists in charge of development administration take advantages of the research findings on the institution of labour cooperatives among the Dongria society. The case study presented below explains how the institution of labour cooperative can be used as a development input which not only reduces the cost of the schemes but also ensures peoples participation in the development process.

During the period (1982-87), a young Anthropologist working as Special Officer of the Micro Project, DKDA, Chatikona, Rayagada district had effectively utilized almost all types of labour cooperatives in the development works mostly for the benefits of the community oriented infrastructure development schemes and income and employment generating schemes for individual families. The specific works for which labour cooperatives were utilized are nursery development, road cleaning and road construction and repairing, construction of Gyanmandirs, building and community houses, environmental sanitation and plantation of fruit orchards and horticulture development including spices like turmeric and ginger cultivation. The orchard works include plantations like pineapples, bananas, oranges, mangoes, jackfruits, lemons etc, and cleaning, fencing and weeding and maintenance of fruit orchards. The advantages of utilization of labour cooperatives are: (i) it is cheaper. The surplus amount was reinvested by taking up more area on development of plantation or other development work for the Dongria. (ii) People participate in their own work, which not only ensures the good quality of work but also its timely completion. (iii) Traditional social value induces the development activities and helps in perpetuation of tradition and thus maintains group solidarity. (iv) Widows and invalid persons and the new settlers in the villages had availed the benefits of land allotment, labour cooperatives and the development process.

The idea of utilizing labour cooperatives as development input was very popular and well accepted in most of the Dongria villages. Plantation and horticultural operations were developed in about 8000 acres of *dongar* land effectively and successfully. The investment of labour cost for the development work varied from Rs. 100/- to Rs. 150/- per acre. The villagers were given assistance in cash, which were paid to the funds of labour cooperatives and the people contributed labour in a cooperative spirit. The other inputs like plantation materials, fertilizers etc. were provided by the DKDA. Food was also provided for the members of labour co-operatives.



The labour cooperatives have helped a lot in making the mountainous fruit orchards success. The *dongars* (swiddens) of the Dongrias at that time earned the fame of 'Fruit Orchards of Rayagada area.

### Conclusion:

The varieties of labour cooperatives in Dongria society attest how people of different age groups, social group and the groups of young unmarried girls organize themselves to work to meet the needs of labour by undertaking all kinds of task. The teamwork through labour cooperatives amidst feasts and songs speaks of the vibrant community spirit. The tradition of labour management is governed by the principle of equality and reciprocity. The rich and the poor work together in each other's field. The system does not discriminate the capacity of men, women and even children for work. There is strong positive sanction for all sorts of cooperative work. In case of dispute, the village council arbitrates. As the swidden work is more labour intensive and the people do not have enough money to pay for the wages people depend upon exchange labour. Thus, the labour cooperatives in a big way help in the production process. Money deposited in the cooperative fund is spent on the Meria festivals, treatment of guests and other community functions. The labour cooperatives are valued more in socio-cultural than economic terms.

The labour cooperatives can be gainfully utilized as a development input. A society in which influence of money economy has yet to influence the livelihood of people, mutual cooperative at the level of social groups and institutions becomes as assured source of their economic strength. Development planners and policy makers are equivocal on securing participation of the people in the development process. Participatory development is considered an effective strategy and the goal of tribal development. The sponsored development schemes could accrue dividends to the Dongria if the institution of labour cooperatives could be tapped. Self Help Groups (SHGs) could be help formed on a sustainable basis in the lines of the institutions of labour co-operatives.

### References:

1. Aparajita, U (1994), *Culture and Development :Dongarias of Niyamgiri*, Tribal Studies of Orissa Series T. 167; New Delhi, Inter India Pub, pp. 116-1 &154.
2. Behura, N. K. & K. K. Mohanti, (1998), "Vulnerable Ethno-cultural Groups" (VEGs)", *Adivasi*, Vol. XXXVIII: Nos.1 & 2, p-11.
3. Dalton, G. (1971), *Economic Anthropology and Development: Essays on Tribal and Peasant Economics*, New York / London, Basic Books, Inc Pub, (pp 13:14).

4. Das, N (1966-67). "A Study on Goti System of Koraput", *Adibasi*, Vol.VIII, No. 1, pp. 13:14
5. Faris, R. El (ed) (1988), *Handbook of Modern Sociology*, Vol.1, Jeypore, Rawat Publications.
6. Webster, N (1981), *New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition., The Delair Publishing Company Inc,; p.532.
7. Fernades, W & Menon G. (1987) *Tribal Women & Forest Economy; Deforestation, Exploitation and Status Change*. New Delhi, Indian Social Institute, pp. 73:74.
8. Herskovits, M.J. (1974) *Economic Anthropology, The Economic life of Primitive Peoples*, New Delhi, Eurasia Publishing House (P) Ltd.
9. Nag, D.S (1958) *Tribal Economics, An Economic Study of the Baiga*, New Delhi, Bharatiya Adimajati Sevak Sangh.
10. Nayak, P. K. (1989) *Blood, Women and Territory, An analysis of clan feuds of Dongaria Kondhs*, New Delhi, Reliance Publishing House, pp. 128-30.
11. Nayak, R, B.M. Boal & N. Soreng, (1990) *The Kondhs, A Handbook for Development*. New Delhi, Indian Social Institute.
12. Patnaik, N & P.S. Das Patnaik (1982) *The Kondhs of Orissa, Their Socio Cultural Life and Development*. Bhubaneswar, THRTI.
13. Redfield, R (1958) *The Primitive World and its Transformations*. Great Seal Books. New York; Cornell University Press, pp. 11:19.
14. Sahoo, A. C. (1988-89). Evaluation of the Dongaria Development Agency, (Kurli) Chatikona, in Koraput district, Bhubaneswar, THRTI (unpublished Report).

# OWNERSHIP PATTERN, LAND SURVEY AND SETTLEMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DONGRIA KONDHS OF ORISSA\*

*P. S. Das Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

The Niyamgiri hill ranges, stretched over an area of 250 square kilometers in South Orissa, right from Muniguda block in the North to Kalyansinghpur block in the East, in the Bissamkatak block of Gunupur and Rayagada subdivisions in the Koraput district (undivided) is the abode of the Dongria Kondhs. These hill ranges of about 4000 to 5000 feet height are contiguous. These are 21 Kilometers away from the North-West of the Police Station headquarters of Bissamkatak and are situated at a distance of 436 kilometers from the State Capital- Bhubaneswar.

For centuries, the Dongria Kondhs have been living in these hills away from the cultural mainstream and have evolved their oral and unrecorded history and culture. Kurli, the first typical Dongria village lying at an average height of 3,000 feet is connected with Bissamkatak by 10 Kilometers of zigzag hill track and three Kilometers of road on the plains of the foot hills. Bissamkatak is connected with the State Capital both by the bus route via Rayagada and by the rail route from Rayagada via Vijayanagaram in Andhra Pradesh. Both these routes are connected with Chatikona, a village on the Waltair-Raipur line from where one is to climb the rugged mountains to reach the Dongria Kondh area. Further, the entire Niyamgiri area comes under four Blocks, namely, Bissamkatak, Kalyansinghpur, Muniguda and Biswanathpur of Rayagada and Gunupur subdivisions of the Koraput district (now Rayagada district).

The Kondhs, one of the most backward tribes of Orissa constitute numerically the first largest group, the total population of which is about 8,69,965 according to the census 1971, inhabit mainly in the district of Koraput and Phulbani. The Dongria Kondhs, a section of Kondhs, though have not been dealt separately in the last census, were enumerated as 5,618 in 110 villages in a

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, January, 1984, pp.23-32

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, THRTI, Bhubaneswar

separate study under-taken during the year of 1975, of which 2,491 are males and 3,127 are females. Thus the Dongria Kondhs constitute about 0.65 per cent of the total Kondh population of the State.

Another Scheduled Caste, locally known as the Domb also inhabit in the same villages and their total population is 1,173 of which 628 are males and 545 are females. These 110 villages are exclusively inhabited by only two communities, the Dongria Kondhs and the Dombs. The Dombs are immigrants from the plains of the district of Bolangir and Kalahandi and have permanently settled in the Niyamagiri hills by pursuing petty trade with the Dongria Kondhs and exploiting them taking advantage of their isolation, simplicity and ignorance. In spite of that, both the groups have developed symbiotic relationship from the past not known in the history.

The demographic analysis reveals that an average Dongria Kondh family consists of 4 persons only. It is indicative of the fact that the families are mostly nuclear and prefer separate household soon after marriage, due to practice of shifting cultivation and *per capita* land holding being 4 to 5 acres only. From age group distribution, it is evident that about 20.8 per cent and 10.8 per cent of the population was below 17 years and 18 to 47 years, respectively. About 68.4 per cent of population was beyond 47 years. But it should not lead us to believe that only the adults (between 18 to 47 years) are the only the working members because children above 6 years of age also help their parents in both domestic and agricultural pursuits. Further, the distribution of population within the age-group of 0-5 and 6-11 years is very low. This clearly indicates that their health conditions have not improved and child mortality is high. The analysis of sex-ratio reveals that the population of females constituting about 53 per cent outnumbers the males (47 per cent). Polygyny is socially sanctioned in their society. So far as the proportion of married men and women are concerned, about 49 per cent of the males and 51 per cent of the females are married and about 51 per cent of the total population are married. Further the average age-limit at which males are married is 18 to 22 years and that of females is 12 to 17 years. Pre-puberty marriage among the girls is not frequent. Usually, widows beyond 29 years of age do not remarry.

**Race-** Edgar Thurston writes in the 'Castes and Tribe of Southern India' (Vol. III, page 356), that in a note on the Kui, Kandhi or Kond language, Mr. G. A. Grierson writes as follows. "The Kandhas or Khonds are a Dravidian Tribe in the hills of Orissa and neighbouring district". The Dongria Kondh, being one of the sections of the Kondhs, are also a Dravidian tribe.

**Language-** Mr. G. A. Grierson writes, "The name which they use themselves is Kui" (Edgar Thurston- Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Vol. III-page 356). Whatever may be the fact, the Kondh language varies from place to place in the same district. The main dialect of the Dongria Kondh is 'Kuvi.'

Physically, they look stalwarts with erect posture and broad shoulders and no growth of chest hairs. Males grow long hairs both for adornment and as an emblem of the community to differentiate themselves from other sections of the Kondh. The skin colour of the males is brown, often near fair. In contrast the skin colour of the females is dark-brown often approaching black. Whatever may be the fact, both sexes adorn themselves abundantly claiming themselves to have been descended from Niyam Raja (Legendry king of Niyamagiri hills).

The Dongria Kondh land is situated over a high plateau, ranging from about 1,500 to 3000 feet above the sea-level. In comparison with the adjoining plains, the climate of the area is cool and pleasant. Humidity in this area ranges from 92 per cent of saturation in August and September, the wettest months, to 60 per cent in March and 61 per cent in April and May. During the summer nights there is usually a light cool breeze. The rainy season is extremely unhealthy. Rains are continuous and heavy. The rigour of the cold weather is intense. Nearly 80 per cent of the annual rainfall is received from the south-west monsoon during the months of June to September. No rivers are found to be flowing on the top of the Niyamgiri ranges excepting a perennial stream called, Gadgada Nallah. This stream touches the entire area and passes through Chatikona Railway station. It is the only source of water for the inhabitants of the Niyamgiri. Birga is the local name of soil. On the mountains, the soil is full of stones and pebbles and therefore, not very suitable for cultivation. Practically soil erosion takes place in the entire area excepting of course, near bed of the stream. Kaditari-Birga (Black soil) is considered to be very fertile and found only under the foot of the hills where Dongar-paddy is sown. Other than that, the entire area is an admixture of Kankada-Birga (Stony-clay) and Panka-Birga (Paste-clay). Due to large-scale deforestation and practice of shifting cultivation, no animals are found near the village. Natural forests are far away from the villages where animals infest. But the entire area is infested with snakes.

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood of the Dongria Kondhs. They are mainly shifting cultivators in view of the terrain or higher altitude where they live. Due to large-scale deforestation, forest collection, though a secondary source of livelihood the availability of the resources have become few and far between. Non-availability of plain lands has made them completely dependent only on hill cultivation and that too, in a large scale.

Lands in the Dongria Kondh region are divided into three categories—Haru (Hill), Penga (Foot of the hill), and Bada (Kitchen garden). Due to continuous hill ranges and rugged mountains, Penga and Bada types of land are less possessed by the local people.

On the Haru, the following crops with relative importance are grown. Millets like; Ragi, Kating and Kosla-rice are produced for staple food. Cereals like; Kandul, Ganthia, Arka and Jana are produced in lesser quantity for consumption. Creepers like Jhudang and Baila are produced and used as

vegetable and tiffin. Castor-seed (Kala-manji) is produced as cash crop. Various roots and tubers like Saru-Kanda, Langala-Kanda and Rani-Kanda are produced and used as vegetables and the surplus is sold for cash. Vast area is utilized for production of turmeric sold as cash-crops. Vegetables like pumpkin, beans and chilly etc. are also produced both on Haru and Penga types of land. Ragi and Kosla-rice are mainly raised in the Penga type of land. With country made plough attempt is taken by a few families to produce Dongar-paddy on the Penga type of land. Gourd, brinjal, chilly and tobacco are raised in the kitchen garden. Other than these, the Dongria Kondhs are renowned horticulturists as they produce various types of fruits on the Haru like; Plantain (Kadali), Orange (Kamala), Pineapple (Bhuin Panasa), Jackfruit (Panasa) and Mango (Amba) as cash crops. Imitating the Hindu neighbours, some of them have started ploughing Penga and Bada types of land where Dongr- dhan is produced. This agricultural innovation has come to the Dongria Kondhs through the Dombs who are more capable in adopting such new practices. However fruits, roots and turmeric are produced in large quantity than other varieties of crops.

Shifting cultivation is practiced by rotation in the hill-slopes and hill-tops by the method of slash-and-burn tillage. The jungle clearing starts with the operation called "Heladi-Tulpi-Manabu" in the month of Chaitra (March-April). Then the operation called "Nai-Rundhi-Manabu" (setting fire) takes place. Right from the hill bottom to the hill top, both the males and females dig the soil with the help of Tahapa (an agricultural instrument) to mix the ash with the soil. Then seeds are sown before the onset of monsoon. There is a no scope for irrigating the Dongar plots. The people entirely depend on the rains. Mixed crops of minor millets, pulses are grown in the swiddens and harvested in succession. When the crops grow they are watched constantly against the birds and wild animals. A watch hut (Ladi) is built at the hill top to take shelter during nights. The recuperative cycle of a swidden varies from 3 to 4 years. This shortening of the recuperative years has caused more damage to the vegetations in the Niyamgiri hills. Certain rituals are attached to shifting cultivation to get the bumper yield.

Thus the people eke out their livelihood by almost entirely depending upon agriculture. Forest collection is a minor source. Wage-earning is considered to be a derogatory pursuit in view of the fact that, the Dongria Kondhs have descended from the Raja of Niyamgiri. Due to their illiteracy and primitiveness, they have not evolved any idea about plant-breeding and soil-parasites. They have no knowledge of scientific agriculture; instead they have evolved their own methodology of cultivation in response to their needs. In fact, the products though not abundant are nevertheless, adequate to meet their needs for the entire year, but about half of their yield is cleverly taken away by the Dombs by exploitation. The inadequacy is also due to the shortage of Dongar plots in comparison with the growth of population. Immediately after the harvest, payment is made to the Domb creditors, women peddlers, servants like; Barika (messenger), Goudia (Cowherd) and Jhateni (village sweeper) of the Domb

community and for the celebration of various socio-religious ceremonies. Thus, a family completely exhausts the total output. As a result he again falls prey to the Domb money lenders. This process continues.

### **Land, its Concept, Ownership and Inheritance**

It is stated earlier that the Dongria Kondhs are principally shifting cultivators and cultivate mainly Haru (hill) type of land. Penga and Bada types of land are scarce in the area.

To a Dongria Kondh, Dongar land is considered to be endowed with divine powers. It is believed that various gods and goddesses (*penu*) like; Pandu Patra, Niyam Raja, Koska Munda, Buda Raja, Raja Manikeseri, Malama, Durga and Bhaira reside in the Dongar plot. The Dongar itself is termed as Dongar-Penu or Haru-Penu. Different Penus, are worshipped by different Shamans (Beju - male Shaman and Bejuni -the female Shaman). The nature of sacrifices also differs from one Penu to another. All these Penus are appeased with a number of sacrifices during the Bihan Parba (Bichha Laka) in the month of February-March (Chetra Lenju) and November (Dewal Lenju) before harvest. Monday and Friday are considered to be auspicious days for first showing and harvesting. It is tabooed for the people to work on the Dongar plot for three days after ritual hunting in the month of May. This being the fact, land is highly revered, carefully owned without being sold or alienated and migration is restrained even if land becomes scarce in due course for family fragmentation.

Secondly, the Niyam Raja had created this Niyamgiri hills and distributed hills among his sons. As per his command, hills must be tilled to claim themselves as descendants of the Niyam Raja. The present generations, who also claim to be the descendants of the Niyam Raja, feel themselves duty bound to pursue shifting cultivation, lest they may dishonor the Creator.

Thirdly, it is believed that each Dongar plot is hunted by the ancestor-spirits (Dumba) who help in the bumper growth of the crops and protect the crops from animal attack, if properly appeased. Hence the right over such swidden can never be confiscated nor changed.

Thus, it is believed, if one claims to be a Dongria Kondh, he must reside in the Niyamgir hills and possess land of his own and pass on to his posterity. This procedure is being continued for centuries.

Nothing can be ascertained about the traditional ownership pattern of Dongria Kondhs as history is silent about them. But as people say, so far as their memory goes, prior to the land settlement done in 1961, during the British rule and during the region of King of Jeypore, the then settler of the Niyamgiri hills had divided Haru land among themselves according to Mutha. 'Mutha' is an important feature of social organization among the Dongaria Kondhs. It consists of a group of villages treated as an administrative-cum-social unit. Each Mutha

has got its own name called upon a clan such as, Jakasika Mutha, Wadaka Mutha, Kadraka Mutha, etc. It was a mutual division among themselves. The Jurisdiction of each Mutha was defined and its boundary was marked with any imaginary object to differentiate from another Mutha. As per this division hills had been distributed among the occupants of each Mutha irrespective of any clan affiliation. Once, a tenant got land in that Mutha, he was considered to be a permanent inhabitant of that Mutha. He must not get land from any other Mutha. In case, he leaves his original settlement and goes to another Mutha, he may enjoy temporary right over a swidden plot in that Mutha, not permanent.

Once the Mutha was defined and the villages were grouped, all the inhabitants assembled together under the leadership of each Mutha head called Mandal, who distributed the hills among the villages. Subsequently, the traditional village leaders like Jani, Bishmajhi, Pujari and Barika distributed hills among the occupants of each village. Each family, in due course, occupied the allotted patch of the hill and started cultivating it from the very bottom of it. Customarily, at the initial stage the foot of the hill was being cultivated for 4 to 5 years leaving the upper portions for future demands. Once this division was made, the occupants have been enjoying their rights over the land. No future divisions have been made later. In case of inadequacy of plots for all the families of a village, the left outs may get hills in other villages of the same Mutha. For, example; five families living in the village Kurli are having their hill plots in the village Hundijali since both the villages are included in Jakasika Mutha.

Other than individual ownership, collective ownerships prevail at the village level, that is, over those lands where village deities have been installed, front yard of the village, cremation ground, grazing land, land beside the stream and land on which communal feasts and butchering of animals take place.

Haru lands are plentiful in the area in each Mutha. Growth of population therefore, is not a problem for availability of land in future. Because each swidden is a vast area it cannot be cultivated at a time due to the nuclear family type and less man power.

Since land was owned as per Mutha, land revenue too, was not paid individually but on the basis of Mutha. Each occupant paid a nominal amount, that is, one Anna to the village Barika (Messenger) who deposited the amount with the Jani and Bishmajhi. Then Jani and Bishmajhi of each village deposited the amount with the Mandal who subsequently deposited the same in the court of Jeypore Maharaja. This system of payment has been continuing till now. Even though, some *royats* or tenants not having land or less land, pay Rs. 2/- each when land revenue is deposited in the Tahsil office at present.

It may be mentioned here that the Dombs claim to be the contemporary occupants with the Dongrias in the Niyamgiri hills. But, as immigrants, they neither had any land nor pursued their traditional occupation of weaving in



Niyamgiri hills. They, in fact, played the roles of liaising with the outsiders and virtually become care-takers of the Dongrias. For that, the Mandal of each Mutha allowed them to cultivate Penga type of land at the foot hills as the Dongrias were in habit of cultivating land at the hill slopes and hills tops. But with the Domb population increasing, such type of land was so scarce that, they could subsist and as a result they had to adopt unfair means to earn livelihood. Thus the rate of exploitation increased over period of time. Whatever may be the fact, the then Domb settlers also equally shared the land revenue with the Dongria Kondhs and the same system is being continued up till now, even if they do not have either homestead land or agricultural land.

The patrilineal kinship ties and the patrilan descent ties bind the Dongria Kondhs in one side and the other ties are established through marriage alliance with the other clans. It is the kinship ties which bind the whole Dongria Kondh in the Niyamgiri hills and to certain extent it extends up to the Desia Kondhs, who live at the foot of the Niyamgiri hills and who are bit acculturated through external contacts. They have their friends in their own clans and in alien clans too. Besides this, other kind of friendships are established within the same age with Dombs. That is called 'sai' system. Analysis of patterned mode of behavior can be made on the basis of gifts and return gifts which embrace a wide field of situations, interactions and ceremonial activities besides certain particular activities at the time of shifting cultivation and all other economic, political and ritual co-operations.

### **Kinship embodies co-operation and mutual help**

Basing on this kinship relations, property is not only acquired by inheritance but also through gifts and exchange. Once it is acquired it is enjoyed from generation to generation and become permanent asset of the family.

Since the Dongria Kondh society is patrilineal property passes from father to sons. The head of the family inherits the land and the house, both moveable and immovable. During the life time of the father, property is distributed among the sons after their marriage. Until marriage the sons remain under the same roof. After the death of the father, the eldest son manages and controls the entire family until his other brothers get married and then the property is distributed with the intervention of their traditional village council. For the wife of any deceased member of the family, an equal share is kept. If she likes, she can enjoy her share any son she loves the most. In case of second wife, the share is little less. Sometimes, the second wife, if having no issue and opt to go back to her parents, may not get any share. Daughters are not entitled for any share. Until marriage, daughters enjoy the property, but loose right only after marriage. In case there is no heir, brother of the deceased inherits property. Sometimes brother's son is adopted to inherit property. After marriage the son-in-law is also called to inherit property in the absence of any heir and in that case he exercises temporary right over it. In the absences of any claimant, the property

is treated as community-owned. Property is never owned by any matrilineal relatives. Because obligations and debts are also inherited which may not be shared by the matrilineal relatives. Since the inheritance is in direct line of decent, all the consanguineal relatives are involved in ownership of property.

Whatever may be the fact, the head of the family has full right over the entire family property. He takes all the decisions right from cultivation up to the disposal of the yield of course, in consultation with his family members.

Once the property is inherited, one is empowered to utilize it in any way he likes. Similarly once land is owned, it can be used in any way other than selling and the right of a person is retained till death. Only in case of gift, the right to utilize that piece of land is transferred. Sometimes, the usufructs or the yield of the land is either pledged or mortgaged to get a loan. Land is never leased. In case of mortgaging, the output or the standing crops are taken away by the creditors. The owner loses right over the crops, but not the right over the land. Until final repayment of loan, this arrangement continues.

After the death of husband, the wife is fully empowered to look after the property until her sons are major. After marriage, the daughter, whatever ornaments and utensil etc. she gets from her father, are enjoyed by herself and her husband only. If a woman is divorced of her own fault, the parents of the girl are forced to return back the bride price. The husband has got every right to get back what he has paid for acquiring the bride.

Further, in the Dongria Kondh society titular rights are owned without any material benefits. For example, the posts of Mandal (Headman of the Mutha), Jani (Village priest), Bishmajhi (Assistant to Jani and revenue collector) and Pujari (Head of the Meria festival) are hereditary. But for holding all these posts, the functionaries do not enjoy any extra benefit, nor are they given any excess land. But they enjoy titular rights only.

In fact, moral sanctions are more binding than the legal sanction. With regards to inheritance and successions and for ascertaining rights, people never go to the court or do not take resort to legal procedures. Customary rules are strictly adhered to. They are by nature God-fearing and any deviation to moral sanction may endanger their life and property.

### **Land Survey and Settlement**

In the year 1961, Land Survey and Settlement operations took place in the Niyamgiri hills for the first time.

It is stated in "Final Report on the Major Settlement Operation in Koraput district" 1938-64 By Shri N.C. Behuria, I. A. S. in para-33 that, the district of Koraput was an unsurveyed tract when it formed a part of the newly created province of Orissa in the 1<sup>st</sup> April. 1936. The various tenancy and other measures

the government to protect the interest of the ryot remained in-operative owing to the absence of land records. The ryots, especially the hill ryots were completely at the mercy of the estate employees in all important matters in tenancy administration. In fact, the *patta* granted to the ryot in the usual form contained a stipulation in conservation of the M.E.L. Act, that the ryot had no right over the trees standing on his holding. The provision of the Agency Tract Interest and Land Transfer Act for binding transfer of land by the Adivasis to Non-Adivasis remained more or less a dead letter owing to the absences of land records.

In the peculiar circumstance of Koraput with its vast unsurveyed area, primitive agriculture and feudal economy, the entire physic and philosophy of the settlement operation was directed towards the preparation of a written record of tenancy right for the first time in its history. Right in hand in fact, cannot be understood negatively as a mere absence of restraints, their documented assurance can only land them meaning and purpose. The Government of Orissa, therefore, took up the early opportunity in coming up to a decision. In 1937 that survey and settlement operation was not known, it was decided in 1938 that before taking up the operation in the district in large scale, a selected typical area should be taken up in an experimental basis to study the problems thrown up during the experimental stage.

Thus settlement operations in the district of Koraput have covered a period of more than 26 years by now. The operation commenced more than two decades ago, in a tract which knew not even the rudiments of Agrarian Law and Tenancy Rights. It is in the post world war era that the operations gradually commenced and expanded and the work reached its apogee in the late fifties.

Originally the Madras Survey and Boundaries Act, 1923 and the Madras Estate Land Act, 1908 governed survey, preparation of records of rights and settlements of rent. When the Orissa Survey and Settlement Act, 1958 (Act-3 of 1959) was passed the detailed procedure for taking up survey, preparation of records and rent settlement operation simultaneously was followed in the remaining areas of the district.

However, the primary objective of the settlement operation was to secure to land-holders and tenants their traditional and fundamental right on land in conformity with the laws in force. This, in the process of the preparation of land records meant for the determination of status under which land was held by the Government, landholders, co-operative bodies and individuals.

The Orissa Survey and Settlement Act came into force in Nawarangpur and Malkangiri sub-division on December, 1960. Under the same law and executive instructions, Survey and Settlement took place in the Niyamgiri hills in year 1961 and the settled rent incorporated in it was finally published in 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1961 in accordance with the rules contained in Government Notification No.3874 S-144/60-R. dated the 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1961. The settled rent shall take effect from the year beginning of July, 1961.

As per the cadastral land survey and settlement, lands in the Dongria Kondhs area were divided into categories such as, Dry land or *padar* and Dongar land. The area of *padar* land extended up to the ten feet slope of the hills. Beyond 10 feet, it was treated as hill and the tenants were not given any right to cultivate those hill slopes. Those hills were also surveyed, and areas were recorded in the Government paper as rent free hills.

As per these classifications, rent was assessed for Padar-I, II and III lands @Rs.0.80, Rs.0.75 and Re. 0.50 respectively.

As per this classification, the inhabitants of the Niyamgiri hills paid the rent only for dry land but not for Paddy land or hill slopes. Because the terrain above which the Dongria Kondhs live, do not contain any Paddy land other than dry land, extended from the foot of the hills up to the stream and the hill slopes.

Prior to this settlement, the Dongria had been cultivating the hill slopes as per traditional division. A nominal rent of twelve *annas* was being paid by the Mandal of each Mutha at the court of the then Maharaja of Jeypore. With this amount paid and without any intervention of the outsiders, the Dongria used to enjoy the vast forest and extended hill slopes of the Niyamgiri hills. But after the settlement in 1961, dry lands were settled and rent was levied on the ryots. But the Dongria continued to cultivate the Dongar lands as per their traditional division in each Mutha and strictly followed the conventional rules.

Recent study in this connection in the village Kurli in the Bissamkatak Police Station reveals that rent was charged on sixteen ryots of the village Kurli. In the year 1961, the area of the village Kurli was surveyed and the total area was 2, 647.32 acres of which 15.32 acres were fit to be declared as cultivable dry land and the rest 2,625.53 acres were uncultivable land.

After this major settlement in 1961, no further settlement has taken place in this area. Basing on the previous settlement, the land of that village was divided into four categories as per the nomenclature as given below:

Total area – 2647.32 cent.

- (a) Cultivable land – A 15.92 Dec.
- (b) Uncultivable waste land – A2625.53 Dec.
- (c) House site – A 6.62 cent.
- (d) Grazing A 1

Leaving apart of these types of land only 54 cents of land was earmarked as common land used as graveyard.

In the year 1973, as requested of the villagers of Kurli, the Tahsildar of Bissamkatak came for spot verification and again distributed the rest A 3.62 cents of dry land among 20 families in the village.

It will not be out of place to mention here that the Dombs, though co-villagers of the Dongria Kondhs in the village Kurli, neither got any dry land nor

homestead land. However, the objective to allot dry land in the earlier settlement was primarily to desist the people from shifting cultivation and secondly, to encourage the paddy cultivation. But the quantum of such dry type of land was few and far between. Thirdly, the extent of available dry land was so meager that, its allotment did not help the people to improve farm cultivation.

### **Effect of Land Survey and Settlement**

Following are the findings on the effects of survey and settlement made basically on the data collected from the village Kurli, since settlement operation took place for the second time in that village.

- (1) The government took into cognizance the customary laws relating to the traditional land tenure system in which land distribution among the autochthonous Dongria families were made mutually. So only the Penga (Padar) type lands were demarcated and distributed below 10 feet slopes, which are basically not differentiated from the hill slopes. Hill slopes and foot hills are taken together as one plot. Further, by demarcating the *padar* plots, the Dongria did not cultivate any new crops i.e., the Dongar-Paddy other than traditional crops like Ragi, Kosla, rice and tobacco. Thus the Dongrias did not feel any change of their traditional pattern. But they did not give up the practice of shifting cultivation. Only slope lands were fragmented and occupied with record of rights in major Settlement, 1961.
- (2) In the Second Settlement (1973), due to growth of more nuclear families, lands were again redistributed on the basis of mutation and more families got new record of rights on fixation of rent.
- (3) This fragmentation brought an explosive effect on the Dombs. The new ryots immediately after occupying their respective plots at the foot hills, did not like to allow the Dombs to cultivate these *padar* lands. Some of the old occupants belonging to both the communities who had developed bond friendship had expired within the time between 1961 to 1973. Those Dombs who enjoyed these *padar* lands since generations with the consent of the Dongria Kondhs, partitioned such lands among their successors with a firm belief that, such land will never be taken away from them. But the occupants of the new generation with a view to cultivate paddy and being encouraged by the Government officials to adopt modern horticulture did not allow the Dombs to enjoy such lands further. The present generation of Dombs too, is becoming obdurate to relinquish their old-age rights. Consequently, the situation has been more aggravated, and the Dombs are not even allowed to walk upon those lands and allow their cattle to graze upon these lands. On the other hand, the Dombs have got no other alternative than to stick to such land to survive.

- (4) To alleviate this tension, some of the Dombs have become liberal in extending loan to the Dongrias. Simultaneously, some of the Dombs have also taken challenge to evict the Dongrias from those plots.
- (5) This new system has also created ill feeling among the Dongria Kondhs. Out of 20 ryots, who were allotted new plots, three of them got plots in the village Kurli and in the village Huttesi coming under the same Jakasika Mutha. Further, one of them, who is adopted (Gultu Jakasika, age 32) also got a plot in Kurli, who is having his own land at Huttesi. This was not appreciated. These four persons were enjoying plot in their respective villages and also at Kurli when four other new occupants were denied any plot being the inhabitants of Kurli.
- (6) Grazing land has been made limited for which the people are facing trouble to graze their cattle in a small plot. The cattle therefore, graze here and there and destroy crops. To take care of them the cow herder (Goudia) is to part with his remuneration to others.
- (7) The land demarcated for cremation ground touches the borders the Wadaka Mutha. The villagers of Kurli do not like this. Such a situation was not there before the land settlement.
- (8) After fragmentation, some of the Dongria Kondhs got full independence to mortgage their plots, which they could not do earlier when they enjoyed joint property. For that, some of the Dombs have picked up ceremonial friendship with them to take advantage of such independent situation.
- (9) Out of 20 ryots, 8 of them have taken up paddy cultivation. But the *per capita* income from the paddy cultivation, which was Rs. 103 in the year 1975, has come down to Rs.87 in the year 1978. It is indicative of the fact that, paddy cultivation has not been taken up in a scientific manner.
- (10) Out of 20, only 5 ryots who were not paying land revenue earlier paid Rs. 2 each from the year 1973.
- (11) To ameliorate the economic condition of the people, horticultural development had been taken up in a scientific line in Kurli village. Lands at the foot of the hills were taken up for demonstration farms without the permission of local tribals. It is learnt that orchards on these lands would be owned by the respective tribal families. But the tribals have reacted to it, primarily because, no permission was obtained from the owners when such land were utilized for orchards and secondly, those orchards will not bring any immediate benefit to them. For example, trees like orange, lemon, jackfruit, mango, etc, will not fetch any immediate income for them. However, the impacts on the people for this settlement operation are mixtures of more bad and some good. Before and after the settlement, there are no cases of land alienation in the area because it is really a taboo

for the people to transfer land from Kondhs *loga* (Kondh people) to *pada loga* (outsiders). In recent investigation, no cases of alienation were found in the Government records. But the age-old procedure of mortgaging the land still persists and it seems the settlement operation has got nothing to do with it. Some of the impacts stated above are the outcome of the study made only in the village Kurli but no matter, there are grave concerns as they may bring social imbalances in the society.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

In view of the facts stated above, the survey and settlement operation did not bring any great change in the Dongria society. The operation had got nothing to do with the Haru lands. Moreover, the Dongria Kondhs are not plain agriculturists. Only thing is that, the Penga-type of lands were settled and distributed and records of rights were given to the people. But on the basis of traditional ownership pattern, the ryots would have got such lands; even if the settlement operation would not have taken place. Further, while taking up settlement operation, due weightage was given to the traditional division and customary rules relating to inheritance and succession. But it has no impact either on land or on cropping pattern. Further, it has brought some imbalances in their social system which needs to be tackled.

- (1) As lands below 10 feet slope are settled, it is unlawful to cultivate above 10 feet slope. But customarily, the tribals have been doing shifting cultivation above 10 feet slope ignoring the imposition made by the Government. Not only that but also these are being denuded in a large scale. When forest growths are exhausted on a particular hill slope, another hill slope is taken up. Under these circumstances, the entire hill slope including the foot hills should be settled, so that, there will be no further deforestation.
- (2) It is a fact that the Dombs are the contemporary settlers with the Dongria Kondhs in the Niyamgiri hills. The Dombs are termed as exploiters by the outsiders. They are also appointed as menials in the Dongria Kondhs. Since the past, the Dongrias have tolerated the Dombs and have been living in harmony with them and have availed their services as essential. Under these circumstances, there is no meaning to take step-motherly attitude towards the Dombs. It is high time to take lenient attitude towards the Dombs. They should be given some alternatives to survive or be given settled land in this area instead of encouraging dissensions between both the groups.
- (3) As is learnt from the study at Kurli, the settlement operation has not been done systematically. Though belong to the same Mutha, *ryots* of some other villages have got land at Kurli. The area of the grazing land has been limited and the cremation ground has not been properly allocated. Personnel in charge of the settlement operation should have been more careful to take into cognizance the socio-cultural aspects of the Dongria Kondh society.

- (4) As per Kuddibaram rights, the land owner has the right to sell or mortgage the property in any way he or she likes. With this right the Dongria Kondhs mortgage cropped-fields and fruit-bearing trees in large scale and are exploited by the Dombs. Though now a society, called "Fruit Growers Co-Operative Society" is already functioning in the area, the Dongria Kondhs still prefer to bring loan from the Dombs by mortgaging their land and cropped area than from the co-operative society. It will be better if restriction is imposed to mortgage lands to the outsiders other than the Government agencies even if the tribals are given the Kuddibaram right.
- (5) After the Penga lands are settled, no attempts have been taken to take up paddy cultivation in a scientific manner even if, a Special Officer from Agriculture Department is posted there. The tribals still cling to the old pattern of cropping, that is, cultivation of Ragi and Kosla-rice irrespective of the land on the hill slope and at the foot of the hill slopes. It is not known why paddy cultivation is not encouraged when irrigation potential of the perennial stream called 'Gadgada Nallah' can be tapped.
- (6) To develop horticulture, private lands at the foot hills should not have been taken up by the government agencies for demonstration orchard. Before doing this the Dongrias should, have been consulted. This had irked them. When they prefer to get immediate benefit by growing some other crops, they should not have been forced to wait for long-term benefit. Of course, some of the demonstration orchards have been made at the 20 feet slope. But those have not been properly terraced. It will be better that all the demonstration orchards are raised above 20 feet hill-slopes and the Dongrias are motivated to participate in this exercise.

These are some of the measures, if implemented, may bring good results for the community.

### References:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Behuria, N. C. I.A.S.                        | Final Report on the Major Settlement in Koraput District 1938-64.  |
| Joshi, P. C.                                 | Land Reformers in India Trends and Perspective.  |
| Senapati, N., I.C.S.(Rtd)&<br>Dr. N. K. Sahu | Orissa District Gazetteers.  |
| Patnaik, N.                                  | Shifting Cultivation in Orissa, Adivasi-Vol.XVI, No.4, January. 1977.  |
| Das Patnaik, P. S.                           | Report on study on Traditional Land Tenure System among the Dongria Kondhs and recent changes in system as a result of cadastral land survey and settlement. |
| Das Patnaik, P. S.                           | Handbook on the Dongria Kondh (unpublished)  |



# SHIFTING CULTIVATION TO HORTICULTURE: A CASE STUDY OF THE DONGRIA KONDH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (KURLI), CHATIKONA \*

*A. C. Sahoo*<sup>1</sup>

The paper highlights how a primitive sub-tribe accepted horticulture as the suitable alternative against the pernicious practice of shifting cultivation. It illustrates that success of development programmes depends on perfect understanding of the development practitioners about life style, cultural values, traditional technology and resources available in a particular community. An attempt has been made to discuss the linkage between eco-cultural pitch and socio-economic development of a simple society. It elucidates the diversified role of societal sub-system, social structure, ecology, economic growth and development planning in the development process. It has also sought to explore the nature and limits of future growth.

It is a case study of the Dongria Kondh Development Agency (Kurli), Chatikona in the Rayagada district of Orissa. Among the 62 tribal communities of Orissa, the Kondhs numerically top the list. On the basis of socio-economic characteristic features, the Kondhs can broadly be divided into several sections such as Desia Kondhs, Kutia Kondhs, Dongria Kondhs, Malua Kondhs, Pengo Kondhs, Nanguli Kondhs, SithaKinds and some others. The Dongria Kondhs are a major section of the Kondh tribe who mostly inhabit a contiguous area of the Niyamgiri hill ranges. It covers some portion of the Bissam-Katak and Muniguda blocks of the Gunupur Subdivision, Kalyansingpur block of Rayagada Subdivision in Rayagada district and Biswanathpur area of Lanjigarh block in Kalahandi district. They are altogether about 10,000 in number out of which 6,439 only are found in Rayagada district. The areas inhabited by the Dongria Kondhs are mountainous rising steeply from 1,200 ft. to 4,900 ft. above the sea level. At present two Micro-Projects, one is for the Dongria Kondhs of Bissam-Katak and Muniguda blocks with its Headquarters at Chatikona and the other one with its Headquarters at Parsali is looking after the same sub-tribe of the Kalyansingpur block of Rayagada district.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXXII, No. 1, March, 1992, pp. 30-35

<sup>1</sup> Officer on Special Duty (Tribal Museum), THRTI, Bhubaneswar

The discussion here would be confined to the Dongria Kondh Development Agency (Kurli), Chatikona in connection with horticultural development programme among the Dongria Kondhs. In accordance with the decision of the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, certain tribal communities of the country were identified as primitive tribes on the basis of the guidelines issued by the Ministry. Major consideration for inclusion in the primitive tribe list was (i) low growth rate or stagnant population, (ii) pre-agricultural level of technology (iii) relative geographical isolation and (iv) low level of literacy. Along with some other tribal communities, the Dongria Kondhs were also identified as one of the primitive tribal groups and a Micro-Project was established at Chatikona in the year 1978 under Societies Registration Act. The agency covers a tribal area of 115 sq. Kms. and 67 villages distributed in 7 Grama Panchayats under the jurisdiction of Bissam-Katak and Muniguda Blocks. As per the study conducted in the year 1986, the target Dongria Kondh beneficiary households were 1,233 comprising a total population of 4,975. A Governing body was setup under the Chairmanship of the District Collector and some officers and non-officials as the members. The Governing Body was set up to suggest the suitable schemes and review the progress of work of the agency. A Sub-committee was set up under the Chairmanship of the Project Administrator, ITDA, Gunupur who happens to be the Vice-Chairman of the Governing Body to review the activities and progress of the agency as per the annual action plan approved by the Governing Body.

For execution of various development programmes there were a Special Officer, an Agricultural Extension Officer, a Welfare Extension Officer, two Amins, one Chainman and one Head Clerk were deputed to the Agency from their respective parent departments. In addition to those, the Agency had appointed 33 Multi Purpose Workers (MPWs), one L.D.C, one Driver, two Fields Assistants, one Pump Driver, two class IV employees and one Watchman. In due course some Nursery Watchers and Field Attendants were appointed on daily wage basis. With the help of the above staff, the Agency tried to bring all-round development of the Dongrias. The following stages of activities were followed to achieve the best by implementation of various schemes.

The Special Officer along with his staff visited several Dongria Kondh villages to gather sufficient knowledge about their culture, environment, natural and human resources, technology and skill, heart and mind of the people. Each village area and household was touched to assess the possibility and feasibility of development schemes. All the people were contacted to ascertain their feelings and sentiments. The village traditional secular and magico-religious leaders and influential people were invited for discussion. Selection of core programmes and briefing the same to the higher authorities, adoption of selective central and respective villages to begin with were followed in due course. Keeping in view the budget, manpower and workload, annual programmes were finalized. Organization of village meetings, coverage of all the beneficiaries of the selected

village, listing out requirements, selection of site, preparation of land, arrangement of planting materials, formation of working zones, training to the staff, training to the beneficiaries, allotment of works among the staff, mode of collection and distribution of planting materials, assistance to different categories of beneficiaries, type of planting materials and technology to be induced etc. were arranged systematically to avoid inconvenience and bottlenecks. Due emphasis was given on watch and ward, application of fertilizer, pesticide and hormones, weeding and maintenance, even sentiments of the people and their socio-cultural values. Arrangements of suitable market, funds and involvement of people in every aspect of operation were some of the major considerations. Due advantage of different fruits of their culture and social practices were taken to enhance the development progress.

The Dongria Kondh Development Agency (Kurli), Chatikona area is predominantly inhabited by Dongria Kondhs as the original settlers. Now a days, a group of Scheduled Caste people locally known as Dombs are also living with them. The area can broadly be divided into several *muthas* the territorial divisions which are the clan territories. Among the clan groups mention may be made of Jakasika, Wadaka, Nisaka, Kadraka, Pusika, Sikaka, Kutruka, Praska, Wangesika, Karaka, etc. They follow clan exogamy. One can witness clan feuds because of transgression of territorial rights, abduction, non-payment of bride price, capture of women, suspicion of witch craft and many others. Among the Dongria Kondhs clan level competition in several socio-religious and economic activities, is of special mention. The Dongria Kondhs depend on forest in one form or the other for their survival. Even today they depend on forest collection for their survival in the lean period. Ragi gruel and rice of small millets are their main food items. They like non-vegetarian food items, specially buffalo flesh and dry fish very much. *Salap*- sago-palm sap and liquor prepared out of *mahua* flower, different fruits, molasses, rice and small millets are relished all over the year. Both male and female members put on several types of jewelry, keep long hairs and use embroidered clothes for socio-cultural significance.

The Dongria Kondhs are very beautiful to look at and are have strong and stout body. They are out spoken, upright, straight forward and hospitable. They are very proud of their village, clan and culture and reveal their cultural heritage through the Niyam Raja. They are basically shifting cultivators and skilled in raising orchards and growing fruit bearing trees. In each village *Adasbeta* - girl dormitory, *Sadar* -community center, *Jatrakudi*'- shrine of the protector deity and *Dharani Penu* - shrine of mother earth are located. The Domb settlement is situated a little apart. Total number of Dongria Kondh household in a village vary from 5 to 50. The Dombs are subservient to the Dongria Kondhs. They market the surplus and supply their daily material necessities. The Dombs arrange loan and act as mediator in socio-economic and political matters. Works like herding the cattle, cleaning the village street etc. are done by them. An influential Domb is appointed as village messenger and his role is very vital and

meaningful in several spheres of socio-economic and cultural activities. The Dongria Kondhs are quite aware of the exploiting habit of the Dombs but rarely do they stand against them. Rather the Dongria Kondh considers the Dombs as their menials and subordinates. The services of the Dombs are taken into account by the Dongria Kondhs as the special privilege.

It has already been mentioned that the Dongria Kondhs are lover of fruit trees and orchards. The agro-climatic condition and soil favor growth of fruit trees and orchards in their area. The Dongria Kondhs were accustomed to horticultural practices and growing jackfruits, banana, mango, citrus, turmeric since time immemorial. Even they have been practicing pineapple cultivation since last six decades. The people are traditionally trained and their culture has accepted this practice without any inhibition. In course of discussion in several village meetings, the people showed their interest towards growing fruit trees. Plantation of fruit trees was also an immediate answer to check shifting cultivation and soil erosion. Hence, it was adopted as the core programmes and in due course tied up with other programmes of the agency for the sustainable economic upliftment of the target people.

To start with, the Special Officer with some of the extension workers of the agency visited villages, contacted people, observed ongoing actions of the people, got acquainted with the land and environmental conditions. All the villages situated in remote areas were accessed by crossing hills and mountains. After listening to the people in the community center, at their respective houses and near hearths, effective and potential beneficiaries were selected irrespective of sex, age and status. These explorative tours made the development practitioner clear about the feelings and wants of the people and their sentiments and values of life. To motivate the people, to support them for their all-round development and to make them aware of their problems and its solution as well as to bridge up the gap between the beneficiaries and the development practitioner, MPWs were recruited. These workers knew or learnt 'Kui' - the Dongria Kondh dialect and were imparted training in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, soil conservation, education, co-operation, health and nutrition, industry and others that are required for bringing success in the development schemes. According to their capability and intelligence, the MPWs were entrusted with the responsibilities of a village or villages. The staffs of the agency were given their job charts in the line they have got training and expertise.

For effective implementation, close and timely supervision of various developmental schemes, the agency area was divided into three zones. Villages under each zone were further sub divided into sub-zones. For different types of activities, the zonal or sub-zonal people were called for meeting together. Mostly these centers were functional centers for distribution of benefits or collection of surplus as well as for demonstration, training and extension works.

The Multi-Purpose Workers were teaching the children in the morning and the adults, in the evening in their respective villages. From each village five community leaders both male and female were selected to lead the village for all development purposes. One male and female known as 'Gram Parichalak' and 'Gyan Maa' respectively were selected in a village meeting who worked among their own people and carried the development messages from the agency to the people and the *vice versa*. In collaboration with the village elites and leaders mentioned above a detailed survey was conducted to gather all possible information about the village and household to use as baseline data and chalk out the area, location beneficiary wise for the agency. Apart from all these, detail data on land, forest, crops grown, horticulture, irrigation, inter-personal relation, inter-village relation, *mutha* organization, important events like, birth, marriage, death, feuds, quarrel, conflict and tension etc. were documented for future action. Different fairs, festivals, important occasions and community level functions were also recorded. Information related to the Scheduled Castes and Dongria Kondhs relationship, past history of development in the area and all festival, agricultural and seasonal calendars, etc. were recorded for planned action. Through the village visits, many facts about various customs, habits and living conditions were collected which guided in evolving strategies for development and taking correct decision in execution of programmes. After determining the nature of problems and felt needs, beneficiary identification and quantum of assistance were finalized. According to the necessity, orientation trainings connected to various developmental programmes with special reference to horticulture were given to the people.

Keeping in view the availability of natural resources socio-cultural significance of the village and degree of acceptance and rejection of the people towards new horticultural programme, demonstration of plantation and establishment of nursery for raising various types of seedlings, central and significant villages were selected and involving the people required seedlings were raised. In the entire process of operation, people of different sex and age were engaged who were properly trained in the technology and scientific methods.

Monitoring of the programmes was arranged in such a manner that there was no chance in delaying the course of action. By the time the seedling were made ready, the people were motivated to take up pre-plantation programmes like cleaning the area, digging pits, arranging stones for fence and water channel from stream for irrigating the plants. Different assignments were distributed among the staff in such a manner that the people developed interest for plantation of fruit trees. Supervisory functions were distributed at different level to cross-check different course of activities. Steps were taken to record the plantations and orchards in favor of respective beneficiaries or to give the usufruct rights. Planting materials available with the well-to-do people, raised in the nursery and purchased from the outside were supplied to the people

according to their need and pre-plantation performances. Since details of the felt-needs of the people were finalized sufficiently before, supply of plants and other requirements were made to the people in their respective sub-zone or zonal centre. Before supply of planting materials the beneficiaries were given all possible training in connection with the planting materials, plantation maintenance, follow up care and harvesting of the crops.

According to the situation and condition of the beneficiaries, the people were given assistance in two different ways, one under the infrastructural development scheme and the other on individual benefit programme. In case of the former the beneficiary was provided with all the benefit from the agency. In the latter case he received some need based inputs, technical and economic assistance and within the assistance norms. By nature the Dongria Kondhs are very competitive both at the individual and at the village level. These personality traits and cultural characteristics which were cause of the inter-group feuds were diverted from destructive goals and harnessed in the developmental programmes for constructive purposes. The dormitory and village community labour force was utilized for extension of plantations. The youths who were engaged in dormitory affairs were diverted for profitable plantation purposes by arranging bride price and solemnizing their marriages. The marriage of youths checked clan feuds and in due course as per the tradition of the Dongria Kondh the couple should raise their own orchards as permanent economic asset for their future. For gainful production water sources available were utilized to provide irrigation facilities through contour irrigation channels. Different new species of grafts of high yielding varieties and new technology were introduced for better results in horticultural development. Mixed orchards, *in situ* plantations and revival of their traditional plantations were encouraged which gave a very good result. The magico-religious practices and beliefs associated with plantations were brought into action in the process of operation to win over the heart and mind of the people. Co-operation of the village council and support of the women yielded very good result for extension of plantations programmes. Organization of village meetings, inter Dongria Kondh council meetings and award of prizes to the successful workers encouraged the ego-centric and prestige conscious Dongria Kondhs to surpass their competitors and opponent either at the village or personal level. A system of assistance and packages of programmes were arranged in such a manner that people adopted improved horticultural practices and covered large areas under plantation programmes.

In the agency area pineapple plantation was taken up in extensive scale. Plantation was preferred where jackfruit and mango trees are present so that these plants were provided with required shade which is favorable for the growth of the pineapple plants. The Dongria Kondhs prefer close spacing during plantation which in the long run decreased the production but helped in protecting soil from erosion. Pineapples were grown without irrigation. Thick depositions of leaves get decomposed and provided humus to the soil. As such

the soil type, drainage system, cool climate, lighter shade, milder sunshine, medium altitude etc. all in combination are congenial to the good growth of the pineapple plants. The Dongria Kondhs, after plantation of suckers only go for weeding then auctioning for which they receive cash from the local Scheduled Caste Doms much before the harvest. In some cases the orchards were sold for years together.

The Dongria Kondhs are very much proud of their culture and people. They usually do not pluck fruits for sale which they consider as lower people's job. Therefore, these type of works are entrusted to the Doms living adjacent to them. Because of these socio-economic factors, the Domb traders purchase the orchards for which they finance much earlier. The parasitic attitude of the Doms towards the Dongria Kondh very often put the latter ones into peril. The services of the Doms were considered indispensable by the Dongria Kondhs. In purchasing jackfruits the Dongria Kondhs people were also adopting the same method. The banana plantations were also not giving substantial return. Mango trees are communally owned at the village level and hence, the sale proceeds of their fruits are kept in community funds and spent in community level functions. But by introduction of better technology, new variety of species and coverage of extensive area under plantation brought an immense change in the project area as an alternative to shifting cultivation and sustainable economic uplift of the people. Previously the people were selling their produce in the nearby weekly markets. When the people produced fruits in large scale, steps were taken by the agency to save the Dongria Kondhs from exploitation and ensure fair price. Therefore, people were motivated and they registered a Co-operative Society known as Niyamgiri Fruit Growers Co-operative Society (NFGCS). To start with, the Special Officer and the Welfare Extension Officer, played vital role but in minimum possible time the Dongria Kondhs took over the charge and managed the Society very nicely. The major function of the Society was to fix prices of different products, procurement of agricultural and horticultural products, to provide the people their daily consumer goods and interest free loan at the time of their need. It also provided the people all that they need for development of plantation in the Niyamgiri hill ranges. By organizing meetings, the people were made conscious about the actual price of their harvest. The mode of fixing the price was taught by means of demonstration. As per their tradition ones price determined for a particular orchard or tree never came below the fixed level in the subsequent years. Although at the outset of implementation this method of pricing was very difficult because of the strong resentment of the exploiters but hearty co-operation of the Dongria Kondhs helped in bringing success and solved a major problem for all the time to come. Fruits like pineapple, jackfruits, orange and banana were sent to Madras, Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Srikakulam, Nagpur, Raipur and many other places. So also the pineapple suckers were purchased by different development agencies inside and outside the State.

Since inception of the project till the year 1987-88, out of 28461. 51 acres of the area, the coverage under horticulture was 9091.61 acres. The details of varieties of fruits and quantitative achievements are as follows.

Sl. No.	Name of the Fruits	Acres
1.	Oranges, Lemon and other citrus varieties.	3545.38
2.	Banana of different varieties.	1547.51
3.	Mango (both <i>in situ</i> and grafts)	1247.07
4.	Pineapple (Spanish and other varieties)	1127.80
5.	Cashew nut	510.14
6.	Mixed plantation (Banana and Pineapple, citrus and Pineapple, Mango and Pineapple, Jackfruits and Pineapple, Banana with Mango grafts, Banana with citrus plants and some other types.)	428.36
7.	Turmeric and Ginger	329.00
8.	Papaya	140.90
9.	Sapeta	118.85
10.	Lemon	.....
11.	Jackfruit	61.85
12.	Lichu, Guava, Ilachi	34.75

Due to these extensive areas covered under plantation the shifting cultivation area was reduced to a greater extent and the economic condition of the people also improved. The plantation programme as the core scheme in the Agency was tied up with other development sectors such education, soil conservation, irrigation, co-operation, industry, health and sanitation and many other welfare activities of the Agency. In practice, it was found that horticulture is the best answer to control shifting cultivation in the area and for bringing sustainable economic upliftment of the people. Along with economic development the socio-cultural transformation in positive line established real health and happiness among the Dongria Kondhs.

From the discussions made in the preceding pages, it may be analyzed that development is embodied with several socio-economic and human factors which should be accompanied by imaginative planning and human engineering. The cultural carriers and barriers in the development process especially in the field of economic pursuits, social organization, political system, religious beliefs, traditional practices and customs are to be conceived by the development practitioners prior to launching of any development programme. Quick and



unimaginative actions invite danger; hence one should learn from the people and apply it for their benefit. There might be individual opinions but there is a core of common purpose in all simple societies which the development practitioner should explore and discover. It helps in evolving appropriate strategies for the development of the people of tribal or simple societies divided in three broad zones. The people in the first zone of interaction are their lineage, clan, village and tribesmen. The second groups of persons who come in the next zone of interaction are the people with whom they maintain some distance but in many ways there is symbiotic relationship. The third group of people is absolutely outsiders and strangers who have no contact with them. Even if the third group of people go and approach them with all good intentions they may not be accepted because of several socio-cultural constraints. Hence before embarking upon any innovative programme one has to establish adequate rapport with the people and gain people's confidence.

Any type of economic development among the tribal people involves socio-cultural aspects hence; pursuance of development strategy considering cultural factors would achieve the best. Pragmatic approach and right type of development practitioner can handle major problems tactfully. However, confidence in the people for whom one works, confidence in oneself and confidence in the programme to be brought into action are very significant as basic ingredients of success in development of people of a tribal community.

## **DONGRIA KONDHS OF ORISSA : THEN AND NOW \***

*P. S. Das Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

*B. B. Mohanty*

A vast area of about 250 square miles, studded with lofty hills and surrounded by dense forest covering is a portion of the Niyamgiri hills in Bissam - katak and K. Singpur Police Station areas in the district of (undivided) Koraput. These hill ranges are the abode of the Dongria Kondhs, one of the most backward sections of the Kondh tribe of Orissa who occupy the seventh place for their numerical strength among the Scheduled Tribes in India. The Kondhs form the largest group among the 62 Scheduled Tribes of Orissa and are estimated at 9,89,342 as per 1981 Census and constitute 16.73 per cent of the total tribal population, in Orissa

About a century and half ago, the British Officials (Macpherson: 1952, Campbell: 1864) featured this tribe very prominently for their heinous practice of female infanticide and human sacrifice. These accounts serve as a valuable source on the culture of the Kondh..

The Kondhs in Orissa are divided into various endogamous sections such as Kutia Kondh, Dongria Kondh, Desia Kondh, Penga Kondh, Malua Kondh, etc. These sections may be broadly divided into three groups according to their level of development The Kutia Kondhs of Belghar area (in the districts of Phulbani and Kalahandi) and the Dongria Kondh of Bissam-katak area (in the district of Koraput) represent the primitive sections and the Desia Kondh, living in the plains in other districts represent the Hinduized section of the tribe.

Nothing definite can be said about the total population and number of villages inhabited by Dongria Kondhs. But they are pocketed in one compact

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol.XXX, No.2&3, 1990, pp.28-41

<sup>1</sup> Research Officers, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, 751003

area, that is, the Niyamgiri ranges which comprise four police-stations such as Kalyansinghpur, Bissam-katak, Muniguda and Biswanathpur. Through a reconnoiter study; an attempt was made to know the total number of villages inhabited and the total population of the tribe. Thus, the Niyamgiri hills constitute 110 villages inhabited by the Dongria Kondh with an approximate total population of 5618 (Males-2,491, Females-3,127) as found out during the survey made in the year 1975. The present paper is the outcome of a field study conducted in villages Khambesi, Kurli and Khajuri during 1987-88.

The Dongria Kondh villages consist of cluster of mud-huts huddled together without a definite plan. Both the sides of a village are covered by rows of huts. The number of huts in a predominant Dongria Kondh village usually does not exceed 35 to 40. The Dombas, a Scheduled Caste live in separate wards in the village of the Dongria Kondhs. The hut of a Dongria Kondh looks very simple. It is made of mud with straw thatched roof. The furniture owned by an average Dongria Kondh house are neither numerous nor costly. The ordinary clothing that the Dongria Kondh male as well as female uses in the village may be just an adequate covering or protection than that of the purpose of decoration. In spite of that, they are not devoid of aesthetic sense. Irrespective of sex, they make up for their deficient clothing by loading their people with varieties of ornaments. They do not take extraordinary interest for bodily cleanliness. They are negligent of personal hygiene and sanitation.

Their staple food is *peja*, a sort of gruel prepared out of ragi and *suan*-rice. It is supplemented by fruits, roots, leaves and tubers collected from forests. Rice is considered to be the ceremonial food. They take the flesh of cows, buffaloes, pigs, goats, lambs, pigeons etc. They also eat flesh of dead animals. They enjoy Mahua-liquor (*Irpi Kalu*) and Sago-palm juice (*Mada Kalu*) that make the Dongrias almost wild. Besides, its ritual and social significance, liquor has a special charm for the Dongrias.

The Dongria Kondhs are primarily horticulturists, but they also practice shifting cultivation. The entire Dongria area is divided into various Muthas (*Farti*). Mutha is an important feature of their social organization. Natural hills are divided and apportioned for each Mutha and these hills are treated as agricultural plots by individual families in the villages of each Mutha. These swiddens are enjoyed hereditarily and get sub-plotted when partition occurs.

The land in hill slopes is called *Dongar* land. The slope on the plains is called *Gudia* and the kitchen garden (*Badi*) is situated at the side or back of the homestead land. Millets like, *mandia* (ragi), *suan* (Kosla), *arka*, *ganthia*, *kating*, *koltha* and *khudijana*, pulses like, *biri*, *alsi*, *jhata*, *kandula*, and turmeric are produced in the Dongar. Plantain, orange, pineapple and jackfruit grow luxuriantly on the hill tops. No irrigation is possible in the area except through a stream called, Gadgada Nallah which flows at the foot of hills. No natural or

artificial fertilizers are used. As a matter of fact, the production gradually decreases from first year to second year and more or less in subsequent years.

Due to growth of population and practice of shifting cultivation, the forest has declined. Hunting has ceased to be an important source of livelihood.

As per tradition, the Dongria Kondhs never go for wage-earning. Surplus commodities like fruits, turmeric, castor seeds etc are sold as cash crops. As fruit growers, they should, in the fitness of things, be rich but most of their products are pocketed by the Dombs for their simplicity and ignorance.

Family is the primary unit in the Dongria Kondh social organization. The nuclear family is of predominant type. Through marriage the conjugal bond is established. Clan exogamy is the general rule of marriage. Though monogamy is the approved form of marriage, the society also permits polygynous unions. The second form of social grouping is the division of the tribes into twenty-five clans called *Bansha*. Mutha as a bigger social unit has got socio-economic relationship with other Muthas of the entire area.

Administration of justice, settlement of disputes and maintenance of peace and promotion of social welfare are some of the functions of the village council. These functions are performed by a group of leaders elected as officials to the council. There are four important traditional office bearers of the village council. The Jani is the headman of the village and also the priest. The Bish majhi is the revenue collector. The Pujari is the village cook and leader-cum-organizer of Meria festival. The Barika, the village messenger belongs to the Domb community. Except these social leaders, there are several religious leaders such as: *Jani*, *Ichani-Jani*, *Pujari*, *Bejuni* (Shaman), *Gurumai* and *Dishari* (medicine-man). *Mandal* is the leader of inter village traditional council of Mutha organization.

The Dongria Kondhs are believers of large number of deities and conceive of a large pantheon of Supernatural Beings who control the whole world. They recognize a supreme deity called *Dharani Penu* (Earth Goddess). There are other important deities namely *Kotebali*, *Jatrakudi*, *Bima*, *Dongar Penu*, *Thakrani Penu*, *Niyamraja Penu* who are worshipped at the village level. *Dumbas* are the ancestor-spirits. Totemism has almost lost its religious significance among them and shamanism is involved in their religion. The rites employed to establish harmonious relations with the deities and spirits are mainly supplication and prayers, offerings and sacrifices and the ceremonial sharing of sacrificial food, besides, certain special observances and taboos. Throughout the year, they remain busy in performing various feasts and festivals.

However, indebtedness was the most acute and complicated problem among the Dongria Kondh. Their economy was primitive but their natural surroundings had bountiful resources. Ordinarily they could glean and reap adequate amount of food materials to live in primitive affluence. The balance

with nature was seriously dislocated by the economic pressure, the dominant feature of which was indebtedness.

Since time immemorial, the Dongria Kondhs were perpetually exploited by the Doms resulting in a severe deficit in the budget of individual families.

Secondly, agriculture and fruit growing are the main sources of income of the Dongria Kondhs. But their swiddens are uneconomic due to stony soil, lack of forest growth and lack of irrigation facility etc. Government launched Purchase-Sale and Fair-price Shop Scheme in the year 1964 to bring about economic development by way of curbing exploitation, by granting interest free loan, by arranging market to purchase their surplus commodities and by giving them adequate amount of cash in exchange to purchase articles of daily necessities through Fair-price Shops. It was intended to improve their horticulture in a scientific line.

A new strategy, called Tribal Sub-Plan was grounded during the Fifth-Plan Period (1975-80) which aimed at comprehensive development of the tribals with special focus on the individual family. The families living below the poverty line were identified and their felt-needs and problems were assessed and suitable programmes for their development were executed. The idea of integration in terms of sectoral programmes and pulling of resources were fundamental aspects in the concept of Tribal Sub-Plan.

Again on the eve of the 5th-Plan, it was felt that special programmes for the extremely backward tribal groups should be taken up on the basis of proper identification as suggested by Shilu Ao Team and Dhebar Commission. It was also considered that the programmes meant for the development of this primitive group would be financed on cent percent basis by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. On the basis of these norms, an Action Plan was formulated for the development of the Dongria Kondh known as Micro Project or Dongria Kondh Development Agency (D.K.D.A).

All these measures brought radical changes in the socio-economic life of the Dongria and ensured them the right to live with a solid economic base.

### **Changing Scene**

The cultural changes among the Dongria Kondh are both varied and complex, particularly in the recent past and from 1975 onwards under the impact of modern forces. The past years are marked by the advent of modern processes like establishment of development agencies and implementation of various welfare schemes, industrialization, development of communication facilities etc. From the past history and cultural synthesis, it is clear that the present cultural change among the Dongria Kondhs is the most important and noteworthy phenomenon which reflects their increasing consciousness, on the one hand, and the impact of modern factors on the other.

### Changes in the Living Conditions

The material aspect of their life has undergone a great change. Straw-thatched houses and bamboo split walls have given place to pucca houses, even bungalow type of houses are found in four villages such as Khajuri, Kurli, Khambesi and Kadragumma. Each house is planned to be of one roomed with front and back having high closed verandahs and G.I. sheet roof with an estimated cost of Rs. 9,500 occupying only 200 square feet plinth area. Each house is provided with a pigsty and a goat pen and a separate cowshed is built at the back of each house. The walls are made of burnt bricks plastered with cement and sand. Houses have been provided with wooden ceilings which serve as the granaries and storing space for prized-possessions of the house.

For free air and light window has been fitted to the wall of the sleeping room. Besides, doors of 6 feet in height have been fitted both at the front and the back of the house. There is no trace of traditional look in the new houses. *Hadada Munda*, the small wooden post which once represented the *Dumbasor* the ancestral-spirits in each Dongria Kondh house is now found in a basket (*changudi*) hung in a rope-shelf from the middle post of the new house instead of posting it on the ground. Cemented platforms have been raised at the right corner of the sleeping room to keep cooking utensils and water pots. Wooden platforms raised about 3 feet in height from the ground level are fixed to the walls for storing paddy and other grains in the sleeping room.

In fact the kitchen to which outsiders were not allowed previously to enter is now opened to them without any restriction. For interior decoration, wooden selves have been fitted on the walls of the living room where suitcases, bags etc are kept. Mirror is fixed on the wall to comb hair. Framed photographs of Lord *Siva*, *Durga* and *Krishna* have been found hanging on the walls in the back room. Due to free air and light, the house is less smoky. Now women folk devote more time for up-keep of the house and its contents. The inside and the surroundings of the house seem to be more neat and tidy than before.

### Household Contents

The new house has necessitated the requirement of varied modern articles. Their furniture which used to consist of a bedstead or date-palm-leaf mat, their crockery which included a few earthen vessels, wooden and gourd ladles and leaf plates, their dress which was nothing more than rags and loin clothes, have all been replaced by more modern and durable ones. Wooden cots, quilts, bed-sheet, pillow and mosquito-curtains have replaced the stringed cots and wrappers out of many homes. Hurricane lanterns have replaced the indigenous lamps (*Badti*). At present electricity has been provided to four villages namely Khejuri, Kurli, Khambesi and Kadraguma and most of the households in each village have taken domestic connections. Umbrellas made of

steel frame, tin suitcases, leather bags, torch lights, radios, cycles, steel almirah, tape-recorder, tin chairs, wooden chairs and tables are found in their houses.

Bamboo combs are fast disappearing as also the traditional bangles and other ornaments of women. Now, women prefer light and sparkling glass bangles, new designs of elegant earrings and nose pins made of gold. Dhotis and shirts are the commonest dress for the males when they go out. *Kodi* of 16 feet in length which was their usual cloth is now replaced by Lungi. Banyan is put on while in the *village*. Some young men of the well-to-do families wear stripped-shirts when they go out. Young women wear blouses when out of door. They put on red or yellow-bordered or print-saris, petticoats and blouses when they visit dormitories. Half-pants and shirts are put on by the children. Shoes have now become popular among them. Use of sponge-chappals, leather and canvas shoes are found among the members of well-to-do households.

Modern cosmetics like soap, scents, hair oils, liquid *alta*, *kumkum* and nail polish have found their way into the houses of both the poor and the rich families. The women are now keen to wash their garments regularly with soap or soda and keep their children clean. The well-to-do young males go to salon located at Chatikona and Bissam-katak to crop up their hair and do not prefer the traditional method. They have started giving their dirty clothes to the laundry for washing and ironing. Some of them possess razor-set for shaving regularly. For cleaning teeth, tooth brush and paste are used.

Earthen pots in the kitchen are being substituted with long durable aluminum utensils. Water is stored in the bell metal pots for drinking purposes. Stainless-steel utensils are used for taking food. Stainless Steel tiffin carrier is used for carrying food to the hill tops.

In most of the villages people are listening news items of the transistor radio. Even though no community set has been provided, the interested persons are found to be assembled at the teacher's residence or at the residence of the person who is having radio set to listen to the local and Delhi news. They have picked up interest for Hindi music. The daily news paper 'Samaj' is also read by some persons in the village Khambesi. The villagers are also interested to see Hindi and Oriya movies. They attend in large number when cinema shows are organized by the Agency authority.

### **Food Habits**

To the Dongria Kondh, food was only meant something to satisfy hunger. They were conscious neither of the nutritive value of the diet nor of its tonic value like vitamins etc. Their kitchen affair was thus quite primitive owing to their ecology, traditional food-habits and geographic isolation. The raw food materials are taken after being boiled in water or roasted or fried depending

upon their method of preparation. The food prepared once sometimes used for days together. They cared more for quantity than quality.

At present the Dongria are little advanced in cooking. They have learnt different cooking methods from their caste neighbors. They now use spices etc in preparation of their dishes. There is no time fixed among the Dongrias for taking food. Ragi-gruel (*peja*) is the staple food. In the morning, after brushing the teeth and washing the face, they take ragi-gruel, either prepared fresh or left over from the previous night. After mid-day, they take the same food which they carry with them to the field. Their night meals consist of ragi-gruel added with suan-rice and baked greens or dry fish, if available. But now their night meals consist of boiled rice, vegetable curry and baked greens. They have now started growing vegetables which they consume or else they purchase vegetables from the local market. Among the vegetables potato, brinjal, bean, chili, onion, cabbage, french bean, radish, *salgam*, beat, tomato, snake gourd, bitter gourd, *Dangala Konda* (a type of tuber), (*arum*) etc are consumed.

They live on cereals like rice, *suan* and wheat. In addition, pulses such as red gram (*kandula*), black gram, beans gram and green gram are consumed. They are very much fond of meat of fowl and buffalo, pork, beef, egg and fish. They now use spices and oil in their meat preparation. Some of the Dongria Kondhs who have visited the holy place of Puri, have their *darshan* of Lord Jagannath and taken bath in the sea, have given up eating of any non-veg food as they have started believing that all the sins of a person are washed away when he takes holy bath in the sea. After the bath to resume the meat diet of any kind has become a taboo for them. This trend is gradually increasing after 1984, when the Dongria Kondhs were specially invited to Koraput on the occasion of car festival to tie a new cloth as the preceptor at the head of Lord Jagannath after which the Chariot is dragged. On the occasion the head (*mandal*) of the territorial unit (*mutha*) is ceremoniously and honorably offered a turban by the District Authority.

They are now very much keen in taking raw tea in the morning. On special or festive occasions like *Dasahara*, *Gamha Purnima* etc, they prepare cakes like that of the caste people from unboiled rice and black gram. Fried-cakes are also prepared. In fact the Dongria Kondhs have already felt the importance of tastes and delicacy in taking and preparing food.

The Dongrias are now aware of the diet of the patients and do not let them eat according to their own choice. For instance, patients suffering from fever are not allowed to take rice, dal, tamarind, brinjal etc. They are strictly prohibited to take non-vegetarian and other items with sour taste. Pregnant ladies are not allowed to eat chilli, garlic, brinjal, fish or meat. They are also restricted from taking hot food, twin fruits and things with sour taste.



### **Intoxicants and Narcotics:**

Mahua Liquor (*irpikalu*) and Sago-Plan juice are the favorite drinks of the Dongria Kondh. Liquor vending of the Dombs in the Niyamgiri hills has always claimed a substantial share of the income of the Dongria Kondh.

In view of this, the Agency with the help of some young elites has stopped this business of liquor vending of the Dombs. A committee was formed in the year 1984 to stop this exploitation of the Dombs. The *Mandal* and other young leaders of the villages organized an oath ceremony to stop drinking liquor. The Agency intensified police vigilance in the area to detect cases of liquor brewing and liquor vending. Then young Dongrias also actively supported it. The Agency monopolized liquor vending and supplied the required quantity on various social functions to each family at the rate of Rs. 2.00 per bottle.

Some of the young Dongria Kondhs are now found making fanfare with foreign liquor. They are smoking cigarettes and *bidis* and keeping match boxes with them. Some of them are also using gas lighters.

### **Religious Changes:**

The Dongria Kondhs now worship Hindu Gods and celebrate Hindu rituals. Accordingly, they follow the Hindu pattern of feasts on religious occasions by using sacred food and sacred materials like coconut milk, ghee, turmeric powder. They are celebrating the major Hindu festivals like—*Ganesh Puja*, *Sri Panchami*, *Gamha-Purnima*, *Ratha Jatra*, *Dasahara*, *Janmastami* etc. Participation of the Dongria Kondh in the Hindu festivals is common now-a-days. In fact, not only do they believe in Hindu beliefs and ideas but themselves participate in the rituals, to the extent that they even perform the function of priest in many occasions like - *Ganesh Puja*, and *Saraswati Puja*. The Hindu idea of holy rivers and the custom of sacred bath have also been adopted by them. Now they undertake pilgrimage to Puri, a holy place of Orissa.

Being influenced by Hinduism they are now raising funds to construct a Jagannath temple at Kurli village, a central place. Book receipts have been printed and each person now pays a minimum of Rs. 10.00 for the temple construction.

Goddess *Durga* otherwise known as *Gotapenu* has been accepted in the Dongria pantheon. She is ceremoniously worshipped during *Bali Jatra*, otherwise known as *Jhamu Jatra*, organized at the interval of two years during *Pana Sankranti* in the month of March- April. It is exclusively held at Khambesi where the people and the vow-takers from different *muthas* assemble. The *Pat-Beju*, *Daitari Kadreka* acts as priest. *Gota Penu*, representing a pitcher-full of water is installed over a mud raised altar under a shade (*Chhamunda*). A pit of 13 feet long and one foot wide is dug and filled up with burning charcoal over which the

*Bejumeanders* to and fro in barefoot. Then he sits over a heap of themes (*Mane*) where he gets possessed with spirit. In a state of ecstasy, he prophesizes the future of all vow-takers. Then he propitiates goddess *Durga* with sacred food materials and sacrifices animals brought by the vow-takers. After the ritual, the consecrated food is distributed among the audience. Since eight years, this ritual is observed. Another interesting aspect of this ritual is persons suffering from fatal diseases are said to be cured by performing this *Puja*.

It is remarkable that the Dongria Kondhs are gradually giving up sacrifice of buffalo on various ritual occasions. The Agency which is responsible to bring this change has 'thus' saved the community from exploitation of the Domb. The Agency is now supplying buffalo to the Dongria Kondhs for celebration of various festive occasions.

Thus it is clear that the Dongria have been greatly influenced by Hinduism and have adopted Hindu religious ideas to a great extent.

### Political Changes

In the Dongria Kondh society, the heads of different traditional units (clan, village and territory) were obeyed, respected and accepted. The office of these heads was on hereditary basis and the authority remained in the hands of a single person. The introduction of Gram panchayat system and Community Development brought the Dongria Kondhs nearer to the democratic character of the National Administration. Besides these with the establishment of the Micro-Project, the political organization of the Dongria Kondhs got a new direction. Though customary laws are still prevalent, their importance is diminished under the impact of modern forces.

By the intervention of the Agency, leadership pattern has been organized more formidably at the *mutha* or territorial level and the development measures are introduced through them. The village headman, *Jani*, the ward member and the young leaders help the *Mandal*, the *mutha* head and Sarpanch in taking decisions on various matters. The Panchayat has good authority in its area. The Government officials are not able to implement any plan and programme without the help of the *Mandal* and Sarpanch.

Another Committee has been formed in each village comprising of *Jani*, *Bishmajhi*, *Pujari*, *Ichan Jani* and two more young leaders. These leaders are responsible for taking decisions on the following matters.

- (a) Selection of beneficiaries for receiving different benefits.
- (b) Distribution of different implements for horticultural plantations.
- (c) Settlement of consideration for sale of crop fields, orchards, fruit trees and horticultural produce to Dombs.
- (d) Selection of beneficiaries for distribution of petty and consumption loans.

- (e) The Committee shall shoulder the responsibility of receiving advance from the Agency for liquidating the debt burden of the Dongrias and to make Dongrias free from the clutches of local money lenders.
- (f) The Committee shall negotiate land dispute cases and disruption arising out of marriage by capture.
- (g) Through Committee, consumer goods are supplied.
- (h) All the welfare measures like construction to approach road to the village, supply of electricity, construction of water harvesting structure, shrinking of wells and tube-wells, opening of schools etc are done as per the suggestion of the Committee.
- (i) The Committee selects the Domb traders for purchase of surplus agricultural and horticultural produce from the tribals and also decides the rate of purchase of different items.
- (j) The Committee unanimously decided not to brew liquor. They motivated the villagers not to purchase liquor from the Dombs or borrow money for purchase of the same.

The modern leaders are also well represented in the Niyamgiri Fruit-Growers Co-operative Society. Under the sponsorship of the Agency, Wadaka Madan of village Khambesi (*Mandal*) become the President and Kadraka Mandala of village Dhamni ponga became the Vice-President. Jakasika Majhlani (Mundbali village), PusikaGaji (Sutanguni village), Wadaka Kana (Khajuri village) and Kadraka Peju (Radang village) became the Directors of the Co-operative Society. Thus the political system and leadership played important role in enforcing reformative measures among the society members and bringing down the extent of exploitation of the Dombs and local moneylenders.

### **Social Changes**

Excessive bride-price (Jhola), customary among the Dongria Kondhs has made it impossible for indigent families to provide bride to otherwise eligible young men and therefore bride capture and bride services have become frequent in the society. Among the Dongria Kondhs, a girl is considered a prized possession and at her age of 4 or 5 years, proposals for her marriage come from different boys parents under the system of negotiable marriage. If the girl's parents accept liquor from the boy's parents, the negotiation is finalized and the nuptial is kept pending till both the boy and the girl are grown up. If after finalization, the girl is captured from the dormitory by any one, the situation results in feuds or tug-of-war between two Muthas belonging to both the boy and the girl - resulting to arson and bloodshed. The delinquent boy's parents are heavily penalized to the tune of Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 3,000.

Secondly, in an indigent family, the boy renders services in the girl's house for years together to minimize the quantum of bride-price required to be

paid by his side. When his patience is tested, he with his fellow boys, threatens the girl's parents to behead them in case the marriage is not solemnized earlier.

All these cases made the Dongria society more strife-ridden and tussles and strife become regular phenomenon. The Agency mitigated these cases by providing funds in the shape of loan for meeting the expenses of marriage and social ceremonies of those who could not afford for these functions. As a result of this, a large number of marriages could be possible among the poorer section of the people. There are now fewer cases of bride capture and late marriage.

With the intervention of the Agency, the bride-price that consisted of Rs.500 to Rs.700 along with some heads of animals like cows and buffaloes is now reduced to cash payment only to the tune of Rs.2, 000 to Rs.3, 000 with one or two cows.

The Dongrias now feel it more convenient to pay the amount in cash only as they are now economically better off with assistance from the Agency.

At present, there are absolutely no celibates in the Dongria Society. Poor economic condition forced some of the Shamans to lead the life of celibacy for which they were involved in spiritual marriages ultimately. But the situation is changed now as the Shamans are no more found as bachelors or spinsters.

There are now more of widow remarriages. Improved economic condition has enabled some of the widowers to marry the widows. In fact the changes are not more conspicuous in the economic aspects of marriage but the structural and the organizational parts changed.

*Changes in death rites* – Among the Dongria Kondhs, the mortuary rite (*Dasha* or *Karja-ki-manamu*) takes place on the second 2<sup>nd</sup> day after the death. Only the nearest and close kins are called upon to observe the rite. To meet the expenses, the Dongrias usually borrow money and animals from the Doms by mortgaging fruit-bearing trees and cropped-fields. Further, in a Dongria family, it is a must to call back the soul of the dead (*Ghar Dumba*) ceremoniously a year after death along with other departed souls (*Konda Dumbas*). If it is not done there may occur repeated deaths in a family. But to celebrate the function, a family is to incur lot of expenditure. This forces some of the families to defer the rite for years together and till this ceremony is observed the affected families live in an atmosphere of fear and anxiety of mishaps caused by the underworld.

The Agency took up 25 such cases and advanced funds to the bereaved families to perform the rituals. Further, the Agency became very much liberal in extending consumption loan to those families who immediately needed to perform such rituals in time without delay.

### Changes in Health Conditions

The Dongria Kondhs live in the most unhealthy regions and face a lot of difficulties with regard to their health and sanitation. A number of diseases like chicken pox, joint pain, diarrhea, cholera, scabies, eye infections and other diseases like gastric pain, stomach pain, headache. Malaria and so on are found among the Dongria Kondhs. Especially they suffer from many kinds of fevers and chronic diseases which are mostly water borne. They attribute disease as the evil acts of malicious spirits and magicians or effects of breach of taboos.

With the intervention of Agency, a lot of changes have taken place in the general health condition of the Dongria Kondhs. The Dongria Kondhs at present cry for medical and, more of it, for quinine and for pure drinking water, and show least courtesy to shamans and diviners, though the village medicine-man (Dishari) still has an important role to play in their struggle and vicissitudes of life. In many villages today, the vaccinator finds little resistance and greater welcome as hundreds of them submit to inoculation against cholera or typhoid. In central villages schools have been opened and the teachers are the custodians of medicine. The teachers, who are in direct contact with the people, distribute medicines worth Rs. 150 in a month and inform the Agency authority when these are special cases of suffering. Moreover, health guides have been appointed suitably selecting both from the Dongria Kondh and the Domb communities with a remuneration of Rs. 50 per month each, to distribute medicines and to keep the Agency informed about the health condition of the people from time to time. In every month two Medical Camps are being organized in consultation with the doctor of local P. H. C. to attend to the patients suffering from various diseases. The Health Guides inform the public the time and venue of such camps. In case of serious illness and fatal injury, etc. patients are admitted to the Mission Hospital at Bissam-katak and the entire cost for the treatment is borne by the Agency. However, the coordinated efforts of the Health Guides, Teachers and the Agency staff have achieved the necessary goal in this regard and their hazardous efforts are really praiseworthy.

Every Dongria faces the difficulty of getting safe drinking water. Though water is plentifully available in some villages, it is dirty and contaminated. But due to unavoidable situation they are forced to use that water. Realizing the situation, the Agency sunk wells and *chuas* in 67 villages in the project area.

### Educational Changes

Now-a-days, a considerable Dongria Kondhs particularly the younger generation are very much conscious regarding education. Under the educational Sector 33 Formal Educational Centre and 33 Adult Literacy Centres have been opened up in the area by the Dongria Kondh Development Agency. Students are provided with reading and writing materials, garments, mid-day-meals, care

feeding and medicines free of cost. Free kerosene oil is supplied to the Adult literacy centre. School buildings are constructed and maintained by the Agency.

Teachers recruited locally are appointed with an emolument of Rs.450 per month each to teach students. To teach in the Adult Literacy Centers, the same teachers are paid an additional amount of Rs.30 per month each. The appointment of the teachers is subject to cancellation after one year, if they do not learn the tribal language within the stipulated period. Other than teaching, the teachers look after the health of the students, motivate the parents to send their children to the schools, visit plantation yards of different families and look after the plantation, distribute medicines and prevent the Doms from purchasing cropped- fields and fruit-bearing trees from the Dongria Kondhs.

Other than Non-Formal Educational Centers, there are 7 UP schools in the area. A low cost hostel is functioning at Kurli with 40 boarders of which 25 are Dongria Kondhs and only 4 students belong to the Domb community.

### **Economic Changes**

Some of the striking changes noticed in the economic sphere after the establishment of Micro-Project are described below:

- 1 The Dongria Kondh in Muniguda and Sakata area who possess *Penga* type of land mostly have adopted modern agricultural practices and have achieved reasonable success as agriculturists. The settlement operation in the year 1976 has settled *Penga* type of land under individual possession as a result of which about 54 families have been benefitted by adopting paddy cultivation at the foot hills. These families have been provided with plough and bullocks. The use of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture is now quite known to them. At present, they are getting more yields from the land by adopting these practices. Irrigation is not a problem, which is assured by the perennial streams flowing from the hill top.
2. Almost all the beneficiaries were supplied with new sets of agricultural implements to take up scientific shifting cultivation.
3. The Dongria Kondhs have now started sowing two types of crops- the Kharif crops and Rabi crop of high yielding varieties. The *kharif* crop is sown in the beginning of the rainy season and is called the 'Rainy Season Crop' while the Rabi crop is sown when the winter starts and is known as the 'winter crop'. The Kharif crops include, maize, ragi, castor, mustard, vegetable seeds like- Pumpkin, cucumber, bitter gourd, snake-gourd, ladies finger, green leaves (Palngna and Kosola) etc.

Low-lying fertilized fields are utilized at village Radanga and Patlamba in Kadraka Mutha, Gunjapadi, Surudipai and Salap-jhola in Pusika Mutha and Gailanga and Sakata in Sikoko Mutha for HYV paddy cultivation.

The Rabi crops include- Potato, Onion, Cauliflower, cabbage, tomato, beats, gazer and bean.

4. In the horticultural sector, the Dongrias were also supplied with HYV fruit-plants which include queen variety of Pineapple, improved variety of banana such as- *Vusabal* and Champa, mango, lichhu, guava, grape, cocoanut, jackfruit, drumstick and cashew nut, ginger and turmeric of better varieties were also supplied to them for cultivation in their swiddens.
5. Cultivation of different crops and plantation programme were done in phased manner under the direct supervision of the Agricultural Extension Officer, Field Assistant, Mate and School Teacher. They officials constantly kept watch over these programmes by chalking out programmes village-wise, besides pursuing follow up measures.
6. In an attempt to involve the beneficiaries in the plantation programme, they were paid wages in the shape of rice, ragi, salt and clothes.
7. For Rabi crops, channels were prepared at the rate of Rs. 2000 each to irrigate cropped field by utilizing the stream water. The Dongrias rendered free and co-operative labour to make the scheme a success. As a result, there was bumper yield of potato and beat in Wadaka and Takasika *muthas*.
8. To encourage cottage industry two families were sanctioned funds to take up blacksmith, four families for carpentry, seven families each for bee-keeping and embroidery and twenty-five families for charka-playing.
9. The problem of indebtedness was quite serious. Usually, the Dombs were the main exploiters. The Dongrias appeared to have accepted indebtedness as normal and almost inescapable aspect of their existence.

The curb indebtedness, committees were formed with important leaders in different villages to settle the contract of loan between the Dombs and the Dongrias and suggest measures for repayment of the loan to the former.

They were paid an advance of Rs.69.000 by the Agency during the year 1983-84 to liquidate their outstanding debt burden. Until now 400 Dongria families have been freed from the clutches of the Dombs and their outstanding loans have been repaid and mortgaged articles have been restored to the loanee families. The teachers guide these committees. These committees have also taken steps to desist the Dongrias from taking further loan from the Dombs and selling the surplus commodities to the Dombs. The Dombs are hoodwinked and taken to task if at all a loan contract is made between a Domb and a Dongria.

Other than the repayment of loan, the Agency extends consumption loan to the tune of maximum Rs.500 to a person to meet emergency needs. Previously it was interest free. But from the 1st July, 1986, an interest of 4 percent per annum

is charged. The loan is realized in the shape of kind when the surplus commodities are purchased by the Agency.

Due to repayment of loan and payment of consumption loan, the indebtedness position of the Dongrias is now minimized to a greater extent. This practically gave a death blow to the economic transaction of the Domb and as a result of this the Dombs of the entire area appealed to the Agency to save them from economic hardship and degradation. The Agency allowed the following concessions to the Dombs.

- (a) In case the Agency has no funds to extend loan, a Domb can extend loan to a Dongria only with the approval of the Agency and a record has to be maintained to that effect.
- (b) The Dombs are given small trading loan for carrying fruit business in the Agency area. All the Domb families have been booked under ITDA Programme. As per recommendation of the P.A, I.T.D.A. about 47 families have received trading loan to the tune of Rs.9,000 in three phases with 33 percent subsidy.

After receiving the amount the Dombs will purchase the commodities directly from the Dongrias in the presence of the Agency authority. These commodities are to be sold to the Agency first. In case the Agency denies, the Dombs may sell to the public and the profit is taken by them.

To know further on the present economic condition of the Dongrias under the changing scene, a case study on Dongria budget is described below.

#### **DongriaKondh budget – A case study**

This case study relates to Wadaka M of village Khambesi. Aged about 40 years he is having 7 members household including wife, Ma (35 years), unmarried younger sister, L (17 years), two sons, P(7 years) and B (6 years) and widow sister, S (45 years) and her daughter, Pu (7 years).M said that primarily he earns from two sources i.e., horticulture and shifting cultivation. He has swiddens located in 3 hills. The area of swiddens under his possession in each of the hills and the distance from the village and are given in **Table -1**.

**Table-1**  
*Location of Swidden*

Hill's Name	Distance from Khambesi village (Kms.)	Approx. area in (Acs)
Wadanga	2	5
Malanda	1	2
Gadagada	2	1

Although he possesses about 8 acres of swidden land, but in the year 1986 he took up cultivation in 2 acres of land located in Malanda hill.



The crops grown and the quantity of seeds sown and the yield of each crop is given in **Table-2**

**Table-2**

*Crops grown with the quantity of seeds sown and yield of each crop*

Name of the Crop	Quantity of seeds sown (Kg)	Yield of each crop in Kg/Nos
Kosala	6	300
Mandia	6	150
Jana	3	50
Kangu	3	50
Ghantia	1.5	60
Jada	3	75
Kandula	3	150
Jhudunga	3	75
Kating	3	100
Nangalakanda	30	200 Nos.
Maka	0.25	300 Nos.
Boitalu	...	100 Nos.
Kakudi	....	300 Nos.
Baila	1	45
Dhanmaricha	0.5	10

#### **Expenditure on Shifting Cultivation:**

M said that the works of shifting cultivation is very arduous and labour intensive and therefore mostly done through co-operative labour (Panda Buti). Besides, engaging himself and his family members, he employed 12 persons for one day for cutting trees and clearing bushes, 12 persons for one day for hoeing, 12 persons for 3 days for the 1st and 2nd weeding, 12 persons for one day for harvesting and 12 persons for one day for threshing. As a matter of practice the workers are provided food for their labour besides Rs. 5 per day.

**Table-3** gives the amount of labour invested with its money value for all types of work connected with shifting cultivation.

**Table-3**

*Amount of Labour invested with money value*

Nature of work	No. of man days employed		Money value (in Rs.)
	Own	Co-operative labour	
Forest clearing & de-bushing	20	12	129
Cutting of stumps & fencing	20	...	100
Sowing and Hoeing	40	12	229
Wedding	24	36	207
Harvesting and Threshing	30	24	208
<b>Total</b>			<b>Rs. 873.00</b>

The price of seeds sown in shifting cultivation given in **Table-4**

**Table-4**

*Amount of seeds sown with money value*

Name of the crop	Quantity of seeds sown (Kg)	Money value in Rs.
Kosala	6	7.20
Mandia	6	9.00
Jana	3	2.70
Kangu	3	4.50
Ghantia	1.5	2.10
Jada	3	13.50
Kandula	3	12.00
Jhudanga	3	6.75
Kating	3	9.00
Nangal Kanda	30	20.00
Maka	0.25	2.00
Boitalu	....	2
Kakudi	....	1
Baila	1	1
DhanaMaricha	0.5	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>Rs. 95.75</b>

The expenditure on shifting cultivation which M has to incurred is (Rs. 873 + Rs. 95.75) Rs. 968.75.

The money value of the yield of different crops as shown in **Table-5** gives the income from shifting cultivation

**Table-5**

*Money value of the crops produced in shifting cultivation*

Name of the Crops	Yield in Kg.	Money value in Rs.
Kosala	300	360
Mandia	150	225
Jana	50	45
Kangu	50	75
Ghantia	60	42
Jada	75	337.50
Kandula	150	600
Jhudanga	75	168
Kating	100	300
Nangal Kanda	200 nos.	200
Maka	300	30
Boitalu	100 Nos.	100

Kakudi	300 Nos.	20
Baila	45	90
DhanaMaricha	10	60
<b>Total</b>		<b>Rs. 2652.50</b>

The money value of the crops grown in shifting cultivation shows that M got man income of Rs. 2,652.50 from two acres of land against an investment of Rs. 968.75. This means that he got a good crop that year which enabled him to earn a profit of Rs. 1,683.75 paise.

M has two orchards, one located at Udadarka hill and the other at Gadagada hill. Besides, he maintains a kitchen garden. The area of the orchards and the type of crops grown in these orchards and the type of crops grown in these orchards has been given in **Table-6**

The horticultural plants which he has grown in both kitchen garden and orchards are Pineapple, Banana, Orange, Turmeric, Jack-fruit, Lemon, and Mango etc. M said that before the inception of D.K.D.A. he had only small orchards with few fruit bearing trees. But after getting assistance from the Agency he could able to expand the area under horticultural plantation by planting more and more improved quality plants. He feels that in comparison to shifting cultivation the labour requirement in horticultural crops is less. Nevertheless, it requires requiring expenditure for maintenance.

**Table-6***Location of the Orchards*

<b>Name of the Hills</b>	<b>Area under plantation in acres</b>	<b>Type of horticultural crops grown</b>
Udadaka	4	Pineapple, Banana, Orange, Turmeric, Jackfruit
Gadagada	2	Banana, Turmeric, Guava, Lemon, Mango.
Kitchen garden	0.5	Banana, Orange, Lichu, Pineapple.

The amount of expenditure involved for maintenance and other works in connection with horticultural crops as told by him is given in **Table-7**.

**Table-7***Expenditure on Horticulture*

<b>Name of the Hill</b>	<b>Items of Work</b>	<b>Amount Spent (Rs.)</b>
Udadaka	Wedding operation of turmeric, new fencing & repair of old fence. Digging of pit and new plantation, Harvesting	650
Gadagada	Ditto	500
Kitchen garden	Ditto	50
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,200</b>

To expand the area under horticulture he got an amount of Rs. 1,500 in the year 1983-84 (Rs. 1,100 for pineapple and Rs. 400 for Banana plantation) in the year 1984-85.

The amount of income derived through horticulture is given below in **Table-8**

<b>Table-8</b> <i>Income from Horticulture</i>		
<b>Name of the Hills</b>	<b>Name of the Crops</b>	<b>Amount of Annual Income (Rs.)</b>
Udadaka	Pineapple	700
	Banana	1,000
	Turmeric	4,000
	Orange(old)	400
	Jack-fruit	1,000
Gadagada	Banana	400
Kitchen garden	Banana	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,600</b>

The total income of wadaka M is Rs. 10,252.50 of which horticulture has a major share of 74 per cent.

#### **Expenditure:**

M told that since he is having a large family, the major portion of his income is spent on food. The annual requirement of cereals for his family as told by him is given below.

Kosala	300 Kg.
Ragi	400 Kg.
Jana, Ghantia, Kangu	190 Kg.
Rice	250 Kg.

Besides these, he has to spend some money for the purchase of salt, vegetables, cooking oil, chili, onion, dry fish, tobacco, sugar, molasses and tea-dust etc. His annual expenditure on different items has been given below:-

<b>Table-9</b> <i>Annual Expenditure</i>	
<b>Items of expenditure</b>	<b>Amount spent in Rs.</b>
Food and drink	3,900.00
Religious expenses	2,000.00
Shifting cultivation and horticulture.	2,168.00
Clothing	4,00.00
Purchase of durable household articles.	350.00

Entertainment of guests and visit to relatives houses.	225.00
House thatching and repairing	150.00
Medicine	325.00
Others	250.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,768.75</b>

The annual expenditure of M is Rs.9, 768.75 which indicate that he has a surplus amount of Rs.483.75. the expenditure on first three items taken together constitute 82 per cent of the total expenditure and the rest 18 percent is distributed in other different items.

The facts which emerge out from the case study show that shifting cultivation which was considered to be the primary source of income has now given way to horticulture. As evident in this case, about 74 per cent of the total income is derived from horticulture. At present, shifting cultivation has become unproductive and less profitable. Moreover, the situation has reached such a stage that the cost of input is the threatening to surpass the cost of output. This fact has been realized by the Dongria Kondhs to some extent as such, many *podu* ravaged areas are now brought under horticulture plantation with assistance from D.K.D.A.

The budget also reflects some noticeable changes which have come about in respect of their dietary habit and other aspects of material culture. Rice which was once used as ceremonial food has occupied a significant place in their daily diet. Since shifting cultivation has failed to provide them with their required quantity of cereals, the people have been, under the circumstances, forced to change their dietary habit by taking rice during the deficit months. With cash in hand earned from horticulture, they could now easily afford to purchase rice either from local weekly market or from the fair price shop located at Bisam cuttack. Besides rice, other new items such as wheat, *dal*, Onion, edible oil, tea, sugar and molasses etc, have found their place in Dongria Kondh diet.

Some other things which emerge out of this case study reveal that a substantial amount has been spent on clothing's and for celebration of religious rites. While giving clarification to this effect M said that the expenditure on clothing's is little high because he has purchased some woolen dresses and shawls for his family during the last winter. Regarding the religious expenses he said that certain important religious rights such as *Meriah Parab*, calling of 'Dumba' (dead ancestors) which were unusually deferred previously due to want of money are now celebrated at the night time without any delay. These clearly indicate that their standard of living is gradually increasing.

Above all, the income and expenditure pattern as revealed from this case study show that the budget is more or less a balanced one with a reasonable surplus. This budget which not only indicates about the economic self-

sufficiency and advancement of M, Wadaka but also of many DongriaKondh, who, in fact, have got themselves feed from the clutches of local Dombs from perpetual debt. They no longer self their horticultural produce to the Dombs, rather they sell these in the local market or in the Co-operative Society.

Now the time has come for the panic stricken Dombs to reconsider their occupational strategy.

### Bibliography

- 1 Aiyappan, A                      1948    Report on the socio-economic conditions of the Aboriginal tribes of the Province of Madras, Government Press, Madras.
- 2 Biale, F.G.                      1958    Caste and the Economic Frontier, Oxford University Press, London.
- 3 Biale, F.G                      1958    Political Changes in Kondhmals, *Eastern Anthropologist*, Vol. II. No.2. Pp (88-106)
- 4 Elwin, V.                      1957    Tribal Myths of Orissa, Oxford University Press, London.
- 5 Patnaik. N. & P.S.            1982    The Kondh of Orissa, T.H.R.T.I., Bhubaneswar.  
Das Patnaik
- 6 Patanik, N.(ed)              1989    The Kondh, T.H.R.T.I., Bhubaneswar.
- 7 Singh, Bhupinder            1980    The Tribal World and its Transformation.  
&Bhandari, J.S (ed)
- 8 Watts, Neville A.            1970    Half Clad Tribals of Eastern India.

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN A MICRO-PROJECT \*

*B. K. Mangaraj*<sup>1</sup>  
*Upali Aparajita*<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

The present paper presents a quantitative model for socio-economic impact assessment of development programme not only considering the number of beneficiaries actually benefited from the programme but also the impact that the programme can make on the economic prosperity as well as the social well being of the community as perceived by various stakeholders of the programme. The competitive-cum-compensatory model which has been considered for the purpose takes into account the non-linearity of the impact function unlike traditional linear models. A case study for Dongria Kondh Development Agency has been taken to find out the impact of development programme in seven villages which has been validated from the socio-economic status of the villages.

## 1. Introduction

The necessity of Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) is to inform policy and decision-makers about the potential benefits and adverse impacts that may occur as the result of any development initiative. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative techniques, SEIA is an approach to determine how a development programme might affect the social and economic conditions of people and communities. Assessing the levels of impact at regional or micro-levels has been engaging the attention of developmental managers since long (Batey et al. 1993, Ogunsumi et al. 2005). One finds in the literature that no uniformity or universally acceptable methods was adopted in the efforts towards developing such methods at the regional or micro-level that could be used and whose results be validated through any socio-economic development. Uneven resource availability, differences in resource utilization pattern, difference in

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXVIII, No.1, 2008, pp.38-53

<sup>1</sup> Professor, Xavier Labour Relations Institute, School of Business and Human Resources, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand-831035

<sup>2</sup> Reader, Anthropology Department, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, Orissa- 751004

knowledge level, variation in the infrastructure facilities, differences in the access to public utility services and above all differences in “way of life” due to cultural variations are the main contributing factors for disparities. Even in the same cultural region, this difference also occurs due to irregular distribution of Government assistance under various development programmes. Identification of backward areas and design and implementation of special programmes for accelerating their development constitute an important element in the strategy for regional development, for which successive 5 year plans have laid emphasis on balanced regional development. Despite the efforts of the development mechanism, disparities persist largely due to historical factors as a result of which the development process itself accentuated the gap between developed and under-developed regions. In some areas, development is faster on account of certain rational advantages while a few areas lag behind due to lack of resources and poor infrastructure. In this perspective, neglect of backward areas would lead to serious developmental problems. Therefore, the need for monitoring such impact at regional or micro level and analysis of the reasons for relatively slow growth and implementation of special programmes to correct the imbalances have to be incorporated in concerned developmental management.

The paper presents a quantitative model based on fuzzy logic for SEIA in a multi-perspective framework. It considers the actual beneficiaries of the programme at one end and other external stakeholders at the other. The purpose of the paper is to assess the impact of any development initiative in various segments of the affected area in order to see whether the effects have been distributed equally or not. This can help development managers redesigning the implementation strategies if necessary for a uniform output in the absence of which the programme results in a more complicated state prior to its implementation. For a primitive tribal group who are known for their characteristics homogeneity irrespective of their irregular spatial distribution in a region, implementation of any development programme should be handled with care so that it cannot be held responsible for destabilization of the social fabric of their society. At the same time, one cannot afford to wait till the completion of the programme to see its effect through an ex-facto evaluation study. In that case a suitable SEIA methodology will prove beneficial whose outcome can be predicted in a comparatively less time, utilizing the knowledge of external stakeholders. However the validity of such methodology should be tested for its effectiveness. In this paper, the proposed model has been validated through a socio-economic development index and hence can be used in any Micro-Project dealing with uniform development of the concerned primitive tribe.

## **2. Development Programme in DKDA**

Introduction of developmental programmes has been in practice for rural development since independence. The philosophy behind this is that these programmes will be instrumental in raising the level of living in an integrated



manner. According to cultural approach (UNESCO 1995), these programmes should be aimed at the needs and aspirations of the people and implementation of these should be based on several factors, viz., the indigenous knowledge, the resource availability, marketability and above all should be compatible with the local culture. But sometimes it has been observed that all the developmental resources may not be drawn from the people or from the area, rather it might include some external resources not in conflict with the way of life of the people concerned. In that case, the resource base is a mix of internal and external resources whose utilization pattern should be in the framework of the local culture. In that case, either the external resource should be acceptable to them or the resources to be required should be within the acceptable range of the people.

For the development of Dongria Kondhs (Upali 1996, 2004), a primitive tribal group of Odisha, the implementation of various developmental programmes are being carried out by a Micro-Project named as “Dongria Kondh Development Agency (DKDA)”. The purpose of this agency is to shape a particular programme as per the requirement of the Dongrias and hence should be culture-specific for endogenous development which would be sustainable (Mangaraj & Upali 2005). Such an implementation can take the form of direct or indirect assistance to them. For example, under the agricultural development programme, the activities which include soil conservation, irrigation and construction of water reservoirs & cross bonds etc to help in agricultural development of the Dongrias in general. But agricultural assistance in form of supply of bullocks, modern implements, improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, insecticides and other necessities help them who avail it directly from the DKDA. But the indirect assistance raises the performance level of direct assistance. This means that the successful implementation of any development programmes mostly depends on the design of direct as well as indirect assistance in such a manner that the direct assistance to any beneficiary should go along with the indirect assistance if at all it is necessary. The economic development programme in the area can be broadly classified into four heads, viz., (i) Horticultural Development (ii) Agricultural Development (iii) Livestock Development and (iv) Small Scale Industrial Development. All these programmes have been carried out through the direct as well as indirect assistance pattern. But to assess the effectiveness of programmes, it is required to measure it through direct assistance pattern due to the fact that the impact of indirect assistance can only be observed from the performance of direct assistance programme. These development programmes under direct assistance pattern can be described as:

(i) Horticultural Development Programme:

Since time immemorial, Dongria Kondhs had been practicing horticulture. They used to grow jackfruit, banana, pineapple, orange and mango trees abundantly in their localities. More or less, next to shifting cultivation, it was their mainstay of life. Directly or indirectly, they devoted lot of their time in

horticultural activities. This was mostly due to the availability of suitable climatic conditions for the growth of fruit bearing trees. After the ban of shifting cultivation, horticultural development programme has been implemented due to the availability of climatic conditions, soil type and other ecological resources which were in favor of different plantation programmes at one end and to minimize the soil erosion in the shifting cultivated land. Under this programme, modern varieties of jackfruit, banana, pineapple, lemon, orange and mango plantations were done not only in their locality but also in the shifting cultivated land. The large scale production of fruits from the region was instrumental for the economic development of the region. Initially “Niyamgiri Fruit Growers Society” took up the marketing of these produces and at present various marketing channels are in operation. The direct assistance under this programme involves assistance in form of cash and kinds for various plantation activities. In the present study assistance for plantation activity of banana, pineapple, lemon, orange have been taken into consideration along with their maintenance.

(ii) Agricultural Development Programme:

Traditionally, there were a limited number of agricultural activities in the Dongria area due to its topographical location. But, their interaction with the external world has increased their need along the agricultural dimension which was also supported by DKDA also. Traditionally, they were growing turmeric, ginger, mustard, small millets, maize, etc., but gradually with the agricultural development programme these activities have grown manifold which also included growing of paddy, *arhar*, spices (cardamom, pepper-corn, etc.), in situ (ginger, garlic) and backyard plantation (vegetables). Of course, the Dongrias did not have knowledge for the growing up the latter crops, but DKDA has taken a lot of steps even in the form of indirect assistance which has motivated them to adopt agriculture in a profitable manner. For example, they have been trained in vegetable cultivation by DKDA officials. They grow seasonal vegetables like cauliflowers, cabbages, tomatoes, chilies, brinjals etc in kitchen garden as well as terrace cultivation land. The climate here is most suited for the growing up of the crops in a most profitable manner. Apart from this, the present day marketing facilities available to them have increased their aspiration along with their agricultural needs. The gradual change of food habits is another important factor for growing paddy not only on the hill-side but also in the plains down the hills. Due to this reason, more and more Dongrias are acquiring plain land of Desia Kondhs down the hills. Apart from indirect assistance provided by DKDA, Dongrias have also availed direct assistance in the form of input assistance, supply of plough bullocks, agricultural implements, incentives for compost production etc. In the present study, direct assistance for growing up mustard, spices like turmeric, ginger and garlic, vegetables along with agricultural input assistance has been taken into account.

(iii) Livestock Development Programme:

Animal rearing constitutes an important aspect of Dongria life. If one analyses the tribal life, then one finds that domestication started with animals and then plants. With this concept, the livestock development programme involved supply of goats, cocks/hens to Dongrias. Normally, they keep animals for sacrifice as well as for consumption, but this development programme aims at encouraging animal rearing for economic gains. At present, the Government is promoting livestock development in tribal areas in big-way with the idea that forest dwellers knew animal rearing from the day they left their nomadic life-style and opted for settled living. In the present study direct assistance under this programme has been considered in two head, viz., supply of goats and cocks/hens. This programme was generally meant for the beneficiaries who were not in a position to be directly benefited from agriculture or/and horticulture.

(iv) Small Scale Industrial Development Programme:

The direct assistance under this programme was mostly available to landless households as well as to women. This programme involves supply of bee-boxes, spinning materials, black smithy, carpentry tools, embroidery kits, etc. But, the present study takes into account the following activities for the purpose.

(a) Embroidery:

The Dongria Kondh girls are skilled in embroidery works. They have developed special interest because of its socio-cultural importance in the community. They used to practice embroidery works without using any machine or better type of materials. But with the subsidy available to Dongria girls and women from DKDA, they were able to get better type of embroidery materials which not only served their socio-cultural needs but also it was found that embroidered cloths were also found a market in the demand of ethnic items.

(b) Bee-Keeping:

Dongria Kondh area especially the Niyamgiri hill ranges is full of different flowering trees all over the year. Also, the large scale growing of mustard and ginger in the area is very much suitable for bee-keeping. Undoubtedly, honey collection was one of the important forest collection activities of the Dongrias. This experience of the Dongrias has been thought to be utilized in this developmental activity. For this purpose, bee-boxes have been distributed among beneficiaries.

(c) Spinning:

Dongria Kondhs, both men and women are habituated in using a particular type of cloth which is only available in the local markets in a very high price. In order to activate weaving activities, spinning materials were provided to Dongria women under the scheme.

All the above development programmes which aimed at lifting the socio-economic levels of the Dongrias need to be assessed for the impact that they can make in their socio-economic development. This is because the Dongria villages are distributed over the Niyamgiri hill ranges and the distance of one village from the other is large. As a result, the resource availability pattern in all the villages is not obviously uniform. This leads to a non-uniform pattern in the utility of development assistance under the development programmes. For example, in the Dongria villages nearer to the plain, the beneficiaries under agricultural development programme utilized the agricultural assistance in a more meaningful manner than the beneficiaries of the in the upper villages.

### 3. Measuring Development:

In order to measure and monitor regional variations in development, UNDP defines *“human development” as a process of enlarging people’s choice, including living a healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a standard of living.* This new approach to human development emphasizes the importance of a people centered process of development. This concept argues that a basic distinction must be made between the means and ends of development. Human well being is the real end of all developmental activities and development must be centered on enhancing achievements, freedom and capabilities of human beings. It is the life they live that is of intrinsic importance, not the income and commodities they happen to possess. The basic approach of human development reports (HDR) values capabilities related to health, nutrition, basic education and ends in themselves and income as the only means to achieve these ends. The approach is based on capability - oriented development process as suggested by Sen (1985, 1987). The HDRs have constructed the human development indices (HDI) for different countries of the world. They have ranked these countries on the basis of their respective HDI values and pushed forward the debate on alternate types of policies to promote true development.

Hence, the premise of “human development” approach is that people are the beneficiaries of development. Per capita income and economic growth can be automatically translated into the betterment of life. The focus of development is on people and how people benefit from the developmental inputs is a means and not the end. The attainment of high level “income” in itself is not important. What is more important is how income is spent to benefit people. In case of developmental inputs, it ultimately means how these can be utilized for the benefit of the people. Because, most of the time, it has been observed from the implementation of various anti-poverty programmes that the developmental assistance could not be even appreciated by the beneficiaries as a result of whom the Government as its duty spends a lot for the purpose and the beneficiaries are, on the other hand, blamed for the non-utilization. This is mostly because of the fact that the beneficiaries are very often ignorant of its utility or the local

resources not permitting for its utilization. Keeping this in view, the use of human development index for the measurement and monitoring of human development has been encouraged so that some sort of quantification can be done in the area of development which will be helpful in the era of information technology so that the developmental managers get some concrete idea about the development process from time to time as well as from place to place. Once this type of index can be used, the regional disparities can be minimized through specially designed developmental packages for the backward areas. The minimum and maximum values of each indicator to be identified for the various areas are to be considered. For example, if  $i = 1, 2, \dots, m$  for the indicators and  $j = 1, 2, \dots, n$  for the areas, then the development index for the  $j^{\text{th}}$  area for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  variable can be computed as :

$$D_{ij} = \frac{X_{ij} - \text{Min}(X_{ij})}{\text{Max}(X_{ij}) - \text{Min}(X_{ij})}, \quad \text{where}$$

$X_{ij}$  determines the value of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  indicator in the  $j^{\text{th}}$  area for which  $i = 1, 2, \dots, m$  and  $j = 1, 2, \dots, n$ . The development indicator may be defined as the average of the variable  $D_{ij}$ . Hence,

$$D_j = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^m D_{ij}}{m} \quad : j = 1, 2, \dots, n.$$

Here development index can be defined by such a linear function where the marginal development is assumed to be constant. At the same time, for defining the development index, one has to clearly define the values of  $\text{Min}(X_{ij})$  and  $\text{Max}(X_{ij})$  with respect to that area concerned. This means that  $\text{Min}(X_{ij})$  as well as  $\text{Max}(X_{ij})$  may vary from place to place. But in reality the importance of these indicators to the development may not be the same as viewed by the beneficiaries or even by the developmental expert. In that case, a “weighted average development indicator” may be considered in place of simple average development indicator. No doubt, there are various types of weighted averages and the simplest of the type is the weighted additive averages. Hence, the average development indicator may be defined taking the weighted average as:

$$D_j = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^m P_i D_{ij}}{m} \quad : j = 1, 2, \dots, n.$$

where  $P_i : i = 1, 2, \dots, m$  are the corresponding weights attached to the indicators. These weights are nothing but the relative weights of the indicators which means that the importance of each indicator can be judged with respect to the other indicators. Hence, this approach deals with linear development function and corresponding weights highlighting the relative priority of the indicators over

others. On the contrary, non-linear development functions can also be considered where the non-linearity can be simplified by piecewise linear development function. For example, if the development value along an indicator be measured over 10 years, then this value does not show similar trend over the entire period. This means that if the entire period is broken down to ten periods each period representing a particular year, then a particular value in the indicator gets different values in these ten periods. Taking the example of literacy, ten persons becoming literate in the first year gets more development value than ten persons becoming literate in successive years. Hence, the rate of development value decreases with respect to change in the value of  $X_{ij}$ . However, measuring development from a development programme in this approach is more or less an ex-facto evaluation research and for a small community, it is more meaningful if it can be done in a multi-perspective framework (Mangaraj & Upali 2008) involving all the stakeholders whose opinion contributes in measuring the value of development. But, very often it becomes necessary to study the impact of the development process just after the initiation of the programme for justifying the continuity of it. And, this impact in a cultural approach should also be holistic and should involve both the social and economic dimensions.

#### **4. Assessing Socio-economic Impact:**

Either single or multiple development indicator(s) can carry out assessment of socio-economic development. For example, if development is considered in terms of per capita income and assessment has to be done only through this, then the rate of change of per capita income shows the trend of the development process based on per capita income of the individuals under consideration. Assessment of this sort is a temporal monitoring process as it involves the time parameter for the same space. At the same time, if a development programme is implemented in various regions, this process can be done spatially in order to know the inequality of the regions. But, if one is interested to assess the developmental states attained by a developmental programme, either across time or regions, it is a difficult procedure. This is because, development is a holistic phenomenon and development of society involves development in all aspects of life. For example, if economic development is only considered in terms of household income, then the change in the income before and after utilization of the developmental assistance shows the change in the developmental states, but economic development can be viewed in terms of multiple indicators some of which may be quantitative and some of which may be qualitative. Hence, in that perspective, if one tries to find out the developmental change, then it involves a lot of parameters both qualitative and quantitative and at the same time, there may be inter-dependence and inter-relationship among these variables. In this context, either one tries to find out the developmental value in terms of some quantifiable indicators or writes a detailed ethnography based upon the change effects due to the assistance. Hence, both the approaches have merits as well as demerits. The quantitative approach cannot incorporate the qualitative aspects of

change whereas the qualitative approach can be only possible through the ethnographer. Considering both the above approaches, an approach has been considered in this work which has taken into account both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative measure has been considered through a quantitative parameter whereas the qualitative aspects have been highlighted through a participative approach of external stakeholders who have sufficient knowledge of the area. Hence, one can say that, this approach is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches at one end and involvement of internal as well as external stakeholders at the other.

In case of assessment of the developmental activity of DKDA through various developmental schemes, this approach has been applied to seven villages as mentioned in table-1. No doubt, various developmental schemes, viz., plantation programme, agriculture and horticulture assistance, supply of goats and cocks etc were in operation by DKDA for the villages covered under DKDA, the utility levels of the schemes varied from village to village. For example, the villages nearer to the DKDA were in advantages position than the farther villages. Similarly, the adoption levels of the schemes varied from time to time. For example, for the successful schemes in a particular year, the demand for the same increased for the successive years. Similarly, for the unsuccessful schemes, the demands for the adoption showed a reverse trend. On the whole, the utilization level of the schemes depended upon so many parameters, starting from the knowledge level of the beneficiaries to resource availability and many other factors. Hence, even if the scheme is availed by a beneficiary, the contribution to development starts only when the beneficiary is benefited from the scheme. But, “benefit level” cannot be solely considered as the level of development. Since, there exists multiple numbers of schemes in a development programme, the benefit level of one scheme cannot be comparable to the other. This requires that both the schemes be brought to a common platform so that they can be considered equally for contributing towards the development. This process generates a weighting structure for the schemes which reflects the importance of the schemes to the overall development considering the feasibility, acceptability as well as effectiveness of the schemes in the area. This demands a broader knowledge domain, which can do the above job. For this, a group of external stakeholders have been taken into account that can visualize the qualitative changes and represent it in a quantitative framework. In this context, one can say that:

Developmental state(D) □	Benefit level of the scheme, by the beneficiaries (B)
Development state (D) □	Importance level attached to the scheme by the stakeholders (I)

Hence from the above two relations, one can conclude that:  
Development state by a developmental scheme = Benefit level raised to

importance level =  $B^I$ . This means that the developmental change due to a programme consisting of various schemes is nothing but the total of the development as components ( $B^I$ ) of the corresponding schemes. Hence,

$$\text{Development} = \sum_{i=1}^m B_i \text{ where there are } m \text{ number of schemes in the programme}$$

As we know that a simple society is homogeneous both structurally and functionally, this aspect of the society is instrumental for a uniform autonomous development. But, in the context of Government sponsored development programme, the uniformity in development status gets distorted due to unequal distribution of development assistance across the region. For example, when a programme consists of several developmental schemes, it is difficult to assess the contribution of each towards development before its implementation. Undoubtedly, it is difficult to provide identical assistance to each household of the area. Hence, this will require the optimal design of development scheme-mix for each village of the region depending upon the availability of the developmental assistance, the knowledge of the contribution of each of the assistance towards development, the number of the households of each of the villages etc prior to implementation. But, most of the time it is not done in the desired manner and implementation takes place directly without any such prior exercises. This leads to an unequal distribution pattern of these schemes and disproportionate development which ultimately destroys the long-lasting homogeneity of the simple society. Even if, the schemes are proportionately distributed in the region, the utility level does not remain uniform due to various reasons. Hence, in order to further provide the assistance in the assisted area, it is first required to assess the developmental status of the various villages. This can act as the input for further planning for the regions. Therefore, one can conclude that, for the implementation of sponsored development programmes in simple societies, an integrated assessment mechanism is a must which should be able to manipulate the various developmental outputs into a common scale so that the developmental pattern can be observed in order to minimize the inequality created by the implementation of such programmes.

But, now the question arises as to how to assess a developmental programme implemented in a simple society. No doubt, various methods both qualitative and quantitative are in practice for such activities even in various tribal development programme which involve single dimensional to multi-dimensional assessment. Also, the process can be carried out based purely on the information either collected by ethnographic methods or by participatory rural appraisal methods which are from the point of view of the beneficiaries or based on the information collected from various stakeholders from their judgments. This paper deals with a methodology for assessment which is a combination of both the approaches so that the beneficiaries as well as the external stakeholders

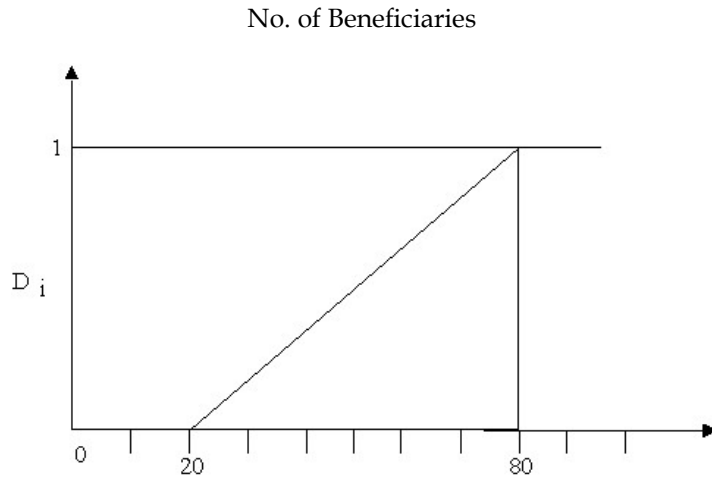


become the actors for such a process. This is due to the fact that both local knowledge as well as the modern knowledge has to be considered for the purpose. In this perspective, one of the important cultural parameters is the benefit level. This is because when a scheme is implemented, the acceptability of it purely depends on the societal culture. This means that culture sometimes acts as a growth positive factor or a growth negative factor for the successful implementation of the scheme. Hence, the rate of benefit as well as effectiveness will be more in a culturally compatible environment. On the whole one can say that from the benefit levels of the schemes, the cultural compatibilities of the schemes can be known and one can also grade the schemes numerically basing on these parameters. This will be quite helpful in determining the developmental contribution of various schemes for an area.

In order to assess the developmental contributions of the schemes and hence, the developmental status of an area, one needs a framework or a basis. This will enable the assessment of the areas in order of their development contributed by the schemes. In this perspective an index or even an indicator having a lower as well upper bound can be good choice. This means that an area having a lower value in the indicator or index is less developed area compared to another area. Hence, one can compare the areas in terms of development and this comparison will be instrumental in designing further development strategies. But sometimes, multiple indicators are required for the purpose, which may be measured in various scales of measurement. For that, a common platform should be considered for aggregating the indicators for a developmental index. Even, to define an indicator and its corresponding value there is no such generalized procedure. For example, "Suppose in a village, development assistance under a particular scheme has been given to 100 households. It might so happen that all of them might have been benefited from the scheme or none has been benefited or some have been benefited. To define the indicator as the benefit level one may set an upper limit as well as a lower limit for the persons benefited based on which he has to define the values for the indicator. To an expert, the scheme may be termed as effective, when at least 20% of the beneficiaries have been benefited at one end, and at the most 80% at the other end. Hence, one can explain the indicator as:

$$D_i = \frac{D_i - \text{No. of Beneficiary}}{80 - 20} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} 0 = \text{No. of Beneficiaries} \leq 20 \\ 20 \leq \text{No. of Beneficiaries} \leq 80 \\ 1 = \text{No. of Beneficiaries} \geq 80 \end{array} \right.$$

The diagrammatic representation of it can be made as:



This means that, the development indicator is a piecewise-linear function which is linear in the regions 0-20, 20-80 and 80-100. Hence, to define an indicator, it needs assumptions regarding the bounds as well as the nature of the function. This clearly indicates that the indicator is a fuzzy set (Zadeh 1965) and the aggregation of indicators depends upon fuzzy aggregating operators. Hence, the design of development indicators and index needs fuzzy logic which has been highlighted in this paper. That is, the information needed for assessing development status can be generated through the fuzzy information management principles. But, in real life human decision-making it has been observed that, when development is considered due to various attributes, then it cannot be judged in discrete manner. For example, in a programme where there are some schemes, the development contributed by the schemes is neither due to the maximum contributor nor due to minimum contributor independently, similarly, it cannot be the discrete average of the contribution made by the schemes. This may be observed as:

Suppose:  $\mu_A = 1$ ,  $\mu_B = 0.7$ ,  $\mu_C = 0.4$  are the developmental indicators due to schemes A, B and C respectively, then the development indicator due to “maximum” aggregation operator is  $\text{Max} [\mu_A, \mu_B, \mu_C] = 1$

The developmental indicator due to “minimum” aggregation operator is:

$$\text{Min} [\mu_A, \mu_B, \mu_C] = 0.4$$

Similarly the development due to “average” aggregation operator for the above can be:

$$[\mu_A + \mu_B + \mu_C] = 1.0 + 0.7 + 0.4 = 0.7$$

This means that, the composite index cannot just be the average of the individual indices because the scheme in a particular programme operates in an interconnected manner. Rather this index should be a synthetic index which may be represented as:

$$D_{ij} = \left\{ \prod_{i=1}^m \left( D_{ij}^{\lambda_i} \right) \right\}^{1-\gamma} \cdot \left\{ 1 - \prod_{i=1}^m \left( 1 - D_{ij}^{\lambda_i} \right) \right\}^{\gamma} \quad 0 \leq \gamma \leq 1 \text{ and } j = 1, 2, \dots, n$$

Where  $D_{ij}$  :  $i=1, 2, \dots, m$  represents the membership functions of the fuzzy development indicator.

$\square_i$  : the weight of the indicator  $D_{ij}$  given by the stakeholders . This concept is the extension of of  $\square$ -operator (Zimmerman & Zysno 1980) applied to product aggregation operator of fuzzy sets. Here  $\square = 0.5$  as conventional agreement for a competitive-cum-compensatory decision situation. The computation of  $\square_i$  is based on a method (Shin 1993) which is intuitive and much easier to perform than the other methods. Shin's method of calculating weight  $\square_i$  for fuzzy set  $D_{ij}$  can be described as follows:

- (i) Suppose there is P number of stakeholders taking part in the evaluation of the weight  $\square_i$  of  $D_{ij}$ .
- (ii) Each stakeholder is to mark three to five points on interval [0,1] showing the importance of i-th scheme for development related to evaluation.
- (iii) Each point is to be marked on the interval [0,1] in separate sheet and without reference to the previous marked points.
- (iv) Let  $a_{ki}$  be the minimum value and  $b_{ki}$  be the maximum value of the three or five points marked by stakeholder k and,

$$W_i = \frac{1}{p} \sum_{k=1}^p \frac{a_{ki} + b_{ki}}{2} \quad : i \leq k \leq p$$

$$M_i = \frac{1}{p} \sum_{k=1}^p \frac{b_{ki} - a_{ki}}{2}$$

$$W_i = W_i (1-M_i) / \sum_{i=1}^m (1 - M_i)$$

Where m: total number of indicators

$M_i$ : blind degree, the smaller the value, the greater the reliability is.

From the above formula, one gets the weight  $\square_i$  of  $D_{ij}$  as:

$$M \square_i = W_i / \sum_{i=1} W_i$$

This means that the synthetic development index not only highlights the interdependence of indicators but also the weights attached to the indicators by the various stakeholders. The determination of the weights is purely dependent upon the local conditions so that even for the same person the values of these weights may be different in different societal environments. The computation of

assessment index in this manner takes a participative approach in the determination of weights so that the method can be utilized to closely monitor the developmental change in a particular culture or in a situation having homogenous parameters. Hence, this system determines the value of the assessment index based on the internal as well as information.

## 5. SEIA of Development Programme

To demonstrate the applicability as well as validity of the model, a real life implementation has been performed for assessing the impact of development assistance in seven study villages under DKDA where the developmental assistance has been broadly categorized for horticulture, agriculture, livestock and small scale rural industries. For example, the assistance in agriculture ranges from high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural implements, etc. The environment for the utility of this assistance varied to a greater degree. Sometimes the beneficiary took full interest in utilizing the assistance where as sometimes either it was partly or even none. Depending upon the utility level, the benefit level also varied. Also the beneficiaries showed varied interest in various schemes. This means that the benefit level also varied across the developmental schemes. For example, a landless household who had got assistance from livestock and rural industries heads could not be benefited to the effect of his counterparts under horticultural assistance. If one analyses the quality as well as the quantity of output, it also varied to a greater effect as a result of which one will be able to visualize the amount of contribution in a developmental scale for each of the programme.

Table - 2 presents the number of households in the study villages under the developmental assistance environment as well as the number of households actually benefited from this programmes. This shows that all the beneficiaries have not been benefited equally due to some reasons or other. Hence, one has to take benefited beneficiaries village-wise as each programme involves some schemes, e.g., a horticultural programme covers the assistance for plantations, viz., lemon, orange, banana, pineapple as well as assistance for fertilizers. Based on the number of expected and minimum number of benefited beneficiaries the values of the indicators for the said programmes have been computed and has been illustrated in table-3. The values of these indicators signify the benefit levels of the programmes based on the first-hand information from the beneficiaries. But, as has been already discussed, these values were not be sufficient to construct the composite assessment index and hence, the judgment of some external stakeholders, viz., Special Officer (DKDA), Welfare Extension Officer (WEO), Block Development Officer (BDO) and the researcher have been taken into account regarding assessment of the programmes in terms of contribution to overall development. This enabled to get a weighting pattern for the said schemes (table-4) which reflected the relative importance of one scheme over others in the framework of development. As per the underlying concept of the

methodology, these weights when aggregated with the benefit indicator generated values in terms of the composite development index.

From table-5, it can be observed that the assessment regarding the status of development in the study villages due to the developmental assistance provided by DKDA goes parallel with the result of ex-facto evaluation for socio-economic development. The values of composite assessment index for the seven villages have been obtained by utilizing competitive-cum cum-compensatory aggregation operator. The value of this index is nothing but synthetic information obtained by processing the information from the beneficiaries as well as the developmental experts based on an information model suitable for monitoring activities. There is a high correlation (about 99%) between ranks based on SEIA and SEC indices. This perfectly validates the SEIA model regarding socio-economic impact assessment of development projects in general and micro-projects in particular. These index values can be taken as the basis for further development assistance so that the inequality in the values of the index can be minimized in order to have a value within a small range. The concept is, smaller the range, greater is the homogeneity even if some development occurs in the society. In this way, the society as a whole develops in the process instead of lopsided development breaking the cohesive force of a "simple society".

## 6. Conclusion

SEIA is a concept gaining popularity as a monitoring mechanism in the planned development process in order to study the effects of development efforts in the intermediate stages of the development process. In case of primitive tribes, it is very important in order to avoid the negative impacts and minimize disparities if at all multiple areas are covered under the programme. Models based on this aspect needs to be scientifically designed in order to incorporate the holistic view of development. Very often pure participative approach fails to see the global view of development as a result of which multi-perspective approach becomes more meaningful involving cultural approach at one end and global perspective at the other. But, implementing such approach becomes a difficult job as it involves both qualitative as well as quantitative attributes to be aggregated for a rational judgment. The present paper utilizes fuzzy logic to handle this issue in a scientific manner as has been used in various decision making processes in modern management. The knowledge management done in this model incorporated cultural and global dimensions of development towards sustainability of the development programme. This has been validated with the ex-facto evaluation results which highlighted the effectiveness of it which justifies the advantage of using modern management principles to handle development issues viewing them in a societal perspective. Hence, this model which is a knowledge engineering based monitoring system for socio-economic impact assessment of development programme for a primitive tribe can also be

implemented in similar such situations and can be more meaningful in context with modern developmental management.

### Acknowledgement

The authors are thankful to Prof (Dr.) N.K Behura, former UGC Emeritus Fellow (Anthropology) for his valuable suggestions.

### References:

- Batey, P.W.J., Madden, M. and Scholefield, G. 1993. Socio-economic Impact Assessment of Large-scale Projects using Input-output Analysis of an Airport. *Regional Studies: The Journal of Regional Studies Association* 27, 3:171-191.
- Mangaraj, B.K. and Upali Aparajita 2005. Culture-Specific Development of the Dongria Kondhs. In *Primitive Tribes in Contemporary India: Concept, Ethnography and Demography*, ed. SK Chaudhuri & SS Chaudhuri.259-284. New-Delhi: Mittal Publication.
- Mangaraj, B.K. and Upali Aparajita 2008. Multi-perspective Evaluation of Community Development Programmes: A Case Study for A Primitive Tribe of Orissa, *Journal of Social and Economic Development* 10, 1: 98-126.
- Ogunsumi, O., Samuel, O.E. and Adebisi, G.D. 2005. Socio-economic Impact Assessment of Maize Production Technology on Farmers' Welfare in South-west Nigeria. *Journal of Central European Agriculture* 16,1: 15-26.
- Sen, A.K. 1985. *Commodities and Capabilities*. Amsterdam: North Holland.
- Sen, A.K. 1987. *The Standard of Living*. U.K: Cambridge University Press.
- Shin, Kai-Chuan 1993. *Gray and Fuzzy System*, Taiwan: Ta-Tung Institute of Technology, Taipei.
- UNESCO Report 1995. *The Cultural Dimension of Development: Towards a Practical Approach*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Upali Aparajita 1996. Development and Culture among the Dongria Kondhs. In *Tribes in India-Ongoing Challenges*, ed. R.S. Mann, 367-374. New Delhi: MD Publication Pvt. Ltd.
- Upali Aparajita 2004. *Culture and Development: Dongrias of Niyamgiri*. New-Delhi: Inter-India Publications.
- Zadeh, L.A. 1965. Fuzzy Sets. *Information and Control* 8: 338-353.
- Zimmerman, H.J. and Zysno, P. 1980. Latent Connectives in Human Decision- Making, *Fuzzy Sets and System* 4: 37-5.

**Table - 1: Demographic profile of Dongria villages under DKDA (2002)**

Name of the Block	Name of the Gram Panchayat	Agency Villages	No. of Household	Male Population	Female Population	Total Population
Bisamkatak	Kurli	Khajuri	63	152	163	314
		Kurli	39	85	95	180
		Patalamba	21	35	47	82
		Radanga	41	82	101	183
		Kadraguma	24	60	67	127
		Bondili	29	55	90	145
		Khambesi	124	200	242	442

**Table - 2: No. of beneficiaries (HH) as well as their number benefited from the schemes.**

Schemes\ Villages	Khajuri	Kurli	Khambesi	Kadraguma	Patalamba	Radanga	Bondili
	No. of Beneficiaries						
1. Horticulture (5)	51	35	111	18	13	31	24
2. Agriculture (6)	27	21	84	12	11	19	18
3. Livestock (2)	18	20	65	08	11	15	16
4. Small scale rural industries (3)	19	14	28	06	04	12	10
	No. of Beneficiaries Benefited						
1. Horticulture (5)	41	27	83	11	08	19	19
2. Agriculture (6)	22	16	61	07	07	11	15
3. Livestock (2)	14	14	46	05	06	10	12
4. Small scale rural industries (3)	07	05	11	02	02	05	04

**Table - 3: Values of the benefit indicator**

Schemes\ Villages	Khajuri	Kurli	Khambesi	Kadraguma	Patalamba	Radanga	Bondili
	Values of the Benefit Indicator						
1. Horticulture (5)	0.80	0.76	0.75	0.60	0.61	0.62	0.81
2. Agriculture (6)	0.83	0.74	0.73	0.57	0.63	0.60	0.84
3. Livestock (2)	0.78	0.70	0.70	0.63	0.58	0.64	0.76
4. Small scale rural industries (3)	0.38	0.36	0.38	0.35	0.38	0.40	0.43

Table - 4: Computation of weights for various schemes

Schemes/Ex. Stakeholders	E <sub>1</sub>		E <sub>2</sub>		E <sub>3</sub>		E <sub>4</sub>	
	Min (a <sub>1i</sub> )	Max (b <sub>1i</sub> )	Min (a <sub>2i</sub> )	Max (b <sub>2i</sub> )	Min (a <sub>3i</sub> )	Max (b <sub>3i</sub> )	Min (a <sub>4i</sub> )	Max (b <sub>4i</sub> )
1. Horticulture (5)	0.4	0.45	0.38	0.42	0.35	0.5	0.5	0.6
2. Agriculture (6)	0.3	0.35	0.33	0.36	0.25	0.3	0.3	0.35
3. Livestock (2)	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.25	0.1	0.1	0.05	0.15
4. Small scale rural industries (3)	0.1	0.1	0.05	0.15	0.1	0.2	0.05	0.1

Schemes	W <sub>i</sub>	M <sub>i</sub>	W <sub>i</sub>	□ <sub>i</sub>
1. Horticulture (5)	0.45	0.0425	0.112	0.45
2. Agriculture (6)	0.31	0.0225	0.079	0.32
3. Livestock (2)	0.13	0.438	0.031	0.12
4. Small scale rural industries (3)	0.11	0.0313	0.028	0.11

Table - 5: Socio-Economic impact vs. Socio-Economic development

Villages	SEIA index	Rank based on SEIA index	Per-capita income in Rs.	Percentage of literacy (Up to 14 years)	Per-capita income index	Literacy index (Up to 14 years)	Socio-economic composite (SEC) index	Rank based on SEC index
Khajuri	0.80	2	2686.3	14	0.62	1.0	0.81	2
Kurli	0.76	3	2980.55	10	0.88	0.68	0.78	3
Khambesi	0.74	4	2755.09	8.14	0.68	0.53	0.61	4
Kadraguma	0.59	7	1988.58	6.29	0.0	0.39	0.2	5
Patalamba	0.61	6	2079.26	2.4	0.08	0.08	0.08	6
Radanga	0.62	5	2082.51	1.45	0.083	0.0	0.04	7
Bondili	0.81	1	3120.00	12.4	1.0	0.87	0.94	1



## KUTIA KANDHA : A SOCIO-CULTURAL PROFILE \*

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

The Kutia Kandha constitutes a primitive section of the most numerically preponderant Kandha tribe in Orissa. They inhabit a contiguous pocket comprising the Belghar area of Baliguda sub-division in Kandhamal district, Chandragiri area of Gunpur sub-division in Rayagada district and Lanjigarh area of Kalahandi district. In Baliguda sub-division they are found in Belghar, Guma, Lankagada and Jhiripani Gram Panchayats of Tumudibandha block and in Subarnagiri area of Kotagarh block.

Their habitat is a wild, rugged, hill and forest-clad highland country situated at about 2500 feet above the sea level. The total geographical area is about 900 sq. miles. The main concentration of the Kutia Kandha lies in the Belghar area, which is located at a distance of 150 Kms. from Phulbani – the district headquarters of Kandhamal, 68 Kms. from Balliguda sub-divisional headquarters and 28 Kms. from Tumudibandha, block headquarters. Belghar is accessible from Tumidibandha through a steep and circuitous metalled *ghat* road connecting Belghar to the Phulbani-Koraput main road at Tumudibandha. There is another road from Ambadola in Rayagada district linking Belghar with Muniguda. The distance is 32 kms. Both the roads are jee pable.

The Kutia country experiences more or less a tropical climate. Because of its elevation and dense forest cover the climate is unhealthy but cooler even during summer months. May is the hottest month. A network of hill streams runs in various directions. These streams serve as the main water sources for cultivation and domestic consumption for the inhabitants. But the climate is highly malarial. The typical tropical forest species abundantly found in this area are *sal*, teak, *bija*, *piasal*, *kusum*, *kendu*, *gambhari*, mango, jackfruit, and bamboo etc. The wild animals, like tiger, leopard, elephant, bear, jackal, deer, *sambar*, wild goat, wild pig and peacock roam freely in this forest area.

---

\* Published in Tribal Customs and Traditions, Vol.1, SCSTRTI, 2009, pp.90-102

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

There are sixty-eight Kutia Kandha villages in Belghar area comprising Belghar and Guma Panchayats, which are now covered under the Micro Project, the Kutia Kandha Development Agency (KKDA) headquartered at Belghar. In these villages, at the time of study, there were 991 Kutia Kandha households with a total population of 3961 individuals including 1908 males and 2053 females. This shows that females outnumbered the males. The level of education was very low i.e. 11 per cent at the time of study. It is lower than the level of literacy for the whole tribal population of Orissa, which was 13.9 per cent in 1981 census.

According to a socio-economic survey conducted by SCSTRTI and KKDA, Belghar in 2007 for preparation of Conservation-cum- Development Plan for Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) for The 11th Five Year Plan, the number of households, population and level of education of the Kutia Kandha in the 68 villages of Belghar area have increased to 1325, 5524 (2658 males and 2866 females) and 25.83 percent respectively in the mean time. The trend of sex ratio has been the same (1078 females for 1000 males) indicating the fact that the females outnumber the males. Their male literacy has increased to 37.96 percent and female literacy, to 14.58 percent.

The gallant British Army Officer, Major General John Campbell had given a vivid account of the Kandhas and their country during 19<sup>th</sup> century in his famous book *A Personal Narrative of Thirteen Years Service amongst the Wild Tribes of Khondistan* (London, 1864). He wrote, "Much of the Khond territory is little better than a wilderness, although it comprises some thousand square miles, where valleys and stretches of level ravines occasionally intersect the forest of thick brush wood... The highest elevation is not more than three thousand feet... the Kandhas bear no resemblance whatever to the inhabitants of the plains. They are of a much darker complexion, strongly bronzed and their language differs from that of all the other tribes, and is not in the least comprehended by their low land neighbours. I should imagine that they had been driven from the plains, centuries ago by successive conquerors and had sought refuge in the distant hills, for though their language is a distinct dialect, there are words having both Telingah, Canaries and Oryah origin ... These wild tribes are the descendants of the aborigines of the whole country. In their religion we find traces of primitive elemental worship of the Vedas... sacrifice is the foundation of their religion... as a rule, they are generally active, wiry and agile, while but imperfectly acquainted with the value of cleanliness... They are exclusively devoted to liquor and tobacco... they are passionately fond of hunting and pursue the sport with eagerness and ardour found only amongst the people of the forest... (and) are exceedingly expert at tracking game and running down wild animals".

About their clothing Campbell observed, "...their clothes consist merely of a few yards of cotton cloth bound around the loins, ornamented with a separate piece stripped with red and dangling behind like a tail. Their thick black hair wound round and round their heads, is fastened in front by a knot, over which is tied a strip of

red or other clothes ... Khond women are scantily clad as men. They partake of prevailing weakness of their sex- an intense love of ornaments and finery. Coloured beads are highly prized and generally used as well as rude and heavy description of brass bracelet worn on their arms and ankles"

Rowney (1882) had described Kandhas as "a wilder race even than the Gonds and Bhills....The men are well framed, of a good height, good looking and remarkably active but women are short in stature and very plain. In color, they are all much fairer than Gonds but varying in hue from that of copper to yellowish olive. In the upper elevations, both sexes for the most part go naked and when pinched by cold, alleviate its excess by making fires... The only covering worn by the men in the lower elevations is a coarse cloth wound round the loins in such a manner as to make the end hang-down round behind as low as flaps of a coat, while head dress is formed by hair being rolled up like a horn...The ornaments in use are brass rings worn on the ear by both sexes and also on the nostrils by women, the latter likewise wearing necklaces, armbands and anklets either of brass or colored beads".

Thurston had cited the following observations of W. Francis in the *Gazetteer of the Vizagapatam District, Vol.-1 (1907)* about the Kutia Kandha. "The only really primitive Khonds in Vizagapatam are the Dongria (Jungle) Khonds of the north of Bissamkatak taluk, the Desya Khonds who just live south-west of them, in and around the Niamgiris, the Kuttiya (hill) Khonds of the hills in the north-east of Gunupurtaluk. The Kuttiya Khond men wear ample necklets of white beads and prominent brass earrings, but otherwise they dress like any other hill-people. Their women however have a distinctive grab, putting on a kind of turban on state occasions, wearing nothing above the waist except masses of white bead necklaces, which almost cover their breasts, and carrying a series of heavy brass bracelets halfway up their forearms. The Dhangadi basa system (separate hut for unmarried girls to sleep in) prevails among them in its simplest form, and girls have opportunities for the most intimate acquaintance before they need inform their parents they wish to marry. Special ceremonies are practiced to prevent the spirit of the dead (especially of those killed by tigers) from returning to molest the living. Except totemistic septs they have apparently no sub-divisions". (1909: 357- 415)

He had also quoted the descriptions of the Kutia Kandha from '*Madras Mail*' (1986). "Distinguished amongst even that wild herds for savagery were the Khonds from the Kuttiya country, who live on tops of hills... They are remarkable for their enormous quantities of frizzly hair tied in huge chignons over the right brow, and decorated with feathers of every hue the jay, the parrot, the peacock and the white quills of the paddy bird predominating".

N.A. Wates in his book *The Half Clad Tribals of Eastern India* (1970) wrote, "Much of the (Kuttia) area is virgin forest in which herds of elephant roam freely and bears and tigers around... the Kuttia Kandhas are believed by their neighbours to be expert practitioners of black arts and adepts at transmogrification. All this

considered with their evil reputation of human (Meriah) sacrifice and infanticide represented them as wild and dreadful as the country in which they live”.

As regards their dress and ornaments he had observed, “A child is adorned with bead necklaces and aluminum bracelets shortly after it is born. Apart from these trimmings, it roams about, innocent of clothing until the age of six. Thereafter it wears loincloth ... A boy ties his hair with a brass chain so as to make a pony tail or a knot. At one end of the brass chain is attached a tiny wooden comb and at the other is a slender three cornered hairpin, both of which are stuck into the hair. He combs the front of his hair forward into a neat fringe. He generally wears one or two small brass earrings, one in the lobe and the other in the upper part of the ear. A necklace of beads or a single brass chain is worn around the neck. Aluminum bracelets on his wrist and a single bangle on each upper-arm may also be worn. His loincloth is white and hangs down the front to form a flap. Tucked in at his waist is a tube in which is kept tobacco for chewing. This tobacco- tube is made from the single node of a bamboo and is carefully decorated by horizontal hatching, rows of lozenges, or teeth, which are engraved all down its length... A girl parts her hair in the middle and with the help of a ball of string or false hair, arranges the back of her hair into a bun. A brass chain is passed around the top of her head and tied below the bun to keep her coiffure secure. Supplementing the function of this brass chain is a hair- pin, comb and chain that are the same as that used by a boy. Bunches of brass rings are passed through a hole in the fold of the helix. The lobe of the ear may be decorated by a single brass ring or large brass button. Projecting from the wing of each nostril is a brass pin, and a single brass ring is passed through the septum of her nose. Bead necklaces, often patterned in floral designs, are worn around the neck. More than half her forearms are lavishly covered with a series of brass or aluminum bracelets. Sometimes a few ornamental brass bangles are also worn on the upper-arm. Aluminum anklets may be worn. Rings are worn. Not usually on the fingers, but on the toes. An apron is suspended from her neck by a length of cord (once she has had her first child this appendage is usually discarded), around her waist she wears a girdle of white cord made of bark fiber. The cord is of great length and wound several times around the waist to constrict it and also to serve as a bustle. A single cord passed around the waist is used to tuck in the apron. The skirt is knee length and is usually white or patterned with dark red vertical stripes”. (ibid)

The Kutia like other subsections of the Kandha tribe are a Dravidian people bearing racial affinity with Proto-Australoid stock. Their skin colour varies from light brown to dark brown. They have medium stature, broad head, broad nose, broad face and curly hair. Their life in the natural environment has endowed them with a sound physique and cheerful disposition. Kutia men grow long hairs tied in a knot. Some Kutia men shave their heads. They are quite fond of using a variety of ornaments as narrated above. Men wear bead necklaces and silver or aluminum bracelets. “The dress of a male while working is a loin cloth of one and half cubits and less than a foot broad when the upper part of the body is kept completely

bare... Kutia use a simple wrapper when they feel cold. The upper garment of a female is a handloom cloth, thrown over in front and held at the neck by means of a knot. It hangs down right up to her knee keeping the back completely bare. The lower garments consist of two pieces. The first is a loincloth, which passes between the thighs to the back where it is tugged with a waist string. The second piece is a skirt wound round the waist and then extends up to the knee... On special occasions the headgear is used. Coloured turban is used by the groom during marriage... the ornaments are either made of silver, gold or glass. The ladies fix hairpins in their bun. The ears as well as nose are similarly pierced at an early age for this purpose. Wooden comb is fixed in their hair knot. Some of them are using nose and earrings made of gold on both the nostrils. They use glass bangles and necklaces of coloured beads... The rings, which are brass made have a pointed design over them, which are known as 'Kutti' and used irrespective of sex... Women always keep their hairs neatly combed and decorated. They use 'kusum' oil which they themselves extract locally from 'Kusum' seeds. Tatoo marks are also seen on the face and hand of the women. These are usually made of various designs on face, chest and on the hands. It is believed that tattoo marks only go with the persons after death" (Patnaik, 1989: 14-16).

The Kandha are a Dravidian tribe and they speak Dravidian dialects. The Kutia being a section of the Kandha speak a Dravidian dialect called "Kui". It has considerable resemblance with Telugu, Tamil and Kanarese in grammar but not to Oriya. However, due to prolonged contact with the neighbouring Oriya people, some Oriya words have entered into their dialect. But it has little impact on Kui grammatical forms and idioms. Thurston (1989, 357) wrote "...the name which they use themselves is 'Ku' and their language should accordingly be denominated by 'Kui', and therefore "the tribe call themselves 'Kuiloc' or 'Kuienu' which may possibly be derived from 'Ko' or 'Ku', a Telugu word for a mountain" (Russell & Hiralal, 1916: 461-465). Thus the Kutias as 'Kui lok' not only speak Kui but they also live, in the mountains.

The origin and past history of the Kutia are still obscure. Russell (1916, 465) believed that "...their own traditions as to their origin are of little historical value, but they were almost certainly at one time the rulers of the country in which they now resided". "They believed themselves to have existed in Orissa from the beginning. Their fore bearers were probably driven from their homes on the richer coastal plains of eastern India during the Aryan advance. Preferring hardship to the less of independence, it is thought that they were forced up into the wild hill tracts of the Eastern Ghats many centuries ago" (Boal, 1982: 1).

"Their superstitions, beliefs and practices have made them well known to the world outside. But the thrones and thickets of the wilderness and the unhealthy climate which as notorious for malaria and backwater were deterrent to any free access to the Kandha country and to have firsthand knowledge about the tribe. However, as the time passed by and road communication was developed, entry into

the Kandha area and contact with the tribe became possible. Scholars like Dalton, Risley, Thurston, Russell and Hiralal have left behind a few pages about the Kandha in their published works. But much of these writings have been reproduced over and over again. Thereafter there have come out articles and notes on some aspects or the other of the tribe in the census reports and scholarly journals," (Bhujabal, 1982: 1). Recently some books such as 'The Kandha' by Barbara, M. Boal and the Kandha by N. Patnaik have been published which contains some ethnographic account of the tribe.

The British officers namely Campbell and McPherson came in contact with the Kutias early as the middle of nineteenth century when they were deputed to suppress the practice of human sacrifice in the Kandha society. Their reports serve as valuable source of information regarding the community. Russell was the first person who through his report brought the barbarous practice of human sacrifice and female infanticide of the Kandha to the notice of the Madras Government in 1886. Elwin was the first anthropologist in this country who wrote about the tribe in 1943. In 1964 Niggemeyer, a German Anthropologist had published a detailed ethnographic account of the Kutia Kandha in German language.

Russell holds the view that "the Kutia Kandhas are hill men and retain their tribal customs... The Kutia or hill Kandhas are said to be so called because they break the skulls of animals when they kill them for food; the word Kutia meaning one who breaks or smashes". In the Kandha dialect the term "Kuti" means hole. The Kutia has a legendary tradition explaining that they had been originated from a hole on the earth. According to the legend their supreme God, *Sapangada*, the Creator, appeared in a place near Guma village (a Kutia settlement) and created the earth, forest, animals and human beings as well as some other Gods and Goddesses to look after the worldly beings. The human beings who came out from the holes later became tribals (Kandhas), Harijans (Panos) and Oriyas according to their deeds, habits and occupations. Since they had originated from the holes or *kuti* they are called 'Kutias'. Now the holy place of appearance of *sapangada* is covered under forest. A hereditary Kutia priest called *Buduka* worships the God annually in a big communal festival named *sapangada jatra* held during January-February.

Kutias live in low roofed houses. The floor inside is dugout to make up for the low roof so that the floor level is lower than the ground level and one has no difficulty for standing erect and moving freely inside the house. Because of the peculiarity of house structure, their houses look like holes or *kuti* as they call it, which is another reason to name them as "Kutia".

There are other explanations about the term 'Kutia'. Kutias are hill-dwelling folks. In Oriya language 'hill' is called *kutta*. Therefore, the people inhabiting the hill settlements are called Kutia by their neighbours. Moreover, Kutia men and women wear a kind of brass ring with a pointed design, which they call '*Kuti*'. Because they wear *kuti* they are called Kutia. Some people say that Kutias are

fond of tattooing their bodies. Tattooing in Oriya language is called *chittakuta* and hence, comes the term 'Kutia', the people with tattoo marks or *chittakuta*.

Often the Kutia call themselves and are also called by their neighbours as 'Malliah' Kandhas, which has two meanings in Oriya language, such as hill men ('Mala' meaning hill and forest territories) or people wearing beads (*mali*).

The Kutia settlements are found in densely wooded remote hill tracts. The size of their settlements is smaller comprising 8-10 households. There are also few large villages with 60-70 households. For their dependence on shifting cultivation, they were semi nomadic people in the past. They were shifting from site to site with cyclic rotation of swidden cultivation. A Kutia village has well-defined boundaries (*sandhi*) marked by rocks, trees, streams etc. The neighbouring villagers respect the common boundaries and any kind of trespassing is severely dealt with by customary laws as it often leads to bloody violence.

In a Kutia settlement, houses are arranged in two linear rows facing each other. Animal sheds are built either as an extension of the living quarters or separately at the back of the house. Each house has its own kitchen garden at the rear. Girls' dormitory (*Dhangribasa*) and boys' dormitory (*Dhangarbasas*) are either situated at the rear or among the rows of living houses. Bamboo or wooden fencing with a narrow entrance to ensure protection from wild animals encloses the settlement site. In the center of the space left in between two rows or houses lie the seat of *Dharani Penu* (Earth Goddess) and other important deities represented by stones and forked pillars for animal sacrifice called *Dharni Munda*. The remaining space is utilized for holding fairs, festivals, dances and village meetings.

The Kutia live in low-roofed houses with a rectangular ground plan. It consists of spacious front and rear verandahs, a living room and a small kitchen. The front verandah is used for multiple purposes such as performing domestic chores, sleeping and entertaining guests. The back verandah is also put to a variety of uses such as a pigsty; a place where women are segregated during menstruation and also it is the stage on which the great human drama of birth is enacted.

The walls are made of wood and bamboo frame plastered with mud and cow dung. The gabled roof structure is thatched with a kind of jungle grass called *piri*. Under the roof long wooden planks are placed across the mud walls of the living room to prepare garret (*attu*). Household articles and grains etc. are pushed for storage inside the garret through a small opening. Another wooden platform - three/ four feet high under the ceiling is raised to store grains. The average size of the living room is 10 feet by 15 feet. Besides the sleeping place, it contains the hearth, the storage racks, and the elevated basket for brooding hens, the mortar holes for pounding grains, the milling stones, limited household utensils agricultural and hunting implements, musical instruments, etc. The room has one entrance door in front and an exit door at the back but no windows. The roofs of the houses slope to about one and half meters from the ground. The entire floor area of the house is

sunk to about half a meter below the level of ground so that the house appears like a dugout hole.

The livelihood of the Kutia Kandha is mainly derived from shifting cultivation supplemented by forest collections and hunting. Lowland plough cultivation is a recent phenomenon found in a limited scale in these days. Each village has a well-defined hill and forest territory for exploitation by the ways of shifting cultivation, collection of minor forest produces and hunting. For shifting cultivation each family in the village is allotted with plots in the hills by the traditional village council prior to commencement of agricultural season. The size of plot varies according to the size and working capacity of the individual family. A swidden is cultivated for a maximum of 2 to 3 years and then left fallow for at least four years to recuperate. They practice mixed cropping of grains like *kandula*, *kalka*, *kangu* (millet) *koiri* (millet), *niger*, maize, green gram, mustard, turmeric, castor, beans, *katting* etc. in their swiddens. Paddy is cultivated in the low lands.

The harvest is barely enough to feed them for the whole year. To meet their other necessities, a part of the harvest is sold or bartered in the local markets. The main saleable commodities such as firewood, *siali* leaves, resin, *sal* seeds and leaves etc. gathered from the forest are also sold in the local markets. The Panos act as middlemen between the Kutia and outsiders in all transactions and exploit the simple tribals. As per Kutia tradition Panos or Doms who live in separate quarters near the Kutia settlements, are their servants. They are in charge of herding the cattle and livestock of the Kutias. There is a Kutia custom that no Kutia should sell or purchase livestock without involving his Pano servant. The Panos also advance loans to Kutias at the time of need and try to keep them indebted always so that, they can exploit them in all possible manners.

The Kutia are fond of rearing animals like bullocks, cows, buffaloes, goats, pigs, and fowls. Cows and she-buffaloes are not milked but used as draught animals. Goats, pigs, and fowls are sold for cash in the local markets or killed for food and entertaining guests. All kinds of animals are sacrificed during the rituals to appease the deities and spirits.

In the Kutia territory, there is little scope for wage earning and pursuing other occupations. Hence, forest collections and occasional hunting and fishing supplement their subsistence. During summer they get plenty of mango and jackfruit from the forests. At that time, they live exclusively on mango and jackfruit diet. They even preserve mango kernel and jackfruit seeds in large heaps to consume as food items during the difficult rainy season.

The food habit of the Kutia varies with the seasonal variation in availability of various kinds of crops, fruits roots and tubers. Rice is not their staple food because of short supply as very small quantity of paddy is produced in few paddy lands. Small quantity of millets and other kinds of cereals produced by shifting cultivation hardly lasts for four-five months. For the remaining part of the year they



depend on wild fruits, roots, tubers collected from the jungle. Depending upon the availability, the minor millets constitute their staple food. They eat non-vegetarian items prepared out of pork, beef, mutton and buffalo meat, chicken and fish on festive occasions. They are also fond of salted dry fish, which they buy from the local markets.

Vegetable oil is rarely used as a cooking medium. Very small quantity of oil is used to prepare vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes during festive occasions. Chilly, salt and turmeric powder are the condiments mostly used for cooking. Salt is consumed in lesser quantity. Women prepare food. Males cook food only during the illness and pollution of women at the time of their menstrual period and childbirth. On ritual and festive occasions, men exclusively do the domestic and communal food preparations in honour of the deities. Kutia women are tabooed against participating in such ritual activities. They are not even allowed to take the meat of the animal scarified during communal rituals.

Generally, they eat three times daily i.e., during morning, mid-day and evening. They do not accept cooked food from the Pano or Dombs whom they consider inferior. They are addicted to liquors of various kinds, which are locally available. *irpikalu* and *salap* (the juice extracted from sago-palm) are raised in their swiddens. Smoking and chewing tobacco is quite common. Even children are found smoking handmade cigars.

The social organization of the Kutia Kandha is simple and self-sufficient. Family forms the elementary social unit of their social organization. It is patrilineal and patriarchal in nature. Father or senior most male member is the head of the family. Property and social status are transmitted through male line. Women cannot inherit property but they are entitled to the residuary rights of maintenance from their father or husband's property depending upon their nature of residence and marital status.

Kutia women are not entitled to exercise customary rights in respect of inheritance, authority and ritual activities. They play a very influential role in management of the family, for their major economic contribution to the family and their active participation in various domestic and economic activities. They control the family purse. They are considered as assets for their father's and husband's families and therefore bride price is paid by their husbands to their fathers to acquire them. Girls enjoy ample liberty for selecting their mates.

Nuclear type of family comprising husband wife and their children is commonly found in Kutia society. Extended families in which old parents live with their married sons and polygynous families are rare. However, Kutia society permits polygyny. A Kutia boy after his marriage separates himself from his parent's family and sets up his separate household with his wife and children as soon as he is able to support himself. His parents and brothers help him in making his separate establishment. But according to the Kutia custom the youngest son

always lives with and supports his old parents even after his marriage and inherits the paternal house.

In the Kutia kinship organization the agnatic lineage called *klambu*– a local descent group formed by families descended from a common ancestor constitute an exogamous unit. The lineage members live in a village or group of villages called *Mutha* and enjoy exclusive property rights, which they have inherited from their ancestors. The headman of a *Mutha* is called *Muthadar* or *Mustajar*. During British Raj the *Mustadar* were kept in charge of revenue collection and were also vested with quasi-magisterial functions to decide cases of small disputes and crimes. Now this system has become obsolete.

Strong supernaturalism pervades all spheres of Kutia life. “Religion and present way of life of the Kutias have their roots in the mythological traditions of the tribe. Functions of priest (*Jani*), medicine man (*Kutaka*) and headman (*Majhi*), rites practiced at ceremonies and festivals, farming and hunting methods, the orientation of the villages, the way to care for pests; the rules for communal living have been defined by ancient laws and their validity accepted without question.... The origins of this tradition dates as far back as the day on which the first human beings came in to the world” (Wattes, 1970).

The Kutia Kandhas have an elaborate pantheon to worship. *Penu* is their supreme deity. She is held in the highest esteem and worshipped in all agricultural rituals. Her seat lies in the center of every Kutia village represented by four stones embedded in the ground called *Dharni Vali*. In front of *Dharnivali* stand forked pillars (*Dharnimunda*) for tying sacrificial animals during *Meriah* or *Kedu* festival. This is the most important festival observed in every Kutia village once in every three or five years to worship *Dharni Penu* by sacrificing buffaloes. This animal sacrifice is the relic of the barbarous practice of *Meriah* (human) sacrifice in the past, which had been suppressed by the British administration during the last century.

There are a number of Gods and Spirits such as the Sun god, *Birna Penu* (the deity of thunder) *Sita Penu* (the Goddess of wealth and prosperity), *DiyaPenu* (the deity of streams), *Suru Penu* (the hill Goddess), *Sapangada* (the Creator and Supreme Being), *Linga Penu* (the deity in charge of departed souls), *Dharma Penu* (the Goddess of small-pox), Ancestral spirits etc. worshipped by the Kutia on various occasions. They observe a number of seasonal rituals and festivals throughout the year to appease their deities. Some of their important annual rituals and festivals are *Anka Puja*, *Taku Jatra*, *Chaitra Jatra*, *Sapangada Jatra*, *Pani Kalu* and *Bichhaval*.

“Every religious ceremony is prefaced by the priest reciting an extract from the tribes’ mythological traditions which is relevant to the ceremony and the history that led to its establishment as a cult. He is flanked by acolytes who solemnly repeat his words. In this way traditions are perpetuated from generation to generation” (Wattes, 1970).

The practice of magic and witchcraft is widespread. Misfortunes are always ascribed to black magic. In this connection *Shaman* or the witch doctor is the most important person to take remedial actions against the evil effects of black magic. There are male (*Beju*) and female (*Bejuni*) shamans who are specialists in this field. They are respected in Kutia society.

Kutias consider birth, marriage and death as important events of human life. They believe that a child is born if ancestral spirits are pleased. A child is always welcomed. Therefore barrenness in married women is treated as a curse. A pregnant woman is subjected to a number of taboos and restrictions about her food and movements to ensure safe delivery and well being of the mother and child.

Childbirth takes place in the rear verandah with the help of a local mid-wife. Birth pollution and confinement of the mother and child is observed for six days after which mother's brother shaves the child's head leaving a patch on the top of the child's head. Then, both mother and child take a ritual bath and resume their daily activities. Nose and ear piercing ceremonies are held on the eighth day. Name-giving ceremony is held shortly afterwards. The name is chosen from those of the dead ancestors whose soul the child supposedly inherits. A pig is sacrificed to appease the deities and ancestors.

Boys and girls during their adolescence enter into dormitory life. Boys and girls have separate dormitories in every Kutia village where they sleep at night. They get necessary training and orientation in adulthood and community life from their elders in their dormitories. Now-a-days, these traditional youth organizations are losing their importance.

Marriage is a very significant event in the life of a Kutia. Girls and boys are considered fit for marriage after attaining puberty. Marriage by negotiation is quite common. However, marriages by elopement, by capture, by exchange of sisters, and by service are also practiced in a limited scale. Remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees; junior levirate, sororate and polygynous types of marriage are also permitted in Kutia society. Bride price is claimed in full by bride's parents or reduced depending upon the type of marriage. The consent of the boy and the girl is taken before finalizing the matrimony. Marriage inside the same village and lineage is strictly prohibited as it amounts to incest.

Negotiation of marriage is quite an expensive affair which involves payment of bride price in cash and kind in successive installments amounting to Rs.500/- in cash and some heads of cattle, some measures of rice and millet and huge quantity of *mohua* or *katul* liquor to entertain the girl's relatives who visit the boy's house from time to time to finalize the marriage.

On the scheduled wedding day, the kinsmen of the groom go to the bride's house to bring her to their home where marriage ritual is performed. A week after the marriage the bride returns to her parents. Her parents keep her with them for

more than one year and do not allow her to return to her husband until the boy's side fulfills all their claims. Many disputes arise between the bride's family and the groom's family for this practice. Consummation of marriage takes place after return of the bride to her husband.

Death is a sorrowful event in the Kutia life. The dead bodies are generally cremated. In case of unnatural deaths the corpses of pregnant women, infants, and persons died by drowning, snakebite, attack of wild animals are buried. Death pollution continues for three days. The purificatory rituals are held on the third day. The village priest (*Jani*) and shaman (Beju or Bejuni) conduct the ritual. Food, liquor and the blood of a goat sacrificed on this occasion are offered to appease the departed soul. Thereafter he/she becomes an ancestor (*Duma*).

Their village organization has survived the test of time. The Kutia Kandha village still continues to be a basic socio-political unit having its own set of traditional secular and sacerdotal leaders. The titular head of the village is *Jani* who acts as the village priest. *Majhi* is the secular head ranking next to *Jani*. *Ganda* is the village messenger who belongs to Pano community. All these posts are hereditary and their succession is based on the custom of primogeniture.

The traditional village Panchayat comprising all the household heads under the leadership of *Jani* and *Majhi* is still quite effective. Its meetings are held as and when necessary to take decisions about village affairs such as organizing the *Kedu* festival, distribution of shifting cultivation plots, intra-village and inter-familial disputes etc. All the decisions are taken unanimously. Jurisdiction of the Panchayat is limited to hear social offences relating to witchcraft, incest, adultery, rape, divorce, non-payment of bride price, marriage by capture, marriage by elopement, marriage in lower castes, non sending of a married daughter to her husband's place, and the like. Such cases are decided according to their prevailing customary rules. In most cases the punishment is imposed on the offender in the form of fine in cash and/or kinds. The amount of fine varies according to the gravity of offence. The amount is spent on food and liquor for entertaining the council members and sometimes a part of it is given to the aggrieved party as compensation.

After independence, the Panchayatiraj institutions have come to stay and the Kutia have accepted it in their own style. They are now electing their ward members unanimously. In many villages the traditional leaders such as *Jani* or *Majhi* are being chosen as ward members because they are still enjoying the confidence of their fellowmen. This new political system has not affected their traditional set up very much. The ward member holds an influential position in a Kutia village, his field of activities is limited to contact the development agencies and initiate welfare measures in his village while the traditional leaders reign supreme in their respective fields. There is no conflict but they work in coordination for the betterment of their village.

Living inside remote hill tracts, the Kutia eke out a miserable existence due to exploitation, illiteracy and ignorance. They remain primitive and backward socio-economically. Government has started a Micro Project named Kutia Kandha Development Agency at Belghar from 1978 to expedite their socio-economic upliftment. This Agency has been implementing various welfare schemes for their betterment. A beginning has been made. The Kutia have slowly responded to the changes brought out by the development programmes. Irrespective of whatever material development that has taken place in these days, it can be said that awareness has been created among the Kutias.

### Bibliography & References

- |                          |         |   |
|--------------------------|---------|---|
| Ali, Almas               | 1978-79 | Health and Genetic Problems of Kutia Kondhs of Burlubaru Village. <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. XVIII, Nos.1-4, pp.56-62. |
| Anonymous                | 1846    | The Kondhs of Hill Tribes, <i>Calcutta Rev</i> , Vol.V, pp. 22-85   |
| Bailey, F.G.             | 1985    | <i>Caste and Economic Frontier</i> . London, Oxford University Press.   |
|                          | 1960    | <i>Tribe, Caste and Nation</i> , London, Oxford University Press.   |
|                          | 1958    | Political Change in Kondmals. <i>Eastern Anthropologist</i> , Vol.11, No.2, pp. 88-106                            |
| Banerjee, S.             | 1969    | <i>Ethnographic Study of the Kuvi Kondh</i> . Calcutta, Anthropological Survey of India,                          |
| Behura, N.K. & B.N. Sahu | 1970-71 | Mutha, the Traditional Political Organisation of the Kondh, <i>Adibasi</i> Vol. XVII, Nos.1-4, pp.13-21.          |
| Behura, N.K.             | 1962    | Transformation of Human Sacrifice among the Kondhs of Orissa. <i>Vanyajati</i> , Vol. X, pp. 93-99.               |
| Boal, B. M.              | 1982    | <i>The Kondhs (Human sacrifice and Religious Change)</i> , Bhubaneswar, M.B.D.                                    |
| Bogardus, E. S.          | 1987    | The Suppression of Human Sacrifices among the Kondhs, <i>Calcutta Review</i> . Vol. XV, No.229, pp. 61-66.        |
| Campbell, J.             | 1864    | <i>Among the Wild Tribes of Khondistan</i> . London, Host and Black Vol. IX, P. 320.                              |
| Dalton, E.T.             | 1872    | <i>Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal</i> , Calcutta, Supdt. of Govt. Printing                                       |
| Das B.N.                 | 1956    | Suppression of Human Sacrifice among the Hill Tribes of Orissa. <i>Man in India</i> , Vol. XXXVI, No.1, P. 21.    |

- Das, J.K. 1961 *Tribes of Orissa*, Census of India
- Das, N. 1950 Sikuli Puja in a Khond Village, *Vanyajati*, Vol. VI, pp.27-30
- Das, M.N. 1960 Female Infanticide Among the Kondhs of Orissa. *Man in India*, Vol.XI, pp.30-35.
- Das, R. K. *Decline of the Kondh Population*, News Mag. H & T.W. Deptt. Govt. of Orissa, Vol.1, No.4, pp.13-14
- Debi, K. *Kondh, Adibasi*, Vol-V, No.3, pp.63-64.
- Elwin, Verrier. 1944 Notes on a Kondh Town. *Man in India*, Vol. .XXIV, No.1, pp.40-58
- Francis, W. 1907 Gazetteer of Vizagapatam District, Vol.I
- Friend-Periera, J.A 1902 Customs of Kondhs, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Vol.71, pp.1-28.
- 1899 Totemism among the Khonds, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Vol. XVIII, pp.1-13.
- Frowde, H. 1908 *Kondh*, the Imperial Gazetteer of India, Oxford, Vol. XVI, pp.-280-288.
- Frye, J.P. 1980 On the Oriya and Kondh Population of Orissa, *Journal of Royal Anthropological Society*, Vol. XVII.
- Hota, N.R. 1959-60 *Human Sacrifice among the Khonds of Orissa*. *Orissa Historical Research Jr.*, Vol.VIII, No.3-4, pp.158-163.
- Jena, K.C. 1962-63 The Kondhs of Koraput, *Indian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. XXIII, pp..57-61.
- Mazumdar, B.C. 1932 The Kui or the Kondh People, *Man in India*, Vol.XII, pp. 245-252.
- Mishra, B. 1963 The Agricultural System, Diet, and Dietary Habits of the Kondhs- a Tribe of Orissa. *Vanyajati*, Vol.XI, pp. 135-142.
- Mohanty, S.C. 1993 Social Position and Property Rights of Kutia Kondh Women. *Adivasi*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, pp. 16-21.
- Mukherjee, P. 1959-60 Human Sacrifice among the Khonds of Orissa, a note, *Orissa Hist. Res. Journal*, Vol. VIII, No.3-4, PP. 164-167.
- Nayak, G. 1976 A Study of Kutia Kondh's Foot, *Adibasi*, Vol. XVI, No.1, P. 1
- Niggemeyer, H 1957 Kutia Kondha Pilara Ekoisia (Oriya), *Adibasi*, Vol.1, No.2 & 3, pp.5-7.
- Panda, S 1969-70 Demography of a Kondh Village. *Adibasi*, Vol. XI, No.3, pp. 27-35.
- Pathy, 1976 Political Economy of Kondh and *Man in India*, Vol.56,

Jagannath		No.1, pp.1-36.
Patnaik, N. & P.S. Daspatnaik	1982	<i>The Kondh of Orissa</i> , Bhubaneswar, T.H.R.T.I.
Patnaik, N.R.	1990	Oath and Ordeal in Kondh Society of Nineteenth Century, Orissa, <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol.XXX, No.1, pp.20-24.
Patnaik, U. N.	1964-65	Reminiscences of an Administrative Officer in the Kondh hills. <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. VI, No.2, pp.29-37.
	1969-70	Religious Ceremonies, Ordeals and a Legend about Oriya Infiltration in Kondh hill. <i>Adibasi</i> . Vol. XI, No.4, pp. 76-84.
Patnaik, Uma Charan	1945	The Kondhas of the Hills, One Century of British Rule (1836 to 1946). <i>Mod. Rev.</i> Vol. IXXVIII, P. 214-218.
Pattanaik, Prananaatha	1962	Phulbani Jilara Kandha, <i>Adibasi</i> , (Oriya), Vol, VII, No.1, pp.25-32.
Raman, L. V.	1957-58	The Kondh of Phulbani. <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol.11, pp.35-40
Rao, L.M.	1940	The Kondh, a Tribal People of South Orissa, <i>Mod. Rev.</i> , Vol. XVII, pp. 199-200.
Ray, G.S.	1949	A Study of the Physical Character of the Kondh. <i>Eastern Anthropologist</i> , Vol. II, pp.199-200.
	1949-50	Characteristic Features of Kondh Kinship Terminology. <i>Eastern Anthropologist</i> , Vol. II, pp.151-157.
Ray, S.C.	1922	Ethnography in Old Official Recorder, Kondh Human Sacrifice, <i>Man in India</i> , Vol. II, pp.67-81.
Rout, S.P.	1964-65	Dom Exploitation in the Kondh Villages of Koraput Dist. <i>Adibasi</i> , No.1, pp.21-28.
Russell, R.V. & Hiralal	1916	<i>Tribes Castes of Central Provinces of India</i> , Vol. III, Part-III, pp.464-481.
Sharama, K.	1981	<i>The Kondha of Orissa</i> , Delhi, Concept Publication.
Swain, J.	1968-69	The Kondh Pantheon and their Social Significance, <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. X, No.3 & 4, pp.33-39.
Thurston, E.	1909	<i>Castes &amp; Tribes of Southern India</i> , Vol. III, pp. 357-415.
Walts, N. A.	1970	<i>The Half-Clad Tribals of Eastern India</i> , Orient Longmans, Bombay.

# KUTIA KANDHA\*

*A. B. Ota*<sup>1</sup>

*A. C. Sahoo*<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

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

The Kutia Kandha mostly inhabit the southern part of Kandhamal district. However, some of them are also found in Kalahandi district. The Kutia Kandha of Belghar area in Kandhamal district is found to be the most archaic and have so far retained their distinct socio-cultural characteristic features. The climate in Kutia Kandha area is comparatively cooler. Between November and February, it is very cold and during March to mid-June it is comparatively hot. There is heavy rainfall during July and August. The temperature sometimes approaches the freezing point, particularly towards the end of December. The soil is found to be red laterite. The hills around the village is marked by dense mixed forest and one of the common species in the forest is Sal (*Shorea robusta*), which is having manifold use in day to day socio-economic and religious life of the people. Apart from the Sal trees, varieties of huge trees, shrubs and herbs are common in the locality. Some of the trees which are having great importance in

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Kutia Kandha, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2010

<sup>1</sup> Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Officer-on-Special Duty (Tribal Museum), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar



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

### SETTLEMENT AND HOUSE PATTERN

The settlement pattern and house types of the Kutia Kandha deserve special attention for its mode of selection of site, manner of construction, architectural design and placement of Functional areas. More over significant landmarks in and around the settlement and structural look of the hutments are reflection of the socio-cultural Identity, skill and technology applied for construction and functional use of space inside the house-Traditionally all Kutia Kandha villages were uniclans, but gradually most of the villages are found to be inhabited by people of many clans and other ethno-cultural groups. In spite of that they have strong feeling of togetherness, mutual help, community co-operation, social solidarity and values of group life.

In a typical Kutia Kandha settlement, two rows of houses, across a rectangular space, face each other. All the Kutia Kandha houses of a village maintain on single roof-ridge along a single row. Of course, each house has its partitioning wall, but the verandah run continuously from one end to the other. According to the economic condition and number of family members the size of house varies. The space i.e. the village street between two rows of the houses is quite wide, neat and clean. In the middle of the street Meriah pole is installed before Darani Penu (earth goddess) popularly known as Wanga Penu. The village courtyard is usually located in east-west direction. The 'Sun' is the supreme deity responsible for good happenings. Moreover, sunlight is very powerful and washes away all evils hence each house must share sunlight of the day equally. In each Kutia Kandha village at least one Domb house is found. But Domb settlement is always located a little away from the Kutia Kandha settlement. The cowsheds are located close to the settlement.

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

The selection of a suitable site is followed by collection of necessary materials by the concerned household members. The male members collect

wooden pillars and beams, bamboo pieces, *siali* fiber and thatching grass from the nearby forest. The women perform all works connected with soil and plastering. Preparation of frame of the roof and thatching are the duties of the male folk. The females plaster the walls, prepare the hearth and raise shelves for keeping the cooking utensils and water pots. They use polished round stone pieces to make the floor smooth. Special care is taken to give the final touch to the place for ancestral spirits. Usually the main room is provided with a ceiling, which serves as the store room. Apart from this, over the hearth, bamboo pole is horizontally hung for drying grains and meat. Inside the main room they keep goats and chicken at the opposite side of the hearth to protect them from wild animals. The Kutia Kandha main room is used for cooking, sleeping, storing, dining and other purpose as and when required and works like grinding of ragi and husking of paddy and small millets are also performed there.

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

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

### ECONOMIC LIFE

The economic life of the Kutia Kandha directly and indirectly revolves round the forest. The forest provides them food, fuel and fodder and materials for construction of houses. The Kutia Kandha collect different varieties of mushrooms, green leaves, shoots, tubers, roots, stems, flowers, fruits, seeds, mango, kernels etc from the forest in their respective growing seasons. During the lean period many of them depend on the edibles of forest, which has gone down due to depletion of forest. In the summer months they depend on jackfruits, mango and tubers and in the early rainy season they eat mango kernels and bamboo shoots along with several green leaves and mushrooms. Collection of lac, gum, honey, hill broom, fiber, leaf for preparation of cups and plates are occasional works, which fetch some cash to the Kutia Kandha.

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

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

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

The village elites especially the magico-religious head and secular leader of the village in consultation with the elderly people demarcate the forest tract suitable for the shifting cultivation. For some time they watch the growth of vegetation in the forest belt and accordingly they select a suitable patch of land left fallow since many years within their village boundary. A particular patch of forest is used continuously for three years for shifting cultivation. Then it is left fallow for more than five years. The fallow period may defer which depends on the growth of vegetation. In normal case after five to six years, they again come back to a particular patch. After selection of the site all the villagers prepare beer (Katul) out of small millets within a week and then perform necessary magico-religious rituals at the community level in the village and subsequently in the forest tract selected for shifting cultivation. A large area is demarcated in presence of all the villagers keeping in view the consumption need of an individual family. Then the *podu* area is distributed among the families of the village on the basis of the number of family members. If the area is scarce then the land is equally distributed among the families of the village. But usually the former method is adopted as the area is quite vast. Some house owners cultivate two plots if the working members in the family are more. Area for each family is demarcated in presence of the villagers; hence nobody encroaches other's area. After allotment of plots each family takes care of its respective plot by demarcation mark and cleaning the area. Now-a-days shifting cultivation patches are owned at family level.

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

The work of sowing of different seeds starts in the months of May and June. Specific variety of seeds is stored for shifting cultivation area, which are first sown in the field then hoed. Some varieties of seeds, particularly vegetables and pulses are sown after digging the soil by a pointed stick. Both males and females work in sowing operation. When plants in the field grow the weeding is done by women folk. During weeding and flowering of the crops some propitiation of deities and sacrificial offerings may be needed to save the crop from the natural calamity and attack of insects and locust.

When crop plants are grown in crop fields, the jungle animals start creating problems. They raise temporary huts in the fields or on a tree according to the suitability, to protect the crops from wild boar, deer, *sambar*, peacock, wild fowl, etc. using their traditional devices.

The harvesting of crops usually takes place after performance of rituals and sacrifices to appease the concerned spirits. As different crops ripen in different times, they harvest crops one after the other quite leisurely. Till completion of the harvest the field watching huts are not demolished.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Kutia Kandha females from their early childhood adorn their body with many kinds of ornaments starting from bead necklace to silver jewelry of different designs. Ornaments made by Scheduled Caste people out of brass in the lost-wax process are purchased and used by them. The females use ornaments of different varieties all over the body from head to toe. The rings, hair clips, bead necklace, comb necklace, a type of seed necklace and palm leaf knitted band are worn for decoration and beautification of the body. Sometimes these are put on as a symbol of status and social prestige. Females put on two pieces of clothes one at the waist and the other hanging from the neck up to the waist to cover the upper part of the body. Forehead band made out of palm leaves and beads are made by themselves. Scanty tattoo marks on the face of the women enhance their beauty and traditional adornment pattern reveals their socio-cultural identity. Male folk put on Dhoti and also some ornaments to make them attractive.

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

A major part of their income is expended for celebrating festivals, appeasing innumerable spirits, Gods and Goddess, celebrating marriage ceremonies and death rituals. Next to that they spend more in food items. The Kutia Kandha living in remote villages purchase salt, chilli, clothes, baskets, agricultural implements and earthen ware pots from the weekly market whereas those living adjacent to towns purchase food-stuff and modern items from the weekly and daily market. They also spend for house thatching and repairs. Quite a substantial part of their income is spent for dresses, cosmetics, agricultural implements, ornaments and their ration. Youths spend for purchase of clothes and narcotics. The women purchase jewelry, cosmetics, fancy items and gifts for their lovers. The unmarried elderly girls purchase modern cosmetics and plastic items. At present, the Kutia Kandha are using bicycle, radio, torchlight, umbrella, shoes, designed boxes and many others modern items.

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

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

Specific works are earmarked for respective sex groups though a lot of works are performed by both the groups particularly in agricultural operations. Women perform household works, such as cooking, husking and plastering of houses. They work much more than men and rarely one can find a Kutia woman sitting idle. The works which need much concentration, like weeding,

reaping, transplanting and collection of corns, etc. are mostly done by the women though it is not tabooed for men. However, each sex group sticks to its prescribed works as per social sanction. Works are not strictly assigned according to one's age and sex. In practice minor works that need less strength and minimum strain are performed by the old people and very young boys and girls.

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

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

Diet routine of the people varies according to season and economic condition of the families. In general they take three times a day, i.e. morning, mid-day and in the late evening. Meals comprise of *ragi* gruel, maize, millet and rice. Moreover, green leaves, vegetables, dry fish and meat are important item & in their diet. Varieties of edibles, like, mushrooms, roots, shoots, leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds are also consumed as per availability in different seasons. The Kutia Kandha depend on yam, tubers, bamboo shoots, jack-fruits, Mahua flower, mango during summer months and mango kernel during lean period.

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

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

is encouraging them for cultivation of good variety of paddy and vegetables for consumption and sale.

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

### **SOCIAL ORGANISATION**

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

The family is the smallest but primary and dominating social unit among the Kutia Kandha. It is mostly nuclear, patrilocal, patrilineal and patriarchal in character. Like many other tribal communities their major economic, social, religious and re-productive activities revolve round their family. Husband, wife and their unmarried children live together under the same roof and share common kitchen. The moment the son gets married he constructs his own house with the help of the villagers. If parents are alive the youngest son is expected to remain with them at their old age. He is expected to take adequate care of his widow mother and unmarried sisters. A Kutia Kandha may marry more than one wife but both the wives and their children share the same hut and hearth and lead harmonious conjugal life. Cases of levirate and sororate are also found. There are incidences of divorce and remarriage. In several villages one can come across single member family, double-member family, extended family, etc. Distant relatives may stay with some nearer one due to formers domestic problems as a helping hand. The male head, holds superior position and has the final say in important family matters. The wife is very sincere, devoted to her husband and dedicated worker. She is a good partner in all social activities. It does not mean that her position is low in the family. Husband-wife relationship is very intimate and both of them manage with mutual understanding. At the time of birth of a child, husband takes adequate care of the wife and performs all rituals till the purification ceremony. In spite of intimacy, co-operation and remarkable co-ordination between the couple there are occasions of conflict and quarrel at times and it may lead even to divorce. In no case a husband is expected to be misbehaved or beaten by the wife which is a social offence and she should be fined by the traditional council. Extra marital relationship and



incest are seriously viewed in the society. A woman, if suspected to be a witch or proved barren may be divorced.

The children are looked after with love and affection and are excused for their minor mistakes. Nursing part is left to the mother. However, father takes care of his children according to necessity. During the childhood a female child is more attached to the mother and a boy helps his father in his works. Boys and girls are liked equally without any discrimination.

Above the family, lineage is found to be the next important bigger social group to unite people for specific socio-cultural and economic purposes. The lineage is a corporate group, and a permanent framework to provide political, jural and ritual status. The significant role of the lineage in birth, marriage and death is unavoidable. It is seen that same lineage members may reside outside their own village but the emotional attachment and mutual socio-economic obligations between the lineage members remain intact.

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

The Kutia Kandhas are well known for their clan organization. There are some uniclan villages, which are in due course, growing into multi-clan villages, however, within a village there is always a dominant clan. Clan organization is very important in respect of matrimonial matters. All the uniclan villages maintain the rule of village exogamy. The boys and girls of the same village are strictly prohibited to marry, even if they belong to different clans. They are also prohibited to do dance together. The clans are territorial units and its members may inhabit separate villages. The members of original clan hold the right to live and work in the village. Even there are some specific village ceremonies in which only members of the main clan participate. However, village community members may be of different clan groups who maintain strong unit in respect of many social, economic, political and ritual activities.

The Kutia Kandhas of a particular village interact with each other for several economic, social, religious and political functions. Each village is a self-contained unit. A Kutia Kandha is conscious of the rich heritage of his village and intensely feels his belongingness. The Kutia Kandha village is a cluster of

households related to each other by lineage membership. It brings different individuals and groups of the village to one fold.

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

### **LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION**

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

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

The Mutha Majhi exercises control over the Kutia Kandha at Mutha level. His role and advices are taken into greater account. He may be invited on specific socio-political occasions. The Majhi who is the village secular head looks after the traditional political matters of the village. This post is very prestigious and hereditary. The 'Majhi' previously was being selected by the 'Mutha Majhi' and since then the post is succeeded in family or lineage level. 'Majhi' is the custodian of the village fund and revenue. He plays an important role in giving decisions in secular matters. He does not receive any remuneration but a good deal of prestige and special status. In case of individual disputes, family conflicts, group rivalry and inter-village rivalry Majhi solves the problems.

The Jani, the magico-religious head is also an active participant of the traditional village council. He is the formal spokesman of the village and keeps an eye over the happenings and decisions. At the time of any conflict and quarrels his words and decisions are sincerely taken into consideration. Everyone in the village pays regards to Jani and his status and prestige

determine the dignity of the village in the area. However, he consults Majhi on jural and political matters.

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

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

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

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

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

## LIFE CYCLE

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

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

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

Name giving ceremony is conducted after the 3rd day of the birth of a child. A 'Siali' leaf is shown to the child uttering the names of the ancestors. While uttering the name of a particular ancestor, if the child catches the leaf, it is believed that the same ancestor has been born. The child is treated accordingly by the family members and the kith and kin. But the name giving ceremony is celebrated by inviting relations both from father and mother's side. Mother's brother sacrifices a pig on this occasion. The magico-religious observances by the family members and enjoyment of traditional drinks are of special mention. The parents, siblings, kinsmen, villagers, and others play vital role in early socialization process of a child. The children acquire knowledge about the environment, culture, people and spirit world.

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

Marriage among the Kutia Kandha is regarded as a sacred institution. Preliminary arrangements for marriage are made by the parents. Normally, initiative starts from the boy's side. Marriage by arrangement is the usual age old practice. However, other types of marriage like marriage by love, capture,

exchange and intrusion are also practiced. Sororate and Junior levirate are also practiced. One may marry more than one wife but monogamy is mostly preferred. Marriage is strictly prohibited between boys and girls of the same clan and outside the Kutia Kandha community. Either the husband or the wife can divorce only when both of them are totally unable to adjust.

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

A dead body may be cremated or buried depending upon the nature of death. The persons having normal death are burnt in the cremation ground. In case of death due to small pox, drowning in water, falling from tree, attack of the wild animals, etc. the corpses are buried. The pollution period is observed by all the lineage members from 3 to 8 days. All the kinsmen are invited, Drinks are brewed and buffalo, goats and chicken are arranged within a stipulated period. Apart from magico-religious celebrations and ceremonial feast and drinks are major activities. According to the Kutia Kandha the dead lives in the house and village in form of spirits and take rebirth in the same family after a generation. Ancestral spirits have important role to play especially in birth, marriage and death ceremonies and keeping health and happiness of living beings.

## RELIGION

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

In the Kutia Kandha area certain symbolic structures represented by wooden poles, notched bifurcated wooden pillars, bamboo frames, stones, small huts, raised platforms having vermilion marks and blood spots, in leaf cups, leaf plates, bamboo baskets, etc. are of magico-religious significance. Each spot has its own significance because it provides shelter to spirits and deities of certain special power. The first magico religious centre that attracts the attention is the place for Dharani Penu represented by three pieces of stones. She is the creator of human beings who protects the community, and ensures fertility. Usually the villagers at community level offer sacrifice for health and happiness of their own and their livestock. In the middle of the village exists a bifurcated notched pillar and at the end of the settlement a very long bamboo with a piece of triangular

cloth on its top which symbolizes the village deity. Its significance is seriously felt at the time of Mariah sacrifice.

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

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

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

The Kutia Kandha magico-religious activities are highlighted in several feasts and festivals. Among the major festivals, mention may be made of Meriah sacrifice, Puni Kalu, Dadbinere, Dasehera, Kandanga Dakina, Basa Dakina, etc. Meriah festival (Bia Katina Dakina) is the most significant and expensive one celebrated with series of observances and propitiations. This festival is communally observed mainly to appease the Dharni Penu. Previously a human being was offered for sacrifice but now-a-days a buffalo is taken as a substitute. Although at the community level one or two buffaloes are sacrificed, at the family level different birds and animals, like pigeon or chicken, goat, etc, are offered names of several spirits well known for specific function. The socio-cultural interaction, bond friendship between clans and villages and feeling of oneness among groups are projected in different phases of ritualistic observances. This very costly sacrifice is observed by the community in an interval of three to five years which may vary according to the specific situation and indication of the spirits and diviners.

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

personal behavior, production and consumption and their life-cycle rituals are significantly influenced by the magico-religious activities. Even accidental and unnatural deaths are related to divinity.

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

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

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

### **SOCIAL VALUE AND WORLD VIEWS**

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

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

They enjoy life to the possible extent. They are very free and frank and spontaneous in action. One can easily recognize their fellow feeling and bravery. They are good hosts and try to satisfy the guests in all possible ways. A Kutia

Kandha never gets angry with someone nor begs to earn his livelihood. He believes in work and worship. They trust the Dombs, people of a Scheduled Caste community. The Kutia Kandhas never disregard or misbehave anybody unless they are very seriously hurt. They believe in love and affection, excuse and forgiving, help and tolerance. They dislike cheats, mischief mongers, characterless and ill-tempered persons and are afraid of evil spirits, black magicians, and sorcerers. The Kutia Kandha are disciplined people and bear high sense of morality. They respect elders and love youngers. Physical punishment and use of taunting remarks to somebody are the worst means for sorting out any problem. They never like persons having stealing and begging propensities. They are very innovative and imaginative. They believe more in equality than individual status symbol. They are very sympathetic and helpful at the time of danger. They may tolerate anything but not against their habitat, clansmen, society and culture.

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

### DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

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

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



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

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

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

# HABIT, HABITAT & GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECT OF KUTIA KANDHA <sup>1</sup>

*Dina Krishna Joshi*  
*Sasmita Mund*  
*Mihir Prasad Mishra*

Tribal people living in the remote areas of the country form an indispensable part of the Indian population. More than 250 different tribal groups inhabit India, of which 62 groups live in Orissa, each varying in culture, language, economic life and level of literacy. The thirteen tribal groups, namely Birhor, Bondo, Didayi, Dongria-Kondh, Juang, Hill Kharia, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankidia, Paudi Bhuinya, Soura and Chuktia Bhunjia having pre-agricultural level of technology and extremely low level of literacy have been recognized as 'Primitive Tribes' of Orissa. These tribal groups remain confined to their own small world and a probe into their history clearly shows that after a few generations the past turns into mythology. It was realized only after the Independence that to have a well-developed and prosperous nation, the needs and problems of the tribes are to be addressed and their welfare needs to be taken care of.

## **The Kandha of Orissa:**

The Kandha tribe is variously known. They are called the Khond, Kondh, Kandha or Kond, according to the usage of the term in vogue in different places in which they live. But whatever the terminology used, it refers to the same tribe. But they identify themselves as Kui loku or Kuinga. The language they speak is Kui/Kuvi, which has no script. The Kandhas are identified from their names. Some writers have attempted to trace out the Telegu derivation from the word 'Konda' meaning 'hills'. The people living on the hill tops are named as Kandha. It is a fact that the Kandha like to live in hill tops and their servants, the Panos live beneath their settlement. The common surnames of Kandhas are Pradhan, Mallick, Konhar, Majhi. Those who worship deities have surnames like Dehury, Jhankar, and Jani etc. Numerically, the Kandhas form the largest group among the 62 tribes of Orissa. Customarily they were once famous for their brutal acts of human sacrifice (Maria

---

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished article of ADIVASI, Vol.47, Nos.1&2, 2007, SCSTRTI

sacrifice) to get bumper crops and killing of infants for better yield of turmeric. There are various sections among the Kandhas. Each section is endogamous though originally they hail from the same Kandha community. Racially the Kandhas belong to the Proto-Australoid racial stock with considerable mongoloid admixture. They are divided into two linguistic groups, *kui* and *kuvi*. The Kandhas had their loyalty to their erstwhile feudatory chiefs in Orissa and elsewhere. They were valiant warriors and discharged their services very faithfully to their rulers. They offered their valuable services at the time of freedom struggle. To name a few among them are Chakara Bisoyi and Dora Bisoyi.

#### **KUTIA KANDHA - THE PRIMITIVE TRIBAL GROUP:**

The Kutia Kandhas constitute a primitive section of the great Kandha tribe of Orissa. They are found in a contiguous pocket comprising the Belghar area of Balliguda sub-division in Kandhamal district and Lanjigarh area of Kalahandi district. They lead an isolated life of poverty and indigence.

#### **Kutia Kandha Micro Projects in Orissa:**

Name of district	Name of project	Blocks covered	No. of villages	No of households	Population	Literacy
Kandhmal	KKDA, Belghar	Tumudibandh	67	1148	5241	17.13 %
Kalahandi	KKDA, Lanjigarh	Lanjigarh	17	557	2442	30.55 %

(Source: Baseline Survey of SCSTRTI)

#### **Nomenclature of the Tribe:**

Different authorities have different views about the nomenclature of Kutia Kandha. The origin myth suggests that the first generation of Kutia Kandha emerged out of a hole (Sapangada). The local term 'Kuti' means a big hole on the earth; hence, the tribe that emerged out of a hole is known as Kutia Kandha.

#### **Dress & Ornaments:**

The dress of the Kutia Kandhas is very simple.

The traditional dress of Kutia Kandha men is a loin cloth (Batada). In the recent past, they used to grow long hairs which they fastened in front by knot and in which they invariably stuck cigars, comb, metal pins etc. Now-a-days, a few older males and a very few young men of the remote hilly region are wearing their traditional dress. But the majority of males are wearing *dhoti* and shirt or full pant or shirt and cutting their hair like the plains people.

The traditional dress of Kutia women are Retang and Uromi. One covers the lower portion of the waist to the upper portion of the knee known as 'Retang' and another for upper portion of the body called 'Uromi' which hangs from the

neck upto the abdomen. Under the Retang they wear a loin cloth known as 'Topa'. The girls from 5 to 9 years of age wear only Topa. Now-a-days, the young girls and women are using *saree*, *saya* and blouse. They have intense love for ornaments and wear gold and silver necklaces, ear-rings, nose-rings and hair ornaments. Coloured beads are generally used as necklaces. They adorn the entire rim of the ear with silver rings. The Kutia Kandha women tattoo their faces and hands. They make tattoo (Tikanga) marks on their body ; they do it only for beautification.

### **Livelihood:**

Agriculture is main occupation. 70% of the land is unproductive. People are still practising primitive method of cultivation i.e. shifting cultivation. Turmeric, Ginger, Arrowroot and other spices are main produce of the land. Collection of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is also done by the women.

The Kutia's derive their livelihood primarily from shifting cultivation. A particular patch of forest or hill slope is used for shifting cultivation for three years consecutively and then it is left fallow for more than five years to recuperate. After selection of site and allotment of plots, each family takes care of its respective plot in giving boundary mark and cleaning the area. Forest clearing takes place in the month of March-April. They do not cut the trees from ground level and also the fruit bearing trees. After the felled trees dry up they set fire on it in the month of April-May. Then they work the soil with digging sticks to mix the ashes in the soil. After first shower a mixture of seeds such as *kandul*, *jhudang*, black gram, *kating* are sown by dibbling. When the soil gets sufficiently wet they sow a mixture of seeds of *ragi*, *kosla*, *gonga* and *kangu* by broadcast. Both men and women take part in the operation. Then weeding is done in the month of June-July and the weeds are left in the site to be decomposed. The crops are then guarded round the clock to protect these from destruction by wild animals. The crops are harvested in succession one after another. *Kosla* and *ragi* are harvested in the month of October-November and *Kandula* in the month of February-March. Threshing is done in the Podu fields and grains are stored in bamboo baskets and earthen pots.

### **Food Habits:**

Generally three principal meals are taken daily by the Kutia Kandha, one in the morning at about 7 AM, then at about mid day between 12 noon to 1 PM and lastly in the evening at about 7 to 7.30 PM. The items for the morning meals are prepared from the previous evening and kept near the hearth for morning use. The rice prepared in the previous night and taken without water is called, *Basi bidi*, but with water is called *Basi simba*. *Basi Simba* or *Basi bidi* is taken with the previous night's curry or fry or *dal* or only with chilly and salt, The mid-day meal consists of rice with gruel and with salt and chilly .The evening meal is 'Kueri rice' without gruel or paddy rice without gruel or *ragi* not in liquid form taken with vegetable curry or some pulses or green leaves. In the evening meal, sometimes meat or fish or dry fish is taken if available.

### **Drinks:**

They are very fond of drinking *salap* (sago palm) juice and *tadi* (date palm) juice. Local herbs and roots are added to the juice to increase its alcoholic contents. Liquor is prepared from Mahua flowers to meet the requirements on special occasions. Liquor is considered as food and at the same time a ritualistic food to satisfy deities and spirits. It is considered as a social necessity by the Kandhas and therefore consumed by them irrespective of sex and age.

Liquor is the most important and essential item for a number of socio-religious functions and ceremonies. The Kutia Kandha take four types of liquors i.e. Madanga (juice of sago palm tree), Ankinga (prepared from Mahua flower), Katuli (procured from liquor vendor) and Pranga Ankinga (Rice Beer). But they generally take Salap and Mahuli.

### **Houses:**

Their houses are made of wooden walls (planks) and bamboo splits with a thatch of forest grass and leaves. Generally the houses with rectangular ground plan are neat and tidy but lack ventilation. Domestic animals and residents are all huddled in two or three rooms. Doors are made of bamboo splits designed artistically. The low roof never exceeding 8 feet to 9 feet in height ensures resistance to the violent storms and ice-cold wind during monsoon and winter.

### **Dormitory:**

In the Kutia Kandha society the bachelor's dormitory, both for boys and girls are called 'Kude'. Generally the marriageable son of the family builds a separate house of his own before he gets married but stays with his parents till his marriage. During this gap period his house is used as boy's 'Kude'. In the boys dormitory the unmarried boys spend nights with an elderly person or widower of the village. The girls spend nights in their Kude under the guardianship of an elderly woman or widow. The married people except widows, widowers and divorcees are not allowed into the Kude.

### **Clans of Kutia Kandha:**

Kutia Kandha are divided into a number of social groups (clans) known as 'Gochhi' or 'Bansa'. The 8 important clans are Nundruka, Saraka, Timaka, Sukbicha, Adanga, Rodamaka, Urlaka and Kadraka. Each clan is given a distinct name which further emphasizes their distinct identity. Gochhi distinction serves as an important factor for selection of mate in their society.

### **Marriage (Sedi Tatam) System:**

Monogamy is the predominant form of marriage among the Kutia Kandha but in some cases polygyny is also noticed. The marriageable age in case of males is between 20 to 24 years and in case of girls it is 17 to 20 years. The clan exogamy is

strictly followed in all types of marriages. There are generally four types of marriages in Kutia Kandha society, such as :

1. Arranged marriage (Sadi Bengana)
2. Marriage by capture (Reja Nona)
3. Marriage by elopement (Guisat Sedi)
4. Marriage by service (Ghar-join Sachenja)

#### **Child Birth:**

The pollution in connection with child birth ends on the fifth day. On that day father of the child sacrifices a fowl and offers cooked meat, rice and liquor to the ancestors so that no misfortune may befall the child. Some households perform this ceremony on the 7th day. After one month hair on the head of child shaved off and a feast is given to the neighbours.

#### **Death:**

The dead bodies are burnt except those of the pregnant women which are buried. On the following day, the priest purifies all the people who attended the funeral by sprinkling oil over their heads with a small broom made up of twigs or blade of grass. After a few days they replace all the earthen vessels and perform an animal sacrifice and give a feast to neighbours and relatives. They believe that the soul after death turns into a spirit (Duma) and goes away from the earth.

#### **Religion & Festivals:**

*Punikalu Dakina:* It is observed once in a year on Sunday which falls just after Pus Punei (Dec.-Jan.). On this occasion the Dharani Penu is worshipped.

*Korubiha Dakina :* It is also called as Meriah Puja, the biggest festival observed at the community level. The festival falls in every five years on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday which comes after Phagun Punei (Feb.-Merch). In the past the Kutia Kandha were sacrificing human beings now substituted by buffalo.

*Burangkalu Dakina:* This festival is observed once in 5-10 years on a Sunday before or after Chait Punei (March-April).

*Bangosina Dakina:* This festival is observed on a selected patch of a hill slope on the occasion of the first time clearing a patch in the hill slope for shifting cultivation. It is observed on a Sunday before or after Phagun Punei (Feb.-March).

*Bicha Dakina:* It is observed for ceremonial sowing of seeds in the newly ploughed area of the shifting cultivation site. This festival observed on a Sunday before or after Jyesth Purnima (May-June).

*Takukalu Dakina:* This festival is observed to avoid diseases in the standing crops. The mango kernel is offered to Dharani Penu. It is observed on a Sunday before or after the Shravan Punei (July -August).

*Badabiha Dakina*: It is observed to cure a serious disease of a person. It is observed on a Monday in the month of Chait (March-April).

### **Status of Women in the Kutia Kandha Society:**

Although the Kutia Kandha society is patriarchal, the women folk have their distinct status. Women are tabooed from certain religious and traditional secular functions but their economic status is very high. They are not permitted to participate in the village council meetings unless personally accused. In religious practices the women are not the direct participants in rituals, except in dance. After marriage the chief duties of the women are to take care of the household, prepare the meal and participate in household chores. Besides these, they pursue outdoor works to supplement the family income by collecting minor forest product and wage earning. In agricultural activities they perform works like cleaning, burning, sowing, weeding and harvesting. All the produce earned by them remain in their hands and they control and make proper use of the products. Marketing for the household produce is preferably done by the women folk. There are mainly two things which Kutia Kandha women must not do. These are; she should not plough the land and climb to the roof of the house for thatching. During her menses she is not allowed to enter into the cowshed and the main living room of the house, to do any sort of household activities except nourishing the infants, to visit the relatives and market place. The cow's milk is generally tabooed for women to drink. The women and grown up girls are forbidden to eat egg and pork.

### **Bibliography:**

Bailey ,F.G.	1960	<i>Tribe Caste and Nation</i> , Oxford University Press, London
Das, M.N.	1960	Suppression of Human sacrifice among the Hill Tribes of Orissa, Vol.40, No.1, p.30, Ranchi
Das, S.Chandra	1960	Ama Kutia Bhai (Oriya), <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. IV, No.1, pp.64-68, TRB, Bhubaneswar
Elwin, V.	1957	<i>Tribal Myths of Orissa</i> , Oxford University ,London
Hardenberg, R.	2002	"Dongria Kond: Youth between Aggression and Friendship", paper presented at Inter-Congress of IUAES, Tokyo
Majumdar, B.C.	1932	The Kui of the Kandha People, Vol.12, No.4, pp.245-52, Ranchi
Nayak, Gitanjali	1976	A Study of Kutia Khond Foot, <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. XVI, No.1, pp.41-49, THRTI, Bhubaneswar
SCSTRTI	2006	<i>The Kandha of Orissa</i> , Bhubaneswar

## KEDU: A BIG FESTIVAL OF THE KUTIA KONDH \*

*K. Mohapatra*<sup>1</sup>

The amazing conglomeration of traditions, beliefs, sorrows and philosophies that together constitute and vitalize the religion of the tribes have descended from antiquity and have been preserved unimpaired to the present day. Every facet of their life covering round the year activities is intimately connected with religion. It is these aspects of their culture that give meaning and depth to their lives, and solidarity to their social structure. Among the tribe spiritual needs -the unquestionable belief of the tribals in supernatural which regulate human existence in the world is the basis of observation of many festivals and rituals.

The festivals are celebrated in three levels - family, village and region. Most of the celebrations are fixed in time and place and are observed for definite purpose, such as, good farming, sound health, safe living and so on. Besides Gods and Goddesses, the forefathers are worshiped with equal awe and respect. Every festival has two sides – sacred and secular. Along with performance of the rituals, they participate in eating, drinking, dancing, singing and socializing. Thus religious and socio-cultural aspects are always twined together in the tribal life. One such festival is 'Kedu' observed by the Kutia Kondh -a primitive section of the tribe Kondh.

KEDU in Kui, the language of the Kondh tribe, means in broader sense a large celebration, a festival. This festival is in vogue since the suppression of Meriah sacrifice and substitution of a buffalo in place of human being during the British regime. The other local names of this festival are *Biha*, *Jhagadi*, *Korubiha Dakina* and *Meriah Puja*. But the rites and mode of sacrifices differ from region to region. However, it is celebrated everywhere with great solemnity and lavish festivity. The main objective of celebration is to please the Earth Goddess (*Darni Penu*) by propitiating her with prayer and sacrifices, which used to be human beings in the past and are buffaloes at present.

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol.48, No2, 2008, pp.1-3

<sup>1</sup> Former Director, Academy of Tribal Dialects and Culture, Bhubaneswar



It is observed at community level in any one villages of the Mutha. The festival is observed at intervals of 5 to 10 years at a place for a group of villages and the duration varies from 3 to 5 days. It is held on the 1st Sunday or on the subsequent Sunday, which comes after *Phagun Punei* (full moon day between February and March). But the festival starts from Saturday and ends on Monday.

A suitable date is fixed in a meeting of the villagers and their traditional leaders, contributions are raised from the households, preparations begin in advance and guests and relatives are invited. The houses get cleaned and painted, people put on their best clothing and body decorations, kinsmen and relative flock with presents and drinking of the millet- beer 'Katul' goes on and on to make them forget all the worries, anxieties and hardship of the routine life. Except the cruel superstition of pleasing the Earth Goddess by blood for better harvest, all other paraphernalia of the festival have much socio-cultural significance.

It is a practice with the Kondhs to tease and torment the buffalo tied to the sacred post near the seat of the Mother Goddess by twisting its tail, molesting the genitals, ringing bells at the ears etc. The following utterance in their singing reveals the underlying purpose of their cruelty, in spite of sympathy for the victim:

We are sacrificing you like a human being  
Like a beloved wife and mother,  
You are like a silver and golden mother.....  
Your master sold you  
Let the sins from your anger lie on your master and not on us.....  
At present through fear of the Sahib, sons, the Pathan sons  
From thy shoulder, thy cheek we take the flesh  
In the country of former times  
We used to bury a human being.....  
Do not cry out to me, O beautiful buffalo  
Do not cry out to me, O curved horn buffalo  
As the tears stream from thine eyes  
So may it drizzle at intervals  
As the blood gushes forth  
So may the vegetation sprout  
As thy gore falls in drops  
So may the grains of rice form!

*(The Konds -Barbara M. Boal, 1982)*

It is clear from the above utterances that the cruelty is based on such superstition that if the victim suffers more the Earth Goddess will be pleased more. Hence, though they heartily feel for the sufferings of the victim, they act in a cruel manner to make it cry and bleed more and more.

Since this particular aspect of the festival hurts our feeling for the poor animals on one side and the superstitious Kondhs on the other, attempts may be

made for some, reformation in the rites. But in a secular and democratic country as ours it is a delicate issue to impose any restriction on the religious practices of any community, particularly of a tribal community. Even the British Government had to take very cautious steps to abolish human sacrifice after it was first discovered in 1835 by Lt. C. Macpherson and G.E. Russell.

Centuries ago i.e., in August 1836 this tribe for the first time featured very prominently for their heinous practices of female infanticide and human sacrifice in the report of Mr. Russell to the Madras Government. Then the British Government was quite concerned to stamp out the barbarous practices. The suppression of human sacrifice was quite a difficult task because the rites had become a national institution of the Kondhs. The primary policy pertaining to the suppression as suggested by Russell was to accomplish it by slow and gradual process and not by rash action. Time and contact of civilization were over the superstitious beliefs of the tribe. Another officer A.J.M. Mills had suggested to the Government the adoption of a persuasive and conciliatory policy. Finally, in July 19, 1845 a Meriah Agency was formed and the preamble of the Act began with the intention of the government to pursue practical measures to repress the crimes arising out of mere superstitions. Such measures were promotion of education and medical aid, construction of roads, establishment of fairs etc. An officer Captain Frye learnt Kondh language and wrote books for their education in Oriya script. As a result, gradually the Kondhs came to terms and agreed to relinquish the rites of human sacrifice on two conditions that (1) they should be at liberty to sacrifice buffaloes, monkeys and goats to their deities. With all the solemnities which were observed in human sacrifice and (2) they should be at liberty to denounce before their deities, the Government and some of its officers in particular, as the cause of their having at length relinquished the great rite. In the process, at last the practice of human sacrifice was abandoned and the Agency was abolished in 1861. But the rites have continued till today with the substitution of buffaloes for sacrifice.

After the human sacrifice stopped and the human being was replaced by a buffalo, with it the name of the festival changed from *Meriah* to *Kedu*. But other items of the rite such as the duration of the festivities, the solemnity with which the rite was being observed and the joyous congregation of people remained as before.

Keeping these facts in view, careful steps and persuasive measures need to be taken by the present Government and Voluntary Social Organizations to impress upon the Kondhs to reform their superstitious and cruel practices. First of all, the belief that Goddess Earth gets pleased with the sacrifice has to be proved false. Secondly, they may be allowed to have substitutes with less costly and less useful animals such as goats, pigs, chicken, etc. Thirdly, the festivals have to be made a great socio-cultural event with Government assistance in order to divert the focus on sacrifice alone and to minimize the religious overtones.

## SOCIAL POSITION AND PROPERTY RIGHTS OF KUTIA KONDH WOMEN \*

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

In these days, there is a growing demand to grant equal rights to women in the male dominated patriarchal societies all over the world. The former president of India, Mr. Fakirudd in Ali Ahmed in his message for the International Women's Year in 1975 has emphasized the need to improve the conditions of vast majority of women of weaker sections living in urban slums, rural and tribal areas. Articles 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitutions has provided for equality of women before law. This has given rise to a host of protective legislations for safeguarding women against various forms of oppression, exploitation and dowry harassments, provisions of equal wages, grant of equal property rights, etc. A number of women's voluntary organizations in various parts of the country have been fighting for the cause of women.

Feministic movements for liberation and equality of women against age-old sexual discrimination have started and gathered momentum in this country following the international trends and an awakening has been made. But this movement has remained more or less parochial and confined among the educated and conscious women of middle class and upper class while the vast majority of disadvantaged women living in the rural and tribal's areas have been least benefited by this.

All these Constitutional provisions, protective laws, voluntary agencies, concessions, reservations, trends and movements have not yet reached these disadvantaged women, especially those living in the tribal societies who struggle hard to eke out a precarious existence. However, despite their socio-economic disadvantages and deprivations, these poor, half-clad and impoverished tribal women enjoy a relatively better position in their society than their sisters living in the modern and advanced societies.

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXIII, No.2, 1993, pp.16-21

<sup>1</sup> Research Assistant, Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, Bhubaneswar

The tribal societies in India though, by and large, patriarchal in nature, covertly and overtly recognize and honour the multi-dimensional, invaluable and indispensable role of their industrious women in all aspects of their life and culture, and therefore, regard them with dignity and equality. So, rarely we find the unfortunate and barbarous cases of bride-burning, female feticide and infanticide or any other kind of atrocities on women in our tribal societies.

This article is about the position of women and their property rights in the Kutia Kondh Society based upon an empirical study of "Tribal Customs and Traditions" sponsored by Government of India and undertaken by the Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute of Orissa, Bhubaneswar during 1990-92. This research project has covered 07 culturally significant tribes of Orissa among whom 04 including the Kutia Kondh are identified as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG) of Orissa by Government of India.

The Kutia Kondhs are a primitive section of the great Kondh tribe of Orissa. They inhabit a remote, wild, rugged and mountainous highland country lying in the common border of Phulbani (Belghar area), Kalahandi (Lanjigarh area) and Rayagada (Chandragiri area) districts of Southern Orissa. They speak a Dravidian dialect called "Kui". Most of them are illiterate and their level of literacy barely exceeds ten percent. Their traditional subsistence is derived primarily from hunting, food gathering and shifting cultivation.

In the male dominated Kutia Kondh Society, the women on one hand, are not permitted to inherit property but on the other hand, are treated as living assets, say, feathers in the crowns of their parents; brothers and husbands for their significant contribution for the sustenance of their families and society at a large. The social prestige and value of Kutia women are derived from the fact that they are hardworking, industrious, men's life partners, homemakers, child bearers and rearers. They also bring pride and prestige to their parents, kinsmen and villagers when their prospective husbands' parents and kinsman come to beg for their hands before their parents, offering gifts of liquor and food and negotiate the bride-price, to finalize the marriage. The boy's side always tries to please and entertain the girl's side to obtain their consent. In this one sided bargain, the balance heavily tilts towards the girl's side which holds an upper hand to dictate terms to the opposite party. The girl's side tries to extract as much as possible from the boy's side as a compensation for parting with a valuable asset of their family and village.

More women in the Kutia family means more swidden plots under cultivating possession of the family, higher agricultural production and forest production, higher earnings from various sources and better economic prosperity. Therefore, the Kutia society cannot afford to treat women as second class citizens. They are taken as equal partners of men and enjoy greater freedom in matters of selecting their mates and of their work and mobility. The consent of the Kutia woman is a necessary precondition for finalizing her matrimony.

The boy's family is required to pay the bride-price (Jula) to the girl's guardians to acquire her as their bride as well as a working hand. This price is very high as compared to the Kutia economic standards. Hence, the boy and his family members cannot afford to ill treat or displease the bride, lest, she may desert her husband and return to her parents or relatives or she may elope with someone whom she likes and that will not only cause disgrace to her husband's family but also a great economic loss.

The institution of levirate (younger brother's marriage with his deceased elder brother's widow) and surrogate (marriage with wife's younger sister) prevalent in their society speaks in favour of the social and economic value of Kutia women. The marriage of a man with his deceased elder brother's widow saves him from the heavy economic burden of bride-price that he has to pay for acquiring a fresh bride. Further no bride-price is paid for marrying the widow of his family as the woman had already been acquired by his deceased brother after payment of the bride-price. Thus a woman once acquired as a bride, becomes the asset of her husband's family until her death, divorce or remarriage. Moreover by marrying the widow the younger brother also inherits the properties of his deceased brother.

Sororate is permitted under similar considerations. A man can marry his deceased wife's younger sister if the girl is willing. In this case the bride-price is reasonably relaxed as the widower's in-laws have already been paid at the time of his first marriage in their family. The Kutias say that the claim of a widower to marry his wife's younger sister and the relaxation of bride price is quite justified in view of the economic loss suffered by him for his wife's death. The widower's in-laws usually do not object to provide him their girl because he has already paid the bride-price once and it is their obligation to provide him a substitute.

Kutia women cannot inherit immovable properties. But they have subsidiary property rights which entitle them to take over the management of their deceased father's or husband's family and property establishments as long as they continue to live with the respective families. It depends upon their marital status and place of residence. As daughters, sisters whether unmarried, widow, divorced or handicapped, they have the right to be maintained in their family of orientation. As wives, daughters-in-laws and mother, they are liable to be maintained in their family of procreation, even if, they are widows, barren, old, sick and invalid. Their right to claim maintenance from the concerned family becomes void when they leave their father's family or husband's family by marriage, remarriage, elopement with a lover, divorce, as the case may be.

When a widow remarries outside her deceased husband's family and lineage and a married woman remarries an outsider by deserting her husband or by eloping with her lover, her husband's kinsmen demand a penalty from her new husband. This penalty is claimed as compensation towards the loss of the woman who is a valuable working hand and an earning member whom they have acquired after paying the bride-price to her parents and kinsmen. They sometimes resort to

violence to collect the penalty from the man if he does not entertain their claim. Often the elopement or remarriage takes place or the woman becomes pregnant by committing adultery while staying with her parents or guardians. In those cases her parents or guardians are held responsible by her husband's kinsmen against the loss or damage of their asset i.e., the woman for whom they have paid the bride price and the former become liable to pay the compensation to the latter. There are several incidents in which the husband's kinsmen have attacked the house and properties of the wife's parents to take revenge and recover their losses. In case of illegal pregnancy, the husband's kinsmen hold the option either to accept or refuse to accept the woman. If they refuse to accept her, they demand a hefty penalty that is more than two times of the bride-price they had paid to acquire her and also a penalty feast called "Mahat". "Mahat" means social prestige and in actual practice, it is demanded for restoration of the social prestige of the aggrieved kin group and the villagers of the man.

Theoretically, a Kutia woman may not inherit her paternal properties or her husband's properties, but, by virtue of her right to claim maintenance from her husband's properties or paternal properties depending upon her place of residence and marital status, she enjoys some residuary possessory rights over the properties and family establishments. A widow officiates as the head of the household, assumes the guardianship of her minor children and manages the family establishment and the properties of her deceased husband till her eldest son becomes major to take over the charge from her. A girl who is the only child of her parents can claim a share from her parent's properties even after her marriage if, she and her husband continue to stay with her parents.

There is some scope for Kutia women to possess their husband's property individually in polygynous households. The Kutia society permits polygyny. Though, monogamy is the common practice, polygyny is not rare. A Kutia man can marry more than one woman if he has adequate means to support them. In polygynous families the co- wives because of their feminine jealousy and quarrels with each other, sometimes stay in separate huts. Usually the eldest wife called, "Badli" stays with the husband and the younger wife called "Sanli" lives in a different hut. It is customary for the Sanli to obey and respect the Badli. They may share common kitchen or have separate kitchens as they may like. In their separate establishments, they are allotted with separate swidden plots, fruit bearing trees, livestock from which they derive their livelihood to maintain themselves along with their children. If there are not enough swidden plots of their husband to be shared among them, they work jointly in the field and share the produces. Besides that, the wage they earn, the minor forest produces they collect by their personal Endeavour and their earnings from all other external sources becomes their personal property. These personal properties are managed by them till the time of their death, divorce and remarriage and subsequently inherited by their children. They automatically loose these possessory rights in the event of their divorce, remarriage and elopement with lover.

The income a Kutia woman derives from her productive assets are her own. She may contribute a part of her income to her husband at the time of need. The paternal house, wet and dry lands and the kitchen garden of the husband are not divided among the co-wives. These are jointly managed and the income constitute the common fund of the family that is managed by the husband himself to meet all the common expenses for livelihood including those for rituals ceremonies, food, health care, education, repayment of debts, etc.

Though Kutia men are legitimate owners of property, it is their women who hold the purse strings of their respective families and in fact, administer the productive assets from behind the curtain. Their active participation in all kinds of economic activities and their significant contribution to the family income give them a leverage to play a decisive role in managing the family affairs. The Kutia economic system has a mode of production in which their women play an important role that tends to be found in tandem with a system of granting females access to the major means production. It is their culture that determines their sexual roles and positions.

The following facts about the extent work participation of the tribal women of Orissa corroborate the importance of Kutia women. In Orissa, the tribal women “work 16.5 hours of days. After finishing the household activities they rush to the forest or to the field for 6-8 hours on a back breaking job. In tribal households where the (land) holding is more than 5 acres, the women work in the field and participate up to 65 percent and where the holding is 1 to 5 acres the participation of women is 88 percent. The daughter (in the age group of 15-25) and the house wife who is the owner of the house, work up to 77percent and 88 percent respectively, in joint family the daughter-in-law goes to field (75percent) to work but their mother-in-laws go to field to work (62percent). Others generally look after the children or go to forest to collect *kendu* leaves or *siali* leaves and other minor forest produce” (Acharya; 1992).

In addition to holding the strings of the family purse, Kutia women build up their personal funds out of the produce of the land, tree, livestock, kitchen garden, forest collection, wage earning and the gifts and compliments they receive from their friends and relatives which they spend mostly for purchasing clothes, fancy objects, cosmetics, ornaments for themselves and their children and also for taking care of their children. Sometimes the male members of their families, i.e., their fathers, brothers and husbands take loan from them at the time of need.

Kutia women can inherit certain kinds of immovable properties. Daughters and daughter-in-laws inherit the clothing, ornaments, utensils and other household assets from their mothers, grandmothers and mother-in-laws. Of course such inheritance cannot be claimed as a matter of right but it is a traditional practice. The Kutia girl at the time of her marriage gets some gifts from her parents and relatives such as; gold and silver ornaments, cosmetics, clothing's and utensils, etc. These gift

items become her property which she can use or dispose off in any manner or share it with any one as she may like.

Despite all these, Kutia women suffer from certain social disabilities, discriminations and deprivations. Though a Kutia woman is free to choose her own mate, she must choose a man belonging to her own tribe but not belonging to her own clan. In other words, she must observe the existing customs and traditions in this regard. If she marries a man of lower caste, say, a man of 'Dom' community she is socially ostracized by her family, kinsmen and community which renders her disqualified to exercise her right to claim any maintenance from her father's or husband's properties in future. She is never readmitted into her community.

Then there are certain taboos and restrictions to limit the freedom of Kutia women. They must not do the works like ploughing, climbing the roof of the house, climbing trees, carrying a corpse, conducting rituals and animal sacrifices, sitting on a cot before her superiors, jumping over the logs lying in front of house, taking part in hunting, etc. However, this disability does not affect the relative status and importance of Kutia women significantly.

Kutia women are economically self-dependent. They are not dependent on the male folk for their sustenance. Rather the opposite is true. They can live without the help of man but man cannot think of life without them. They depend on their male kins only when they become old, sick and invalid. They have achieved this status not by their beauty and charm but by their economic independence and their indispensable roles in all spheres of social, economic and religious life.

This situation supports the views of Easter Boserup (1970) that, women's economic independence on man implies an inferior status as it is seen in caste-Hindu society and Muslim society. This kind of economic determinism assumes a univariant status structure with economic relationships being the determining factor. Undoubtedly, the Kutia women's access to and even more important, control of resources is one of the major variables favoring their prestige ranking. Bose up further said that under conditions of shifting cultivation in areas with sparse cultivation, women perform most of the work. With greater density of population and settled agriculture men do more work than women. Where land is irrigated and intensively cultivated both the sexes share the hard work. Women belonging to the first and the last categories of economy enjoy a higher status than those of the second category. Kutia women certainly come under the first category.

The central issue here is the right of Kutia women to the important means of production such as, land and forest. It is seen that they have greater access to these resources in their subsistence economy. It is a necessary pre-condition not only to social and ecological stability but also to their social mobility. In their society full-fledged patriarchy i.e., control of women both within and outside the home, has not yet been consolidated. It is primarily because of the forest based subsistence and women's control over income from this activity. Among this primitive community,



a gender based division of labour, particular within the household does not denote patriarchy. Women enjoy considerable autonomy; violence against them is rare. While control of land and its produce is heavily biased in favour of the male, there are residual rights for women and the transition process that favours the greater exclusion of women gives rise to patriarchy in other societies.

In conclusion it is worth mentioning here that, it is a difficult task to evaluate objectively women's position in any particular primitive society or primitive societies in general. In studies made so far, the status of women in the primitive societies have been misunderstood, misinterpreted and underestimated. According to Lowie (1921), "the conditions involved in the relations of men and women are many sided and it is dangerous to overweight one particular phase of them." For example the payment of bride-price being interpreted as a sale of bride is not a correct interpretation of social facts.

"The most authoritative accounts of primitive peoples of most recent years have tended to emphasize the influence of women, their ability to hold their own, the esteem in which they are held and their important roles in the social life." (Evans-Pritchard, 1965). In this respect, Kutia women are not chattels. They suffer from lesser number of feminine disabilities than the neighbouring Hindu women. Altogether their position is far from being unfavourable. They enjoy good deal of freedom.

Evans-Pritchard (1965) also held, "The primitive woman has no choice and given the duties that go with marriage; is therefore seldom able to take much part in public life. But if she can be regarded as being at a disadvantage in this respect from our point of view, she does not regard herself as being at a disadvantage, and she does not envy her men folk what we describe as their privileges. She does not desire in this respect, things to be other than they are and it would greatly puzzle her if she knew that in our society many women are unmarried and childless". This is also true for Kutia women who do not consider themselves underprivileged as compared to their men and they do not fight for social equality and they do not want to be like men. This situation corroborates the observations of Lowie (1991) that; "Neither superstitious sentiments nor man's physical superiority have produced a greater debarment of primitive women, that she is generally well treated and able to influence masculine decisions regardless of all theory as to her inferiority or impurity, that is precisely among some of the rudest people that she enjoy practical equality with her male."

**References:**

- |                                |              |   |
|--------------------------------|--------------|---|
| Ali, Almas                     | 1978-79      | Health & Genetic Problems of Kutia Kondhs of Burlubaru Village. <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. XVIII, Nos.1-4, pp. 56-62.                          |
| Annonymous                     | 1846         | The Kondhs of Hill Tribes, <i>Calcutta Rev</i> , Vol.V, pp. 22-85   |
| Bailey, F.G.                   | 1985<br>1960 | <i>Caste and Economic Frontier</i> . London, Oxford University Press.<br><br><i>Tribe, Caste and Nation</i> , London, Oxford Univ. Press. |
| Banerjee, S.                   | 1969         | <i>Ethnographic Study of the Kuvi Kondh</i> . Calcutta, Anthropological Survey of India,  |
| Behura, N.K. & B.N. Sahu       | 1970-71      | Mutha, the Traditional Political Organisation of the Kondh, <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. XVII, Nos.1-4, pp.13-21.                                |
| Das, J.K.                      | 1961         | <i>Tribes of Orissa</i> , Census of India   |
| Friend-Pereira, J.A            | 1902         | <i>Customs of Kondhs</i> , <i>Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal</i> . Vol.71, pp.1-28.   |
| Mazumdar, B.C.                 | 1932         | The Kui or the Kondh People, <i>Man in India</i> , Vol.XII, pp. 245-252.  |
| Patnaik, N. & P.S. Das Patnaik | 1982         | <i>The Kondh of Orissa</i> , Bhubaneswar, T.H.R.T.I.  |
| Patnaik, U. N.                 | 1964-65      | Reminiscences of an Administrative Officer in the Kondh Hills. <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. VI, No.2, pp. 29-37.                                 |
| Patnaik, Uma Charan            | 1945         | The Kondhas of the Hills, One Century of British Rule (1836 to 1946). <i>Mod. Rev</i> . Vol. IXXVIII, pp. 214-218.                        |
| Raman, Leeia V.                | 1957-58      | The Kondh of Phulbani, <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol.11, pp.35-40  |
| Rao, L.M.                      | 1940         | The Kondh, a Tribal people of South Orissa, <i>Mod. Rev.</i> , Vol.-XVII, pp. 199-200.  |
| Russell, R.V.& Hiralal         | 1916         | <i>Tribes Caste's of Central Provinces of India</i> , Vol.III, Part-III, pp.-464-481.   |
| Sharama, Krishna               | 1981         | <i>The Kondha of Orissa</i> , Delhi, Concept Publication.   |
| Thurston, E.                   | 1909         | <i>Castes &amp; Tribes of Southern India</i> , Vol.III, pp. 357-415.  |
| Watts, Neville A.              | 1970         | <i>The Half-Clad Tribals of Eastern India</i> , Orient Longmans, Bombay.  |

# HEALTH AND GENETIC PROBLEM OF KUTIA KONDHS OF BURLUBARU VILLAGE IN PHULBANI DISTRICT (ORISSA) \*

*Almas Ali*<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

The report on the health and genetic problem of based on field work in the Burlubaru village, a Kutia Kondh village located in Belghar area of Phulbani district, Orissa. The Kutia Kondhs are a primitive section of the great Kondh tribe which was once noted for its hurried practices of human sacrifice and female infanticide.

The Kondhs are most numerous and are mainly concentrated in Koraput, Phulbani and Kalahandi districts. The advanced section of the tribe is scattered throughout the State and live mixed with non-tribal people in the different degrees of economic parabiosis.

The Kutia Kondhs are even to-day away from the pale of civilization on the mountain fastnesses and lead a life of squalor, poverty and misery. Either any detailed ethnographic study or any medical anthropology of the Kondhs let alone the isolated primitive section, is available. The present study is a beginning of systematic survey of the little known problems of health, genetics and nutrition among the tribe. The present study centers round these problems.

## **Objectives**

The main objective of the present survey was to identify special and specific problems concerning their health aspects. A systematic survey work was therefore undertaken in identifying these problems with the views of taking effective measures in formulating definite health programmes and of course implementing them in the near future for the benefit and well-being of this particular tribal group.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 1-4, 1978 -79, pp.56-62.

<sup>1</sup> Special Officer, Tribal Health, THRTI, Bhubaneswar

### **Burlubaru, the Study Village**

The village Burlubaru lies at distance of 1½ Kms. from Belghar Police-Station on the Ambadola-Belghar Road in Tumudibandh Block of Phulbari district. It is situated at a height of about 2250 ft. above sea level and lies roughly on 19.47-N latitude and 83.44-E longitude, on the north-east fringe of the Eastern ghat. It is surrounded by wooden hills and thick forest intersected by many perennial hill streams. The area of the village is about 66.64 acres and it comes under the special project area known as the Kutia Kondh Development Agency (K.K.D.A). The village consists of 20 house-holds of 107 people all belonging to the Kutia Kondhs.

### **Materials and Method**

103 persons out of the total population of 107 were examined physically, clinically and the blood samples were tested for malaria parasite, sickle-cell gene and G-6 P.D. (Glucose 6-Phosphate Dehydrogenase) deficiency. Out of 103 persons studied 52 were males and 51 were females. The youngest of the population examined was only 3 months' old whereas the oldest of 72 years of age.

#### **The following methods were used for the survey of the study village**

- (a) A thorough clinical examination of the people of the village was made and in some cases with the help of laboratory data the exciting diseases in the study village were diagnosed and general disease pattern was established.
- (b) Survey of nutritional status in the sample families was carried out only by the help of clinical assessment.

#### **Clinical Examination: Inspection and Measurement**

The overall nutritional appearance of each patient was appraised to find out whether a person is grossly underweight or has generalized skin lesions of other indications of unsatisfactory health, possibly related to diet. Changes in hair, eyes skin, neck, mouth, teeth knee and ankle jerk reflexes, oedema of lower extremities and many other signs suggesting possible nutritional deficiency were evaluated.

- (c) Data on hygiene, sanitation, religious beliefs, about health practices, traditional methods of treatment, present health condition and health facilities and medical care available in the village were collected by interviewing people of the village.
- (d) In the depth investigation with special reference to genetic disease such as sickle cell disease and red-cell enzyme deficiency (G-6-PD) was carried out with the help of following methods:-
  - (i) For detection of sickle-cell disease the simple sickling test was conducted using sodium-meta-bisulphite.

- (ii) For detection of G-6-PD deficiency Breistins' method was adopted using 2-6 Dichloro-Phenol Indo-phenol and Phenacin-metha-sulphate.
- (iii) For detection of malarial parasite thick and thin blood films were taken and examined.

### **Observation, Finding & Discussions**

From the survey the following health problems have emerged:-

In the matter of health and sanitation Kutia Kondhs of the village are very backward and primitive. Their knowledge regarding health is rudimentary. They cultivate land and grow their own food. They take buffalo meat, beef, and pork, but there is inadequate supply of such animal protein. Their staple food is rice though they are fond of *ragi* gruel. There is no regulated menu for their daily diet. The cereals and millets such as *ragi* and rice which are produced by them hardly last for about 4 months and for the rest of the 8 months they depend on edible wild roots, fruits and leaves. Fruit such as mango and jack fruit provide food to them for about one to two months. They prepare gruel from mango stones. Thus in their diet fat and protein content is very inadequate and deficiencies in their diet are both quantitative and qualitative. The result is malnutrition which is most common in the study village. The Kutias are very much addicted to Mohua and Salap liquor. One of their common drinks is 'Katalu'. Consumption of such alcoholic drinks aggravates liver diseases. Thus, cirrhosis of liver has been found to be one of the common diseases among them. Consciousness regarding bodily cleanliness is lacking particularly among the children and women. Lack of personal hygiene causes skin and infectious diseases. They do not take bath for days together. Most of them do not brush their teeth and therefore dental and skin diseases are most common among the Kutias.

### **Type of Diseases prevalent (Disease Pattern)**

Medical examination of the 103 people of the study village indicates that almost all people were found to have suffered from one type of illness or other. Most common disease is Malaria. Other type of diseases are water-borne and due to unhygienic condition of the surrounding in which they live and malnutrition and low intake of food. The source of drinking water is the hill stream which is not only polluted but also has high content of graphite causing irritation in the gastrointestinal tract resulting in gastric discomfort, abdominal pain, hyper-acidity and constipation

The hill stream serves many purposes; it provides water for drinking and cooking food and cleaning utensils. It is the place where people bathe, wash their body after defecation and clean their cattle. It is for this reason that incidence of diarrhea and dysentery (Amoebic and Bacillary), Typhoid and other gastric diseases are very common. Occurrence of helminthic (worm) infection, viz., *Taenia solium*, *taenia bovis*, *Ascaris Lumbricoides* (Tapeworm and round worm), etc. is high due

to their food habits. The indication of T.B. (Tuberculosis) is also high the most common form of it being pulmonary tuberculosis. Semi-starvation, inferior diet and unhygienic living conditions, attribute to the prevalence of T.B. their houses are rectangular in ground plan with some 2 rooms while most of them having only one room each. The walls made of planks of Sal wood in most cases and of bamboo wattle plastered with mud in a few cases. In all cases the roof is grass thatched. There are no windows. Hardly any light gets into the hut. Poor ventilation and close contact with infected members of the family are largely responsible for wide spread contagion.

Only 3 cases of Leprosy were seen in the study village. But in Rangaparu, a village 3 ½ Kms. from Burlubaru, leprosy was rampant. Though no health survey was conducted in this village but our preliminary visit brought out as many as 23 leprosy patients in this village. They were not segregated from their society and the disease spread widely as a result of close contact with the infected patients.

No case of yaws was detected in the study village. Similarly, no case of filariasis was also present and this disease is perhaps not common in this area. The incidence of some viral disease is common particularly that of the upper respiratory tract with symptoms of rhinitis (running nose) pharyngitis, bronchitis, cold, cough and fever. Skin diseases are very common on this village. Scabies tops the list among all the skin disease. Other skin diseases are also common. Venereal diseases (V.D.), viz, syphilis and gonorrhea is not common among Kutias. Cardio-vascular diseases (heart disease), diabetes mellitus, renal diseases (Kidney diseases) are not so common. Diseases of ear also are not common. Dental diseases are very common. Hypertension (high blood pressure) was not seen in any of the individuals of the study village. On the contrary low blood pressure was very common. One of the most interesting observations was that not a single person even the every old persons were neither bald nor had their hair grown grey. Child mortality rate is not very high. Adult marriage is practiced among the Kutias. During our survey we found out many unmarried girls of 22 to 26 years of age.

### **Nutrition Assessment by Clinical Methods**

Nutrition survey (only nutrition assessment) through clinical study was also conducted during this survey to assess the prevalence of malnutrition and under nutrition in the study village. Unfortunately no diet survey could be conducted, which is a must in any nutrition survey to define the deity and the dietary pattern of the population.

On clinical assessment 43 cases showed one or more signs or symptoms of nutritional deficiency. Most common deficiencies observed were:-

#### **1. Under Nutrition:-**

- (a) Low weight in relation to height.
- (b) Diminished skin folds.

- (c) Lethargy-especially in children.
- (d) Exaggerated skeletal prominence.
- (e) Loss of elasticity of skin.

**2. Protein-Calorie Deficiency:-**

- (a) Oedema
- (b) Muscle wasting.
- (c) Moon face etc.

**3. Vitamin 'A' (Retinol) Deficiency:-**

- (a) Xerosis of skin.
- (b) Xerosis conjunctivae.
- (c) Keratomalacia.
- (d) Bitot' sspots.

**4. Vitamin B1 (Thiamin) Deficiency:-**

- (a) Loss of ankle jerks.
- (b) Calf muscle tenderness.

**5. Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin) Deficiency:-**

- (a) Angular stomatitis.
- (b) Chelosis.
- (c) Magenta tongue.
- (d) Corneal vascularization.

**6. Vitamin C (Riboflavin) Deficiency:-**

- (a) Spongy and bleeding gums.
- (b) Petechiae.

**7. Vitamin Deficiency:-**

- (a) Active rickets in children.
- (b) Healed rickets in children and few adults.
- (c) Octomalacia in adults with local skeletal deformities.

**8. Iron Deficiency:-**

- (a) Pallor of Mucous Membrane (Anaemic).
- (b) Koilonchia.

It may be emphasized that the aforementioned signs are largely non-specific and clinical examination alone is not sufficient to establish a clear and definite diagnosis of nutritional disease and deficiencies. A thorough diet survey and biochemical studies revealing confirmatory and essential dietary and biochemical data are required for the appraisal of nutritional status. Future studies of nutritional stress will throw more light on the problem.

### Genetic Problems of Kutia Kondhs

The incidence of sickle-cell disease is quite common among the people of the study village. So is the case of Enzyme Glucose-6- Phosphate Dehydrogenase (G-6-PD) deficiency in the blood.

The term sickle-cell disease is applied to all hereditary (genetic) disorders in which the red-cells contain Hemoglobin-S or (HB-S). HB-S is much less soluble than normal hemoglobin particularly in the reduced state. When reduced it undergoes changes with the result that the cells which contain it become markedly deformed, assuming a sickle-shape hence the name sickle-cell disease and the phenomenon is known as sickling. Sickle-cell disease is inherited as a medelian dominant. The common sickle-diseases are sickle-cell trait, sickle-cell anaemia and sickle-cell thalassaemia.

The red-cell enzyme G-6-PD deficiency is a genetically transmitted disorder by a sex-linked gene of intermediate dominance. Full expression of the trait occurs in hemizygous males, in whom the single x-chromosome carries the mutant gene and in homozygous females in whom both sex-chromosomes (XX) carry a mutant gene. Intermediate expression is found in heterozygous females in whom expression is variable.

103 blood samples were collected from the study village. 16 cases with G-6-PD deficiency were detected and the incidence of sickle-cell hemoglobin (sickle-cell gene) was detected in 22 cases. Such a high incidence of sickle-cell disease and G-6-DP enzyme deficiency calls for immediate remedial attention.

The abnormality of these two genes exposes the Kutias to: 1. Drug induced as well as other forms of hemolytic anaemias with all its known complications and 2. Congenital malformation.

### Malaria

Malaria is very common in this area and more so in the study village and manifests its typical clinical symptoms.

All the blood samples were tested for the detection of malaria parasite (MP), with the help of thick as well as thin blood films. The incidence of positive cases with malaria parasite in the blood smear was not very high (only 14 positive cases). All of them belong to the species *Plasmodium falciparum*. But clinically with the help of past history of the illness (Anaemnesis) and through clinical examination it was found that at least 63 persons are suffering or had suffered in the recent past, by malaria infection. This was also evident from a very high incidence of heptosplenomegaly (enlargement of liver and spleen), 18 persons are suffering from Malaria when the survey was undertaken. Mostly children were suffering from typical signs and symptoms of high fever of intermittent type with shivers and profuse sweating even though the clinical and laboratory investigation for the



identification of Malaria parasite did not tally always. But it can be explained by the fact that at the time of collection of blood samples presumably, the parasites were absent, though in reality the persons may be suffering from Malaria. From this survey it is evident that among the inhabitants of Burlubaru village the incident of Malaria (*P.falciparum*) is quite high. An interesting fact to note is that the mortality rate from Malaria is not high at all.

### **Malaria and Genetic Disorders**

Presumably these hilly areas are hyperendemic or mesoendemic for Malaria infection. The Kutia Kondhs have been possibly exposed to Malaria infection for the last several hundred years and as a result such mutations might have occurred in them. The heterozygous advantage in affording protection against Malaria, particularly against *P. falciparum* is known and this possibly must be the genesis of such a high incidence of sickle-cell disease and red cell enzyme G- 6-PD deficiency.

Other side of the problem is still more interesting and at the same time alarming which calls for immediate attention of health authorities in particular. In eradication of Malaria the role of red-cell enzyme deficiency G- 6- PD should be given due emphasis. Moreover we know, that Malaria is treated with anti - Malaria drugs like Chloroquine, Camoquine, Primaquine, etc, which in turn can induce acute hemolytic anaemias in persons having this deficiency and in some cases this may be fatal. So, instead of saving them from the grip of Malaria we can do great harm by giving anti-malarial drugs to persons who are G-6-PD deficient. So this may lead to some serious complications resulting in severe jaundice and anaemia and sometimes may lead to even death.

So by the help of this survey a thorough screening for G- 6-PD deficiency was done in the village inhabited by this primitive tribal group. Record has been made regarding the frequency of the incidence of G-6-PD deficiency in this Kutia Kondhs of Burlubaru village. Hence indiscriminate use of anti-Malaria drugs for treatment as well as for prevention has to be given with precaution taking into view of this particular factor. This particular type of phenomenon thus not only becomes a problem for the geneticist but also to be public Health authorities as well as to the Tribal Welfare Development authorities.

### **Superstitious Beliefs regarding Diseases**

On interviewing the residents of the study village we found out that these Kutia Kondhs generally believe in the prevalence of benevolent and malevolent spirits, which affect and control their lives. They appease the malevolent spirits that bring misfortune, disease and consequently death. In obedience of religious beliefs deeply rooted in the Kutias invariably call on their village priest (Jani) also popularly Known as 'Kutaka'.

They diagnose anger of deity or evil spirits as causing illness, thus according to them the etiology and pathogenesis of any disease is nothing but

mainly due to anger of evil spirits. Hence, the Kutakas (priest) perform rituals with animal sacrifice to please the evil spirits. It usually starts from small animals like hen, pigeon, etc. and ends up in bigger animals buffalo sacrifice are very common amongst them. Mostly, Kutia Kondh depends on such priests and witch doctors for help during their illness. Because of this belief they usually do not prefer to go to dispensaries or hospitals to avail modern medical treatment.

But in the study village the situation is gradually changing. This age-old tradition and belief and as well as their attitude towards modern medicine has also changed considerably during the last few years and this is mainly due to good social work done by one devoted lady worker of Utkal Naba Jivan Mandal-Shrimati Radhamoni Sahu (popularly known as Apa) in this village, who is living with them for the last 12 years, i.e. from 1967 onwards. She is helping these tribals in all their difficulties and doing immensely good work in this village. She also advises them at the time of their need to go to the hospital or even to the primary health centre to consult the doctor for treatment whenever these tribals suffer from any serious illness, thus indirectly popularizing modern medicine and treatment amongst the Kutias.

### **Existing Health Service in the Study Village**

Unfortunately, the existing health facilities and service in this village is very low. The salient features of the health service and medical care are given below:-

1. There is neither hospital nor dispensary here.
2. The nearest hospital is situated 1 ½ Kms. away, i.e. at Belghar. The hospital is a six bedded one and is practically the one and only source of getting medical aid for the residents of the study village. But unfortunately it runs without a doctor. No doctor is prepared to come to this study village for the inaccessibility to the place. Hence virtually the Kutias of this village do not have any access to the health facilities.
3. The only other alternative for them is the Primary Health Center at Tumudibandha which is about 25 Kms. from this study village. The distance has to be covered by foot and that too through dense forests and hills, thus creating natural geographical barrier, for the utilization of health services by the unfortunate villagers.
4. In this study village no special health survey of this kind was conducted in the past to understand the health problems of the Kutia Kondhs.
5. No special campaigns have been ever undertaken so far in this village for eradicating any dreaded disease.
6. The Kutias of Burlubaru village were never covered in routine campaign for eradication of mass-killers like cholera, small-pox, malaria, etc. (excepting for

the fact that a Malaria Supervisor has visited this village only twice during last 3 years).

### **Conclusions and Suggestions**

1. Our survey shows that the Kutias of the study village are interested in getting themselves medically examined and in taking up medical allopathic treatment for their illness. During our camp in the village, not only survey and research was conducted for collection of data on medical anthropology but also several medicines were distributed free among people after proper diagnosis of illness.
2. Most of the diseases afflicting the Kutia Kondhs of this village are mainly due to insanitary condition, lack of personal hygiene, lack of health education and ignorance.
3. There is utter ignorance among the Kutias about the causes of their maladies. The only way to enlighten them in matters concerning health is to give these tribals health education through adult education classes. In addition health education may be imparted to tribal children by introducing topics on health in school syllabus.
4. The tribal people are poor and they cannot afford those foods of rich nutritious contents which are not locally available. It is therefore necessary to analyze the food value of the foodstuff which are locally available and popularize such nutritious food as to provide a balanced diet to the tribals. In other words it implies that a thorough nutritional survey including all the three vital components, viz. (1) clinical assessment (2) diet survey (3) bio-chemical studies is imperative for the appraisal of the nutritional status of this village.
5. Detail knowledge about various types of herbal medicines and their medical efficiency is overdue. A systematic study of this matter and proper collection of various samples of medicinal herbs should form part of any health survey in the Kutia areas. Since the toxic side effects of the herbal medicines are minimal it is therefore advisable to make such medical ingredients popular in place of synthetic drugs having considerable toxic effects.
6. It is suspected that the water of the hill streams of this area which the Kutias used for drinking and for cooking meals contains graphite. The Kutias complain about indigestion and irritation in stomach. These troubles may be due to graphite content in water.
7. The survey indicated high incidence of tuberculosis in the study village. It is due to insanitary condition and contagion by living huddled together in hut without ventilation. Proper housing condition and nutritious diets will surely check the disease.

8. Incidence of leprosy was not found to be high in the study village, but in a nearby village, viz. Rangaparu its incidence was quite high among Kutias. They are not secluded from their society and live in close contact with family members. So, a leprosy asylum will stop spreading this disease.
9. It is necessary to carry out a study to find out what factors are responsible for the healthy growth of hair among the Kutias in the study village.
10. The causes of low blood pressure (Hypo-tension) which was found among the Kutias require investigation.
11. The Kutias have a strong habit of drinking alcoholic beverages. Before any attempt is made to stop this habit, it is absolutely necessary to analyse all types of beverages chemically and find out if they contain any vitamins. Any proposal for stopping the habit of drinking should include suggestion of substitute which will supply the same vitamins.
12. The survey indicated that the incidence of sickle-cell disease (sickle-cell trait and anaemia) and the red- cell enzyme-deficiency (G-6-PD) is quite high. It is necessary to carry out a detailed investigation to find out if any other types of genetic diseases are existing in the population of the village. Therefore this aspect of the problem has to be investigated in a special survey to find out the epidemiology of such serious genetic diseases. Each of the genetic hazards needs special preventive and curative measure.
13. A very high incidence of Malaria was observed in the study village. So is the case with the genetic G-6-PDenzyme deficiency. Moreover, we know that Malaria is treated with anti-Malaria drugs which in turn can induce acute haemolytic anaemia in persons with this deficiency and in some cases it can also lead to death. It is necessary to inform this situation to the N.M.E.P. authorities as well as other Health authorities who are in charge of eradicating Malaria so that they do the screening of G-6-PD deficiency before administering anti-Malaria drugs indiscriminately.

### **Acknowledgement**

The author is deeply indebted to Dr. N. Patnaik, Director, T.H.R.T.I. Bhubaneswar for his valuable guidance and suggestions.

# ETHNIC ASPECTS OF INDIAN SAGO PALM (*CARYOTA URENS-L*) : AN ETHNO-BOTANICAL STUDY AMONG KUTIA KANDHA \*

*Mihir Kumar Jena<sup>1</sup>*  
*Klaus Seeland*  
*Kamala KumariPatnaik*

## ABSTRACT

*The traditional uses of Indian Sago Palm (*Caryotaurens-L*) by Kutia Kandha of Phulbani district of southern Orissa are usually not known by many. The present paper, therefore, deals in these plant species which are intimately interwoven in the social, cultural, ceremonial and many other aspects of the traditional life style of Kutia Kandha. Along with the precise description of the plant, the indigenous way of fermentation and extraction process of Toddy (liquor) from the plant parts are given. Toddy is considered as the sole source of food and energy for Kutia Kandha living in southern parts of Orissa. The data were collected during the Ethno-Botanical Tour of the Kutia Kandha habitat made by the authors.*

## Introduction

Many authors have collected certain information on the studies on ethno-botany in different tribal areas of Orissa State (Rai et. al,1970; Saxenna and Dutta, 1975; Mishra and Dubey,1991-92; Pal, 1980; Bannerji, 1971; Sahoo, 1986; Choudhury et. al, 1975 etc.). None of them has reported on a particular plant species, which has a significant role on the social, cultural and ritual life style of the KutiaKandha. Hence, in the present investigation attempts have been made to study in detail about the traditional relationship between Indian Sago Palm (*Caryota Urens-L*) and Kutia Kandha of Phulbani district.

Kutia Kandha is one of the many different sub tribes of the Kandha Tribe, the study on which is of great fascination among research scholars so far as their organization, cultural pattern and ethnicity of life style are concerned. Most of the

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXIII, Nos. 3&4, 1993, pp.29-33.

<sup>1</sup> All the authors are from Parija P.G. Deptt. of Botany, Revenshaw College, Cuttack, Odisha

people belonging to this tribe are living in hill tracts, i.e. in the dense forest surrounded by hills and mountains. The Kutia Kandha are not fully pastoral or agricultural community. Mostly they live upon the forest products like tubers, fruits and wild herbs, leafy vegetables, etc.

Hunting is also another important source of their livelihood. They procure and consume animal flesh whenever available. Scanty agricultural output from land and non-availability of food during lean periods has made them to go for liquors produced in any form. They collect toddy from certain plant species. Distilled/fermented liquor is prepared by their indigenous method. This habit is not socially prohibited irrespective of sex and age. Consumption of liquor is approved by the society both in ceremonial and religious functions. The environmental condition viz. the high terrain topography and climatic factor have made them somehow perpetual addicts.

Country toddy is usually collected from date palms (*Phoenix Sylvestris*), the tree being extensively available in the tribal localities. However, the sago palm (*Caryota Urens-L*) is an important species in southern Orissa. In the present investigation the style of access of Indian Sago Palm tree to the life of Kutia Kandha residing in Belghar of Phulbani district of Orissa is studied. Besides attempts have been made to study the association of this plant with their ethnicity in various aspects of their socio-cultural life. Association of Kutia Kandha with this tree (*Caryota-Urens-L*) is known from time immemorial. This is also known in English as Kittul Palm/ The Fish tail Sago Palm. According to Kutia Kandha it is popularly known as *Mada Mara* (*Mada* means liquor, *Mara* means tree). In Oriya it is known as *Salap*.

#### **Abbreviations**

**KK-** Kutia Kandha

**E-** English

**O-** Oriya

#### **Description of *Caryota Urens* (Sago Palm)**

Sago palm tree are commonly found in some parts of Agency Areas of Orissa (Haines, 1921-25). The seed keeps up its dormancy for a prolonged period that is overcome after two to three years and starts germinating in suitable environmental conditions. The tree attains a height up to 15 to 20 feet with leaflets (look like those of maiden hair fern), leaves 10 to 12 feet broad and petioles very stout. Inflorescences of the tree usually come out during October-November and remain fresh till March to April. The stem is erect, unbranched, round and smooth. Sometimes saplings are planted in a kitchen garden and at the side of the avenues. According to Kutia Kandha the tree grows better on hill slopes and foot hills than in any other place. A tree can produce Toddy up to three years before it withers. The tree attains its maturity at about 15 to 20 years.

### **Preparation of Musical Drum from Root Base (KK-Daki, E-Root base, O-Muli)**

Different parts of Sago Palm trees have contributed a lot to the material culture of Kutia Kandha. A musical drum [KK-*Tapka*], mostly used in occasions like Meriah festival [KK—*Baikatina*, E- Animal Sacrifice Ceremony], New Year festival [KK- *Punikalu*] is made out of the root base of this palm. The dome shaped root base, which is hollow at the top and blunt at the bottom, is cut from the palm of various ages after they die. The external lateral roots are cleaned by sharp edged knives. Each of such cut pieces look like a bowl. A tanned skin (preferably of a cow) is then cut into size to tie over the open end of the bowl shaped root base. A young, tender and flexible bamboo stem [KK-*Manisira*] is used as a rope to tie the skin over the open space in order to make it more tight and perfect. Gum [extracted from an herb called *Jrikeni* (KK)] is pasted around the flexible bamboo. That makes the perfect musical drum.

A matured tree trunk is cut into two equal halves in a longitudinal section with the help of an axe. The two hollow pieces obtained from it are used as drain to irrigate crop fields.

### **Process of Collecting Sago**

The stem of young palm is more important because its pith generally contains a good quality of Sago. The pith (KK- *Jendi*, E- Pith, O-*Manja*) is collected at the premature death of a Sago Palm. Sago is collected and sundried. They use the Sago in different ways, viz. simply boil it to make their food, prepare chapatti out of the flour and prepare various types of cakes on different occasions. Dried Sago is also stored for use in the lean periods.

### **Yielding Strong Fiber from Leaf Sheath**

Fibres collected from leaf sheaths are very strong. They use these fibers for tying up the clump of the cleaning broom [*Thysanolaena maxima*]. T, maxima is known to them as "*Satrangra*" and its inflorescence is known as "*Seperaka*". The culm of the plant is finely cut and sharpened. They are tied together with fiber (extracted from the Sago Palm leaf sheath) to make combs. Besides, they use the plant fibers for preparing strings of musical instruments, net to trap birds, jungle fowl and snares, to catch small wild animals for food.

### **Yielding "Toddy" from Inflorescence (KK-Kama) and Pith (KK-Jendi)**

The inflorescence is considered as the best part of the plant for collecting Toddy. They simply make fresh transverse cut [about half an inch] from the hanging terminal end of the inflorescence. Then they tie the earthen pot at the neck of fresh cut end. This process is done successively thrice in a day [morning, mid-day and evening] during summer and twice in winter.

Each time a fresh cut is made in order to avoid blockage of Today flow, which may occur due to drying up of the terminal end or for any sort of infections,

etc. However, they also prepare Today out of pith. However, the Today is used to cook meat in the forest when water is not available. However, the today helps in maintaining a thermodynamic balance between the body and the surroundings in different seasons.

### **Indigenous Fermentation Process (KK-Madang Manipaa)**

The Toddy is sweet because of its high sugar content. Very sweet Toddy sometimes causes loose motion. Among the tribe, different age-groups of male and female consume Toddy. They are aware of the fact of the low and high power of the fermented Toddy and they are also conscious of allowing particular drink of specific power to particular age group. Hence, according to the needs of the age-groups, they ferment the juice at the time of collection. However, they adopt the indigenous method of their own to specify the power of fermentation for different age groups of a male and female folk. They select bark of *Holarrhanta antidy senterica* (KK-Kudu mara, O-Kuduchi), root bark of *Cassia fistula* (KK-Pundenimara, O-Sunari, E-Indian Laburnam/Purging Cassia), root of *Cissampelos Pareira* (KK-Dindidipatulla, O-Akanbindi, E-False Pareira Brava), bark of *Mangifera Indica* (KK-Maskamara, O-Amba, E-Mango) and fruit of *Bahunia Vahlia* (KK-Paeritulla, O-Siali) as the major fermenting agents. Huskless grains of *Oryza sativa* (KK-Kulinga, O-Dhana, E-Paddy) and *Panicum miliare* (KK-Kueri, O-Suan, E-Little millet), are common fomenters. These are generally kept inside the pitcher to collect the juice, before the pitcher is tied to the cut end of inflorescences. The knowledge about fermentation of Toddy is inherited from generation to generation. The process is very simple. As per the required power/ strength of the Toddy, the selected part is kept inside an empty earthen pot meant for collection of Toddy. It appears these plant parts help Toddy to ferment quickly within 8 to 12 hours without any difficulty.

### **Property Ownership**

The tree is a valuable property of Kuttia Kandha, because of this nutritious Toddy. In fact, Toddy plays an important role in making a tribal society mentally, physically and socially fit to carry out their work efficiently. The tree are owned either individually or family wise. But the person who plants it gets its ownership. Sometimes the family owned trees are divided among the family members. However, women ownership is rare among the tribe.

The owner reserves the right to tap inflorescence of the tree for the Toddy. In the event of the owner's inability or old age, he chooses a man who would collect the juice from his tree. After owner dies the tree is transferred to his family members, mostly to sons. In most cases, it is the will of the owner that decides the future owner of the tree. He may transfer his ownership to his legacy holders or to his relatives or any other person belonging to his village.

Some tribal people have divulged that in ancient days liquor was prepared from the tree like *Mangifera Indica*, *Madhuka longifolia* (KK-Pujumara, O-Mahula, E-Mowra butter tree), *Attocarpus terophyllus* (KK-Pansimara, O-Panas, E-Jackfruit),



*Musa sapientum* (KK-Tademara, O-Kadali, E-Plantain) and molasses. But Toddy from Sago Palm tree is considered as the best among such liquors. Toddy is sometimes sold at the rate of one *dumuni* (a unit) for one rupee. Good yielding trees are sometimes sold at a rate of maximum one thousand rupees per tree. However, producing the most valuable Toddy from Indian Sago Palm is the “inherited tradition” among Kutia Kandha from time immemorial.

### **Sago Palm Trees- A Place for Social Intercourse**

The place where the people sit and drink the Toddy is called *madangbasa*. This place is specially chosen by the people for exchanging their thoughts, ideas, isms, feelings, decisions, etc. In a forest where there is more than one Toddy plant tree, people choose to sit under the youngest tree or at a place where Toddy can be brought conveniently from the collecting spot. Many decisions pertaining to village conflicts and misunderstanding for attending court for common purpose, choosing new forest patches for shifting cultivation and many other type of decisions are often taken at *Madang basa* by mutual discussion. Discussions, affecting other's sentiments and thoughts, or hampering social welfare, are however not entertained at *Madang basa*. They use a big spoon called *Dumuni* made out of gourd of *Lagenariapiceraria* (KK-Anka, O-Lau, E-Bottle gourd) to distribute Toddy equally among people participating in the discussion.

Guests are specially treated with an extra *Dumuni* of Toddy. It is also customary to offer a *Dumuni* full of Toddy to a friend for mutual interaction. Female folks, who occasionally visit the *Madangbasa*, are served Toddy separately. On no occasion this method of distribution is changed. In other words, every individual is entertained with Toddy at *Madangbasa*.

In almost all the rituals Toddy is offered to their gods and goddesses and mainly to their ancestral spirits (KK-*Dukeli*). In case of the death of an owner of the tree, his successor has to perform witch *puja* during his first Toddy collection. On this occasion, astrologers (KK-*Kutaka*), priest (KK-*Jani*) and headman (KK-*Majhi*) of the village are invited to the spot. The astrologer invokes the owner's spirit and chants “we are cutting your trees for Toddy. May your goodwill be with us. May your tree secrete sweet, tasty and plenty of Toddy for our children (KK-*Miladali*)”. Then the Toddy is distributed among themselves according to the status and age.

When the owner of an immature tree dies, his soul has to pass through a critical test in a queer manner. If the Toddy collected from the tree (when the tree attains maturity) is plenty and sweet on taste, then it is believed that the departed soul had good and healthy feelings for the village folk. Or else, he is blamed as a wicked person.

If due to any unknown reason, a palm tree yields less Toddy, they perform a ritual. The village astrologer performs a *puja* by offering rice, leaves of *Bauhinia vahlii* and *Themdaarund inacea* (KK-Bika, O-*Chhona*, E- Thatch grass) to the tree to

detect the evil spirit and to satisfy it. Fruits of *Semecarpus anacardium* (KK-Ganju, O-Bhalia, E-Marking nut tree) are kept in a packet secretly inside the tree to avoid the evil eyes of the spirit.

In many cases they get a positive result and thus they become contented. However, the relationship of such rituals with the secretion of Toddy is ambiguous to others.

### Aesthetic Scenario

In certain folk songs the aesthetic sense associated to the tree is often sung. In one folksong about the tree, their affinity for the Toddy is reflected. It goes like this.

“There was a Sago Palm tree.  
Its Toddy developed my appetite.  
I drank it to my full satisfaction.  
It developed my addition and hunger also, which demanded meat.  
I want it and could have it. Then I slept a sound sleep.”

A conversation of love between lovers is represented in a Koraputian Kandha folk song which reads as “*Madamarasinan gadokari takarinanga, piopatabais angade.....*”

Further, Toddy relieves pains and agony, sorrows and sufferings.

### Conservation Policy

The tree is cared by the Kutia Kandha for its contribution to their social life, cultural patterns, aesthetic life etc. The people deeply love this tree as it provides them with food and drink. It is also provided for a lot to their art, craft and material culture. The Toddy plays its role in relaxing the pain from hard labour of the day and is indispensable for rituals and festivals. Its contribution has motivated them to preserve and conserve the species in their locality. Planting a Sago Palm tree and dedicating it to the interest of the local people is the noblest deed which one can do to be ever remembered by Kutia folks. The tree stands as a mother, providing its Toddy- the elixir vital by having which people of all ages survive and enjoy. Kutia Kandha, thus, feels ill at its ill, well at its well.

### Bibliography

1. Chaudhuri, H.N. Ray, Pal, D. C. & Tarafdar, C.R. (1975)  
“Less known uses of some plants from the tribal areas of Orissa” *Bull. Bot. Survey. India*, Vol. 17, Nos. 1-4, PP. 132-36.
2. Haines, H.H. (1921-1925)  
“Botany of Bihar & Orissa” Vol. 1-3, Abelson & Co, London.

3. Mishra, S.C & Dubey, A.K.(1991-1992)  
"Medicinal use of some commonly occurring plants by tribals of Mayurbhanj",  
Department of Botany, Bhanja Bharati, Orissa.
4. Mudugal, V. & Pal D.C. (1980)  
"Medicinal plants used by tribals of Mayurbhanj (Orissa)" - *Bull, Bot, Sury, India*.  
Vol. 22, Nos. 1-4, PP. 59-62.
5. Pal, D.C. (1980)  
"Observation of Folklore about plants used in veterinary medicine in Bengal, Orissa &  
Bihar". *Bull, Bot, Sury, India*. Vol.22, Nos .1-4 pp. 96-99.
6. Pal, D.C. & Banarjee, D.K.(1971)  
"Some less known plant foods among the tribals of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa  
State". *Bull, Bot, Sury, India*. Vol. 13, Nos. 3 & 4, PP. 221-23.
7. Sahoo, A.K. (1986)  
"Plant resources of Phulbani district (Orissa) - Some suggestions to develop cottage  
industries in tribal localities" - *Orissa Review*, Vol. XLIII, No. 3. PP. 5-10.
8. Saxena, H.O. & Dutta, P.K. (1975)  
"Studies on Ethno Botany of Orissa", *Bull, Bot, Sury, India*. Vol. 17, Nos. 1-4, PP.124-31.

# A STUDY OF KUTIA KHOND FOOT \*

*Gitanjali Nayak*<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction:**

The Kutia Khond is one of the major subdivisions of the famous Khond tribe of Orissa. The Khonds were famous for practicing human sacrifice. Kutia Khonds are mainly found in Phulbani, Koraput and Kalahandi districts of Orissa.

## **Data:**

In the present paper a study of the foot contour of the Kutia Khonds has been made. The data were collected from sixty-seven adult males and fifty four adult females from seven Kutia Khond villages of Tumudibandh and Belghar areas of Phulbani district. Foot contours were collected according to the method described by Sarkar (1958).

In the present work the following metrical characters were studied:-

- (1) Length of the foot (from acropodion to pterion).
- (2) Breadth of the foot (from meta-tarsale tibiale to meta-tarsale fibular).
- (3) Length -Breadth Index of foot and
- (4) Hallux divergent angle.

Along with the above metrical characters, frequencies of the three type of foot, namely, 'T' 'F' and 'O' are also studied. Then the data have been compared with some Mongoloid tribes such as Rabha and Khasi with Hira group, a backward caste of Assam and with the Santal, Mundari, Juang, Pahira tribal groups and Rana, a warrior caste living in the Koraput district of Orissa.

## **Discussion:**

Three types of foot are observed when the relative lengths of first and second toes are taken into consideration.

- (1) The first toe is longer than the second toe-1>2- 'T' type.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XVI, No. 1, 1976, pp.41-49.

<sup>1</sup> Former Lecturer in Anthropology, B.J.B. College, Bhubaneswar

- (2) The second toe is longer than the first toe- $2 > 1$ - 'F' type.
- (3) The lengths of both the first and second toes are equal-  $1 = 2$  'O' type.

The frequencies of these three types of foot among the Kutia Khond for both male and female are presented in the table-I.

From the table it is observed that the 'T' type of foot is found more frequently in both the sex. Bisexual variation is not observed. Frequencies of both 'F' and 'O' types are very low in comparison to that of 'T' type. Occurrence of 'F' type is very low. Males exhibit 2.24 per cent and females 0.94 per cent.

In the Table-II the present data have been compared with the Rana, Hira, Khasi, Rabha, Santal, Mundari, Juang, Oraon, Pahira groups. It is noted that Kutia Khonds both male and female exhibit quite higher frequencies of 'T' type foot. Kutia Khond males exhibit 'T' type foot in slightly lower frequency than the Oraon and Hira males and among the female group, Kutia Khond females exhibit highest frequencies of 'T' type foot in comparison to other females group mentioned.

While comparing the frequencies of 'F' type foot, in both the male and female groups, it is observed that Kutia Khonds exhibit lowest frequency of 'F' type foot in comparison to other groups.

In frequency of 'O' type of foot, the male Kutia Khonds exhibit a higher frequency in comparison to all the groups except the Rana and Rabha groups. Among the females also the frequency is only less than the Khasi group.

Table-III presents the frequencies of various combinations of the homo and hetero types of foot as found in different populations of India.

There are nine different types of combinations of homo and hetero types of foot. Among all these combinations the frequency of 'TT' type is highest in all the groups presented in the table. Among the Kutia Khonds the frequency is nearly same in the both the sex. The next higher frequencies are 'OO', 'TO' and 'OT' types (all being 4.48 per cent) in the Kutia Khond male. But in the Kutia Khond female the higher frequency next to 'TT' type is 'OT' type (7.41 per cent).

The foot measurements, the Hallux divergent angle and the foot index of the Kutia Khonds are presented in Table-IV. In the Table-V the values of 't' test of significance between left and right foot are presented. Table-VI shows the value of 't' test of significance for foot index and hallux divergent angle between male and female. From Table-V, it is noted that the right and left foot do not differ much in all the measurements except in the foot index of the Kutia Khond females. In the intersex comparison in the Table-VI, it is observed that there is no bisexual variation.

In the Table-VII, the mean value of the foot length, foot breadth, foot index and hallux divergent angle of various groups are presented and in the Table-VIII

the difference and 't' test of significance of various groups compared with the Kutia Kondhs are presented.

From the Table-VII, it is observed that Kutia Khond males do not possess long foot like the Ranas. But the foot length is slightly longer than those of Hira, Khasi and Rabha. The foot length of the Kutia Khond female is also found to be slightly longer than those of Rana, Hira and Rabha.

From the Table-VIII it is observed that among the male, the Kutia Khond differs from the Rana, the Khasi and the Rabha in foot length, it differs from the Rabha in foot breadth and from Rana and Rabha in hallux divergent angle. Among the female group the Kutia Khond differs from the Rabha in foot length and from the Rana and Rabha in foot breadth.

**Table-1**  
**Relative Length of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Toe of the Kutia Khond foot**

Sex	Number	Left foot			Right-foot			Combined		
(1)	(2)	(3) T%	(4) F%	(5) O%	(6) T%	(7) F%	(8) O%	(9) T%	(10) F%	(11) O%
Male	67	86.57	4.48	8.95	89.55	0.00	10.45	88.06	2.24	9.07
Female	54	88.88	0.00	11.11	90.74	1.85	7.41	89.81	0.94	9.26

**Table -II**  
**Relative Length of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Toe in different population**

Population (1)	Sex (2)	Number (3)	'T' (4)	'F' (5)	'O' (6)	Author (7)
KutiaKhond	Male	67	88.06	2.24	9.70	Present study
Rana	Do	87	83.93	4.6	11.47	Patnaik (1971)
Hira	Do	76	88.81	3.28	7.89	Das & Das (1967)
Khasi	Do	56	87.81	7.14	5.35	Das &Ujir(1959)
Rabha	Do	300	87.50	16.50	13.83	Das &Ujir (1959)
Santal	Do	44	69.66	11.36	3.41	A. Pal (1966)
Mundari	Do	45	85.23	13.33	5.56	Sarkar (1958)
Juang	Do	43	81.11	3.49	4.65	Sarkar (1958)
Oraon	Do	44	91.86	5.68	1.14	Sarkar (1958)
Pahira	Do	29	79.31	12.07	8.62	Sarkar (1958)
KutiaKhond	Female	54	89.81	0.94	9.26	Present study
Rana	Do	78	89.10	2.55	8.35	Patnaik(1971)
Hira	Do	105	87.61	7.61	4.76	Das &Das (1967)
Khasi	Do	62	76.60	8.06	15.31	Das &Ujir (1959)
Rabha	Do	300	72.66	18.33	9.00	Das &Ujir (1959)
Santal	Do	67	83.58	8.96	7.46	A. Pal (1966)
Mundari	Do	9	83.33	11.11	5.56	Sarkar (1958)

**Table -III**  
**Frequency of Homo and Hetro types of individuals in different population**

(1) Population	(2) Sex	(3) Number of individuals	(4) T.T.%	(5) F.F.%	(6) O.O.%	(7) T.F.%	(8) F.T.%	(9) T.O.%	(10) O.T.%	(11) F.O.%	(12) C.F.%
<b>KutiaKhond</b>	<b>Male</b>	67	82.09	0.00	4.48	0.00	2.98	4.48	4.48	1.49	0.00
<b>Rana</b>	<b>Male</b>	87	75.70	1.15	4.60	3.35	1.15	8.05	1.15	1.15	1.50
<b>Mundari</b>	<b>Male</b>	45	73.33	6.67	2.22	8.69	22.69	22.2	2.22	0.00	2.22
<b>Hira</b>	<b>Male</b>	76	80.26	0.00	1.31	2.63	2.63	9.21	1.31	1.31	0.00
<b>Juang</b>	<b>Male</b>	43	86.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.72	2.58	0.00	0.86	0.00
<b>Khasi</b>	<b>Male</b>	56	80.35	3.57	0.00	3.78	3.57	8.92	1.78	1.78	0.00
<b>Oraon</b>	<b>Male</b>	44	88.64	2.27	0.00	2.27	4.54	2.27	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Rabha</b>	<b>Male</b>	300	60.33	10.66	5.66	3.00	4.00	3.66	4.33	4.33	0.00
<b>Santal</b>	<b>Male</b>	44	79.55	4.55	2.27	11.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.27	0.00
<b>Pahira</b>	<b>Male</b>	29	75.86	6.90	8.90	3.45	3.45	0.00	0.00	3.45	0.00
<b>KutiaKhond</b>	<b>Female</b>	54	83.33	0.00	3.70	1.85	0.00	3.70	7.41	0.00	0.00
<b>Rana</b>	<b>Female</b>	78	80.75	1.28	1.28	0.00	2.56	14.10	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Mundari</b>	<b>Female</b>	9	77.78	11.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Hira</b>	<b>Female</b>	105	80.95	1.90	0.95	5.70	2.85	1.90	0.95	0.95	0.00
<b>Khasi</b>	<b>Female</b>	62	69.35	3.22	6.44	1.61	6.44	6.44	1.61	1.61	0.00
<b>Rabha</b>	<b>Female</b>	300	63.00	11.00	2.66	3.66	7.00	4.33	2.33	2.33	0.00
<b>Santal</b>	<b>Female</b>	67	77.71	5.97	0.00	0.00	2.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	00.0

**Table-IV**  
**Mean Values of the Characters of Kutia foot**

(1)	(2)	(3) Left Mean + S.E	(4) Right Mean+ S.E.	(5) Combined Mean+ S.E.	Range (6)
<b>Foot Length (in Cm.)</b>	Male	24.56+ 0.20	24.78 +0.22	24.75 + 0.25	22.0 – 28.9
	Female	22.41+0.16	22.8+ 0.19	22.74+ 0.14	21.1- 24.9
<b>Foot Breadth (in Cm.)</b>	Male	10.26 + 0.08	10.14 + 0.08	10.22 + 0.08	8.6 - 11.85
	Female	9.2 + 0.04	9.02 + 0.05	9.28 + 0.05	8.1- 0.5
<b>Foot Breadth Length index</b>	Male	41.62 + 0.48	41.19 + 0.62	41.33 +0.62	34.09 – 46.53
	Female	40.85 + 0.86	39.83 + 0.77	40.46 + 0.62	36.84 – 45.04
<b>Hallux Divergent Angle</b>	Male	7.08 + 0.22	6.90 + 0.22	7.25 +0.12	5.0 – 11.0
	Female	6.33 + 0.22	6.68 + 0.25	6.85 + 0.17	4.0 – 10.0

**Table -V**  
**Difference of Mean (Left- Right) 't' test of significance**

(1)	Kutia Male (Lt-Rt)		Kutia Female (Lt- Rt)	
	Difference (2)	't' (3)	Difference (4)	't' (5)
<b>Foot Length</b>	0.22	0.73	0.39	1.56
<b>Foot Breadth</b>	0.12	1.09	0.00	0.00
<b>Foot Index</b>	0.43	0.55	1.02	2.83
<b>Hallux Divergent Angle</b>	0.18	0.58	0.35	1.06

Significant at 1 % level

**Table -VI**  
**Difference to Mean (Male- Female) Inter sex 't' test of significance**

(1)	Foot breadth-length Index		Hallux Divergent angle	
	Difference (2)	't' (3)	Difference (4)	't' (5)
<b>Left</b>	0.77	0.79	0.75	2.42
<b>Right</b>	1.36	1.37	0.22	0.67
<b>Combined</b>	0.87	0.99	0.40	1.90



**Table - VII**  
**Comparison of Means**

Male	Foot length in Cms.	Foot Breadth In Cms.	Foot Index In Cms.	Hallux Divergent Angle
(1)	Mean + S. E. (2)	Mean + S.E. (3)	Mean + S.E. (4)	Mean + S.E. (5)
<b>KutiaKhond Male</b>	24.75 + 0.25	10.22 + 0.08	41.33 + 0.62	7.25 + 0.12
<b>Rana</b>	27.72+ 0.116	9.97 + 0.61	40.375 + 0.17	6.49 + 0.11
<b>Hira</b>	24.56 + 0.12	10.05 + 0.06	41.00 + 0.15	7.48 + 0.13
<b>Khasi</b>	23.58 + 0.11	10.07 + 0.06	42.43 + 0.28	7.00 + 0.10
<b>Rabha</b>	23.97 + 0.07	9.97 + 0.05	40.74 + 0.13	6.73 + 0.06
<b>Female</b>				
<b>KutiaKhond</b>	22.74 + 0.14	9.28 + 0.05	40.46 + 0.62	6.85 + 0.17
<b>Rana</b>	22.80 + 0.086	8.85 + 0.13	39.92 + 0.118	6.62 + 0.08
<b>Hira</b>	22.63 + 0.10	9.15 + 0.05	40.31 + 0.13	7.27 + 0.11
<b>Rabha</b>	22.02 + 0.07	8.74 + 0.03	39.58 + 0.13	6.59 + 0.06

**Table - VIII**  
**Difference of Mean-'t' test of significance (Inter group)**

Male	Foot length		Foot Breadth		Foot Index		Hallux Divergent angle	
(1)	Diff (2)	't' (3)	Diff (4)	't' (5)	Diff (6)	't' (7)	Diff (8)	't' (9)
Kutia Khond-Rana	2.97	10.8 *	0.25	0.41	0.955	1.49	0.76	4.75 *
Kutia Khond- Hira	0.19	0.64	0.17	0.27	0.33	0.51	0.23	1.28
Kutia Khond- Khasi	1.17	4.33 *	0.15	1.36	1.10	1.62	0.25	1.56
Kutia Khond- Rabha	0.78	3.00 *	0.25	2.67 *	0.59	0.94	0.52	4.00 *
<b>Female</b>								
Kutia Khond - Rana	0.06	0.36	0.43	3.07 *	0.54	0.84	0.23	1.21
Kutia Khond- Hira	0.11	0.65	0.13	1.86	0.15	0.24	0.42	2.1 **
Kutia Khond- Rabha	0.72	4.5 *	0.54	9.00 *	0.88	1.4	0.26	0.14

\* Significant at 1 % level

\*\* at 5 % level

### Explanatory Notes on Terms Used

1. Acropodion (ap)...It is the most forwardly projecting point on the top of the first or second toe.
2. Foot index or Length-breadth index of foot ... Breadth of the foot x. 100/length of the Foot
3. Hallux divergent angle ...It is the angle formed by the hallux (great toe) with the 2<sup>nd</sup> toe.
4. Metatarsal fibulare (mf)...It is the lateral most point on the fifth metatarsal.
5. Metatarsal tibiale (mt)- It is the medial most point on the 1st metatarsal

### Acknowledgement

This paper was prepared under the guidance of Dr. Usha Deka, Reader in Physical Anthropology, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar.

### Bibliography

- |                    |      |   |
|--------------------|------|---|
| Das, R & Das, B. M | 1967 | A study of Hira Foot ; " <i>Man in India</i> " Vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 139-48.  |
| Das, B.M & P. Uzir | 1959 | Relative length of the first and second toes of the Rabha Foot " <i>Jrn. Can. Univ.</i> Vol. X, No. 2, pp. 153-58." |
| Ibid               | 1961 | A study of Khasi Foot. " <i>Man in India</i> " Vol. 41. No. 1, pp.16-24   |
| Pal. A             | 1966 | A study on the Santal Foot. " <i>Jr. of Indian Anthropological Society</i> ", Vol. 1. No. 2.                        |
| Patnaik, B.        | 1971 | Study of Rana Foot. " <i>Adibasi</i> ", Vol. XII, Nos. 1-4, pp.64-70  |
| Sarkar, S.S        | 1958 | Morphological Character of the Human Foot. " <i>Proc Nat, Ins. So.</i> ", Vol. 21. B. No. 4, pp. 209-28.            |

# A STUDY OF BETTMAN'S FIGURE AMONG THE KUTIA KHOND OF ORISSA \*

*Gitanjali Nayak<sup>1</sup>*

The study of the dermatoglyphic features of the human palm has been done by various authors from time to time. Some of the prominent workers such as Wilder (1902), Rife (1941) etc. have studied the dermatoglyphic patterns on the palm such as loops, whorls, vestiges, open fields. The two prominent regions on the palm which are mostly studied are the thenar and hypothenar region. Beside the usual loop, whorl and vestigial pattern the thenar region of the palm is sometimes found to present two loops which lie apposite to each other and are open on the different sides. This pattern on the thenar area was studied and termed as Bettman's figure (1931). In the present paper an analysis of the frequency of Bettmans's figure in the Kutia Khond of Orissa is made.

Kutia Khonds are one of the major divisions of the Khond tribe who inhabit in the most inaccessible areas in the southern part of Phulbani and Kalahandi districts of Orissa.

The data were collected from 100 Kutia Khond males and 100 Kutia Khond females inhabiting in different villages under Tumudibandha block of Phulbani district. Palm prints were collected using the ink-rolling method of Cummins and Midlo (1943).

## **RESULT:**

Out of 100 males and 100 female Kutia Khond studied only 7 males (7.00%) and 8 females (8.00%) exhibit Bettman's figure on the thenar region unilaterally or

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXIV, Nos. 3 & 4, 1984-85, pp.9-10.

<sup>1</sup> Post Graduate Deptt of Anthropology, Khallikote College, Berhampur, Ganjam, Orissa

bilaterally. The sex-wise difference with regard to the occurrence of Bettman's figure is statistically insignificant as shown in Table-I.

**TABLE-I**  
**Sex-wise distribution of Bettman's figure among the Kutia Khond**

Group	Sex	No. observed	No. Present		No. Absent		X*
			N	%	N	%	
Kutia Khond	Male	100	7	7.00	93	93.00	X*=1
	Female	100	8	8.00	92	92.00	d. f.=1 0.50>P>0.30

Bimanual difference in sexes with regard to the occurrence of Bettman's figure is shown in Table-II.

**TABLE-II**  
**Bimanual difference in the occurrence of Bettman's figure among the Kutia Khond.**

Group	Sex	No. observed	Right		Left	
			N	%	N	%
Kutia Khond	Male	100	2	2.00	6	6.00
	Female	100	6	6.00	6	6.00
TOTAL		200	8	4.00	12	6.00

It is observed that among the males this figure occurs in a higher frequency in the left palm whereas the frequency of this figure among the females is equal on both the palms. The frequencies of this figure in both the sexes are nearly equal.

Asymmetric and symmetric occurrence of this figure is 6.00 % and 1.00 % respectively, among the males whereas among the females the frequency of asymmetric and symmetric occurrence of the figure is equal (4.00%). The figures are presented in Table-III.

**TABLE-III**  
**Symmetric and asymmetric in Bettman's figure among the Kutia Khond**

Group	Sex	No. Observed	Asymmetric or Unilateral	Symmetric or Bilateral
Kutia Khond	Male	100	6	1
	Female	100	4	4

Comparison of the occurrence of the Bettman's figure is made between the Kutia Khond and the Vadabalijas, a fishing group living in Visakhapatnam coast of Andhra Pradesh, which is presented in Table-IV.

**TABLE-IV**  
**Frequency of Bettman's figure among the Vadabalijas and Kutia Khond**

Group	Sex	No. observed	Present		Absent		Author
			N	%	N	%	
Vadabalija (ANDHRA)	Male	130	33	25.39	97	74.61	M. Sudhakar Babu- 1981
	Female	112	23	20.53	89	79.47	-do-
Kutia Khond (ORISSA)	Male	100	7	7.00	93	93.00	Present study
	Female	100	8	8.00	92	92.00	-do-

$\chi^2=1173.744$ , d. f. =1

$P<0.01$

It is seen from the table that the Kutia Khond exhibit very low frequency of Bettman's figure in comparison to the Vadabalijas. Both the groups do not exhibit statistical difference sex-wise. But the two groups are statistically significant with regard to the occurrence of Bettman's figure in their population.

### References

- |                        |      |  |
|------------------------|------|--|
| Cummins, H. & C. Midlo | 1943 | Finger prints, Palm and Soles. Philadelphia. The Blackistan Co.  |
| Babu, M. S.            | 1981 | Incidence of Bettman's figure among Vadabalijas. <i>Man in India</i> , Vol. 61, No. 1, 1981, pp.83-85. |

# IMPACT OF SPECIAL MICRO PROJECT ON THE LIVELIHOOD OF KUTIA KANDHAS \*

*N. K. Behura* <sup>1</sup>

*N. Panigrahi* <sup>2</sup>

## **Introduction:**

The tribal communities possess a wide range of variations, which are manifest in their socio-culture milieu. Looking at these variations and considering their levels of backwardness, Government of India have designated some of the tribal communities or sections thereof as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). Since the Fifth-Five Year Plan Period Government of India have started Micro Projects for the development of the PTGs and adopted four criteria for determining the primitiveness of a tribal group. They are (i) pre-agricultural level of technology and economy, (ii) very low rate of literacy, (iii) declining or near stagnant population, and (iv) general backwardness due to seclusion and consequential archaic mode of living. However, criticisms have been leveled that these Micro Projects do not yield the desired result; rather they suffer from a lot of structural, financial and managerial crises. This paper on the one hand provides the general ethno-cultural profile of Primitive Tribal Groups of Orissa with special reference to the Kandha community, and on the other, from empirical study findings, it critically analysis the impact of special micro project on the life and livelihood of the Kutia Kandhas of Biswanathpur block.

There were Fifty-two micro projects on the eve of the 5th Plan period distributed over 14 States of India. During the 6<sup>th</sup> Plan period 20 more such projects have been established and later on 3 other projects have been launched. Thus,

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol.42, Nos.1&2 & Vol.43, Nos.1&2, 2002 & 2003, pp.40-48.

<sup>1</sup> Professor of Anthropology (Rtd), Utkal University. Presently working as Honorary Fellow in Anthropology, NKC Center for Development Studies (ICSSR Centre), Bhubaneswar.

<sup>2</sup> Research Associate in Anthropology, (Faculty Member) NKC Centre for Development Studies, (ICSSR Centre), Bhubaneswar.

presently there are a total of 76 micro projects, functioning in India, which cover a total population of 14lakhs. These micro projects are receiving funds from Government of India in the form of Special Central Assistance (SCA) on cent-percent basis. Up to the end of 9th Five-Year Plan the entire TSP Area, Non-TSP areas having larger tribal concentration in the State of Orissa has been divided into 21 Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) covering 118 C.D. Blocks and 17 Special Micro Projects for 13 PTGs, 46 Modified Area Development Agencies, 14 Clusters for Dispersed Tribal population of the State. The PTGs of Orissa are *Bonda, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dongaria Kandha, Hill Kharia, Juang, Kutia Kandha, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankiridia, Birhor, Paudi Bhuiyan* and *Saora*. These groups have differences with each other, which are reflected in their language, political organization, economy and socio-cultural life. However, these communities have similarities amongst them as regards their dependency on the nature for livelihood and in adherence to nature-spirit complexes. Almost all these communities are divided into certain sub-groups who reside on hill-tops and hill slopes.

While undertaking fieldwork for the research project on the “Functioning of 5th Schedule of the Constitution Orissa: through various appropriate state level agencies in respect of the welfare and development of the weaker sections, particularly the Scheduled Tribes” (Report submitted to ICSSR, 2001), the study tried to collect data on the functioning and impact of Kutia Kandha Development Agency (KKDA), Lanjigarh. The data have been collected both from primary and secondary sources. The primary data as regards the impact of the project have been collected from one project-village, names as Rengapalli in Lanjigarh Gram Panchayat, whereas, the secondary data have been collected from the office of KKDA at Lanjigarh and from the ST and SC Welfare Department of the state.

## II. Socio-Cultural Profile of the Kandha in Orissa:

The Kandha are one of the 62 Scheduled Tribes of Orissa. They have highest numerical strength and spatial coverage. They are also found beyond the boundaries of the State of Orissa. The Kandha are largely distributed across the districts of Phulbani, Ganjam, Balangir and Koraput (all undivided districts). These districts in the past were ruled under different Rajas of Jeypore and Ghumusar. It was the British who established contact with them first during late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. There are five main sub-groups of the Kandha, namely the Maliah Kandha, who live in Phulbani and West of Ganjam district, the Kutia Kandha, who live in certain pockets of Phulbani (undivided); the Dongaria Kandha who live in the Niyamgiri hill ranges of the Koraput and Kalahandi (all undivided districts); the Padaria Kandha or Kuvi Kandha who inhabit in the plains of Niyamgiri hill ranges; and the Desia Kandha the acculturated groups of the Maliah Kandha, who live in Central Kalahanid, Balangir, Dhenkanal and Boudh.

The Kandha is numerically a dominant tribe of Orissa. They have a total population of 1140374 (577850 males and 562524 females) who account for 17.5 percent of the total Scheduled Tribe population of the State (1991, Census of India.)

the female (1030) outnumber the male (1000). The tribe had a growth rate of 7.9 percent in 1971, which increased to 12.38 percent in 1981. The literacy among the Kandha was 7.14 percent during 1961, which has increased to 7.97 percent during 1971 and to 12.18 percent during 1981. As per 1981 figures the male literacy among Kandha was 21.7 percent and that of females was only 3.32 percent, which is much below the State average. As per 1991 census of India there are only 2127 Kandha people who have completed their higher secondary education among whom the male account 1856 and female account 271, whereas, there are only 355 Kandhas who have non-technical diplomas or certificate not equivalent with degree which include only 42 Kandha women. The literacy position in G. Udaygiri, one of the Kandha dominated blocks in Kandhamal district with a large Christianized Kandha population, does not reflect a better trend. Among Kandha males of this block the literacy was 38.09 percent (1961), which increased to 42.13 per cent in 1971 and to 50.49 percent in 1981. Similarly among the female population of the block it was 7.31, 14.36 and 21.21 percent during the year of 1961, 1971 and 1981 respectively. The achievement of literacy among the Kandha of this block is due to large-scale conversion to Christianity during the period between 1961-1951, which has facilitated the availability of and access to educational and other social sector institutions. However, only 3.20 percent of Kandha population in Orissa have been classified as Christian and 90.26 percent of the Kandha have enumerated themselves as Hindus (1981, Census of India).

The environment influences the settlement pattern and style of living of Kandha people. Because of the segmentary character the Kandha people even today by and large maintain their autonomous character in social organization. This is one of the major reasons as to why there is certain congruence between their economy and socio-cultural life. Traditionally the Kandha economy was solely based on crude agricultural practices on the hills as well as in the plains, supplemented by forest produces, and livestock-raising. Studies have been carried out at different points of time on various aspects of Kandha economy, particularly on *podu* cultivation, highlighting its various dimensions, such as the cropping pattern, division of labour, pattern of land use and control, cycle of cultivation, physical losses of soil and erosion of micro-nutrients etc. (Risley, 1891:409; Mac Pherson, 1846; Patnaik, 1972:73; Choudhury, 1999:121; Pathy, 1982). Bailey's study (1957) among the Kandha explains that clan membership is a normative condition of holding and exploiting land in the clan territory of Kandha society. This practice, by and large, still prevails in spite of the introduction of individual ownership in Kandha dominated areas. Some caste categories, such as the Pana and Dom living within Kandha villages for generations, do not find any difficulty in establishing economic, political and religious collaborations with Kandha people. The Kandha refer to them as exploiters, land grabbers and usurious money lenders (Patnaik, 1992; Boal, 1982; Padel, 1995).



### **III. Special Micro Projects among the Kandha of Orissa:**

Considering the backward characteristics of both the region and of the sections of Kandha people Government of Orissa has started two different Micro Projects for the Dongaria Kandhas and two for the Kutia Kandhas. Of these projects, two micro projects were commenced during 1978-79 (23 years ago), one was started during 1986-87 (15 years ago), whereas the fourth one was started during 1987-88 (14 years ago). These four micro projects together cover 14145 Kandha people in 198 villages, which are distributed over five blocks in three districts. The Niyamgiri hill range of the State surrounds these villages. The schemes implemented for the upliftment of the PTGs through Micro Projects can be categorized, mainly as Land-based Schemes, which include promotion of horticulture, agriculture, soil conservation, provision of dug well, pisci-culture, tank fishery, supply of pump sets etc, Animal Husbandry Schemes include diary, poultry, fishery, goatery, piggery development units, etc. The non-agricultural schemes popularly implemented in the project villages are; cycle repairing shops, supply of rickshaws, bullock carts, sewing machines etc. with little variation these micro projects normally invest more funds in agriculture, and horticulture development, on education and health programmes as well.

#### **Kutia Kandha Development Agency (KKDA), Lanjigarh:**

The Kutia Kandha Development Agency, a Micro Project, was started during the year 1986-87 its headquarters at Lanjigarh. The project covers 538 Kutia Kandha families with a population of 2073 distributed over 17 villages of Lanjigarh and Chatrapur GPs of Biswanathpur Block in Kalahandi district. The total geographical area of the project is 17.5 sq. kms. Ambadola and Biswanathpur bound it on the north; Niyamgiri hills and forests surround the project area, and influence the life style and economy of the Kutia Kandha people. Shifting cultivation, slope-land cultivation, horticulture products, and forest produce are the major traditional sources of living, which still contribute to the grain bank of the Kutia families. The total literacy of the Kutias in the Micro Project area is 16.82 percent, in which male literacy is 28.29 percent and female literacy is 5.48 percent (1981 census).

As regards the review of allotment of funds and expenditure of the KKDA Lanjigarh Micro Project from 1987-88 to 2000-2001, the following facts have come to notice. Firstly, gaps have been found in the total budget proposed in the action plan and the allotment finally received by the Micro Project. Secondly, as the quantum of release of allotment to the Micro Project is more towards the end of every financial year, the backlog of unspent money normally is carried over to the next financial year. This affects the implementation of the entire action plan of the project. Thirdly, it is observed that in certain years the allotment of funds is so less that, after meeting the establishment cost there is hardly any money left for investment in implementation of the action plan schemes. For example, during the year 1997-98

out of the total of Rs. 5,64,357 fund received only Rs. 1,02,859.30 (18.12%) was spent for the implementation of various schemes, whereas, rest of the amount was spent for the establishment. The average annual expenditure of the project, which has been calculated since its inception till the end of 1998-99, is 7.83 lakh. Similarly, from the beginning of the project till the end of 1998-99 the average expenditure made for the development of the individual Kutia households in the project area is Rs. 377.00. The study of Behura and Panigrahi (2001) reflects that till today the Kutia Kandha of this region have been largely depending on the usurious money lenders who are regularly visiting their villages and meet them in weekly haats (markets) particularly during the production months and during the lean months. Consumption of liquor and food insecurity seems to be the root cause of their poverty and exploitation (ibid).

### **Impact of Special Micro Project: Empirical Finding**

In order to assess the impact of special Micro Project on the life and livelihood of Kutia Kandha an empirical study was made during November 2000 in the village Rengapalli of Lanjigarh Gram Panchayat in Biswanathpur block of Kalahandi district. The village is situated on the foothills of Niyamgiri hill range. It is only 6 kms from Lanjigarh, the Micro Project headquarters.

### **Resources Profile of the Village**

The village consists of three hamlets, located on hill slopes of the Niyamgiri hill range. The total geographical area of the village is 407.93 acres, which includes forest land (36.28 acres), permanent pastures (16.43 acres), cultivable wastes (55.42 acres), and land put for non-agricultural use (65.15 acres). According to the last settlement carried out in the village during 1974-75, one finds that there are 37 ST households who own 137.86 acres of land. a total of 56 households reside in the village, of which 48 households belong to Kutia Kandha and 8 households to Dalit caste groups. The village has a total population of 229 of which 120 are male and 109 are female. Around 30.00 percent of the total population are below the age group of 6 years, whereas, 36 children belong to the age group of 7 to 14 years of age.

As regards the land holding pattern of the village, there are 9 (18.75%) ST households who do not have *patta* land, whereas, among SCs 4 households (50.00%) do not have Patta land. the average land holding among the Kutias (including non-*patta* land) is about 5.76 acres, whereas, it is only 2.5 acres among SC households. A look into the land holding pattern of the ST households reflects that almost 9 households, 6 households and 8 households belong to small, semi-medium and medium land holding categories respectively. The village has more ant or *dhippa* type of land and has less *berna* or low land.

The village has a poor level of educational achievement. Out of the total population (2073) 83.84 percent are illiterate, whereas, 12.66 percent literate and only 3.49 percent have received primary education. The village does not have a single matriculate though there are two High Schools functioning at a distance of 8

kms since 1964 and 1971-72 respectively. The survey shows that 30.56 percent of the Kutia Kandha households have bicycle, 10.71 percent Kutia households have radios, and only 3.49 percent have wrist watches as household assets.

#### **Sources of Livelihood:**

The village economy is basically centers on agriculture, forestry and wage labour. Of the total income raised by the Kutia Kandha from different sources during the year 1999-2000, as per the study, paddy comprises their major source of earning (38.35), followed by *jhudunga* (leguminous seeds) (14.05%), *alasi* (Nizer) (13.1%), *mandia* (Millet) (11.67 &), *kandula* (red gram) (9.76%), and *mahula* (*basia latifolia*) (7.08%), *kosala* (2.54%). The total *mahua* flower collected by the villagers during the year is 5478 kgs. The women of the village are engaged as wage-labourer in agricultural activities in the nearby villages. Even the tribal women have adopted wage-labour as a source of livelihood. The calculation for the year 1999-2000 shows that the village has generated Rs. 1,79,685/- from various agricultural sources, Rs. 13,695/- from minor forest produces and Rs. 65,600/- from wage labour. The data shows that the women of the village are engaged more in wage labour than the males who have earned Rs. 47,600/- and Rs. 17,490/- respectively. As regards institutional loan it has been observed that during the year of 1999-2000 only 27 Kutia Kandha households have received loan from Indian Overseas Bank, located at Lanjigarh and only 3 Kutia Kandha households have received loan from LAMPs. These loans have been provided for development of agriculture, such as purchase of plough bullock and land reclamation (37 cases) which includes 6 cases for cotton cultivation. Similarly 7 SC households have also received bank loan during that year for various purposes. Of the total loan amount of Rs. 2,28,900/- for agriculture and Rs. 20,000/- for land development the tribal people have returned only Rs. 20,000/-.

#### **Development Intervention by the Micro Project:**

As a part of the agriculture programme the Micro Project has supplied insecticides, pesticides, seeds for groundnut, paddy, vegetables, wheat, peas, *alasi* (nizer), and horticulture saplings to the Kutia Kandha at regular intervals. Apart from these, agricultural implements (one spade and one crow bar) have been supplied by the micro project to all the Kutia Kandha households in the village during 1995-96. The villagers in Rengapalli admitted that compared to other non-project villages they are cultivating more vegetables, other cash crops and very few households are practicing podu cultivation. Since 1995 the project has introduced the cultivation of various vegetables like banana, potato, peas, chilly, tomato, brinjal etc. The project has made immense impact for introducing modern agriculture implements, use of fertilizers and introduction of plane land cultivation. As a result of this, some Kutia households have started using these modern agricultural practices in their fields. However, the plight with the people and the project is that this intervention over the time has developed a dependency syndrome on the part of the people. As a result, the lead-Kutia farmers are always looking at the project

for providing these modern agricultural inputs as no effort has been made for capacity building of Kutia Kandha farmers to independently practise modern agriculture and horticulture.

The use of bio-fertilizer and locally adapted agricultural inputs should have been promoted by the micro project. In order to preserve the germ plasma the micro project could have explored the tribal treasure of various crops. This at certain level justifies that the micro project could not contribute in building self-sustaining development processes in the agriculture sector.

The infrastructure development in the village so far made by different agencies includes construction of one Anganwadi sub-centre (1999) by the block, construction of *mondaghar* (Kothaghar) or community house building by the micro project (1999), village drain by *gram panchayat* (2000), and three tube wells. The connection for the supply of electricity to the village though made during the year 1985, no current has yet been supplied. FARR an NGO has supplied a solar battery during the year 1990 and 36 households have been given connection to use one 60watt bulb. The village has a perennial stream, which has not been tapped properly by the project, but the villagers are using the water of the downstream for agricultural purposes. Since the development of agriculture is largely dependent on the development of irrigation, utilization of the semi-perennial streams of the village will promote good agriculture. Agriculture can be made sustainable and profitable if such water sources are tapped and if the beneficiaries are properly trained as regards the use of modern agricultural inputs.

Medicines for common diseases like cough, cold, aches, dysentery, fever have been distributed in the village, but now-a-days distribution of medicines by the project both in quantity and frequency has been reduced. The villagers avail health services from Government hospital at Lanjigarh, which is located at a distance of 6kms. However, the hospital does not function regularly. During our fieldwork we observed that a Kandha named Garila Majhi, (age 60 years) of Basantapada village was attacked by a bear on 08.11.2000, and was brought to this hospital after 14 hours, but died due to the lack of required medical service facilities. Though the doctors have been posted in the hospital, they are staying at Biswanathpur PHC or outside. The visit of ANM to the village is twice a year, while the VAW more or less does not visit the village. One ambulance has been provided by ZSS to this hospital which has been kept idle, and thus in non-functional. This has encouraged the private practitioners to monopolies the delivery of health services through an exploitative manner. The poor illiterate Kutia Kandhas are the victim of this sort of situation. Intervention of the project in the health sector seems to be inadequate and inappropriate. The project authorities very well know the fact that tribal people continue to depend on their traditional methods of treatment. In spite of, the Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) have not been provided with training and equipments to upgrade their skill regarding basic health care practice. Therefore the knowledge of Kutia Kandha women with regard to health care

services, mother-child related programmes and family welfare measures are largely traditional. This at certain level indicates that neither the project could generate a demand among the Kutia Kandha for the convergence of the health care services from the line department, nor strengthened the traditional health recovery mechanisms of the Kutias, rather the project prefers more to depend on its limited resources.

As regards the empowerment of Kutia Kandha women the project has not built up a systematic process. As a result, Kutia women of the village still feel shy and are reluctant to interact with outsiders. The so-called extension methods adopted by the micro project authorities to implement agricultural and horticultural demonstration programmes is basically targeted to cater to the needs of mostly Kutia males but less to the Kutia females. The project staff (among whom all are males) are less efficient in DKDA, at Kurli, to involve Dongaria Kandha women in project activities through women Co-Operatives. The KKDA at Lanjigarh has not organized Kutia women at any stage, because none of the programmes is specifically women-centric. As a result of this, even after more than ten years of development interventions, the micro project could not build the empowerment processes among the Kutia women. This at certain level reflects the non-holistic approach adapted by the Micro Project.

Rengapalli village does not have a primary school. The Government Sevashrama (primary school) situated at Basantapada, 2 kms away from the village, is supposed to cover all the potential students of this village. Practically in tribal areas to cover a distance of 2 kms in hill terrain to attend primary school is not an encouraging factor for the pupil. Keeping this in view the micro project has started one Balwadi center in the village for the pre-school children, but since one Multi Purpose Worker (MPW) of the micro project looks after three villages, and monitors other project activities and reports about the progress to the project office, it is not possible for him to be regular at the Balwadi center. However, the resource constraints and lack of proper planning in prioritizing peoples' needs on the part of the Micro Project authorities are the retarding factors. They have clubbed the children of Rengapalli village with the Balwadi center of Basantapada village. As a result, the attendance of the Kutia Kandha children from this village in different classes is dismal. Even the project has not yet started adult education programme in the village. Non-payment of salary has de-motivated the project staff and this has grossly affected the implementation of various programmes of the Micro Project.

During the discussion with the lead Kutia farmers and Ward Member of the village it could be ascertained that very little or almost no attempt has been made by the project authorities to make the villagers conscious of the anti-exploitative regulations. The project authorities have not rightly empowered the village Panchayat representatives for local governance. As a result, the members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions are found ignorant of various on-going welfare activities, particularly about the food security programmes of the government.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons for which the exploitative traps of the moneylenders still revolve in and around the Kutia villages. As a result, the long term objective of the Micro Project to make the Kutia Kandha free from exploitative chains and to develop the capacity of the tribal people have not been fulfilled. In this respect, Kutia women are much behind. Whatever programmes have been launched for the women those could not empower them in true sense.

It has been found that lack of supervision by the project authorities has negatively affected the overall implementation of the Project activities. It has been observed that the project suffers because funds are not released on time. The project authorities agree that lack of adequate funds has affected the nature, quality and frequency of interventions made by the project over the years. Though the Micro Project is specially meant for the development of the primitive tribal groups, in practice, over the years, the project has suffered from shortage of funds, irregular release of funds and bad fiscal management. As a result, whatever inputs have been supplied as regards institutional credit, training in improved dry land farming, demonstration of multiple crops and dissemination of knowledge on crop diversification could not yield much result among the tribal beneficiaries. Lack of technical expertise with the Micro Project and the inability to mobilize the technical hands from the line-departments have also resulted in bad technical follow-ups, and demonstration basis, these have never become sustainable as per the objectives.

### **Conclusion:**

It is observed that the Kandhas are living in special ecological and physical conditions. The natural resources offer special livelihood potentialities to them and which shape their culture. It has been observed that the special Micro Project has failed to articulate with the strength and potentialities of the Kutia Kandhas. This is partly reflected in the annual action plan of the special Micro Project, which has not reflected the resources strength and opportunities of the area and of the Kutia Kandhas. The authorities of these projects, by and large, have never thought of associating the Kutias in the planning process, rather they have improved various tailor-made plans (with little adjustment), in different sectors. The project authorities prepare action plans objectively being less conscious of the needs of the people and local resource bases utilize by people. Implementation of various development programmes along with the flow of inconsistent and unplanned allotments at certain level largely justifies that the Micro Project has overlooked the importance of using indigenous resources of the people and of the area.

The Micro Project should have specific time-planning and measuring indicators for the withdrawal or closer from a particular Project Area. It has been observed that the Micro Project at Lanjigarh is being implemented for more than one decade without any expansion of geographical and demographic coverage.

In order to revive the specialty of the Project Authorities while taking into account the local resources strength of the community and of the area, the capability

and the needs of the beneficiaries should develop a time bound development plan. This should incorporate the empowerment processes both within and outside the community and making sustainable the resource base of the area by way of converging the resources of various development agencies in a more integrated and coordinated manner.

### References:

- Acharya, P. K. and R. Mishra. 2000. "Evaluation of Lanjia Soara Development Agency, Puttasing. Rayagada District, Orissa". Submitted to ST and SC Development Dept. GoO, by NCDS.
- Bailey, F. G. 1958. "Political Change in Kandha land", *Eastern Anthropologist*, 2:2, P. 18-106
- Boal Barbara, M. 1982. "The Kandhas (Human Sacrifice and Religious Change)", Modern Book Depot, Bhubaneswar.
- Behura, N. 1990-93. "Tribal Development –A Critical Review", *MANAV*, 4.22-32.
- Behura, N, and Mohanty, K. K. 1998. "Vulnerable Ethno-Cultural Groups (VEGS)". *Adivasi*, Vol.XXXVIII, Nos.1&2,P.1-24
- Behura, N. & Panigrahi, N. 2001. "Functioning of the Fifth Scheduled of the Constitution of India in the State of Orissa". Report Submitted to ICSSR New Delhi by NCDS Bhubaneswar.
- Census of India. 1961. "Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes", XII, Orissa, Part VA. 1971, "Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes", Series-16, Orissa, Vol.V-A.
- Das Patnaik, P.S. 1976. "Liquor among the Dongria Kondh of Orissa", *Adivasi*, Vol.16, No.3, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, pp.52-57
- Fontain, La. 1967. "Development intervention Study of the Lanjia Saoras of Orissa report submitted to NCDS Bhubaneswar.
- Mohanty, K. K. 1996. "Account of the religious opinion and observance of the Kandha of Goomsur and Boud", *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain*, Vol.7.
- Macpherson, S. C. 1843. "Cuttack", United Scottish Press, Madras.
- Patnaik, N. 1989. "The Kandha", THRTI, Orissa, Bhubaneswar.
- Ray, M. 1941. "Power and Potentialities of the Dongria Kandha Women and their role in the Development Process". Ph.d Awarded by Utkal University.

# KUTIA KONDH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (KKDA) LANJIGARH: A DEVELOPMENT PROFILE \*

*Kalpana Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction:**

Kutia Kondh is a section of the largest Kondh tribe of Orissa which has been identified as Primitive Tribal Group (PTGs) on the basis of the criteria stipulated by the Govt. of India; during 6<sup>th</sup> Plan period. They are found mainly in Belghar, Gumma, Lankagarh, Jhiripani Gram Panchyats of Tumudibandh Block and in few villages of Subarnagiri area of Kotagarh block of Kondhmal district and also in Lanjigarh Block of Kalahandi district. The distinctive features of Kutia Kondh are that - they and speak "Kui " dialect of Dravidian linguistic family; they claim a typical mythical origin of emergence of their tribe out of "Kuti" meaning a big hole on earth; have well organized clan groups, traditional social organizations, village council and functionaries, culture and the life style. They are popularly known for *Meria Festival* (human sacrifices in turmeric fields) in the pre-Independence period. They are basically, shifting cultivators and at present subsist on settle cultivation, shifting cultivation, wage earnings and forest collection.

For the all round development of Kutia Kondhs, two Micro Projects were set up in Orissa known as Kutia Kondh Development Agency (KKDA), Belghar (1978) and KKDA, Lanjigarh (1986), which have been functioning till date utilizing funds received under Special Central Assistance (SCA) from Govt. of India. The total population of Kutia Kondh in these two Micro Projects was 6479 which has increased to 8,053 as per Socio-Economic Survey conducted by SCSTRTI in 2000-01 and 2007-08 for preparation of Need based Action Plan for the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan and CCD Plan for 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan respectively.

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXVIII, No.1, SCSTRTI, 2008, pp.76-88

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar.



**Objectives:**

The main objective of this paper is to give a database and description about the present status of the Micro Project, KKDA, Lanjigarh, taking into account all the beneficiary households of 17 Project villages. The paper intended to give more stresses on "Planned Development Intervention" made since inception of the Project with reference to the Project area, resources, people & their socio-economic condition.

**Scope:**

- i) It will help researchers, academicians and planners for an academic reference and applied and comparative research.
- ii) It will help to formulate vision plan for the socio-economic development of Kutia Kondh of Lanjigarh.

**The Project:**

KKDA, Lanjigarh was constituted for the all-round developments of Kutia Kondhs vide H. & T.W. Department Notification No-24363/ Dated 13.8.1986 and was registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 on 20.12.1986. The Agency started functioning with its headquarters at Lanjigarh, in Kalahandi district under a Governing Body, headed by the District Collector, as Chairman; P.A., ITDA, Thuamul-Rampur, as Vice-Chairman and Special Officer, Micro Project as Member Secretary. Besides, it has 21 members from various line departments, financial Institutions, people's representatives and tribal leaders.

**Location:**

The Project covers an area of 17.5 Sq. Kms, which comes under the Sadar Sub-Division and Thuamul-Rampur ITDA area of Kalahandi district. There are 17 revenue villages of which 8 villages come under Lanjigarh Gram Panchayat and rest 09, under Chatrapur Gram Panchayat all of which come under Lanjigarh Police Station. The Project villages are approachable by all weather roads except a few fair weather communications. The Project headquarters, Lanjigarh is 60 Kms. away from Bhawanipatna, the district headquarters of Kalahandi.

**Geo-physical Condition:**

The project lies in between 19° 30"N to 19° 45" N Latitude and 83°20"E to 83° 25" E Longitude with an elevation of about 1500-1600 feet above the mean sea level. The area enjoys a comparatively dry climate with a moderate rainfall influenced by south-west monsoon. There area have three types of soils of laterite origin, brown forest soil and red soil, beneficial for a good production of cereals, pulses, mustard, groundnut, potato, cotton and large varieties of horticultural crops. There is luxuriant floral and faunal growth across the Niyamagiri Hill ranges and its foot ranges. River (Bansadhara), rivulets (Masani *Nalla*, Padarbhatta *Nalla*, Nagalbeda *Nalla* and Sukha *Nalla*), forest and mineral resources like Bauxite and unclassified Gneisses including Singhbhum Granites, Khondalites and Charnockite group and Anorthosite, Gaabro -

Granophre complex of middle Proterozoic exist in this area. Some of these natural resources were tapped up, utilized and developed for the economic benefit of the beneficiary households during last decades.

### Demographic Profile:

The village-wise and a sex-wise distribution of population and literates are given in Table-1

**Table-1**

SI. No.	Name of the Villages	Total No. of PTG households	Population			Literates		
			Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total / Percentage
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>A. Lanjigarh G.P.</b>								
1	Banigaon	27	69	65	134	36	10	46(24.63)
2	Similibhata	40	82	74	156	31	8	39 (25.00)
3	Goipeta	29	65	61	126	26	13	39 (30.95)
4	Kasibadi	14	27	27	54	13	5	18 (33.33)
5	Bandhaguda	21	49	35	84	12	1	13 (15.48)
6	Rengopali	48	91	94	185	38	20	58 (31.35)
7	Dengsargi	23	46	50	96	10	9	19 (19.79)
8	Kenduguda	29	66	63	129	14	6	20 (15.50)
<b>B. Chatrapur G.P.</b>								
1	Kinari	32	66	71	137	34	11	45 (32.85)
2	Kapaguda	41	91	80	171	49	13	62 (36.20)
3	Kutendeli	16	41	50	91	17	11	28 (30.37)
4	Belemba	30	77	82	159	33	27	60 (37.73)
5	Maskapadar	68	151	150	301	65	13	78(25.91)
6	Rosbundel	18	41	43	84	19	7	26 (30.95)
7	Baniponga	25	66	59	125	43	9	52 (41.60)
8	Bhataguda	58	131	104	235	61	33	94 (40.00)
9	Turiguda	38	81	94	175	38	11	49 (28.00)
<b>Total/Percentage</b>			1240 (50.78)	1202 (49.22)	2442 (100.00)	539 (43.47)	207 (17.22)	746 (30.55)

As evident from the above Table, there are 17 villages in the Project, having a total number of 687 households (557 are Kutia Kondh households and rest 130 households belong to Lohara, Dom, Pano, Paika, Teli, Sundi and Mali communities) with 3065 (1556 Males + 1509 Females) population. The percentage of Kutia Kondh household is 81.08% to the total households (687) as per the survey. The population of 557 Kutia Kondh households is 2442 persons (1240 Males + 1202 females) with a sex ratio of 969 Females per 1000 Males. The average size of the Kutia Kondh household is approximately 4 persons.

The total percentage of literacy of the project (villages) is 30.55% (43.47% Males +17.22% Females) of which the number of literates in the age-group category of "below 14 years" is more than the number of literates in the age group category of 15 years and above. This reveals that the Project has taken initiatives in motivating the Kutia parents to send their children to schools. As observed, the total number of illiterates is more than two times than the total number of literates of the project area.

### **Ethnic Profile:**

The Kutia Kondh inhabiting the Project area is divided into 34 clan groups. Their sizes vary between the ranges of minimum 1 household to maximum 127 households. Bidrika clan group is the dominant clan group of the KKDA area followed by *Kadraka*, *Jakesika* and *Sikoka* having more than 60 households (Socio-Economic Survey, 2001-02).

### **Landholding:**

The project area has 1.25 acres of current fallow, 463.72 acres of wasteland, 136.89 acres of land put to non-agricultural uses, 340.90 acres of permanent pasture and grazing land and 253.74 acres of forestland. Besides, 1526.41 acres of cultivated land, 0.88 acres of orchard and 13.90 acres kitchen garden of the target beneficiary households were also present.

Little information was obtained about the exact area under shifting cultivation. It is known that shifting cultivation (swidden cultivation) is one of the main sources of livelihood of Kutia Kondh households of the Project villages. Swidden cultivation is done on hilltops and hill slopes rotationally and the headman of the village distributes these lands. As many as 114 (14 fully +100 partially) households depend upon shifting cultivation having a total of 139 swidden pots (the plot size varies from 0.5 Ac. to 2.00 Ac approximately). The average swidden plots per household are 1.22 acres. Crops like minor millets, *alsi*, *kangu*, *janna*, *suan*, *kosala*, *kandula*, *jhudanga* etc. are grown in these swidden plots. Although, the yield from these swidden plots are meager but people tend to raise these crops because those have religious and cultural significance.

Most of the cultivable lands of these PTG households are rain fed lands meant for single cropping or mono cropping; resulting in food insecurity and lesser work participation through out the year. This has affected their socio-economic life languishing in abject poverty. It is observed and informed that major crops grown in the project villages are paddy, *ragi*, blackgram, redgram, nizer, groundnut, wheat, cotton, maize, mustard, field pea, *jowar*, turmeric and potato. Besides a number of vegetables, mushrooms and different fruits are also grown.

The total cultivable Land of the project is 1526.41 acres distributed among 426 households. There are 131 landless households. The average land holding per household is 2.74 acres.

The total forest area in the project villages is 254.74 acres, which meets the need of food, fuel, fodder, fiber, flank and other house building materials. Forest also provides economic pursuits. Forest the indispensable part of Kutia Kondh culture is reported to be shrinking gradually due to demand of growing population and shrinking land-man ratio, industrialization and other development interventions. Tree and MFPs Species like *sal*, medicinal plants, bamboo, broomsticks, *mohua* flower, *kendu* leaves are exported from the project area.

### **Plant Resources:**

There are 21 varieties of trees owned by the people planted in their kitchen gardens; backyards and others are located in their swidden plots. As estimated, the total number of trees owned / possessed is 1680 of which *Mahua* constitute 873 (51.96%), jackfruit 191 (11.37%), mango 148 (8.81%), guava 122 (7.26%), *Mahua* plant 100 (5.95%), custard apple 56 (3.33%), Jammu 31 (1.85%), papaya 28 (1.67%), and *Salap* 25(1.49%) each. Trees like coconut (18), eucalyptus (17), tamarind (8), date palm (7), drumstick (7), cashew nut (6), lemon (5), orange (4), *neem* (3) and *kendu* (2) constitute 81(4.82%) of the total tree owned by the PTG households. The average trees owned / possessed per household is 3 in number. *Mahua*, *salap*, *kendu* and mango are larger in number contribute 1148 (68.33 %) have high socio-cultural significance and usage.

### **Animal Resources:**

PTG households in total have 2352 domestic animals and birds of which poultry birds occupy 725 followed by bullock (510), goat (415), *cow* (379), buffalo (224), sheep (79), pig (19) and she-buffalo (1) in descending order.

Plough bullocks and buffaloes cater to the need of those households (469 H.H.) engaged in cultivation primarily and secondarily. It is also found that at present most of the households are depending upon hiring of plough bullocks (called *Bucka* locally) on exchange basis to meet their real need of cultivation.

Taking into account the existing number of plough bullocks and buffaloes and the total number of households depending upon cultivation primarily and secondarily it can be inferred that 102 pairs of plough bullocks/ buffaloes are more needed for those households depending upon cultivation.

### **Health Profile:**

The Project has adequate health care facilities like a Mobile Health Unit, which covers 16 villages. It has 7 Anganwadi centers (ICDS), covering all the 17 project villages. There is an ANM Centre at village Bhataguda and a sub-centre at project headquarters Lanjigarh. People also depend upon their traditional medicine man- *Dishari* in as many as 14 villages. In spite of these efforts the health status of the people appears to be marginal.

69 person (57 males + 12 females) were found suffering from different diseases at the time of survey of which 28 are cases of old age sufferings and 2 are

disabled persons and rest are suffering from malaria, gastritis, anemia, scabies, jaundice, polio, *pillirog* (inflammation of spleen), tuberculosis, epilepsy, bronchitis, piles and leukemia.

Malaria is endemic in the area but the incidence is relatively low as the project authority does a follow up prophylactics in giving Chloroquine tablets to the people every fortnightly. The people of the project area are prone to water borne diseases and malaria -the percentage of sufferers as found is 2.83% of the total population.

To reduce the health problems the project has taken up sanitation programme and constructed 9 concrete drains in 9 villages for drainage of waste and rainwater.

### **Economic Profile:**

Kutia Kondh households of the Project area are largely dependent upon cultivation and some households on wage earning, shifting cultivation, service, sheep herding and old age pension. Considering the sources of income it is found that Kutia Kondh of the Project area are primarily dependent upon cultivation and secondarily on wage earning and forest collection. They practice 17 categories of occupation and each household depends upon two-to-three occupational categories during different parts of the year. The occupational status is ascertained by taking into account two sectors of occupational category which revealed that wage earning holds transcendental position followed by cultivation, forest collection, shifting cultivation & other occupational categories in descending order (Socio-Economic Survey 2001-02).

### **Workforce Participation:**

- The workforce participation in different occupation is also ascertained and it is found that there are 1482 workers {1724 males (48.85%) and 758 females (51.15%)} and 960 (516 males + 444 females) non-workers. The sex-wise distribution of workers revealed that females outnumber males in worker category and it is the vice versa in non-worker category. The variation in number of male and female workers in worker and non-worker category is 34 and 72 respectively.
- The earner and dependant ratio in project area is 1:0.65 which implies that a Kutia Kondh earner in an average has shouldered only the 65% of the cost responsibility of a dependant.

### **Economic Status:**

Taking into account the annual income, expenditure and household assets (2000-01) (including the value of land, house/house-site, orchard, fruit trees, domestic animals and birds owned, agricultural, hunting and musical instruments, household articles, jewels and ornaments and modern articles) the economic status of 557 PTG households are assessed which implies that the average annual income varies from Rs.2, 050/- in the minimum to Rs.76, 6 00/- at the maximum. The average annual per capita income is Rs.1, 876.58 and expenditure is Rs.1, 807.47.

**Poverty Ranking:**

On the basis of these data poverty ranking of these PTG households has been made in the following table which reveals that 71 households have income within Rs.5, 000/- per annum are termed "poorest of the poor", 462 households belonging to "poor" category, 22 households are subsistent lower income group" and rest 2 are belonging to "medium income group category.

It is found that 533(95.69%) households have annual income less than Rs. 15, 000/ - and per capita expenditure is less than Rs.3000/- per annum, are BPL households according to the norms fixed by the Panchayatiraj Department.

Sl. No	Income range	No. of Households		Poverty Ranking	Remarks
1	Upto Rs.3, 000/-	9	533 (95.69%)	Very poor	BPL households
2	3,001 to Rs.5, 000/-	62		Very poor	
3	5001 to Rs10000/-	394		Poor	
4	10001/-to Rs15000/-	68		Poor	
5	15001/-to Rs24000/-	22	24 (3.95%)	Subsistent/lower income group	
6	58001/-toRs76600/-	2	2 (0.36%)	Medium income group	
<b>Total</b>		<b>557</b>			

**Indebtedness:**

There are 103 indebted households in the project area of which 89 are indebted in cash and 17 are indebted in kind (i.e. rice and paddy). The total amount of indebtedness amounting to Rs.97 630/- varies from Rs.100/- in the minimum to Rs.6, 000/- at the maximum. The amount of rice and paddy indebted together is amounts to 1425 kgs (795 kg rice + 630 kg paddy). Two village namely, Kasibadi and Dengsargi have little incidence of indebtedness.

To cater to the problem food insecurity and indebtedness, 3 nos. of grain banks are functioning in the project area successfully. Besides, people are covered under Food For Work Programme, Anthodoya, SJSRY, JRY, Arnapurna Yojana, Assured Gramina Rojgar Yojana and other related anti- poverty programmes during the time of draught and crisis.

**Core Programme of the Project:**

Taking into account the Base Line Survey Report (1984-85) from pilot survey, on KKDA, Lanjigarh, the Project adopted following development strategy as its core programme- like Horticulture and soil conservations measures, Agriculture and allied programmes like land reclamation & development, distribution of seeds, supply of agricultural implements, fertilizer and pesticides,

low lift pump sets, vegetable cultivation, plantation, bee-keeping (silvi-culture), some welfare programme and animal husbandry programme.

The project mainly focused on horticulture and agriculture development programmes in its one and half decade operation.

The project received funds annually for meeting its establishment and development costs. The year wise funds released and its utilization since inception till 2000-01 is presented below in Table-2 for a better understanding of the financial support to the Micro Project for its smooth operation.

**Table - 2**  
**Statement showing Funds Released/Utilization Certificates submitted to Government by KKDA, Lanjigarh (since inception to 2000-2001)**

Year	Opening Balance as on 01-04-1999	Amount Released by H&TW Dept. to Micro Project	Total funds available for expenditure	Amount utilized during the year	Utilisation certificates sent	Balance at the year ending
1986-87		4,75,000/-	4,75,000.00	34,746.84	-	4,40,253.16
1987-88	4,40,253.16	5,00,000/-	9,40,253.16	4,90,967.75	-	4,49,285.41
1988-89	4,49,285.41	2,95,000/-	7,44,285.41	4,49,865.13	3,92,027.09	2,94,420.28
1989-90	2,94,428.28	5,00,000/-	7,94,428.28	3,98,773.99	4,28,064.13	4,65,646.29
1990-91	4,65,646.29	12,00,000/-	16,65,646.29	3,18,365.10	6,35,348.54	13,47,281.19
1991-92	13,47,281.19	7,30,000/-	20,77,281.19	13,65,750.99	5,31,329.25	7,11,530.20
1992-93	7,11,530.20	5,85,000/-	12,96,530.20	9,55,205.07	11,68,625.61	3,41,325.13
1993-94	3,41,325.13	6,86,000/-	10,27,325.13	7,02,165.75	11,92,437.22	3,25,159.38
1994-95	3,25,159.38	8,58,000/-	11,83,159.38	6,99,436.46	2,71,011.46	4,83,722.92
1995-96	4,83,722.92	10,30,000/-	15,13,722.92	8,80,796.78	6,99,436.46	6,32,926.14
1996-97	6,32,926.14	5,64,000/-	11,96,926.14	9,05,517.73	9,05,517.75	2,91,408.41
1997-98	2,91,408.41	6,93,000/-	9,84,408.41	5,64,357.62	-	4,20,050.79
1998-99	4,20,050.79	6,90,000/-	11,10,050.79	9,23,103.32	5,55,494.50	1,86,947.47
1999-00	1,86,947.47	-	1,86,947.47	118436.35	-	68,511.12
2000-01	68,511.12	8,36,000/-	9,04,511.12	6,69,809.12	5,60,000.12	2,34,702.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>64,58,475.89</b>	<b>96,42,000/-</b>	<b>1,61,00,475.89</b>	<b>94,07,298.00</b>	<b>73,19,228.11</b>	<b>66,93,177.89</b>

#### **Planned Development Intervention:**

The Planned Development Intervention of the project will give a detail description of the implementation of different development schemes made for the socio-economic development of the PTG households of the project area. Out of 557 PTG households only 498 households had received different development assistance since inception (1987-88 to 2000-01) and rest 59 households received little development assistance.

In the initial year of the project only horticulture programme was adopted and in subsequent four years (1988-89 to 1991-92) various schemes under horticulture and agriculture programmes were taken up. On fifth year (1992-93) the selected beneficiary households were covered under agriculture development programmes like supply of

agriculture implements, low lift pump sets, seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. In 1993-94 and 1994-95, only agriculture development programmes were adopted for identified beneficiary households.

During 1995-96, the project had adopted extensive development programmes. It emphasized on agriculture, land reclamation, bee keeping and some welfare schemes by distributing medicines and blankets to the beneficiaries. It incurred more than 2 lakh rupees for the beneficiaries during this year. In subsequent financial years the project incurred expenditure on agriculture and horticulture programme. As assessed, the project in total spent Rs.8,96,560.98 on different development assistance since inception of the project (1987-88 to 2000-01) covering 3099 b beneficiaries in total, during last fourteen years with an average of Rs.289.31 per beneficiary under Income Generation Schemes (IGS). The year-wise schemes implemented, beneficiaries covered and total development assistance provided are presented in **Table-3**.

Besides, the Project spent on amount of Rs.43,77,622/- for the development and construction of different infrastructures in the Project villages since inception, which contribute 45.40% of the total fund released to the Project (Rs.96,42,000/-) and 46.53% of the total fund utilized (Rs.94,07,298/-) by the Project since inception.

**Table -4**, presents the year-wise amount spent by Micro project for different infrastructure development.

**Table -5**, presents the Expenditure Incurred by the Project on Establishment, Infrastructure (IDS) and Income Generation Programmes (IGS)

(Tables- 3, 4, & 5 are given at the end)

### **Conservation-cum-Development (CCD) Plan for 11th Five Year Plan (2007-12)**

During 2007 SCSTRTI had taken up another survey of all the Micro Projects in collaboration with the concerned Micro for preparation of Conservation-cum-Development Plans for 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2012) as desired by Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA) Govt. of India. The survey also compiled basic information like number of Project villages/settlements, total households, landless households, BPL households, population, sex ratio, literacy level, occupational status and sources of income of the PTGs. Besides it also identified problems of the area and the people, and priority of the people through a series of Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and Gram Sabha. The survey revealed that in case of DKDA, Lanjigarh the total number of villages have come down from 17 to 16 distributed in three GPs which were previously under two GPs, the reason being the inclusion of village Kinari in Vedanta Alumina industrial project area. A comparative analysis of information collected during 2001 and 2007 is given in **Table -6**

The survey was mainly made on the basis of the guidelines issued by MOTA, Govt. of India for a total development of the PTGs. The plan aimed to reduce poverty, enhance literacy, ensures health status, income generation and



above all to improve the quality of life of the PTGs and conservation of their tradition and culture. The survey identified the priorities of the PTGs like communication, fire proof houses, irrigation and safe drinking water, horticulture programmes, health, education and coverage under Janashree Bima Yojana in descending order. The total financial abstract for the year 2007-2012 financial year under CCD Plan for KKDA, Lanjigarh is given in **Table -7**

**Table -6**

Sl.	Types of information	2001	2007	Remarks
1	No. of Project villages	17 in Two GPs	16 in Three GPs	1 reduced
2	Total Households	557	591	34 increased
3	Landless Households	131	95	36 reduced
4	BPL Households	533	288	245 reduced
5	Population	2442	2549	107 increased
6	Population Growth	-	4.38%	Increased
7	Sex ratio	969	979	10 increased
8	Literacy	30.55%	32.56%	2.01% increased
9	Male literacy	43.47%	44.64%	1.17% increased
10	Female literacy	17.22%	20.22%	3.00% increased

**Table -7**

Sl. No.	Implementing agencies	Works Rs. in Lakhs	Other than Works Rs. in Lakhs	Total
1	Orissa Govt.	--	23.25	23.25
2	ITDA	40.50	--	40.50
3	G.P	--	--	--
4	NGO	--	13.84	13.84
5	Micro Project	159.86	60.60	220.46
<b>Total</b>		200.36 (67.22%)	97.69 (32.78%)	298.05

The CCD Plan gave more stress on building of basic infrastructures (about 67.22% of the total out lay) and less on other social development works. Those are to be implemented by the State Govt., ITDA, NGOs. Gram Panchayats have major role to play in supervision of all the works because the CCD plan had been prepared in consultation and approval of Gram Sabhas.

### Conclusion:

On the basis of these data a SWOT analysis has been made which reflected that the project has physical and financial strength and many areas of opportunity for expansion of economic development. The point of strength are implementing agency, flow funds, development schemes, input and technical assistance, and area of opportunity are forest resources indigenous schemes and knowledge and natural

resources. It has minimum points of weakness and threat to restrict its scope of development. The causes of weakness are illiteracy, lack of knowledge, poverty poor infrastructure facilities, ill health, poor management and un-utilization of natural and human resources and lack of people participation in development this can be curbed up through suitable positive approaches and strategies.

However, the following recommendations can be considered for development.

1. Flow of fund to the project is steady which needs proper distribution among the different heads of expenditure to avoid lapses. Proper monitoring of funds needs to be ensured.
2. Although PTGs inhabit resource rich areas, they have little knowledge of their global utilization, mobilization and management and therefore, suffer from impoverishment. Steps should be taken for utilization of these resources.
3. Kutia Kondh has good knowledge of swidden cultivation, house building and preparation of minor household articles. In village Kasibadi, most of the members of Kutia Kondh households have expertise in plough making. These traditional skills and know how can be promoted for their economic betterment.
4. The area has scope for expansions of agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry programmes.
5. Besides, there are scopes for establishment of some small and medium range industries and also agro-based industries.
6. The forest also provides scope for the economic pursuit of the Kutia Kondhs. Schemes should be made for establishment of processing units of various Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and also cottage industries.
7. The project should adopt schemes for wasteland development for expansion of pasture and grazing land, fodder cultivation and afforestation programmes.
8. Although project has taken steps and established Community Centers in every village, those should be developed with all 'aids and inputs' for practical learning, awareness building, attitude formation and motivation.
9. Efforts of the project in the promotion of literacy are good. It should further expanded so that people will develop a sense receptivity to accept the positive message of development? Female education needs special care and promotion.

10. Project should make "livelihood promotion" and "*in situ* development" training for youths and leaders.
11. The project has made effort for preservation of tribal art and dance in one village, Similibhata that requires further expansion, promotion and publicity.
12. The steps taken by the project to uphold the problem of health through health care and sanitation programme is remarkable. The follow up actions should be taken to promote health awareness and health status among the people.
13. The social priorities and problems of the people need to be assessed before preparation and implementation of any action plan for development.
14. People's participation should be ensured in planning and implementation.
15. It is a fact that infrastructure development should be given top priority, because, those are the mediating agents to reach people and the medium of support, for planned development intervention for the target group.

It can be concluded that the achievement of KKDA, Lanjigarh till date is no doubt appreciable but it failed to achieve the desired targets of the project in sectors like-education, health and economic development of its beneficiaries.

## References

1. Project Report on Baseline Survey on KKDA Lanjigarh (1985)
2. Socio-Economic Survey Report (2000-01) on KKDA Lanjigarh, SCSTRTI
3. Tribes of Orissa (Revised Edition) 2004, Published by SCSTRTI
4. Kondh of Orissa (Revised Edition) 2006, Published by SCSTRTI
5. CCD Plan for PTGs, KKDA, Lanjigarh (2007) prepared by SCSTRTI
6. Activity Report of Micro Projects for PTGs (2007) ST & SC Dev. Dept, Orissa.

**Table-3**  
**SCHEME WISE EXPENDITURE ON BENEFICIARIES COVERED BY KKDA, LANJIGARH IN 17 PROJECT VILLAGES**  
**SINCE 1987-88 TO 2000-2001**

S1, Fin Yr./Dev. No	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Particulars	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1 Scheme provided	Banana, Papaya, J.fruit, guava, c.apple, D.stick	G.nut, Maize, Field Pea Mustard, J.Fruit Guava, C. apple, Papaya Coconut Mango, Paddy Fertilizer, Land Dev.	Mango Coconut, Mustard Plough Bullock, Ferti- Pesticide, Paddy, Lemon, Orange, Guava, Ragi	Ag.Imp. & Input Potato, Wheat, Orange, Papaya, Lemon Guava Fruit G.nut, Paddy Blk-Gram.	Ag. Imp. Ag. Input Mustard, Nizer, Ustard J.fruit Banana, B.Gram, Paddy, Nizer Maize Jawar	Ag.Imp. & Input Mustard, Nizer, Ragi, Blk-gram, Red-gram, Paddy, Jawar Fertilizer Low lift	Ag. Input Cashew Maize, J.Fruit, Papaya, Orange, Lemon, Guava, Mustard Blk-gram, D.stick, Fertilizer.	Mustard Guava C.apple Orange J.fruit Papaya, D.Stick	Ag. Imp Blanket, Medicine Paddy,Mung, Maize,G.nut, Mustard, Veg seed Guava, C.Apple, Wheat,Jawar, Bee Box Fertilizer, Land Dev.	Ag. Imp. Ag. Input Paddy, Mung, Mustard Maize, R.gram B.gram, Veg. Seeds, Wheat, Jawar, Medicine	Nizer Mung Black Gram, Red Gram Mustard, Fertilizer	Ag.Input Maize, Cotton G.nut, Mushroom Veg.seeds, Cashew Nut, polythene Bag	Ag.Input G.nut, Vegt. Seeds, Banana, Potato	G.Nut, Field pea, Papaya Drum-stick
2 Total Amt spent (Rs)	20692.21	34155.03	24673.42	60667.48	60546.91	70435.99	18613.25	4099.56	213575.75	17491.14	30052.50	104078.29	57970.56	18508.8
3 No. of beneficiary	212	200	176	182	214	252	154	158	397	364	279	290	160	61
4 Assistance/Beneficiary	97.60	170.78	140.19	333.34	282.93	279.51	120.87	25.95	537.97	490.36	107.71	358.89	362.32	303.42

- Out of total funding of Rs.96, 42,000/- to Micro Project only Rs.8,96,560.98 have been spent towards development assistance to the beneficiaries since 1987 (over the last 14 years)
- Besides, the project spent Rs.43, 77,622/- for the development and construction of different infrastructures in the project villages since inception, which is 45.40% of the total fund released to the project (Rs.96, 42,000/-) and 46.53% of the total fund utilized (Rs.94, 07,298) by the project since inception.

**Table-4**  
**Amount Spent by Micro Project on IDS Programme since inception**  
**(1986-87 to 2000-07)**

IDS Programme	Amount spent year-wise in Rupees for various infrastructure development schemes.														Total expenditure sector wise
	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	
Irrigation	30,000	30,000	40,000	-	2,10,870	-	2,80,000	2,00,000	-	2,30,000	50,000	25,000	16,000	-	11,11,870
Construction	-	-	68,000	-	-	2,80,000	98,400	18,000	91,500	-	12,000	1,30,000	24,000	66,495	7,88,395
Communication	11,000	-	-	1,31,687	2,20,000	1,82,000	1,10,000	-	50,000	1,00,000	36,000	1,59,670	50,000	11,45,000	21,95,357
Drinking water	-	-	-	-	-	-	34,000	18,000	-	-	-	2,10,000	-	20,000	2,82,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>1,08,000</b>	<b>1,31,687</b>	<b>4,30,870</b>	<b>4,62,000</b>	<b>5,22,400</b>	<b>2,36,000</b>	<b>1,41,500</b>	<b>3,30,000</b>	<b>98,000</b>	<b>3,14,670</b>	<b>90,000</b>	<b>12,31,000</b>	<b>43,77,622</b>

■ Total expenditure incurred on IDS since inception of the project is Rs.43, 77,622/-.

■ The sector-wise expenditure reveals, the project spent maximum on development of communication followed by irrigation, construction and drinking water.

The total expenditure incurred by Micro Project on IDS, ICS and Establishment since inception till 2000-01 are given in the Table-5 which reveals that the Project spent 46.53% on Infrastructure Development Schemes (IDS), 43.98% towards its establishment cost and only 9.53% on various Income Generation Schemes (IGS) out of the total fund released to the project.

**Table-5**

Expenditure Incurred by the Project on Establishment, Infrastructure (IDS) and Income Generation Programmes (IGS)		
S1. No.	Head of expenditure	Percentage of expenditure to The total utilized.
1	Establishment	43.94
2	Infrastructure Schemes (IDS)	46.53
3	Income Schemes (IGS)	9.53
<b>Total</b>		<b>100.00</b>

# KUTIA KONDH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE YEARS: ISSUES AND CONCERNS \*

*Smruti Ranjan Patra*<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*During the Fifth Five Year Plan (FYP) a sub-category was created within the Scheduled Tribes named Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). The features of such a group include a pre-agricultural system of existence, i.e. practice of hunting and gathering, zero or negative population growth, extremely low level of literacy in comparison with other tribal groups. In 2009, Government of India (GoI) decided to re-designate "Primitive Tribal Group" (PTG) as "Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)" considering the complaints that the term 'primitive' is value loaded. Odisha has 13 designated PVTG s. Kutia Kondh is one among them.*

*The present study has been conducted on Kutia Kondh in villages covered by Kutia Kondh Development Agency (KKDA) in Belghar under Baliguda sub-division of Kandhamal district. The paper has compared certain critical development indicators of Kutia Kondhs in between two reference periods of socio economic surveys with an ethnographic background of the Kutias.*

*The paper concludes that presently, the Kutia Kondhs are undergoing a a phase of tradition and transition. The socio-economic development activities have brought immense changes in their cultural pattern and lifestyle, yet in many aspects they have retained their traditional processes and practices. However, analyzing from various parameters, the Kutia Kondh villages are not much above their disadvantageous situation from point of view of reach and access to miscellaneous facilities, infrastructure and provisions. The critical areas of concern are infrastructure, connectivity, housing, drinking water, electricity, education, health and nutrition, livelihoods improvement and income generation, irrigation, social security and above all capacity building and skill development. Along with development interventions for their socio-economic development and consequent improvement in raising the HDI, efforts and programs also need to be designed realistically and implemented for conservation of their unique pristine culture and traditions.*

## Introduction

The Kondhs are the principal inhabitants of Boudh and Kandhamal districts of Odisha. Being Dravidians in their language, they were living in this track of the

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXXVI, Nos.1&2, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2016, pp.66-75

<sup>1</sup> Investigator, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, email: [smruti.patra@gmail.com](mailto:smruti.patra@gmail.com), Ph.9437100316

country before the advent of the Aryans. They have been classified under the ancient Gondi race of the Proto-Australoid stock.

The Kutia Kondhs are a section of Kondhs and are numerous in the Baliguda subdivision of erstwhile Phulbani and present Kandhamal district. Earlier they were designated as one among the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and now they have been redesignated as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG). They are largely populated in Belghar area of Tumudibandh block and the adjoining Kotagarh area. The present study is carried out amongst the Kutia Kondhs of Belghar area coming under Kutia Kondh Development Agency (KKDA) which is located between 19°45' - 20°05' Northern latitude and 80°30' - 83°45' Eastern longitude. This area is approximately 30 kms away from Tumudibandh; 65kms away from Baliguda towards Muniguda of Rayagada district. Belghar is situated at an altitude of 2255ft. above the sea level. The total geographical area of the project is 300sq.kms. The temperature records 35°C during summer and 3°C in winter. The average annual rain fall is 1360 mm. The type of soil found in the region is of Red Lateritic Group.

### **Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)**

The Dhebar Commission (1960-1961) stated that within the Scheduled Tribes (ST) there existed an inequality in the rate of development. During the Fifth Five Year Plan (FYP) a sub-category was created within the Scheduled Tribes by identifying groups those were considered to be at a lower level of socio-economic development. This special category was named "Primitive Tribal Group" (PTGs). The characteristic features of such a group include a pre-agricultural system of existence, i.e. practice of hunting and gathering and shifting cultivation, zero or negative population growth, extremely low level of literacy in comparison with other tribal groups.

By the end of the Fifth Five Year Plan, 52 communities were identified as "PTGs", 20 groups were added in the Sixth Five Year Plan and 02 more in the Seventh Five Year Plan and 01 more group was added in the Eighth Five-Year Plan, thus making a total 75 groups as PTGs in India. These communities were identified on the basis of recommendations made by the respective state governments.

In 2009, Government of India (GoI) decided to re-designate "Primitive Tribal Group" (PTG) as "Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)" considering the complaints that the term 'primitive' is value loaded.

Odisha has the largest number of PTGs (13) among all the States and Union Territories of India. They are the Bonda, Birhor, Didayi, Paudi Bhuyan, Lanjia Saora, Hill Kharia, Mankirdia, Kutia Kondh, Dongria Kondh, Juang, Chuktia Bhunjia, Lodha and Saora. These PTGs were identified in Odisha during different plan periods starting from 5<sup>th</sup> Plan period (1974-79).

### **General Characteristics of PTGs**

In common parlance, the term primitive means simple-ness and antiquity. The commonly agreed cultural traits of primitive people are (1) homogeneity, (2) small population, (3) relative physical isolation, (4) social institutions are cast in a simple mould, (5) absence of a written language (6) relatively simple technology and (7) a slower rate of change. In the present context the groups of aboriginals who continue to pursue an archaic way of life and absorb the changes slowly are distinguished as PTGs' (Ota & Mohanty, 2015).

Tribal communities, who carry on pre-agricultural activities for their survival, have been classified as so called Primitive Tribal Groups. Government of India has prescribed four criteria for identifying Primitive Tribal Groups. These criteria are: (1) pre-agricultural level of technology and economy, (ii) very low rate of literacy, (iii) declining or near stagnant population, and (iv) general backwardness due to seclusion, and consequential archaic mode of living.

The so called Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) are indeed vulnerable and techno-economically backward. Their habitats are natural and serene. Development of infrastructure in their habitats is utterly inadequate. They have perfectly adapted to their eco-system and lead a very simple life like natural men. However, it is ridiculous to brand them as "primitive". This epithet is value-loaded and means primeval, or aboriginal and archaic. When the mankind is at the threshold of Twenty-first Century there should be rethinking about these Colonial and Imperial jargons. "Primitive" is the word commonly used to describe the tribes with whom anthropologists have been traditionally concerned. (Behura and Mohanti, 1998)

'With the vision of comprehensive development of the PTGs, the concept of micro level planning was introduced in the country in the year 1975-76. This envisages integrated and comprehensive development of the Micro Project areas in which various programmes irrespective of the sources of funding can be implemented in unison to achieve the common goal of bringing the area at par with other areas and to improve the quality of life of the primitive tribes' (Ota, 2015).

### **The Kutia Kandha Development Agency, Belghar**

The Kutia Kandha Development Agency, Belgharin Kandhamal district was established in the year 1978-79 during the 5<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan and registered under the Society Registration Act, 1960.

### **Socio-cultural and economic life of Kutia Kondh**

#### *Ethnic identity and language*

The Kutia Kondhs are a section of the Kondh tribe and their ethnic identity is derived from the Kondh terms, *Kutti*, and *Kui*. The term *Kutti* gives the cultural



identity of the tribe that they emerged out of a hole in *Sapangada* - a forest patch and later started living in *Kutti* (holes) of hills. Further, they speak *Kui* language. On the basis of the language they call *Kuienja* to the male folks of the tribe, *Kuiladu* to the female folks and are collectively known as *Kuianka*.

*Kui* is the language which the Kutia Kondhs speak. Linguists identified it as belonging to the Dravidian group. The language *Kui* varies a little bit from those of the other Kondh communities. Those of the community who are exposed to the mainstream speak Oriya along with *Kui*. Edgar Thurston quoted G.A. Grierson on Kondh language in the 'Castes and Tribes of Southern India' Vol- III, that 'the Kandhas or Kondhs are a Dravidian Tribe in the Hills of Orissa and neighboring districts ( Das Patnaik, 2004).

#### ***Settlement and housing pattern***

In a Kutia Kondh village settlement (*Naju*), houses are arranged in two parallel rows facing each other. Each row is occupied by a sect of the tribe. Houses in each row are attached to each other in such a manner that from a distance each row appears as a single long hall. The traditional structure of the village itself is a symbol of unity. Sometimes the village settlement looks like a cluster of houses. A large space is left in between the two rows. More or less at the middle of the longitude space, *Karumunda* i.e. the Meria (sacrifice) pole is established. The backyard is used for kitchen garden and cattle shed.

Kutia Kondh house (*ilu*) is mono-hut type, constructed on a rectangular ground plan with gabled roofing. It is usually a two roomed structure with a high verandah, converted into a sitting place. The floor of the house remains at a lower level than the premises and the design called *Kutti* gives the ethnic identity of the tribe. Immediately continuing with the backdoor are provisions for pigsty and goat pens. The traditional pattern of house is the same throughout with the same design, same architecture and same management of space.

Walls of the houses are made of Sal poles planted on the ground or with poles of *Buchanania lanzan* and *Xylia xylocarpa* plastered over with mud. In some cases walls are made with bamboo mats smeared over with mud. Earthen walls are very common. The roofs are thatched with jungle grass (*Themda arundinacea*) or with tiles (*khapari*) that is much preferred by the community. The houses are painted red with black borders and the walls are engraved by fingers to make various designs called *Piching*. Inside or in front of the house, household deity (*Ilu penu*) is installed.

#### ***Family organization, kinship and property inheritance***

Kutia Kondh family is patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. Nuclear type of family is found more in number. After the death of the head of the family or marriage of the son if he wants to be separated, then he makes a house for himself on the same row but his family takes food from the same kitchen. They have customary law relating to property and inheritance, which are decided upon

prevailing social norms on the principles of equity and good conscience. However regarding trees in forest the ownership goes to the person who first utilized it. Then such trees become family properties and inherited according to the social norms.

Clan is exogamous. Out of 33, the nine main clans found in Kutia society are the *Timaka*, *Saraka*, *Gunjika*, *Sukhbichaka*, *Nondruka*, *Sukuka*, *Mindanga*, *Andanga* and *Urlaka*. *Timaka* is regarded as the important clan. The lineage system is understood from two main title groups: Jani and Majhi. Lineage is also exogamous. Thus at the family level both the lineages are mixed up. Families are made with both consanguineal and affinal members. By the use of kinship terms the relationship among family members can be better understood. Their role in life cycle rituals, festivals, ceremonies is very important.

### ***Food, Drinks and Narcotics***

Cereals, pulses, eggs, meat, tubers and other edibles available in the forest are the main sources of food items of Kutia Kondhs. The principal food is gruel with some vegetables. Gruel is made of rice (*Oryza sativa*), *Mande* i.e. finger millets (*Eleusine coracana*), out of little millet (*Panicum miliare*), *Jana* (*Sorghum vulgare*) etc. Raw rice is called *Pranga*, paddy as *Kulinga* and cooked rice as *Bidi*. *Mande* gruel is a favorite item for them.

Kutia Kondh male and female are fond of drinking *mada* i.e. toddy tapped from Sago Palm (*Caryota urens*) tree. The second type of drink is *irpi kalu* or *adkinga*, prepared out of dried flowers of Mahua (*Madhuca langifolia*) by distillation. They also prepare liquor out of cereals which they call *Katul*, specially prepared during festivals and ceremonies. Apart from toddy, they distil liquor out of mango (*Mangifera indica*), jack fruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*), banana (*Musa sapientum*) and molasses. Now-a-days they mostly depend upon toddy of Sago palm, date palm, distilled Mahua liquor and crop beverages. Besides drinking, they also use narcotics (*Dhuan bada*) i.e. dry tobacco leaf and its powders called *Nasa* or *Dua* as stimulant. A Sal leaf or Siali leaf is rolled containing the tobacco dusts to make a cigar called *Kali*. The other type of stimulant is *Gudakhu* which they keep under the tongue or lips or brush the teeth with are usually purchased from vendors or local shops.

### ***Livelihood and Economy***

Taking into consideration the technology and methodology adopted for procuring food, the Kutia Kondhs have been identified as one of the primitive tribal groups of Odisha. Their economic life hinges exclusively on slash and burn type of cultivation which has become a way of life for them. They also undertake food gathering and occasional hunting. Apart from the daily routine of work, the seasonal drudgery is hard and laborious. Division of labour is based on sex. Women have to do all the vital tasks of housekeeping. In swidden plots, debussing, dibbling, hoeing, weeding, guarding the crops, harvesting, winnowing and finally storing are the women's job. Men undertake the tasks of cutting big trees, burning

the felled trees, watch the crops, etc. In wet cultivation, which is very rare, women undertake the important tasks of transplanting, weeding, reaping, harvesting and storing the produce. The Kutia Kondhs do not engage themselves much for NTFP collection except some important ones like hill broom, tamarind, char seeds, etc.

### ***Political Organization***

The Kutia Kondh society is less hierarchical. So their political organization is small. The traditional secular head of the village is called *Majhi*. He decides the cases of inter-personal conflicts, misunderstandings, disputes over inheritance of land and property etc. The most important among his functions is decision pertaining to selection of swidden plots and their distribution amongst the villagers. He is the village representative to the courts to handle disputes with forest department for slashing and burning of forests. He takes the responsibility of making liaison with lawyers, officers and thus acts as a situational leader to villagers at the time of need. The village social and cultural affairs are organized in consultation and by the approval of the *Majhi*. In the Panchayatiraj system, the village head-*Majhi* was being unanimously elected to represents the village in Panchayat. The village people still obey *Majhi* and so normally they do not take the help of the police or public even in serious cases. Kutia Kondh Women do not participate in the political organization.

### ***Religious beliefs and practices***

To the people, the environment is sacred and god (*Penu*) is omnipresent. The entire animate and inanimate material worlds that are found around them are a small part of the larger whole, Nature. *Penu* is manifested in different forms of Nature. Some of the *Penuni* (sing :*Penu*) are benevolent and most are malevolent. All of them need to be invoked and treated duly at the same time or otherwise. Some demand big sacrifice and some are satisfied with small animals. The *Penuni* have different forms and abodes. Some live in mountains, some in plants and trees, huge rocks and peculiar landscapes. They are also seen in dreams of the priests in different forms. The *Penuni* themselves approach priests in dream and direct them to do performances for the welfare of the society. The priests are directed always to act for the welfare of people in the village by acquiring the blessing and secret knowledge imparted by the *Penuni*.

*Dharni Penu* (Earth goddess) is the most important deity in Kutia Kondh pantheon. *Weda Penu* (Sun god) is equally powerful. Besides, there are innumerable hill spirits, ancestral spirits and supernatural spirits whom the Kutia Kondh submits to preserve their well-being.

The important festivals round the year include *Punikalu* (many meanings: new liquor, full-moon, new eating, new festival etc.) in January, *Wango Dropondi* (preparation of Swidden plots) in April, *Taka Kalu* (Mango kernel festival) in July, *Bicha Supinere* (crop sowing ) in June, *Badbinere* (farewell festival) in October etc., *Dussera Kandanga Dakina* (*Dasahara* sword worship ) in October etc. The most

important festivals that are organised once at an interval of 3-4 years include *Bilha Katina* (Meria Festival) and *Burlanga Dakina* (crop container worship), organised sometimes in January - February and April - May respectively. Their dance forms are Kedu Dance, Meria Dance and Dhangada Dhangidi dance.

## **Development and Change of Kutia Kondh under the KKDA**

### ***Demographic indicators***

For sake of comparison of development over the years two sets of information has been referred i.e. the socio-economic survey conducted in the year 2007 and the survey conducted in 2015. As per the survey of 2015, KKDA, Belghar covers 1468 households in 68 villages with a total population of 6336 (3079 males & 3357 females). The average family size is 4.38 persons. As compared to the socio-economic survey conducted in 2007, the total population of the tribe in the said 68 villages was 5524. The growth rate of the tribe during 2007 to 2015 has been 16.50%. Comparing the male and female growth rate during the said period, it has been 15.83% and 17.13% respectively. The growth rate of the tribe has been optimal. There has also been appreciable development marked in terms of the sex ratio which has gone up from 1078 in 2007 to 1090 in 2015. This indicates that the community has been fairly positioned on the demographic parameters.

### ***Literacy Status of Kutia Kondh and its comparative account***

There has been little change in the literacy rate of the community between the two reference periods, i.e. 2007 and 2015. The average literacy rate of the community that was 44% during 2007 has gone up to 45.71% in 2015. The Kutia Kondh community is well placed on literacy as compared to the literacy of the Scheduled Tribes as a whole in the State which was 43.96% as per census 2011. The Kutia Kondh literacy rates for men (59.98%) and for women (32.61%), as on 2015, are also appreciable compared to that of the total ST male (53.35%) and total ST female (34.82%) in the State in 2011 Census.

### ***Accessibility and communication***

There has been significant improvement in connectivity, communication and other infrastructures in the area. Out of 68 project villages, 53 i.e. about 80% have been well connected by motorable roads. Adding to that CC roads within the villages have been constructed in about 49 i.e. 72% villages. With the road facilities, communication by small passenger vehicles, motor cycles, etc. have become easier. Moreover, because of the road facilities the medical emergencies are well attended. However, there are still 15 villages to which road facilities have not been created as yet. These villages in remote pockets have been facing difficulties in accessing public infrastructures like medical facility, veterinary facility, bank, school, etc.

### ***Provision of Electricity and Power***

As per the base line survey in 2015, total 26 villages i.e, only 38% of the total project villages, have been electrified which was limited to 16 villages (23.5%) in 2007. Almost all households in the electrified villages have taken electricity connection. In the same manner, there are 33 (i.e. 48.5%) villages with provisioning of solar lights as on 2015. As per socio-economic survey conducted in 2007, only 12 villages had the provisioning of solar light. The data indicates that there are 59 villages provided with electricity or solar power supply and still there are 11 (16%) villages lacking such facilities. The solar light posts only light up the village premises. Hence, there is great demand for electricity so that the domestic requirements can be met. There has been no instance of use of electricity for irrigation and farming.

### ***Drinking water and Sanitation***

The base line information of 2015 indicates that 64 villages (94%) have access to safe drinking water from tube wells. By the year 2007 only 54 (79%) villages had access to safe drinking water from tube wells. However, during the dry weather some villages face the problem as the tube wells do not yield pure water adequately. Further, despite the availability of tube wells the villagers depend upon other open sources like open wells and stream water for drinking and other domestic requirements. As a comparison it can be said that there has been adequate development in provisioning of drinking water, although it cannot be said sufficient enough to cater to the emerging requirements at household level. On sanitation matters the villages have not developed much. Despite cement concrete roads running through the villages with adjoining drainage systems, the village premises remain dirty with crop residues and other garbage. The village backyards are very unclean laden with dung and garbage. People suffer from frequent outbreaks of malaria, diarrhea, and skin infection problems, due to unhygienic living conditions in the villages.

Almost all people go for open defecation. In none of the villages community toilets and bathrooms are available. There are two reasons why people go for open defecation, one it is one of their old habits and two, there is no water facility for toilet even if one would change his habit. As a matter of fact, the development trend warrants interventions for provisioning of pipe water supply in villages; both for drinking, domestic, toilet and other purpose.

### ***Miscellaneous facilities***

All the Kutia Kondh villages do not have access to provisions under Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). The survey of 2015 indicates that in 26 (38%) habitations the Anganwadi Centres (AWC) are working. The situation in 2007 was precarious with only in 11 habitations having AWCs. However, the supplementary nutrition provisions in existing Anganwadi Centers are to be made better. For women and child related matters, each village has access to ASHA

workers in own village or nearby. The ASHA workers are really a great help to the Kutia Kondh people. However, since the appropriate and referral health care centers are distantly located and the communication facilities from habitations to the mainstream are poor, the ASHAs also face a tough task in handling situations. Most of the villages are out of mobile phone connectivity.

Except the weekly haat the Kutia Kondhs have opportunity to interact with the markets in Tumudibandh and Ambadola but their participation is negligible. They are at a very subsistence level of economy and hence it is very unlikely for them to participate in larger markets. Out of 68 villages only in 4 villages there are petty grocery shops which happen to help the Kutia Kondh at times of emergency.

The Public Distribution Services (PDS) is a big relief for the Kutia Kondh for whom the PDS has become sort of life line. However, the PDS shops are not available in every village but are accessible in the locality. Usually the Kutia Kondhs visit the GP headquarters to collect their PDS quota twice every month. There is no government run fair price shop.

The Kutia Kondhs have not gone far about microenterprise promotion although there are 58 SHGs that includes 54 women SHGs and 4 men SHGs formed and functioning. In absence of proper guidance in trade linkage, loan facilities and bank transactions, they have confined themselves to thrift and credit inside the villages only. The thrift and credit transactions mainly happen for medical emergencies. Since the markets are far the SHGs have not been able to link themselves with the market so far. There are community centers in 13 villages. The community centers are important for many community affairs, meetings and also occasionally for storing goods and articles meant for the community.

### *Sources of Irrigation*

The Kutia Kondh study villages are by and large deprived of any irrigation facility except very few patches of lands located by the streams. There are no perennial water bodies, no gravity flow has been tapped, canal irrigation has not been provided, and above all hardly there are adequate field channels to aid irrigation to the agricultural lands. Hence, the agriculture is by and large rain fed and Kharif is the main agriculture season. Efforts are going on through operation of schemes like OTELP to create irrigation facilities by constructing individual farm ponds, agriculture wells, and by tapping the gravity flow, although, however, they would not be sufficient. What is important here is to plan for series of community tanks along the stretch of recharge zone and discharge zones for facilitating percolation to storage. The in-situ water conservation in an attempt to develop the soil moisture profile of the Kutia Kondh villages is very important in this connection. This can be and should be expedited.

### ***Landholding and land types***

The Kutia Kondhs own three types of land such as low land, medium land and upland. Besides, some families have been granted titles on forest land under Forest Rights Act. The average landholding per family is only 1.30 Acres and they are mostly medium lands and uplands. The low land is valued higher compared to others because the low lands favour paddy cultivation. From the FGDs it was understood that the families who own low lands have a better food security compared to those having medium lands and up lands. The poorest of poor families usually have up lands. Up lands are valued low because only Kharif cultivation is possible on up lands and usually millets are grown there depending on the mercy of nature.

The landholding does not necessarily reflect the economic well being of the Kutia Kondhs because without irrigation facilities the lands are cultivated only once in Kharif season. By the year 2015, total 1253.70 acres of land have been settled in the project villages under Forest Rights Act (FRA), which are located on slopes. Adequate land development interventions in the lands granted under FRA would help the crop diversification, food security and thus the economy of Kutia Kondhs.

### ***Livelihood Scenario***

The landscape of Kutia Kondh study villages is composed of undulating tracts of high ridges and low valleys. In these terrain different types of lands like hill slopes, foothills, high land, up land, medium and lowlands are found within the village boundary and the water of this area is drained by a main drainage line. From the hilly lands soil erosion is very high and land condition is very poor having very low moisture holding capacity. Shifting cultivation continues to be their main source of livelihoods supplemented with wage earning, animal husbandry and collection of NTFPs. On the slope lands mixed cropping system is usually followed. The multiple cropping in a shifting cultivation system is very important in the context of food security, crop harvest security, and above all in a larger context helps preservation of crop germplasm that are specific to the terrain and conditions.

The important crops that are being grown on hill slopes today are mainly millets and oil seeds. The *suan* (fox millet) is the commonly grown variety which again has two sub varieties called *Bado suan* (long duration) and *Sana suan* (short duration). The long duration *suan* is sown along with ragi. These millets come up well in comparatively least fertile soil, which is even unsuitable for millets. The short duration *suan* is sown in June and reaped in August. This millet meets the food requirements in the monsoon when there is no reserve of paddy or ragi left at home.

The other important crop grown on slopes is *Alsi* which is the only oil seed of importance. It is a short duration crop with least water requirement. The crop is grown on uplands which are very prone to soil erosion. Sometimes, *Kulthi* (horse gram) on the uplands which has a same duration life cycle as *Alsi*. Amongst the

pulses, *Arhar* and *Dongarani* or *Kating* are the two main crops grown on the slopes. The name *Dongarani* (queen of hillocks) implies to its superiority on uplands. Local varieties of maize are also grown on the uplands and hill slopes.

Over the years some Kutia Kondh youths have migrated out in search of livelihood opportunities in the cities, far and near, in the states of Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra.

### **Development and change**

The Kutia Kondhs are in transition between tradition and modern. The socio-economic development activities have brought immense changes in their cultural pattern and lifestyle, yet in many aspects they have retained their traditional processes and practices. The main factors responsible for their economic transformation are programs launched by Government and Non-Government agencies, to bring in significant development intervention to raise the standard of living and quality of life relating to health and sanitation, education, environment, infrastructural development, individual benefit schemes, etc. Introduction of modern agriculture, multiple cropping, use of high yielding variety of seeds, provision of irrigation facilities, input assistance, market assurance, etc have to a larger extent set the trends for visible changes in future.

Now-a-days young men and women work in road construction as daily labourers and as wage earners under contractors. Some of them have adopted small business. A few Kutia Kondhs are also using motor bikes. The development organizations and welfare institutions like public health center, police check post, office of the agriculture extension officers, veterinary hospital, post office, weekly market, big shops, establishment of banks, LAMPS and several other public institutions have contributed to the changing life of the Kutia Kondh.

### **Conclusion**

Analyzing from various parameters the Kutia Kondh villages are not much above their disadvantageous situation from point of view of reach and access to miscellaneous facilities, infrastructure and provisions. Compared to the development at the mainstream, at least at the level of nearby sub-urban areas the Kutia Kondh habitations are about decades backward. Hence, there is an urgency to seriously look at the minimum standards of infrastructure and facilities in Kutia Kondh villages so as to improve the Human Development Indicators (HDI). The critical areas of concern are infrastructure, connectivity, housing, drinking water, electricity, education, health and nutrition, livelihoods improvement and income generation, irrigation, social security and above all capacity building and skill development. Along with development interventions for their socio-economic development and consequent improvement in raising the HDI, efforts and programs also need to be designed and implemented for conservation of their unique culture and traditions.



## References

- Behura, N.K. & Mohanti, K.K. (1998): *Vulnerable ethno-cultural groups (VEGs)*, Adivasi, Vol. XXXVII, Nos. 1&2, pp 1-24
- Das Patnaik, P.S. (2004): *Kandha*, in Tribes of Orissa, 2nd edn, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 159-165
- Ota, A.B., and Sahoo, A.C., (2010): *Kutia Kandha*, Photo Handbook Series - 7, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar
- Ota, A.B., and Mohanty, S.C., (2015): *Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) Of Odisha*, in Ota & Mohanty (Ed.) *Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) of Odisha, Volume I (Ethnography)*, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha
- Ota, A.B.,(2015): *Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) Of Orissa: An Overview*, in Ota & Mohanty (Ed.) *Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) of Odisha, Volume I (Ethnography)*, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

# STABILITY AND CHANGE IN THE CUSTOMARY WAY OF LIFE OF THE KUTIA KANDHA \*

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

One significant characteristic of customary rules and practices is that it is not very rigid for all time to come. It changes with time to meet the requirements of the society to remain valid.

Today as evident from the pattern of societies all over the world, certain foreign agencies, changing circumstances, and new socio-political developments compel a society to give up their age-old traditions and accept new ideas. There is spontaneous exchange of human resources, science and technologies, art, culture, religion etc. As a result a simple society grows pluralistic and goes beyond the clutches of customary laws and practices.

The Kutia Kandhas, belonging to a simple society have their own customary laws and practices and their own way of administering law and justice. They do not possess any written law of their own creation. It seems that the basis that determines the nature of Kutia customary rules and principles which guide in imparting justice and the related basis of punishment, are all directed towards one target, that is, preservation of age old customs, practices, traditions and usages. According to them, to follow a custom is to follow a law and to deviate from it is to commit a breach of law. The very enforcement towards adherence to a custom, turns custom into a law particularly when the custom is closely linked with display of standardized interpersonal relationship, between the members of their society in any sphere of social activity and that a little deviation is not only a strikingly alarming anachronism but also an irksome, incongruent and irreconcilable anathema to everyone's sense of traditional reasoning. For them the custom is as

---

\* Published in Tribal Customs and Traditions, Vol.1, SCSTRTI, 2009, pp.174-78

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer, , SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

sacrosanct as an edict of law and the nature and the manner of dispensation of justice is based on it.

Most of the Kutia customs and traditions have been preserved all through the long years of their existence. The nature of their customary laws can be comprehended on certain basis. One of the basis lies in the principle behind the structure and function of their traditional village council composed of village elders, household heads and traditional village leaders. A Kutia village in the past was composed of families belonging to one lineage and clan. The villagers therefore formed a close-knit agnatic kin group and an individual had to look forward to the other members for cooperation and support for his very existence. Therefore, in case of any wrong done to him it also affected his kinsmen. Then the kin group would rise together to retaliate or receive compensation. The roles and functions of the village council were the manifestations of collective responsibility of kinship bonds to perpetuate age-old customs and traditions by following the precedents of their forefathers.

Any issue with a potential discord or dissension that cuts across kinship bonds had to be resolved and subsided. For damages, no doubt, appropriate compensation had to be made besides conducting necessary ceremonies or rituals and feasting following the norms. This principle of reconciliation as necessitated by the preservation of kinship bonds when extended in similar manner to larger groups comprising several lineage of one clan or more than one clan gives clue to the democratic and the decentralized political system and institutions.

With the passage of time, and with gradual growth of population, thereby increasing members of lineages and formations of clans, the preservation of kinship bonds along with the spirit of reconciliation always continued to dominate as the guiding principles of resolution of inter-personal relationship, which gradually extended beyond and covered other kinship groups. In this process of embracing larger groups, the democratic and decentralized process continued to manifest itself and acquired the stamp of stability and permanence and assumed the shape of an institutionalized association, that is, the political system as the kin group grew in to a tribe.

Very little is known about the past history of development of the Kutias. But prior to British occupation of the Kandha territory during the last century, the Kutia country was under the chiefdoms ruled by the Rajas and Zamindars. In 1836, the Raja of Ghoomsar revolted against the British Government and took refuge with the Kutias in their remote hill settlements. The natives rose in rebellion against the British Government when British troops invaded their settlements to arrest the Raja. The British administration suppressed the revolt with heavy casualties on either side and finally brought the area under their control. They also suppressed the barbarous human sacrifice (*meriah*).

The Kutias are a brave and courageous people. They love their independence and boldly resist any outside interference. Their feudal rulers never interfered with their life style but established friendly ties with them only to get their loyalty and tributes and allowed them to continue with their own system. The Britishers also exercised due caution to administer them because of their bitter experience in subjugating the natives at the outset. They recognized the traditional system of the Kutias and collected revenues and taxes by reinforcing the traditional system. But with the spread of British rule in the hill tracts, some development works such as roads, schools, dispensaries, rest-sheds were constructed. Revenue and police administration was also brought in to the area. With the opening up of the interiors, people from the plains infiltrated in to these areas as contractors, moneylenders, traders, brokers, social workers and Government servants. Many of them found it easy to gain the confidence of the simple natives and exploit them in all possible ways. The Kutias suffered at the hands of these exploiters. In 1865, a general rising of the Kutia Kandhas took place having its root in a dispute about payment for construction of certain roads, which the Patro (Mutha head) of Subarnagiri had contracted to execute.

The Kutia area was included under Ganjam Agency during British rule. "In the whole of the Agency tracts... the Kandhas used to hold land rent free and pay *mamul* to the Hill Chiefs in kinds as well as in cash. Though a proclamation issued in 1846 the (British) Government made it known to the public not to levy any tax on the Kandha. What happened as a result, most of the lands belonging to the Kandha and other tribal communities passed on to the non-tribals by the process of alienation. To put a stop to this process the Agency Tracts Interest and Land Transfer Act-1 of 1870 was passed prohibiting transfer of land from the tribal people to the non tribal people without express permission of authorities." (Patnaik, 1982).

The British policy of "leave them alone" reflected in the Government of India Act, 1919 & 1935 provided for partial exclusion of backward tribal areas i.e. the Agency Tracts. This Act declared the Agency tracts of the Kandhamals, Koraput, Ganjam, Sambalpur and Angul districts in Orissa province as Partially Excluded Areas. Many developmental works were undertaken during this time. The British administration gave due weight age to the indigenous institutions of the natives. Such system may be described as "indirect rule" and defined as a system of governance by which the controlling power encourages amongst the natives, the fullest possible use of their dynamic institutions as instruments of local self-government on lines consistent with modern requirements.

By and large the Kutias remained happy and contended with their undisturbed life-style. One of the Assistant Agents who was in charge of administration of the Agency tract once reported, "I am convinced that the Kandhas are animated by as a strong sentiment of contentment which it would require a course of systematic oppression or of the most insensate mis-management to upset, while there is no doubt that combination for rebellion would in a great measure be

thwarted by diversity of dialect and of the survival of blood feuds between 'Mutha' which though liable to cause casual breaches of peace as a bulwark against general rebellion." (Patnaik, 1972).

Despite the merits and demerits of the British Administration, it can be said that the foreign rulers were sympathetic towards them and were successful in creating a general awareness about tribal problems in this country. Influenced by public opinion, British Government appointed a committee designated as "Partially Excluded Areas Enquiry Committee" in 1938 to examine the tribal problems and recommend remedial measures. Its recommendations submitted to Government in 1940-41 included reorganization of administrative structure, checking shifting cultivation, enforcement of prohibition, development of road communication, spread of education, provision of public health and veterinary services, abolition of debt and bondage, modernization of agriculture, etc. These recommendations could not be translated into action due to war emergencies and subsequently India gained independence.

The post-independence policy disparaged thoroughly the approach of 'integration' and assimilation' which was aimed at activating and developing all that was good and useful in the tribal society and culture. Several developmental programmes for the upliftment of the backward tribals were geared up. Constitution of India incorporated special provisions granting special privileges and protections to the tribals who were declared as Scheduled Tribes. Panchayat Raj system of local self-government was introduced. Special Multipurpose Tribal Development (SMPT) Blocks started functioning for socio-economic development of the tribal areas. During the fifth five-year plan, the integrated Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) approach was implemented. The Kutias of Belghar are covered under the Integrated Tribal Development Agency of Baliguda sub-division. Since 1979, a Micro project named the "Kutia Kandha Development Agency has started functioning at Belghar with the aim of bringing all round socio-economic development of the Kutia Kandhas who have been declared as a Primitive Tribal Group (PTG).

All these development exercises have brought some change among the Kutias. Their dependence on shifting cultivation has reduced to some extent and they have started taking up settled cultivation with modernized agricultural practices. As a result of the impact of land settlement operations and issue of *patttas* (tenancy rights) to individual landowners, they have become more assertive of their rights over their lands. The 'Land Alienation Act' (Regulation-2 of 1956) has reduced the frequency of land alienation from the Kutias to their non-tribal neighbors. The exploitation of Panos is no longer tolerated. With the spread of formal and non-formal education, their level of literacy has jumped up from 4 percent to 25.83 percent. The younger generation has become more conscious of their rights and privileges and their worldview has widened.

In the village politics, the traditional leaders feel it as their duty to cooperate with modern leaders' i.e. the Ward Member, Sarpanch, Panchayat Samity

Chairman, M.L.A. and M.P. in planning and executing the development programmes. The new leaders of younger generation instead of challenging the planned change rather accept the new policies and programmes and explain the same to the elders to get their support and advice. They take part in the elections to elect their leaders. Despite all these, most of the traditions of their fore-fathers are obeyed as a rule because, they love their traditions by which they have preserved and upheld their “group identity” against the tide of modern changes.

By rapid increase of population, socio-economic and political development, the Kutia society is not excluded from the recurring changes and resultant developments. At present, the general widening of the outlook of the Kutias made possible by outside contact and resulting complexities of life in general, have made room for doubt – to what extent the customary law would meet the requirement of their present day needs. More over with the march of time and development taking place, changes in the society, its norms and values are bound to occur. The younger generation is becoming more conscious of their rights and privileges. The changes in the outlook and policy of the Government have brought the Kutia society closer to the rest of the nation and made their mind little open for acceptance of new ideas.

It appears inevitable under the present circumstances that a customary law or even an enacted law cannot maintain its originality and there may occur some changes and modifications to suit the prevailing conditions. Although some visible changes have appeared in the concept of Kutia customs, and marked departure in the observations of these customs, yet such deviations have not changed the basic features of the original custom. Although, for example the human sacrifice has been converted to buffalo sacrifice, the devotion and *modus operandi* remains the same as before. Rather such changes are accommodated within the bounds of the customs without any radical changes. The concept of customs relating to marriage, inheritance, restitutions etc. also exhibit trends towards modernism. Whenever there is conflict between new and old concept of custom, the justice, equity and good conscience play a vital role as a mitigating factor. Generally the new changes are accommodated by modifying the contents while the spirit behind the custom is tried to be kept intact.

## Bibliography & References

- |              |         |   |
|--------------|---------|---|
| Ali, Almas   | 1978-79 | Health and Genetic Problems of Kutia Kondhs of Burlubaru Village. <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol. XVIII, Nos.1-4, pp-56-62. |
| Anonymous    | 1846    | The Kondhs of Hill Tribes, <i>Calcutta Rev</i> , Vol.V, pp. 22-85   |
| Behura, N.K. | 1962    | Transformation of Human Sacrifice among the Kondhs of Orissa. <i>Vanyajati</i> , Vol. X, PP 93-99.                |

- |                               |         |   |
|-------------------------------|---------|---|
| Boal, B. M.                   | 1982    | <i>The Kondhs (Human sacrifice and Religious Change)</i> , Bhubaneswar, M.B.D.  |
| Bogardus, E. S.               | 1987    | The Suppression of Human Sacrifices among the Kondhs, <i>Calcutta Review</i> . Vol. XV, No.229, pp. 61-66.                |
| Campbell, J.                  | 1864    | <i>Among the Wild Tribes of Khondistan</i> . London, Host and Black Vol. IX, P. 320.                                      |
| Dalton, E.T.                  | 1872    | <i>Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal</i> , Calcutta, Supdt. of Govt. Printing.  |
| Das, B.N.                     | 1956    | Suppression of Human Sacrifice among the Hill Tribes of Orissa. <i>Man in India</i> , Vol. XXXVI, No.1, P.21.             |
| Das, N.                       | 1950    | Sikuli Puja in a Khond Village, <i>Vanyajati</i> , Vol.VI, pp.27-30   |
| Das, M.N.                     | 1960    | Female Infanticide Among the Kondhs of Orissa. <i>Man in India</i> , Vol.XI, pp.30-35.                                    |
| Friend-Periera, J.A           | 1902    | Customs of Kondhs, <i>Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal</i> . Vol.71, pp.1-28.   |
|                               | 1899    | Totemism among the Khonds, <i>Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal</i> . Vol. XVIII, pp.1-13.                             |
| Frowde, H.                    | 1908    | <i>Kondh</i> , the Imperial Gazetter of India, Oxford, Vol.XVI, pp.-280-288.  |
| Hota, N.R.                    | 1959-60 | <i>Human Sacrifice among the Khonds of Orissa</i> . <i>Orissa Historical Research Jr.</i> , Vol.VIII, No.3-4, pp.158-163. |
| Mazumdar, B.C.                | 1932    | The Kui or the Kondh People, <i>Man in India</i> , Vol.XII, pp. 245-252.  |
| Mohanty, S.C.                 | 1993    | Social Position and Property Rights of Kutia Kondh Women. <i>Adivasi</i> , Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, pp. 16-21.                 |
| Mukherjee, P.                 | 1959-60 | Human Sacrifice among the Khonds of Orissa, a note, <i>Orissa Hist. Res. Journal</i> , Vol. VIII, No.3-4, PP 164-167.     |
| Niggemeyer, H                 | 1957    | Kutia Kondha Pilara Ekoisia (Oriya), <i>Adibasi</i> , Vol.1, No.2 & 3, pp.5-7.  |
| Patnaik, N. & P.S. Daspatnaik | 1982    | <i>The Kondh of Orissa</i> , Bhubaneswar, T.H.R.T.I.  |
| Patnaik, U. C.                | 1945    | The Kondhas of the Hills, One Century of British Rule (1836 to 1946). <i>Mod. Rev.</i> Vol. IXXVIII, P 214-218.           |
| Russell, R.V.                 | 1916    | <i>Tribes Castes of Central Provinces of India</i> , Vol.III, Part-III, pp.-464-481.                                      |
| Walts, N. A.                  | 1970    | <i>The Half-Clad Tribals of Eastern India</i> , Orient Longmans, Bombay.  |

# KISAN\*

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

The term 'Kisan' has been derived from Hindi which means peasant or farmer. The community is enlisted as a Scheduled Tribe both in Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand. They are migrants from Nagpur area and are considered to be an offshoot of the Oraon tribe. They bear different synonyms such as Kuda, Kora, Mirdha, Kola, Morva etc.

In Odisha they are largely concentrated in Sundergarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda districts. As per 2011 census their population in Odisha is 3,31,589 including 1,65,079 males and 1,66,510 females having the sex ratio of 1009. Their percentage of literacy is 64.21 (74.60% for males and 53.96% for females). Their mother tongue *Kisan* is a Dravidian language and some of them speak a local dialect called *Laria*. In addition to that they are conversant in Oriya.

Kissan settlements are generally unclan and homogenous. In multi-ethnic villages they live in separate hamlets.

The Kisan are settled cultivators, agricultural and non-agricultural wage earners and gatherers of seasonal forest produce. Economically, Kisan women contribute substantially participating in different economic activities i.e. cultivation, wage earning, household industry like, broom stick and mat making, besides doing their household chores. They are non-vegetarians and rice is their staple food. They also consume a variety of pulses, vegetables, edible roots and tubers, leaves and flowers, collected from the local forest. They are addicted to rice beer, country liquor and tobacco smoking.

Kisan is an endogamous community which is divided into a number of exogamous totemic septs like *Lokda* (tiger), *Bahata* (wild dog), *Bada* (banyan), *Kind* (a fish), *Topo* (a bird), *Kujur* (a plant), *Minj* (kite), *Aka* (tortoise), *Maha* (crow), *Tiga*

---

\* Unpublished article of 2000 updated in 2019

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer (2000) & Consultant (2018), SCSTRTI



(monkey), *Hesar* (paddy), *pannor* (iron), *Bakur* (salt), *Palar* (cur), *Majhi* (Boat man) and *Khalir*.

Kisan family is mostly nuclear and monogamous. Few cases of extended family are also found. Family is patrilocal and patrilineal. Marriage through negotiation is regarded as ideal and prestigious. Bride price is prevalent and cross cousin marriage is preferred. The other modes of marriage are capture, elopement and service, which are becoming rare in these days. Remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees are permitted and junior levirate and junior sororate are also socially approved. The wedding function is celebrated at the bride's residence and the nuptial function is performed on the fourth day at groom's residence.

The Kisan observe birth pollution for a period of seven days. The lineage members observe purificatory rites on the seventh day and the father and mother of the newborn baby observe the rites on the twenty-first day. On the same day name-giving ceremony is observed. They also observe puberty rites for an adolescent girl after a seven days pollution period. During this period the menstruating girl remains in seclusion. The community practices both burial and cremation for the dead. They observe death pollution for eleven days. On the twelfth day they observe purificatory rites.

The Kisan profess Hinduism and worship Hindu deities along with their traditional tutelary deities like *Gonsain*, *BhimDevta*, *Budha Band*, *Baghia*, *Samlei*, etc. and observe festivals like *Rath Yatra*, *Raja*, *Dasara*, *Kalipuja*, *Makar Sankranti*, *Dol Yatra*, *Janmastami*, *Nuakhia*, *Pus Punei* and *Karma*. They celebrate the occasion amidst traditional folkdance and music. Their traditional community priest *Kalo* or *Soin* officiates in the rituals and Brahmin priest worships the deities.

The community has its own traditional council known as *Jati Samaj* headed by a *Sardar* or *Kotwar* whose office is hereditary. The other office bearers are *Mukhia*, the village head and *Barika*, the regional head. The *Jati* council settles up intra community disputes and acts as the custodian of social values, traditions and customs.

The community has preserved its traditional song and music. On occasions of rituals, ceremonies and festivals both men and women participate in dance singing their traditional folk songs.

## K I S A N \*

*Uma Charan Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

The little known tribe, Kisan, remained long obscured on account of its Hindi appellation which means cultivator. The tribe seems to be an offshoot of the great Oraon tribe which belongs to the Dravidian group. But at present they take pride in declaring themselves as a separate tribe and only acknowledge the Oraons as their younger brother. The language of the Kisan is allied to that of Oraon and they call it '*Kun Boli*' and declare themselves as *Kunhar*. According to their traditions the Kisans have migrated from Chhotanagpur to Sunargarh from where they moved to other places. Either for labour or for agriculture the tribe has spread over an extensive area. The present distribution of the tribe as enumerated in 1961 Census is given below:-

Sl. No.	Name of the district	Total population	Male	Female
1.	Sambalpur	66,528	33,298	33,230
2.	Sundergarh	50,632	24,146	26,486
3.	Dhenkanal	6,010	3,057	2,953
4.	Keonjhar	2,241	1,088	1,153
5.	Cuttack	108	40	68
6.	Mayurbhanj	69	37	32
7.	Koraput	41	25	16
8.	Kalahandi	06	02	04
<b>Total</b>		<b>125,605</b>	<b>61,693</b>	<b>63,912</b>

The Kisans do not reside in any compact areas of their own but live in multi-caste and multi-tribal villages though in most cases they have their own *Tola* or ward at the end of the village. They live with caste Hindus as such as Brahmin, Teli, Agharia, Sundhi, Keut, Lohar, Kumbhar etc., and with tribal people such as the Bhuiyans, Mundas, Oraons, Kharias, or Kols. In social status

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No.3, (Spl. Issue), TRB, Bhubaneswar 1963-64, pp.179-180

<sup>1</sup> Former Research Scholar, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

they are below the Hinduised tribes such as Bhuyans, Gonds and Kandhas but almost rank equally with the Munda, Oraon, and Kharias. They are not served by Brahmins, washer men or barbers yet they have almost integrated with the local Oriya Society having lived long with these people. The chief virtue of the tribe is that though they have been greatly influenced by the local culture they have not lost as yet their own identity. The tribe has no subdivisions but in different areas they have different names such as Kuda or Koda and Mirdha.

The Kisans are both industrious and intelligent. Most of them possess some land. They work hard in the fields. Even the wealthy Kisans do not hesitate to work in the fields with labourers. There are a few rich Kisans who have fifty acres of land or more. They employ several servants and lead a prosperous life. But majority of the tribe lead the life of poor labourer.

The Kisans are the best earth-workers. Many of them have known carpentry and lying of bricks. Most of the poor cultivators and all the landless people depend greatly on daily wages or serve as 'Goti' or 'Halia' under rich cultivators. Besides they also supplement their resources by way of food gathering and collect Mahul, Char, Kendu and other green leaves and tubers.

Educationally they are very backward. Hardly ten per cent of the Kisans are educated. After independence the situations has altered substantially and a good numbers of Kisan youths are now entering into schools and colleges. A few educated Kisans now serve as teachers, clerks or work in farms and factories.

The Kisan settlements are generally situated on plain open land with scope for expansion. In most of the villages it is only a separate ward at the end of the main village adjoining to the wads of other tribals such as Mundas, Kharias or Oraons. The houses are not very high, mostly with double sloped thatches. In Sundargarh and Sambalpur area most of the houses are thatched with country tiles (called *khappar*) but in other areas these are either thatched with straw or locally available grass.

The Kisans are divided into more than sixteen clans or *Bansa* such as *Majhi*, *Lakda* (tiger), *Topo* (A bird), *Bahala* (wild dog), *Bada* (Banyan), *Kind* (a type of fish), *Kujur* (a Plume), *Ming* (Kite), *Eka* (Tortoise), *Haha* (Crow), *Tiga* (monkey), *Hes* (paddy), *Panna* (Iron), *Beka* (Salt), *Khale* (curd), *Pala* (Curd), etc. Each *Bansa* is exogamous and totemistic. The *Majhi*, *Lakda* and *Topo* clans seem more progressive. Each clan is further divided into sub-clans which are called *Khudi* by the Kisans. The *Majhi* clan is divided into *Nageria* and *Sabaria*, etc. the *Bada* clan is divided into *Sud* and *Chattia*, etc. The sub-clans are generally named after some particular village where the ancestors of the sub-clan were residing previously. The major clans or sub-clans have their clans meetings which are held annually or once within three to twelve years. The formal or informal meetings of the clans are also held either at the time of *Bansa Khoja* or *Guhul Puja*.

The Kisans show a great deal of co-operation and mutuality in their social life. All the Kisans of a village live as a corporate group. The Kisan elders of the village form an informal group and look into all socio-religious affairs of the village. The headman of the village is called *Sian*. In important disputes the Kisan elders invite the *Gountia* of the village and take his counsel in arriving at a decision.

In Kisan villages there are few persons who serve as *Mati*. The *Mati* is the witch doctor of the village. To some extent he is the spiritual priest and teacher in the Kisan society. The *Mati* undergoes regular training and serves selflessly for the benefit of others. The chief function of the *Mati* is to cure diseases. In death rites the *Mati* serves as *Kalo* (the priest) as he is more intimately familiar with the spirits of the Under Worlds.

Over and above the village, the Kisans have another territorial unit which consists of a cluster of federated villages. These villages have a particular *Ghat* in the nearby river or brook where every year on a fixed day, either in the month of *Kartik* or *Margasira*, the Kisans observe *Ganga* ceremony and throw the pots containing the effigies or bones of the dead persons of the year. For each *Ghat* there is a particular official who is called *Panigiri*. The chief function of the *Panigiri* is to readmit the ex-communicated persons into the community.

In old days, the *Bariha* was the tribal chief in such confederated villages. At present in most of the area the institution of *Bariha* has been abolished and *Panchupalli* Panchayat has been evolved. The *Panchupalli* Organization is an informal body consisting of important persons of different villages. These people decide all the caste disputes.

The Kisans are extremely fond of dance and music. The *Nadu Jatra* is the important festival of the tribe. But at present the Kisans have reorganized their caste meetings. In the three ex-States of Gangpur, Bonai and Bamanda three caste meetings or '*Kisan Jati Sabhas*' are functioning at present.

The chief aim of these caste meetings is to reform their society, to drive out superstitious customs and to improve the social and economic conditions of their community. Now all these meetings are fighting hard to prohibit drinking, to stop the dancing of women, to eradicate irregular forms of marriage. Through these caste meetings, Hindu rites and customs are being introduced into the Kisan Society. Besides, these are serving as useful media to bring consciousness amongst the people.

# KISAN \*

*B. Chowdhury*<sup>1</sup>

The Kisan tribe is listed as a Scheduled Tribe in Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal. In the 1971 Census, they numbered 1,97,644 in the whole country, constituting 0.52 per cent of the total tribal population of 37,998,041. Orissa, with 1,80,025 (91.09%), claims the highest number of Kisan, followed by Bihar with 16,903 (8.55,210), and then by West Bengal with 716 (0.36%). In Orissa, the Kisan population (2,66,371) constitutes 3.79 per cent of the total tribal population of the state in 1991. Their population showed a growth rate of 16.83 per cent during the decade 1981-91 as against 18.89 per cent for the total tribal population and 20.06 per cent of the total population. The sex ratio is 999 females per thousand males. Although they are found in most of the districts of the state, their concentration is very heavy in the districts of Sambalpur and Sundargarh.

The term 'Kisan' is a Hindi word meaning 'cultivator'. This name might have been given to them by their Hindi-speaking neighbors because of their efficiency in agriculture. But a Kisan calls himself 'Kunhar', from which the term 'Kisan' might also have been derived. In some places they are referred to as 'Kuda' because of their efficiency in earthwork. However, a Kisan feels pride in calling himself a 'Kisan'.

In some places in Orissa, as quoted in the Census report of 1911 by Sarat Chandra Roy (1915), the Oraons describe themselves as Kisans, 'cultivators', or Koras, 'diggers', and in some other places as Dhangar-Kodas. In this way writes Roy (1915) 'different occupations followed by the Oraons in different localities have secured them from their neighbours different names and they are on the way to creating different sub-sections of the same tribe among whom intermarriage is no longer permitted.'

---

\* Published in *Tribes of Orissa* (revised edition), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2004, pp.175-179

<sup>1</sup> Former Deputy Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

As to the origin of the tribe, they have only faint memories of their traditions. According to tradition the mountainous tract of Bada Nagapur was the original abode of the Kunhar as opposed to Chotanagpur. When their forefathers were in Bada Nagapur, hunting and forest collection were their main sources of livelihood. At that time they were moving from place to place in search of suitable jungle tracts. In course of time a group arrived at the densely forested Nagara area. In those days there was no raja or *zamindar*. So they invited and installed a Bhuiya as the *zamindar* of the area and distributed the forest land among themselves. Subsequently they learnt and practiced settled agriculture by clearing the forest land. Whatever may be the tradition they recall concerning their original birth place, they show much similarity in language and in cultural traits with the Oraon, whom they consider their younger brothers. No doubt one can conclude that the Kisan tribe is an offshoot of the Oraon tribe.

Their percentage of literacy has improved from 8.90 in 1961 to 11.45 in 1971 at state level. It increased further to 17.3 by 1981 as against 13.96 of the tribal population of the state as a whole. In 1991 it rose to 28.95. This shows that they are already ahead of many of the tribal communities in the educational field.

They live in any compact area alongside other tribes, though with separate ward (*tola*) set up at one corner of the village. The arrangement of houses in a Kisan settlement and the house patterns are not the same throughout the locality. In some settlements, generally in the older villages, the houses are clustered together, while in certain others, which have comparatively new houses, these are neatly arranged on either side of the village road. Each individual house has its compound. Well-to-do Kisan households build houses along the sides of a quadrangle, which serves as the courtyard. Kisan houses are rectangular in size, with one door in each room open to the courtyard. Most of the houses have low mud walls and a *naria* tiled roof.

In selecting a new site for the construction of houses, the Kisan follow a method of grain divination. At the selected site, seven grains of *arua* rice in the name of Mother Earth and the Sun God are placed in a spot that was cleared earlier. These rice grains are covered with a *papal* leaf with sand on it. If these grains are found undisturbed the following morning, the site is considered auspicious. Before actual construction of the house is started the first wooden pillar, called the auspicious pillar, is fixed ceremonially by the oldest male member of the household. Most households own more than one living room, besides the cowshed and the kitchen.

Kisan household articles do not differ much from those of middle-class Hindus and other tribal groups like the Oraon and the Gond. They now possess many modern articles. As regards household furniture, the *khatti* (charpoy) with a wooden frame woven with thin *sabai* rope is found in many households. *Patia* or mat made of date-palm leaf is also used very commonly as bedstead. Some of the well-to-do houses have a framed wooden cot, chair and table. Their household

utensils include plates and pots of various sizes made of brass, bell metal and aluminum. They use earthenware or aluminum cooking pots. The husking lever and grinding stone are found in many houses. Bamboo baskets of different shapes and sizes, and all types of utensil, are purchased from the market. The kerosene lamp, lantern, torch light, radio, watch, cotton umbrella, bucket and bicycle are now very commonly used. In dress and ornaments they do not show any peculiarity. Common dresses as used by the rural folk are worn by the older generation. Tattoo marks are mainly seen among the old women. Their other household articles include different varieties of agricultural implements, fishing traps and weapons for hunting. Musical instruments, which include drums of different size, are owned collectively by the villagers.

Rice is their staple food, which is taken two to three times a day with a side-dish of green leaves or vegetables. Besides these general items they also eat special items such as cakes and non-vegetarian dishes, mostly on festive occasions. Edible roots, fruits and flowers collected from the nearby forests are eaten. Rice-beer and *mohua* liquor are the most common alcoholic drinks. Tobacco-smoking, chewing and the use of tobacco-paste (*gurakhu*) are common habits.

In the treatment of diseases, they still depend on their traditional methods of magico-religious treatments to some extent, although modern treatments like Ayurvedic, allopathic and homeopathic, are also resorted to. The shaman known as Mati and the quacks called Kabiraj are still there to provide traditional methods of treating diseases.

As their name indicates, the Kisan are mainly an agricultural community. A majority still stick to agriculture. The employment pattern among the Kisan is more or less the same as that of the total tribal population of the state, with a slight deviation in the industrial category of manufacturing, processing, servicing, repairs, etc. Their participation in mining and quarrying and other services should have been more, in view of the mining activities and other characteristics of the area of their habitation. In other words, the Kisan have not yet taken up gainful employments like regular service, trade and commerce to an appreciable extent, but still largely depend on cultivation and agricultural labour. For a long time the Kisan have enjoyed the reputation of being good farmers among the tribes. Most have some land, which they cultivate. They mainly grow rice and *gulji*, a minor millet, as their main food crop. Most still follow the traditional method of cultivation, and very few have taken up new methods by using improved seeds or chemical fertilizer. They use the same types of agricultural implements that are used by their neighbors. In addition to agriculture the Kisans depend on forest collection as much as their places of habitation permit. They collect firewood, green leaves, fruits, *mohua* flowers and seeds mostly for their own consumption, and *kendu* leaves for sale. Hunting and fishing have become pastimes. As regards household industries, women have knowledge of making mats and broomsticks from wild date palm leaves, while many men know brick-making and carpentry.

The tribe is divided into several *banso*, or totemic exogamous clans. The Kisan population belonging to the following *banso* are found in Sundargarh and Sambalpur districts :

<i>Banso</i>	<i>English equivalent</i>
1. Lokda	Tiger
2. Bahata	Wild dog
3. Bada	Banyan
4. Kind	A kind of fish ( <i>seula</i> )
5. Tapo	A kind of bird
6. Kujur	A kind of leafy plant
7. Minj	Kite
8. Aka	Tortoise
9. Maha (r)	Crow
10. Tiga (r)	Monkey
11. Hesar	Paddy
12. Panner	Iron
13. Bakur	Salt
14. Palar	Cur
15. Majhi	Term used for the village by boatmen
16. Khalir	Secular headman among the Santal

They have no knowledge how these clans originated. They have no religious rites for the multiplication of their totems or as a mode of paying respect. They also do not show reverence towards their totemic objects, animals or plant. The *bansos* are exogamous, and marriage within a *banso* is strictly prohibited. Marriage within one's *banso* will result in the excommunication of the offenders, which is irrevocable. There are several totemic names, which are similar to those found among the Oraon. Some of the *bansos* are divided into sub-groups, which are named after the old places from which the forefathers of the sub-groups migrated. For example the Lakda *banso* is divided into Tungulia, Gudhiali, Karanjia and Alandia. Similarly the Majhi *banso* is sub-divided into Dasalpurie, Nagpuria and Saheria.

The delivery of a child takes place in one corner of the living room, and experienced women assist the woman in confinement. In extremely difficult cases, the traditional shaman's help is summoned or the woman is taken to the nearest hospital. Soon after birth, the naval cord is severed with a knife, and along with the placenta, it is buried in a pit by one of the women who had assisted at the time of the delivery. Until the purificatory rites are performed on the seventh day, the mother is not allowed to cook or go out. She is given boiled rice and *kulthidel* to eat during this period. On the seventh day the mother washes her clothes, takes a complete bath and takes *tulsi* water for her purification. On the 21st day after the birth, the child is given a name. On this day, if the family can afford it, it may invite the neighbors and relatives to eat festive meals, which include liquor.



Marriage within the same clan or to a member of any other caste or tribe is strictly forbidden. Marriage by capture, elopement and service, though socially approved, are less common than marriage by negotiation. However, both boys and girls are given freedom in the selection of spouses. Cross-cousin marriage is not compulsory but preferential. In a case of arranged marriage, the marriage proposal is brought formally by the boy's family. After the exchange of several visits, the bride price and the date for the marriage ceremony are fixed. The brideprice is paid in both cash and kind, the amount of which varies from place to place. The cash payment varies from Rs.16.00 to Rs.18.00, and payment in kind, including paddy measuring 10 *khadies* or 150 kilograms approximately, and two clothes. Before the actual marriage the bride price is paid by the boy's side. On the appointed day the groom, accompanied by relatives, both male and female, young and old, proceeds to the bride's village for marriage. The occasion is celebrated with dancing and singing and feasting in both villages. Widow Remarriage and divorce are socially approved.

They both bury and burn the deceased. Death rites are observed in two stages as primary and secondary rites. During the primary death rites, they dispose of the corpse, collect its bones and observe purificatory rites. During the secondary rites they ceremonially throw the pot containing the bones of the deceased into the fixed water source known as Ganga ghat. After death, the corpse is anointed with turmeric and oil, and is carried to the cremation ground in a bier or a charpoy. After cremation they take bath and return to the deceased's house, where they purify themselves with the smoke from a burning fire in which oil is poured. On the third day of cremation, they go to collect the bones in a pot. On the eight or twelfth day the final purificatory rites are observed by cleaning the houses and washing the clothes. After the harvest the bone immersion ceremony is observed.

The Kisan believe in the existence of a number of Gods and Goddesses. They refer to the under-god as Mahapur and worship the Earth Goddess, and village deities named Gansir, Budha-Band and Bhim Debata. They believe in the existence of innumerable spirits who bring diseases and death. Various religious ceremonies are observed in honour of Gods and Goddesses round the year. Religious rites connected with agricultural operations start with the ceremonial sowing of paddy (*bihanbuna*) in Baisakh (April-May). The Gamha festival for planting *kendu* twigs is held in the agricultural fields in Sravan(July-August), Nuakhai or the first eating of new rice in the month of Bhadrab(August-September) and finally Puspune in the month of Pusa(December-January), which marks the end of agricultural operations for the year. In addition to these they also observe Dashara, Kali Puja and Dol Purnima, along with their Hindu neighbors. On these festive occasions, special food like cakes and mutton are taken. The sacrifice of goats and fowls is very common. Such occasions are celebrated with dancing and music.

The Kisans are fond of dancing and music. On every occasion like marriage, the bone emersion ceremony, and at religious ceremonies, dancing and singing by both male and female, young and old, continue for day and night without break. Jatra, the festival of youth, is observed at different regions in different months of the winter and summer season. Groups of male and female Kisan visit the place where Jatra is held to participate in the dancing. They have special dances and music for this specific occasion.

In a village all Kisans show mutuality and cooperation in their daily lives. All the elders form an informal group under the informal leadership of the Sian, the secular headman. The village priest called Kalo and the witch-doctor known as Mati act and assist the Sianas spiritual priest and teacher in the society. All disputes and the celebration of socio-religious ceremonies in the village pertaining to their own group are examined by the informal village council. Over and above the village, they used to have a territorial unit consisting of a group of neighboring villages under a tribal chief called *Bariha* to look after tribal matters and to organize the annual bone emersion ceremony. But this institution exists no longer. The only official who still continues it is the Panigiri, who officiates at the time of the bone emersion ceremony.

After independence the influential and educated Kisans made an attempt to bring about various reforms in the society for the improvement of their social status in the locality. They held meetings and finally formed informal tribal organizations at various places. The main aim of such organizations and the meetings of the prominent members of the tribe was to bring about the reform of their society by removing superstitious beliefs and customs, drinking habits, poverty and illiteracy. Several resolutions of reform pertaining to marriage rules and socio-economic improvements were passed and implemented in the past. The Kisans are now conscious of their socio-economic status in the locality and are trying hard to improve their economic conditions with the assistance of the Government, and their educational standards under the guidance of some educated and active members of their own group. Many changes have occurred in their society and several Hindu elements are now being absorbed.

# THE KISAN - A LITTLE KNOWN TRIBE INHABITING THE DISTRICT OF SUNDARGARH \*

*Nityananda Patnaik*<sup>1</sup>

The Kisan is one of the least known tribes of Orissa. No census report says anything about them. And no ethnographic study of the tribe is available in any report, except a few lines of Dalton written in his book "Ethnology of Bengal". He claimed them to have similarity with the Nagabans is of Chutia Nagpur. Thus he seemed to have included them in the Kolarian group. But from what I have gathered about the tribe especially the language, kinship terminology, birth rites, marriage customs and death rites, etc, they seem to be more akin to the Oraon who belong to the pre-Dravidian stock than to Kolarian group. Nevertheless more study of these tribes is essential in order to establish the theory of resemblance of the Kisan with the Oraon. Not a detailed ethnographic research alone of these tribes is enough for this matter but the factors contributing to the causes of similarity are to be found out by the deep study of these little known tribes.

The comparative treatment of the Kisan culture and that of the Oraon on one hand and that of the Munda, Kharia and Ho on the other should certainly take a large space. Hence the comparative picture may be split into small sections which can be published in different installments. Therefore the paper deals in general with two items of their culture, that is, language and the cross-cousin marriage on a comparative basis.

## **Name of Different Parts of the Body : -**

<u>Kissan</u>	<u>Oraon</u>	<u>Names</u>	<u>Ho</u>	<u>Kharia</u>	
Kuku	Kuk		Head	Boa	Bakab
Chuti	Chuti		Hair	Ub	Uli

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. I, Inaugural Issue, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1955, pp.12-15

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

Muhin	Puin	Nose	Muta	Ramang
Hanu	Khan	Bye	Med	Mad
Tatha	Tatkha	Tongue	Lea	Langa
Palu	Pal	Tooth	Thata	Gone
Thathana	Bhai	Mouth	Ao	Mang
Hanto	Kheser	Neck	Serom	Kanka
Heka	Khekha Hand	Ti	Baha	
Angtli	Angali	Finger	Ganda	Angri
Ehu	Chhati	Chest	Kuam	
Kul	Kul	Stomach	Poda	Lai
Kadma	Kadma	Waist	Majam	
Hedu	Khede	Leg	Kata	Kata
Pad	TaruaKhede	Foot	Kata	Pad
Meta	Metar	Man		
Hanke	Muka	Woman		
Dihi	Pada	Village		Pada
Edepa	Edepa	House		

The above list shows that there is enough similarity between the Kisan and Oraon words for different parts of the body whereas there is no similarity between the Kisan and Ho or Kharia words.

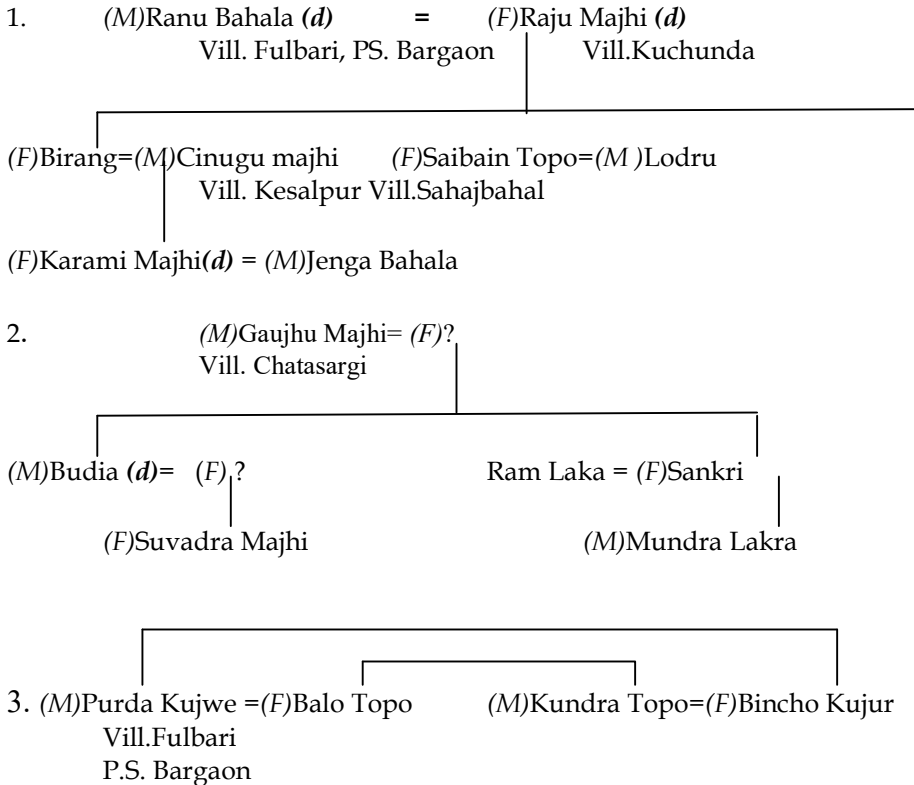
#### Some important terms of Kinship Relationship :-

Kisan	Oraon	Relationship	Munda
Babu (ENG DAS)	Betta (or Babu)	Son Daughter	Koda Hon
Pitru	Ba	Father Mother	Apu Enga
Dadas (DADAS)	Baradada (TANG DADA)	el. Brother	Dada (BAUIN)
Dai (EMMHADAI)	Didi	el. Sister	Dai (AJING)
Engha Alas	Mukamet	Husband	Koda
EnghaMuka	Muka	Wife	Kudi
Mamu (also <i>mamusasur</i> )	Mamu	Mother's brother	Kuma (mamu)
Mamusasur	Mamu	Father's sister's husband	Kuma (mamu)
Sasur	Ba (sasur)	Father-in-law	Honyar
Sas	Ayo (ENGSAIS)	Mother-in-law	Hanar
Tachi	Tachi	Father's sister	Hatam
Tachi	Tachi	Mother's brother's wife	Hatam

NB - The terms which are written within brackets in block letters are terms of reference and those in small letters are terms of address, whereas the rest are terms of relationship.

### Cross – cousin marriage and marriage by exchange :-

Of different types of marriage prevalent among the Kissan, cross-cousin marriage and marriage by ex-change are widely traced in several genealogies collected from the Kisanin different villages. Three genealogies are given below to show concrete cases of those two types of marriage practiced among the Kisan.



Explanation of symbols used in above genealogies :-

(F) Female; (M)Male ;= Marriage; (*d*)Dead ; ? name unknown ;

┌───┐ brother and sister; Vill. Village.

The children of Purda and Kundra are permitted to marry each other according to the custom of the Kisan society. The fact that the mother's brother and father's sister's husband are both denoted by one term called "mamu" and that the father's sister and the mother's brother's wife are described by a single term called "Tachi" is due to the prevalence of cross-cousin marriage with marriage by exchange among the Kisan. In cross-cousin marriage mother's brother becomes father-in-law. Hence the Kisan have borrowed the Hindu terminology "sasur" and have synchronized it with the term "mamu" and forming it into one word as "mamu-sasur."

Among the Oraon, similar terminology of relationship is used for mother's brother and father's sister's husband as "mamu" and father's sister and mother's brother's wife as "Tachi". But there is no trace of actual cross-cousin marriage and marriage by exchange in any genealogy collected among this tribe. However, a detailed study and collection of more genealogies among the Oraon in Sundargarh is necessary. But for the present until further data are available it may be taken as a point of dispute as to why the Kisan have been practicing both the types of marriage whereas the Oraon who are found to be similar to the Kisan in many respects of their culture do not practice it now-a-days.

As regards the Munda, no concrete case of such marriage was found out in genealogies although the terminology of relationship indicates the possibility of prevalence of cross-cousin marriage and marriage by exchange in the past. But what is meant to show here is that by looking to the chart of terms of relationships, the terms used by the Kisan and the Oraon for different relationships seem to have originated from one language stock, whereas those of the Munda from another language stock.

### **Conclusion :-**

It goes without saying that Orissa is the epitome of Adibasis, belonging to different stocks such as pre-Dravidian, Kolarian, etc. They are present under different stages of economic development. Some are in the out-of-the way places up in the jungles without being affected by outside influences, some under the impact of outside forces, such as plains culture, factory, dam, Christianity and mining quarries, etc., and the rest in transition of change. It would, however, be of great value to draw a map and write a short bibliography on each tribe with particular reference to the population, economic stage in which they live, racial identification and some hints of obvious problems faced by each tribe. Then the Province may be divided into several cultural zones based on the map from administrative standpoint and be then studied by different research scholars. It should be noted that by far the greater proportion of anthropological field work has been designed in terms of the study of a single community or a single culture. Research designs for field work on a cross-cultural or even multi community which includes Christian, Hindu, Muslim community also along with tribal community, are few. This comparative study of Adibasi and non-Adibasi communities will reveal a great deal of interchange of culture which might help answer some of the caste and traditional problems. The point that I am trying to make is this—that where changes are taking place or where changes are intended to be introduced the knowledge of the entire community and the different forces acting on it is essential in order to make those changes as much frictionless as possible. At least we can by our accumulated wisdom predict what sort of friction or difficulty might arise out of a particular situation and then try to devise ways and means to make the changes less bothersome.

# K I S A N \*

*A. B. Ota* <sup>1</sup>

*T. Sahoo* <sup>2</sup>

## SOCIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY

The Kisan are a peasant community. They are expert agriculturists. They cultivate land and thus are called as Kisan. The Kisans call themselves as "Kunhar" which means hill men. They are known by various names according to the place of their residence. In Sundargarh district they are called as 'Kuda' or 'Koda' and even 'Mirdha' whereas in the Kuchinda area of Sambalpur district they are known as 'Kola' or 'Morva'. The Kisan of Odisha use surnames such as Dash, Bhoi, Mohapatra and Kisan after their names. The name of Kisan is found in the list of Schedule Tribes in the State of Odisha.

In India, they are distributed in the States of Bihar, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. In Odisha, they are found in most of the districts. But their concentration is more in the districts like Sundargarh, Sambalpur and Keonjhar

The Kisans of Odisha speak 'Kisan'. It is considered to be a Dravidian language, which is allied to the Oraon language. They are also conversant with the regional language, 'Odia' and use the Odia script for writing. Some are conversant with 'Laria' as well as with 'Hindi'. From cultural and linguistic points of view the Kisan seem to be a branch of Oraon. In dress and ornaments they do not show any peculiarity. Common dresses are used by the rural folk are worn by the older generation. Tattoo marks are mainly seen among the old woman.

Probably they came to Odisha earlier than Oraons and settled in the states of Gangapur, Bonai, and Bamanda. According to their local traditions they first lived under the patronage of Bhuinya chiefs and later migrated to different parts either in search of land or labour. Now, the Kisan is a peasant community and many of them possess land of their own. The tribe is very adaptive. In most areas people of other castes and tribes are their immediate neighbor.

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Kisan, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2013

<sup>1</sup> Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Former Joint Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

According to 2001 census, the total population of Kisan in Odisha is 3,21,592, i.e. 3.94 % of the total tribal population of the State. Their sex ratio comes to 993 female per 1000 males. Their level of literary is 50.19 per cent for all, 64.43 per cent for males and 35.88 per cent for females.

### HABITAT & SETTLEMENT

The Kisan settlement is homogeneous. Mostly the settlement consists of a single lineage. In multiethnic villages, they live in separate hamlets. The arrangement of houses in a Kisan settlement and the house pattern there are not the same throughout the locality. In some settlements, generally in the original and older villages, the houses are clustered together. In certain new cluster of houses, these are conspicuously arranged along the village roads and streets.

For the selection of a new house site, the Kisan observe a method of grain divination. At the selected site, seven grains of fried "Arua" rice covered with a papal leaf with sand on it are placed in a spot that was cleared earlier in the name of mother earth goddess and the Sun god. In the following morning, if it is found that the grains are undisturbed, the site is considered as auspicious for settlement. Before the actual construction of the house starts the first auspicious wooden pillar is fixed in a ritual by the oldest male member of the household.

Kisan houses are rectangular in size. Each individual house has its compound with one door in each room open to the courtyard. Most of the houses have low mud walls and a *naria* tiled roof. Besides the cowshed and the kitchen, each house consists of more than one living room.

### Household Materials

Kisan household articles do not differ much from those of middle class Hindu and other tribal groups like the Oraon and the Gond. They have the Khatti (Charopy) with a wooden frame woven with Siali rope found in many households. Patia or mat made of date palm is also used very commonly as bedstead. Some of the well-to-do families have a framed wooden cot, chair and table. Their utensils include plates and pots of various sizes made of brass, bell metal and aluminum. Husking lever and grinding stone are the common objects of every household. Their other household articles include different varieties of agricultural implements, fishing traps and weapons for hunting, musical instruments which include drums of different size, are owned collectively by the villagers.

Each household has own cattle wealth, agricultural implements, weapons and household utensils. Their agricultural implements comprise of plough, *kamaba* or *khanti*, *kudal*, *khurapi*, sickles, axes, etc. The utensils consist of earthen pots, aluminum pots, bronze *thali*, *lota*, tumbler, iron knife, *karahi*, *chholani*, *kalchhul*. They use baskets of different sizes for storing and carrying forest produce, grains etc. They prepare these baskets, brooms, mats and winnowing tray with bamboo and date leaves. They have few cots, *machia* and *sikia* which they prepare from the ropes. They weave and prepare ropes from the local grasses for self-use and also



selling for additional income. They have Lathi, Ber, Barchha, Bhala, as hunting weapons. Now a days some households own radio, watch and bicycles.

### Food and Drink

Rice is their staple food. It is taken twice or 3 thrice daily with a side dish of green leaves or vegetables. They also eat lentils, roots, tubers, *mandia*, maize, arrowroot, greens, fruits, nuts, berries, flowers, mushrooms, which are collected from the nearby forest. They use mustard oil for cooking. Occasionally they also eat mutton, poultry, egg and fishes. Most of them prefer water rice, which is taken with salt, chilly and edible greens and vegetables. Besides their daily intake of food, they also prepare special foods, like boiled and baked curry and non-vegetarian dishes on the festive occasions. The Kisan men drink alcohol, mostly home or locally brewed country liquor like rice beer and *mahua*, a spirit distilled from the flowers of the local *mahua* (or the *bassia latifolia*) tree. They smoke and chew tobacco. Also the use of tobacco paste (*gurakhu*) is their common habit.

### LIVELIHOOD

Traditionally, they are a farming and food gathering tribe. As their name suggests they pursue agriculture as their primary occupation and that justifies the connotation of their name as a land owning cultivator community. For a long time, the Kisan have been enjoying the reputation of being good farmers among the tribes. They mainly grow rice and *gulji*, minor millets, as their main food crop. Most of them still follow the traditional method of cultivation, and very few have taken up modern methods by using improved seeds or chemical fertilizers. They use the same types of agricultural implements that are used by their neighbors.

In addition, to agriculture, they depend on forest collection where they live near forest. They collect firewood, green leaves, fruits, *mohua* flowers and seeds mostly for their own consumption, and lac, honey, *kendu* leaves for sale. In the leisure time also they go for hunting in the nearby forest and fishing.

As regards their household industries Kisan women are skilled in making mats and broomsticks from wild date palm leaves, while many men know brick-making and carpentry. The landless Kisans earn their livelihood primarily as the agricultural labourers. Some of them were brought to work in the tea plantations of West Bengal by the British during colonial rule. Since then they have settled down there. Now-a-days little change is also seen in their occupation. Few of them are employed in private and government sectors or own small business, while many of them are daily-wagers in industry, construction and agricultural sectors.

### SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Kisan social structure comprises of 16 sects or lineages. They are Lakada (Tiger), Babala (Wild dog), Bhada (Bangan), Kind, a kind of fish (Seula), Tapo (A kind of bird), Kajur (A kind of leafy plant), Minj (Kite), Eka (Tortoise), Mahacr (Crow), Tigar (Monkey), Hesar (Paddy), Punner (Iron), Bakur (Salt),

Palar(Curd), Majhi (Boatmen), Khalir (Secular head man), etc. Each of these social units is exogamous in nature. Marriage within the clan is restricted. According to ancestry, each lineage is again divided into a number of divisions called *khudi*.

Although nuclear families are common, extended families are also found in some cases. Parental property is equally divided among the sons and the eldest son succeeds the father. The Kisan women have many significant roles to perform in the social, economic and religious spheres.

### Life Cycle

The life cycle of Kisan passes through such events as conception, birth, childhood, adulthood, marriage, old age and death with observance of rituals.

Experienced women of the village assist the expectant mother at the time of the child delivery. The delivery of a child always takes place in one corner of the living room. At critical situation the shaman's help is sought for or the woman is taken to the nearest hospital. Soon after birth, the naval cord is cut with a knife, and along with the placenta it is buried in a pit. Until the purificatory rites are performed the mother is forbidden to cook or go out. She takes restricted food, like boiled rice and Kulthi dal during this period. On the 7th day, the mother washes her clothes, takes a complete bath and takes Tulsi water for purification. On the 21st day, the name giving ceremony of the child takes place. On this day, if the family can afford, it may host a feast with drinks to the neighbors and relatives.

The Kisan marriage custom strictly follows the principle of community endogamy and clan exogamy. Marriage within the same clan or to a member of any other caste or tribe is forbidden. Monogamy is the common practice, but polygyny is permitted in certain cases. The Kisan prefer adult and arranged marriages. In some cases, marriage by mutual consent, phony capture, elopement and service are accepted. Marriage with one's mother's brother's daughter is common. The symbols of matrimony for women include *sindur* (vermillion in the mid hair parting), glass or lacquer bangles, earrings and toe rings. The practice of bride price is prevalent among them.

Divorce due to adultery, maladjustment, impotency and cruelty is socially permissible, as the re-marriage of widows, widowers and divorces is also socially approved. A widow may marry her younger brother-in-law, while a widower is allowed to marry his younger sister-in-law. The Kisan have their own oral tradition and both men and women sing wedding songs.

They bury and also burn the deceased at times. Death rites are observed in two stages as primary and secondary rites. During the primary death rites, they dispose of the corpse, collect its bones and observe purificatory rites. After death corpse is anointed with turmeric and is carried to the cremation ground in a bier or a charpoy. After cremation they take bath and return to the deceased house, where they purify themselves with the smoke from a burning fire in which oil is poured. On the third day of cremation, they go to collect the bones in a pot. On the eighth or

twelfth day the final purificatory rites are observed by cleaning the houses and washing the clothes. During the secondary rites the bone immersion ceremony is observed. After the harvest, they ceremonially throw the pot containing the bones of the deceased into the fixed water source popularly called as the 'Ganga Ghat'.

### RELIGION, RITUALS AND FESTIVALS

Like the religion of other tribes, the Kisan religion is mostly based on nature and ancestor worship. Among many deities of their ancient religion, Ista Devta, along with Samalai Maha Prabhu are revered as household deities, while Gosain, Ganasir, Budha Bandha, Baghia, Bihma Devta are worshipped as some of their tutelary village deities.

Among the Kisan different rituals and festivals are observed in honour of Gods and goddesses round the year. Their festivities are connected with agricultural operations like sowing, harvesting and consumption of first fruits, etc. Their agrarian activities start with the Bihan buna-the first sowing of paddy in the month of Baisakha (April-May). The Gamha festival for installation of *kendu* twigs is held in the agricultural fields in the month of July-August. They observe Nuakhia in the month of Bhadrab (Aug-Sept) for eating new rice, Dusserha in the month of Aswin (Sept-Oct.) for worshipping the village deity and finally Puspunei in the month of *pusa* (December and January) for ancestral worship with dance and song and merrymaking which marks the end of agricultural operation for the year. On these festive occasions the sacrifice of goats and fowls is very common. Also special food like cakes, chicken and mutton are taken. Rituals and festivals are always celebrated with singing and dancing on the tune of music.

The Kisan also follow Hinduism and worship all major gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon like Shiva, Vishnu, Krishna, Kali, Durga, Hanuman, Rama and others. Like their Hindu neighbors, the Kisan observe the festivals such as Dusserha, Kalipuja, Janmastamai, Holi. The services of Brahmin priests, known as *purohit*, as well as priests from their own community, called Kaloor/ Soin perform all life-cycle ceremonies and ritual worship of deities. Medicine men called Gunia, Moti and Baidya, from other neighboring communities are consulted to ward off evil spirits and to cure diseases. They are famous for their singing and dancing along with their hospitality.

### LEADERSHIP & SOCIAL CONTROL

The elders are leaders and torch bearer of the Kisan society. They are respected by all and are the most important persons. The Kisan socio-political structure is always democratic in spirit and the Kisan leaders are mostly informal in nature. But having been ruled long by the feudal chiefs and coming in contact with other caste Hindus they have organized their social structure on caste principles.

The two important formal leaders within the tribe are the Bariha and Panigiri. Till the recent past, the Bariha was very powerful with large amount of

authority and discretion. Then he was considered as the Raja of the tribe and was a dictator so some extent. Within the democratic framework of Kisan society, the institution has declined at present partly under the pressure of modern forces and partly through the formal Kisan leaders of the statutory Panchayat.

The post of Panigiri is not very important as he just officiates in the ritual of readmitting the excommunicated persons into the tribe and formally presides over the mass-meeting held every year at the time of throwing effigies or bones in the so called Ganga Ghat.

For all socio-political purposes local group is the most important social unit in the Kisan society. The local group may be a village or a word within the village. In the local group an informal council of elders is the real authority. The prominent person within the group is called Sian or headman but he neither exercises any special power nor holds any hereditary or lifelong office. He is just a common man though he enjoys some amount of prestige in the eye of others. Sociologically considered every local group is not a single unit. The Kisan villagers are multi-clan in nature. In a Bigger village it is not convenient to maintain solidarity by the local group. In such occasions the local group becomes divided into a number of sub groups, locally called 'bad'.

The Kisans retain some amount of solidarity in the lineage level or sub-clan level through the functions of Bansa Puja and Bansa Khoja. Bansa Puja is held annually or once in two or three years, when the members of the clan or sub-clan of each village gather at a particular place. They worship the Bansa ancestors and other deities and pray for the expansion of the Bansa and for the protection of Bansa members from diseases. In some sub-clan such regular worship is not held but in 12 or 20 years they hold a general meeting called Bansa Khoja when the members of the clan or sub-clan trace their genealogies and get themselves acquainted with the lineage members who reside at distant places. In case of Bansa Puja there is a formal official called Kalo, who officiates as priest in the lineage worship but organization of such meetings are done by the informal leaders.

All household heads are the members of the village Panchayat which operates as a mechanism of social control at the village level to resolve intra-village disputes. The matters related to husband-wife conflict, divorce, property distribution, theft, adultery, extra marital relations, violation of marriage rule, witchcraft, village level worship etc. are decided in traditional village Panchayat. Through this village Panchayat, the Kisan maintain their customs and tradition.

The inter-village organization is called *punchupalli*. It is a loose and evolving organization. The members who attend its meetings to adjudicate cases get no remuneration. If they visit the village of the complaint, they are treated respectfully and Bhang (powered tobacco) Kahali (tobacco leaves rolled as cigars in *sal* leave) and liquor are offered to them. Sometimes they are also offered meals

if they come from distant place. The important disputes which are not finalized in the village level Sians of 5 or 6 villages are called to adjudicate the issue.

To decide the cases between two or more villages there is a larger organization called as 'Kisan Mahasabha' which operates at the regional level. The Mahasabha is headed by Bariha and looks after the welfare and development of the community at regional level. The Kisan society of Odisha has a traditional community council (Jati Samaj). The Mukhia is its head. Both the posts of Mukhia and Bariha are hereditary. The decisions of the village and regional panchayats are welcomed by all the Kisans.

### CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

After independence, the Kisan are listed as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) under the provisions of the constitution of India. This enlisting benefits them by providing access to fixed quotas in government jobs, reservation of seats in educational institutions to study medicine or engineering and in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly and Panchayat bodies. Through the govt. interventions, especially by the ST& SC Development Department, GOO by opening schools and special hostel for STs, the Kisan have availed formal education for their children. There are a few Kisan students who have reached postgraduate level. Both modern and indigenous medicine is used by the community. Many of the Kissan people have adopted family planning measures.

There are opportunities extended through the ITDAs under various employment generation schemes. Some Kisan households have taken advantage of these. Besides, the Kisan people have benefited from the government's child welfare and immunization programmes and the Public Distribution System. At present the national banking facilities are made available in their localities. The Kisan women have been attached to Mahila Mandal, Self Help Group etc. and taken up economic and social welfare activities.

Now days, there is modern Gram Panchayat headed by Sarpanch. Through this modern Panchayat development works are being implemented. Now there are Thana, Police, Court, Lawyer etc., who look after the criminal cases. Few Kisan have gone in the shelter of the court for justice and availed the free legal aid facility. After independence, the Kisan have become voters. During different elections they participate in democratic process by casting their votes. But the village Panchayat by and large decides their voting behavior. Amidst recent changes most of the Kisan are a tribal peasant community that has retained many aboriginal characteristics of its forest tribe origins. For the conservation and preservation of tribal arts and crafts of Odisha some of the Kisan's arts and artifacts have been displayed in the Tribal Museum at SCSTRTI, CRPF Square, Bhubaneswar. Still now the Kisan are apparent in their social customs and culture.

# KISAN CASTE ASSEMBLY IN SUNDARGARH \*

*U. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

In this paper an attempt has been made to present the proceedings of a 'Jati Sava' (caste-meeting) of the Kisan tribe which was observed by the writer during his field work in the Sundargarh district of North Orissa in the year 1962. The chief purpose of presenting the proceeding is to show how the new Kisan leaders are trying to bring reforms and social movement in their society through the mechanism of caste meetings. (In my analysis the present caste meeting is compared with the traditional annual Kisan gathering described later on. Finally I have suggested how such caste meeting can be utilized in welfare work and in bringing social change in tradition oriented tribal culture.)

The Kisans have spread over an extensive area through the slow process of migration either in search of land or for labour. They are good earth workers, and are generally very industrious, with a passion for agriculture. They live in multi-caste and multi-tribal villages and have remarkably adapted themselves to the local culture of the regions where they have settled. The social status of the Kisans is very low. They are considered as low untouchables and no caste Hindu accepts water from them. On the contrary they strictly refrain from accepting cooked food from the hands of others and in the past they never touched food from the hands of even Brahmins who enjoyed the highest position in the esteem of feudal chiefs and others. Thus in spite of their residence in caste Hindu villages and close contact with outsiders they remained somewhat segregated and could retain some particular features of their traditional culture namely a distinct language, their interesting dance and music, peculiar rituals and usages.

In multi-caste Hindu villages the Kisans had almost accepted their low status and neither challenged nor revolted against their degrading position. But during the last thirty years, with the spread of education, modernization and other social movements to abolish untouchability a new consciousness arose amongst the Kisan leaders of Sundargarh and as a consequence of this they have organized

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. VI, No.2, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1964-65, pp.45-50

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, TRB, Bhubaneswar

the caste assembly called the 'Kisan Jati Maha sava' after the pattern of the caste assemblies of neighboring castes such as the Agharias, the Telis and the Kaibartas, etc. Though the 'Kisan Jati Mahasava' is organized after the traditional caste assembly of Hindu society it is a new institution so far the Kisans are concerned. The Kisans derived much of their inspiration during anti-British and national movement. But the attainment of national independence and the merger of feudal kingdom with the former British Indian State of Orissa fired their imagination and raised their level of aspiration. They organized and reinforced their caste assembly with redoubled energy and tried to push forward their community by abolishing superstitious beliefs and eradicating their traditional practices which they consider degrading. The proceedings of the meeting given here would indicate how the new leaders of the Kisans are eager to go ahead and improve the social, educational and economic condition of their fellow men.

### **The Jurisdiction of the caste meeting**

The present 'Kisan Jati Mahasava' has not covered all the Kisan areas so far, though the organizers have that lofty aspiration in view. The present Sava first started in the feudal State of Gangpur especially in the police station of Badgaon some thirty years ago under the leadership of Jenga Kisan of Kurebega. This meeting roughly covers the whole of Gangpur State though Kisans of Panposh and Rourkela area rarely join it. Besides, some portions of upper Bamanda and Jaipur estate (Zamidary) of Sambalpur district are also covered by the present Jati Sava. In Banai and Bamanda they have respective separate organizations while in other parts of Sambalpur proper (Khas) no such caste organization has evolved so far.

#### *Mode of Invitation:*

The Kisan Jati Mahasava does not hold its meetings regularly. Sometimes the meetings have been held at intervals of three to four years, or at times these have been held annually. Before summoning a meeting the organizers consult the leading persons of the community and send messages to each village. They have no formal office-bearers either paid or honorary. So the most important persons take the responsibility of summoning the meeting. The meeting described in this paper was held in the village Birtula in 1962.

In the Birtula meeting there was some specialty. Previously the notice which was circulated was drafted in Oriya and was hand written. Sometimes messengers were engaged to visit the different Kisan villages. This year's notice was in Kisan language but the script was Oriya. The notice was cyclostyled in large numbers and one such notice was sent to each Kisan village lying within the police-stations of Rajgangpur and Badgaon in Sundargarh district. Most of the notices were distributed in the local weekly markets but the organizers also personally visited some of the villages to circulate the notice. The notice was addressed to all Kisan members under the signature of important Kisans. It was stipulated in the notice that *annas* three and three *pawa* of rice would be collected

for each delegate and the amount thus collected from each village should be deposited with Jarka Majhi of Birtula. The meeting was fixed to be held on the 1st May 1962 at 9 A.M.

*Description of the Meeting:*

The meeting was held in a mango grove almost at the entrance of the village. Some tarpaulins had been hung as a canopy to protect the audience from the sun. The ground was covered with mats and hay. A table, two chairs and two benches were placed for the President and distinguished persons. Some flower garlands were kept for important persons and delegates. A big water vessel with glasses was kept at a corner for drinking. At a little distance under a mango tree, youths of the village were engaged in cooking for the participants.

The meeting could not be started exactly at 9 'O'clock in the morning on account of poor attendance. By that time only a hundred persons had joined the meeting while other delegates were gradually pouring into the meeting. Before the start of the meeting the delegates were asked to finish their bath and take their meals cooked by the village youths. The expense was met by donations raised from participant villages which sent their delegates.

By the time the meeting commenced, nearly six hundred people representing roughly one hundred villages, had gathered in the meeting ground. A few women of the village were seated on the front row of the meeting. Important delegates including women were garlanded before the commencement of the meeting. The President, two Joint Secretaries and a Treasurer were selected and the new President occupied the chair.

The meeting started in a calm atmosphere with the recital of vedic hymns by the delegate of Gudhiali, a Pracharak (Preacher) of the Arya Samaj serving under the Veda Vyasa Centre in Sundargarh.

In this plenary session nearly fifteen persons delivered their speeches in their own mother-tongue, the Kisan language. All the speakers attacked some evil practices of the tribe and suggested how they can advance by educating their children. Before giving the summary of their speeches a few explanatory notes may be given on the following terms:

*Nadu Jatra:*

It is a sort of inter-village dance meeting held in the spring and winter seasons. It is a festival of youths. During the cycle of such Nadu Jatra batches of unmarried and married young men and women go round from village to village and dance throughout the night in a particular village. As the festival is celebrated each night in a village the entire cycle of the Jatra takes weeks for completion. It is reported that much of sexual laxity takes place during such dancing festivities. Therefore the Kisan leaders are very keen in abolishing this Nadu Jatra.



*Gallon wine :*

In Sundargarh area the liquor contractors have been permitted to establish their outpost distilleries. For more profit they illegally open small liquor shops in almost all tribal villages by bribing the village elders or by donating lavishly for the development work of the village. The Kisans complain that the presence of liquor shops close to their villages lures them to habitual drinking. These temporary illegal centres which are supplied with liquor through porters of the contractor are called gallon shop and the liquor is called gallon liquor.

**Summary of the Speeches**

On the above two topics almost all speakers gave their comments. First after the recital of Vedic hymns, the Kisan Pracharak (Age 40) began his speech plainly in a low voice. He pointed out that the Kisan society is considered low on account of the continuance of the evil practices such as Nadu. "Our women lose their chastity on account of this corrupt practice" he said. "It is not truly a Kisan custom. We learnt it from Kols and Kharias when we came in contact with them. Thus we lost our old heritage and were degraded to the present low social-status". He also spoke a few words about Christianity how they should not be lured by the Christian missionaries and change their religion.

The delegate of Phulbari, a landowning cultivator (Age 55) who had been a Congress member but later contested the general election on the Jharkhand party ticket, delivered his speech in an emphatic and loud voice. His main attack was against drinking. He scolded his tribesmen for their addiction to liquor and severely criticized the Government for their excise policy. Elaborating further he said "Gallon liquor is the root of all evils. It tempts poor people to drinking. The Government should immediately abolish all the gallon shop which are illegal and unauthorized". Indicating the illiteracy and corrupt practices of Nadu Yatra of the Kisans he pointed to the better condition of life of the non-Adivasis. "See" he said, "How non-Adivasis get good posts, earn handsome pay in the factory of Rourkela. Why is none of the Adivasis holding such high posts? We are uneducated drunkards, so we fail to prosper in our life. We should try to improve our condition by competing with non-Adivasis".

The delegate of Telighana (Age 50) a man of strong common sense, with good humor and calm disposition emphasized the need of education and appealed to all parents to take interest in the education of their children. The delegate of Pinda pathar, a sophisticated young student of the Sundargarh College (Age 18), explained the need of higher education. As he could not speak fluently in Kisan language his Oriya speech created some commotion in the meeting. So he tried his best to convey his ideas in Kisan language. It is high time that more Kisans should go for higher education while everybody should learn at least the three rupees. He pointed out that Kisan students reading in Sambalpur and Sundargarh Colleges would hardly exceed a dozen in all. He suggested that a separate fund should be created by the Jati Sabha and Kisan students should be given stipends out of it as a

further incentive especially when Government stipends are not very regular in the beginning of the session. Finally he explained how drinking habit pauperizes the Kisans and deprives them from all sense of responsibility.

The Sarpanch and Gountia of San-Phiring Bahal, an enthusiastic young man (Age 30) in his emotional speech asked "Why should we hold such meetings and pass each time high sounding resolutions without examining how far these have been put to actual practice?" "Empty resolutions would not take us far" he said, "so long as they are not strictly enforced".

The delegate of Tenterporsh (Ago 36) besides reiterating the utility of education and evil effect of gallon liquor, emphasized the need of restricting the movement of Kisan women. "Women are like Laxmi", he said, "on whom depend the prestige of a people. Our women go to markets, work in factories and mines and thus come in contact with various people who take advantage of the free movement of our women. As such we should take care of our women-folk and should not allow them to go out freely wherever they like".

The delegate of Kantaimura, a young Ashram School Teacher, (Age 27), in an impressive speech asked audience not to just hear something in the meeting and do the contrary at home. He explained how a person who sincerely tries to translate the reformative proposals into action is severely criticized and out casted in the village. Explaining how the institution of *Nadu* corrupts young girls and gives free license to young men. He enquired "Why girls go to dance in the Nadu ? Why our girls are entangled in fornication?" Exploring the reasons for such events he answered "It is because the parents do not take care of their daughters. They do not give their girls in marriage early. No doubt they perform the betrothal ceremony quite early or in time. But the girls are not given away in marriage at appropriate time. The bridegroom's people come each year, requests the bride's father to give his daughter in marriage but he turns a deaf ear to their entreaties. The girl in our society earns and the parents like to enjoy the fruits of her labour. With the postponement of her marriage she is forced to satisfy her sexual urge in illicit ways. Finally when the girl is married away she is completely substance less like the skimmed milk out of which butter has been taken away." (Loud laughter).

The newly elected Joint Secretary, the Chief Organizer of that year's meeting, a young high school teacher (Age 27) emphasized mainly on the need of educating women. Deprecating the present low status of Kisan women who work as laborers and fall an easy prey to immoralities he stressed the need of educating them. Our women should be educated. They should come forward and join in open meeting where they can discuss their own problems. Every individual should try to educate his daughter or daughter-in-law. He attacked vehemently the Kisan belief system regarding *Bhuta* (ghost), *Bharua* (oracle) and *Matt* (witch-doctor) and appealed to all to give up such blind faith and judge everything rationally. He narrated how they were trying to get Government grant for construction of a building for the Kisan Jati Sabha".

The meeting continued till evening. Besides the above speakers two primary school teachers, a factory worker and two land owning cultivators gave their speeches almost in the same line. Finally, the President, a reputed political worker, who worked in Praja Mandal during pre-independence days, explained in his short speech how people should try to understand things correctly and adopt right things in spite of hindrances. To illustrate this point he explained, "We know that gallon liquor shops are illegal and Governments should abolish these drastically. But in case Government do not take strong steps these illegal shops would collapse automatically the moment we stop drinking there". He emphasized that the use of liquor in our socio-religious rituals should be abolished altogether, Thus ended the first session.

#### *The Second Sitting*

The next sitting which started in the afternoon and continued throughout entire evening discussed mainly the marriage regulation. Of course no voting was taken to arrive at any decision yet everybody was allowed to participate in the discussions which were very informal. The upper age-limit within which a girl should be given away in marriage, the amount of bride-price for a newly married girl, widowed women and a divorced woman, the social status of off springs of a Kisan father having a spouse of either higher or lower caste; the punishment for a Kisan woman who elopes away with another and such other problems regarding marriage were discussed. The Secretary took the charge of drafting the regulations on the basis of those discussions.

The meeting continued late in the night. Finally there was the mass dinner in which only rice and dal were served. The people of nearby villages returned to their own villages while the people of distant villages slept under the mango grove either on cots or on mats spread over the ground.

On the next day (the 2nd May 1962) morning the meeting continued as usual though majority of the audience had returned to their respective villages. In the morning session there was further discussion on caste rules and regulations. In the meeting two complaints were filed. In one case a woman who had been betrothed to the complainant's son, had married elsewhere through the form of marriage by intrusion (Dhuku) and the complainant had prayed for compensation from the bride's father. But as the members of the other party were not present the trial of the case was postponed for spot enquiry. Finally, the meeting was over at about eleven O' clock.

## TRADITIONAL OFFICIALS IN THE KISAN SOCIETY \*

*Uma Charan Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

In a welfare state, creating right type of leadership is of prime importance for successful implementation of development work. No community exists without its leaders but in many instances the very leaders may stand as formidable blocks in the progress of under developed or conservative society. Most often traditional officials are conservative and they do not entertain or encourage any change as it may affect their very *status quo*. Yet a good administrator or social worker should know who the traditional officials are as these are the persons who wield great influence amongst their fellowmen. If these people can be utilized properly not only they would be useful media in communicating new ideas but the very implementation of development schemes would be facilitated to a great extent. In a tribal society the traditional officials have still more importance and proper understanding of the functions of these people. It throws light on the social organization of the tribe. Here the role of the traditional officials in the Kisan society is described, as found in Sundargarh area.

The tribe Kisan is chiefly confined within the State of Orissa in the districts of Sundargarh, Sambalpur and Dhenkanal. The Kisans call themselves 'KUNHAR' in their own tongue which may mean 'hill men'. They speak a Dravidian tongue which is allied to the Oraon language. From cultural and linguistic evidences the Kisans seem to be a branch of the Onions. Probably they came to Orissa earlier than Oraons and settled in the States of Gangapur, Bonai and Bamanda. According to their local traditions they first lived under the patronage of Bhuinya chiefs and later migrated to different parts either in search of land or labour. Now the Kisan is a good cultivating caste and many of them possess land of their own. The tribe is very adaptive and in most areas they live with other castes and tribes. Thus they have adopted many institutions from their surrounding people.

Before describing about the officials of the Kisan tribe it is necessary to know about the village officials of the area in which they live. In the villages of

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No.1, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1963-64, pp.56-60

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, TRB, Bhubaneswar

Sundargarh area, there are two types of officials. The chief of the village is called Gountia who used to collect rent on behalf of the former Rajas. The Gountia is the de-facto head of the village. The post is no doubt hereditary but most often the Rajas used to select the Gountia of the village in consultation of the villagers. In old days in tribal villages the Gountia was being elected by the villagers but later the Raja became the sole authority to appoint, discharge or dismiss a Gountia. The Gountia was very powerful man and owned all the communal land (Bhogra) of the village. All disputes regarding land were referred to him at the first instance and he was the chief in the village Panchayat. After the merger of States his powers have decreased greatly yet at present he is the most important person in the village. In all communal affairs, in collection of donations for village festivals and Pujas, he is the most prominent man. His orders are carried out by all the villagers. Even at present he is the political head in the village polity.

The village priest is called, Kalo in the Sundargarh district. His office is equivalent to Jhankar in the Sambalpur district. The presiding deity of the village is called Gaonsiri. The Gaonsiri is worshipped at the foot of a particular tree situated at the end of the village. The Kalo worships Gaonsiri on two occasions once before sowing of paddy when after the communal worship he distributes handfuls of paddy seeds to each family and secondly at the time of inter-culture of paddy plants. Besides, the Kalo also worships Gaonsiri on specific occasions.

Now coming to the Kisan social structure, the tribe is divided into nearly sixteen exogamous Bansas or clans such as Majhi, Lakda, Topo, Hes, Ekka, Bada etc. So far as the Bansa is concerned it never acts as a unit. At present its only function is to regulate marriage i.e., nobody can marry within the same clan. The clan is further divided into Khudi or sub-clans. In certain regions there is great cohesion within the Khudi group. In important social functions such as Karna Bedha, marriage or death, all the Khudi members are invited. They are also invited at the time of Guhal Puja which is performed for specific purposes. Besides these, most of the Khudis have got a Bansa Puja which is held either at the time of Dola Purnami in the month of Fagun (March) or in the month of Kartik. It seems Bansa Puja as the very name indicates was a function of the clan but later when the clan became dispersed it became a function of the Khudi organization. Most of the Khudi names are after a particular village which indicates that the Khudi organization has developed from the lineage of particular villages. Now some of the Khudis are further divided into Gountia Vida and Kalo Vida. In each Khudi, for the Bansa Puja there is a Kalo who worships at the time of Bansa Puja. Representatives of the Khudi members of different villages assemble in the house of the Kalo at the time of Bansa Puja. When a Khudi is divided into Gountia Vida & Kalo Vida the Kalo is always selected from Kalovida,. The persons of Gountia Vida have no function; they only supervise at the time of worship. The post of Kalo is hereditary but at times the old Kalo can relinquish his office at the time of Bansa Puja. The selection of new Kalo is made through magico-religious rite. The prospective candidates stand in the water while the old Kalo floats a bamboo

basket, putting some flowers a candle etc., in it. When the basket reaches a particular person he becomes the Kalo of the Bansa or the Khudi. Through this Bansa Puja of the Khudi the Kisans have retained their unity to a great extent. Of course in some Khudis, Bansa Puja is not held annually but the Khudi members hold Bansa Khoja ceremony in ten or twelve years and these members of the Khudi who have migrated to distant places get scope to reinforce their social ties.

Besides the Kaloof the Khudi organization, in every ritual the services of a priest are necessary. The post of Kisan priest is not hereditary. Any man can serve as Kalo in rituals like marriage, KarnaBedha, death rites etc., provided he knows the names of the old fore-fathers of the lineage, the founders of the village, the names of old Gountia and Kalo of the village and of few gods such as Gaonsiri, Mahabir etc. The Kalo offers Tarpen i.e., liquor or milk (if the dead Gountias and Kalos of the village belong to Caste Hindu) at the time of every ritual. The person serving as Kalo in rituals is recruited immediately on adhoc basis. Generally old men of the lineage or some Mati of the village act as Kalo in such social functions. Similarly in all such occasions the management is given to a particular person. For example in Karna Bedha or death ritual a person belonging to the Bandhu clan becomes the Gountia. So long the ceremony continues he acts as the chief of the family. He receives all the presents brought by relatives and friends and takes care of the invited guests. Distribution of tobacco, liquor cooking of meals and feeding the guests are his responsibilities. If he absents for a few hours he entrusts some person to look into the affairs on his behalf. Thus these offices of Kalo and Gountia are created in the Kisan society on the occasion of specific ceremony or ritual.

In every Kisan village or hamlet there is a Sian or headman. In Kisan society, village elders decide everything but out of these elders a particular person is selected as Sian whose opinion is considered as final in all matters. At times a Kisan village or hamlet is further divided into factions or Bad. In such cases each Bad has a Sian of its own.

In a Kisan village there are a few persons who serve as Mati. The Mati is neither selected or elected nor given any power. But by virtue of his functions he becomes the most important person in the village. He is the witch doctor and to some extent the spiritual priest and teacher in the Kisan society. He undergoes regular training. The old Matis hold regular classes at the time of festivals such as Dasara, Kartik Purnami or Nuakhia. The Mati learns to invoke different spirits and gods. The chief function of the Mati is to cure diseases. Their services are most often voluntary and selfless. Before curing a patient the Mati tries to diagnose the disease i.e., he tries to find out which spirit has created the disease. After knowing this he invokes the benevolent spirits by rubbing *Arua* rice on a winnowing fan. Thus by performing necessary worships he drives away the malevolent spirits that cause the disease. In death rites the Mati serves as Kalo most often as he is more familiar with the spirits of the underworld. He also performs the 'Pancha Bhak Kata' rite to counteract the effects of the evil eye and evil mouth.

**Panigiri:**

Over and above the village, the Kisans have another territorial unit. A number of Kisan villages have a particular 'ghat' in the nearby river or brook where every year on a fixed day the Kisans observe Ganga ceremony by throwing their Kundis or pots containing the effigies or bones of the dead persons of the year. In each ghat the Kisans have a particular official who is called Panigiri. The chief function of the Panigiri is to readmit the excommunicated persons into the community. Any person, who commits a sin according to the Kisan standards, is immediately out casted. When the offender admits his fault and pays the necessary fines, generally in the form of a feast to the village elders, he is allowed to be readmitted into the community. At this stage only the Panigiri is invited to perform necessary rites. But if the matter is of disputable nature and no final decision is arrived, the Kundis of the excommunicated person is not allowed by the Panigiri to be thrown in the ghat. A tribal meeting is held near the ghat before immersion of the Kundis, under the president ship of the Panigiri. Here all the outstanding disputes of the year are settled after which the excommunicated persons are readmitted into the society after payment of due fines. Thus the Panigiri has great importance in enforcing the caste rules in the Kisan Society.

**Bariha:**

Till the recent past the Bariha was very important in the Kisan society. With the independence and merger of ex-States in Orissa the institution has decayed gradually and at present a few Barihas are functioning in the ex-State of Bamanda though their powers have declined substantially. The Bariha was considered as the Raja within the tribe and he had jurisdiction over an extensive area within a particular State.

In old days the Barihas were generally selected by the people and the post was also hereditary to some extent. The former chiefs used to recognize the influential and popular Bariha. But at times they were selected by the Raja, who used to offer copper plates authorizing them to try cases within the community relating to marriage and other social customs. They could collect fines also from the offenders, appropriate the bride price received from the marriage of widows and divorced women. His important function was to arrange marriages of these widows and divorced women. He also tried the cases of irregular marriages such as Dhuku, Udulia and those of pregnant women. He imposed the fines and regularized irregularities committed within the community. Later the institution of Bariha became unpopular. The new emerging leaders of the Kisan society of the present generation revolted against the arbitrary and superstitious leadership of the Bariha as consequence of which the post is abolished in most of the Kisan areas. In a subsequent article it would be discussed how with the change of Government from the rule of the Raja to the present democratic form of Govt, there is concomitant change in the leadership pattern in the Kisan society.

# CHANGE IN THE LEADERSHIP PATTERN IN KISAN SOCIETY \*

*Umacharan Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

The vitality and strength of a tribe depends largely on the type of leaders it produces within its social structure. The efficiency of leaders not only depends on enforcing the traditional rules but they should also have capacity to adjust and mould their followers in changed circumstances. In the present paper an attempt has been made to show the leadership pattern of the Kisan society; how it emerges at different levels of the social organization and the recent changes that have occurred in the leadership pattern.

The leaders are the most important persons in the Kisan society. Though the members of the tribe have spread far and wide, chiefly in the districts of Sundargarh and Sambalpur, and now live as agriculturists and labourers in the multi-caste and multi-tribal villages, they still maintain some amount of solidarity and exclusiveness amongst themselves. They try jealously to confine all matters relating to their social customs and practices within the tribe.

The Kisan political structure is always democratic in spirit and the Kisan leaders are mostly informal in nature. But having been ruled long by the feudal chiefs and coming in contact with other caste Hindus they have organized their social structure on caste principles. The two important formal leaders within the tribe are the Bariha and Panigiri. The post of Panigiri is not very important as he just officiates in the ritual of readmitting the ex-communicated persons into the tribe and formally presides over the mass-meeting held every year at the time of throwing effigies or bones in the so-called Ganga ghat. But in old days the Bariha was very powerful with large amount of authority and discretion. Up to recent past he was considered as the Raja of the tribe and was a dictator to some extent within the democratic frame-work of Kisan social structure. The institution has been destroyed at present partly under the pressure of modern forces and partly through the instrumentality of informal Kisan leaders. Enquiry about the role of

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No.2, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1963-64, pp.55-62

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, TRB, Bhubaneswar



Bariha is now just of historical interest; nevertheless, it is helpful to throw light on the functions of leaders in the tribe in the past. We may, therefore, discuss the role and function of Bariha in detail.

### **The Bariha in the Kisan Society**

The *Barihas* were selected by the people. But after being selected once, the post becomes hereditary. Usually Rajas gave their formal approval to particular Barihas by issuing copper plates and delegated some authority to try cases purely relating to his caste affairs. At times the Rajas also selected a particular person as Bariha within his territory, considering his efficiency and influence over his tribesmen. Within a particular jurisdiction the Bariha adjudicated all social cases.

The chief function of the Bariha was to regulate the irregular sex-relations within the tribe. Lot of complications was arising within the tribe on account of various forms of marriage such as Dhuku-Dhukeila (marriage by intrusion), Udulia (marriage by elopement), Ghicha (marriage by capture) or marriage through Goti service. Even in case of arranged form of marriage at times after betrothal, marriage took place with some other person which was leading to dissensions and disputes. The Kisans were tolerant towards irregular premarital sex-relations. But in the past, pregnant unmarried girls were deposited (Sapara) under the guardianship of the Bariha. He tried such cases and traced the offenders. If there was no illegality in marriage the Bariha forced the concerned person to marry the pregnant woman. In some occasions he took her to his house. Either before or after the birth of the child the Bariha arranged her marriage. He collected expenses called compensation (Haraja) from the bridegroom, out of which he gave some portion to the community. If a Ghara-juwain was driven out or if somebody violated the promise after betrothal, the Bariha imposed fines as punishment. In case of adultery the Bariha, at times, ordered the brother of the offended girl to capture and marry the sister of the offender. Thus Ghicha form of marriage was in force through the instrumentality of the Bariha.

In his limited way the Bariha used to maintain the regal paraphernalia. He appointed a peon, called Ganmcha Buhain in Sundargarh, who accompanied him whenever he used to go to some place to try any case. Some Barihas of Bamanda had their assistant, called Danda sena, who, removed all articles from the house of an Ajatia - the out casted person.

When a person used to submit his prayer before the Bariha with a request to adjudicate, the Bariha was sending a stick to the defendants village with certain scratches indicating the number of days after which he would visit the village to try the particular case. The stick with necessary information was sent to the prominent Kisan of the village. It was just like a notice to the entire village. In those days Bariha-Badi (stick) was an object of great terror. The Bariha could fine anybody and so the entire village had to pay respect to him. In serious offences he would demand a goat from the village, which is called Godadhua Buka, as a

presentation for the trouble of his visiting the village. He could also summon anybody to appear before him just by sending his peon to him.

### **Remuneration of the Bariha**

Unlike other voluntary offices within the tribe, the post of Bariha was not completely free from monetary gains. The Raja of the locality conferred him the power to try social cases and to collect fines from the offenders out of which he used to take the lion's share. Besides through traditional custom they were allowed to appropriate the bride-price of widows and divorced women within their respective jurisdictions. Once a girl was married away, no further the father could demand any bride-price. In case of marriage of a widow the bridegroom was to give a cloth to the bride and was to pay Rs. 5 to the Bariha. But regarding divorced woman, there was no fixed rule. The Bariha used to hear the complaint of the aggrieved husband or the wife and was effecting the dissolution of the marriage tie. He was arranging the marriage of the divorced woman and was fixing the bride-price at a very high rate to his own advantage. He was also collecting fines in case of irregular forms of marriage such as Dhuku-Dhukeila, Udulia or in case of pregnancy caused by illicit sex-relations. The entire bride-price collected at the time of marriage of a divorced woman was being appropriated by the Bariha. Thus the women were to some extent marriageable commodities in the hands of the Bariha in olden days.

The Bariha could collect a large amount of money through the collections of fines, compensations and bride-price. But he was not appropriating the entire amount. He used to give a small fraction to the parents of the girl when he received bride-price and had to pay some amount to the community, i.e., to the village elders who were helping him in trying the cases. He was also giving some share to his Gamucha Buha (peon) for his services of accompanying him and summoning the concerned persons.

Thus the post was created in the beginning to safeguard the interests of the tribe to provide a machinery for the enforcement of tribal customary law through their own leaders and to protect it from the administration of the alien rulers. But in course of time the Barihas became self-centred and mercenary in their motives. Receiving the support of feudal chiefs they became free from the control of the common people. Of course the Bariha could not be fully arbitrary or autocratic as he had to decide cases with the help of the village elders of the Kisan community of the particular village. But once he became powerful through tradition and Raja's authority, he began to create his own supporters. In each village he was selecting a prominent person who was obedient to him and through whose help he could give effect to his decisions. In deciding cases the Bariha used to take their assistance. A share of the fines or other collections, which was to be distributed among the community members, was given to such elder or elders. Thus the leader in the village level were partially influenced and demoralized through the institution of Bariha.

The institution of Bariha became an agency of exploitation in course of time. The evils of feudal system and corrupt practices of the state officials contaminated the tribal official Bariha and he tried to extract money from simple tribals. His leadership lacked the dynamism which was necessary in changed circumstances and he continued to enforce the old practices of the tribe while the country was undergoing tremendous change. With the spread of education, development of consciousness through national movement and with the decrease of Raja's autonomy and power, the Bariha became very unpopular. Finally, the establishment of law courts and introduction of modern law even in remote corners of the country was a death nail to the institution of Bariha and now from all areas the post of Barihas have been abolished. Nearly twenty-five years ago the Barihas in different areas started losing their importance and after the independence and merger of states the institution became defunct in all areas. Now, I was reported, only a few Barihas are existing in the lower Bamanda area but they have substantially lost their power and importance in society.

Abolition of Barihas is an epoch making incident in the political life of the Kisans. It shows the vitality of tribal organization to dispel the harmful elements however powerful, these may be. The informal leaders in different areas drove away the Bariha from his authority. It is interesting to hear the opinion of these informal leaders who were direct agents to throw away the Bariha from his office.

The villagers of Pinda Pathar in Sambalpur narrated before me :

The Bariha had previously the duty to punish the offenders. But later he found it as a source of income. He admitted pregnant girls, who had illicit relations with the Gandas and Ghasis, into our society. So we decided to live as Munda dalia (leaderless communal life). We instituted a case against him in the court of Govindpur and removed him from his office.

The people of Kapond in Bonai narrated before me :

We abolished Bariha as he tried to exploit his fellowmen by inflicting heavy fines. Therefore people did not prefer to consult him in case of difficulty. Each tried to do things according to his own sweet will. Thus gradually his power declined. In this situation clever villagers exploited others and gained money. Finally we cut off all relations with the Bariha.

In certain instances the Bariha's actions were challenged in the law courts by their opponents. The following is an instance how Negi Bariha of Gudhiali was driven out of his post:-

Once on a certain point there was dispute between the Nagra Bariha and Negi Bariha of Gudhiali regarding the validity of the marriage of a divorced woman who had undergone Bandeiba ceremony under the authority of Negi. In protracted legal suit when Negi saw the possibility of being punished, he identified his assistant Jogi as the Bariha of the community. Jogi was fined Rs. 100

which he paid with difficulty by making loan. After this Jogi became the Bariha of the area but gradually the post lost its old glamour.

While the Bariha was losing importance the informal leaders started caste assemblies in the modern lines. These leaders of the caste assemblies with a puritan zeal tried to purge their community from all evils and revolted against the rule of the traditional leader Bariha. They placed importance on the 'Panchu-palli' organization, the traditional Panchatyat system and tried to select members in different areas to try social cases which were decided by the Barihas earlier. Thus at present the absence of Bariha does not create any vacuum as the Panchupalli is discharging the duties that were performed by the Barihas in the past.

To understand the emergence of these new leaders who organize the caste meeting it is necessary to understand the leadership pattern of the Kisan society. At present after the abolition of Bariha there is no formal leader of any importance. No doubt there are formal officials as Panigiri within the tribe but such formal officials are just the office bearers while the real power, prestige and decision making and organizing communal affairs rest with informal leaders. Here we may see how at different levels leadership is created in the Kisan society before describing the present caste meetings.

### **Leaders at the Village Level**

For all practical purposes local group is the most important social unit in the Kisan society. The local group may be a village or a ward within the village which consists of a number of Kisan families. As pure Kisan villages are very few in number, the local group generally implies the Kisan ward. In the local group an informal council of elders is the real authority. The function of the council of elders is to administer justice, organise the communal rites and festivals and to co-operate in other social functions. The prominent person within the group is called Sian or headman but he neither exercises any special power nor holds any hereditary or life-long office. He is just a common man though he enjoys some amount of prestige in the eye of others. In some villages there are more than one Sian each enjoying almost equal status. Thus the Sim is an informal leader who gets the recognition by common consent. If the Gountia of the village is a Kisan, usually he becomes the Sian of the local group but such persons are very few in number. Generally the land-owning wealthy cultivator of the village who can argue well becomes the Sian, provided he takes interest in the communal affairs of his village. As kinship ties are more important in the village level, a person, belonging to the clan of the majority, naturally becomes the Sian of the village as he can very easily influence his kin members.

Except prestige the Sian gets no other advantages through his office. The only remuneration for council of elders is received in the form of feast as in major cases of serious offences punishment is given to arrange a communal feast which

is called 'Jati Bhoji Danda'. Except compensation to the aggrieved party, the Kisan leaders do not impose monetary fines lest it may corrupt the village elders.

### **Factions within the Village**

Sociologically, every local group is not a single unit. The Kisan villages are multi-clan in nature and sometimes mild competition is seen within the important clan groups. Besides, for various other reasons, there may arise dispute within the village. Generally, too big Kisan villages cannot perform their social duties efficiently. In case of marriage, death or such other rites it is customary that all the villagers should join in the common feast. But in bigger villages it is not convenient to maintain this solidarity. In such occasions the local group becomes divided into a number of factions called 'Bad' in the local language. Now Bad is the important self-contained autonomous social unit within the village. In all social rituals members of Bandhu clans take an important role as their very presence is indispensable. So in the formation of Bad groups the leaders see that the Bandhu clans are well represented in the Bad organization. Thus Bad organization is a safety valve which counteracts the friction amongst the leaders in the village.

### **At the level of Cluster of Villages**

The important disputes which are not finalized at the Bad level are discussed in the village level and if no satisfactory decision is arrived at that stage, important Sians of five or six villages are invited to adjudicate the issue. Thus in the village level there may be a number of leaders, depending on the number of Bads within the village, but some prominent person is considered as the representative of the entire village. Such prominent villagers are invited by the aggrieved party to decide particular issues. This inter-village organization is called Panchupalli though it is a loose and evolving organization. Important land-owning cultivator, Gountia or some educated person who has acquaintance with the law courts and present day rules and regulations, becomes the important leader in the Panchupalli meeting. Generally, such influential man who enjoys higher status in the locality is recognized as the Sian of the Panchupalli organization. This body acts as a court of appeal.

The members who join the Panchupalli meeting to adjudicate cases get no remuneration. If they visit the village of the complainant, they are treated very respectfully and Bhang (powdered tobacco), Kahali (tobacco leaves rolled as cigars in Sal leave) and liquor are offered to them. Sometimes they are also given meals if they come from distant places.

### **In the level of Clan or Sub-clan**

The Kisans retain some amount of solidarity in the clan level or sub-clan level through the functions of Bansa Puja and Bansa Khoja. Bansa Puja is held annually or once in two or three years, when the representatives of the clan or sub-clan members of each, village gather at a particular place. They worship the Bansa

ancestors and other deities and pray for the expansion of the Bansa and for the protection of Bansa members from diseases. In some sub-clans such regular worship (Bansa Puja) is not held but in twelve or twenty years they hold a general meeting called Bansa Khoja when the members of the clan or sub-clan trace their genealogies and get themselves acquainted with the clan members who have resided at distant places. In case of Bansa Puja there is a formal official called "Kalo" who officiates as the priest in the clan worship but organization of such meetings are done by the informal leaders of the clan.

In recent years educated Kisans seem to show great interest towards these clan meetings in the form of Bansa Puja or Bansa Khoja. In old days such meeting was discussing about the members of the group, especially regarding their migration, marriage, etc. Some sub-clans maintain the birth and death registers regarding their group members. Such meeting also acts as arbitrator in family disputes and imposes punishment to the offender who violates caste rules. But now the educated people are discussing how to bring new reforms into the community. Some clan meetings are advancing loans from the clan funds to the needy members. They also now put more emphasis on the need of education and discuss about the evil effects of drinking, dance, etc. New ideas are also being disseminated through this organization. In the Bansa meeting of the Topo clan which was held during my field work (on the 29th April 1962) a Kisan Sarpanch of Sambalpur district explained about the newly introduced Panchayat, Blocks, etc., and tried to rouse the political consciousness amongst them.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of describing these organizations is to show how at different levels of social organization in the Kisan tribe, informal leaders are created out of the common people, who get scope to exercise their leadership amongst the tribesmen. Once such leaders are created they begin to think in terms of tribal upliftment specially to raise their status in the caste-hierarchy of their locality. They have been also powerfully influenced by the caste meetings of their neighboring people. During last thirty years three caste meetings (The Kisan Jati Mahasava) have been organized in Bonai, Bamanda and Gangpur on the modern lines. In a subsequent article I shall discuss how the Kisan leaders have successfully organized the caste meetings in these different areas and how they are trying to give vent to their aspiration through these caste meetings.

## KOL LOHARA \*

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

Kol Lohara belongs to the ancient stock of Kolarian tribes who share a similar culture and language, and live in different localities with different names. They are rural artisans by profession who work as village black smiths in northwestern Odisha. The term *Lohra* is derived from *loha*, meaning iron. They prefer to identify themselves as *Munda-Lohra* that they consider more prestigious.

As per 2011 census their population is 9558 including 4707 males and 4851 females registering the sex ratio of 1031. In 1981 their literacy was 11 % only. Over the decades it has remarkably improved to 52.68% (62.40% for males and 43.25% for females). They are largely concentrated in Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh, districts and thinly scattered in other districts. They speak Odia and Kol languages. They say in the distant past that they have migrated to northwestern Odisha from the neighboring areas of West Bengal and Jharkhand.

As village blacksmiths, they were earning their livelihood by supplying simple iron implements to the local peasants. Now they have lost their market due to technological revolution that made available cheap and machine made variety of iron implements in the market. They are trying to take up agricultural and allied pursuits but most of them are either landless or marginal farmers and many of them are wage earners. Those who still stick to their traditional occupation of black smithy, they maintain patron-client relationship with those farmers who pay them in the shape of food grains in lieu of their services.

They are non-vegetarians and their staple food is rice. They are fond of consuming the traditional and popular rice beer – Handia. Kol Lohara women besides attending their household chores, play a role in ritual activities.

They are divided into a number of exogamous and totemic clans, namely, *Tudkar*, *Hansdawat*, *Golur*, *Bandwar*, etc. Clan is called *killi*. They have their surnames like Lohar, Kol-lohar and Munda Lohar etc.

---

\* Unpublished article of 2000 updated in 2019

<sup>1</sup> Research Officer (2000) & Consultant (2018), SCSTRTI

The Kol Lohara society allows cross-cousin marriage, junior levirate and sorrorate. Marriage by elopement, exchange, intrusion, and by service is prevalent among them. Marriage by negotiation involving the parents and relatives on both the sides with full payment of bride price (*ganang*) is considered ideal and prestigious. Bride price comprises of cash, few heads of livestock, some measures of rice and some pieces of clothes as negotiated between both the parties. Monogamy is the common practice. Divorce and remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees is socially permitted

Pregnancy is a welcome event in Kol Lohara household. On the ninth day of birth they observe *chautkate*, the first hair cutting ceremony. The twenty-first day ceremony, *ekosia* is observed to name the newborn. Puberty rites are held for girls after seven days of pollution and seclusion. They bury the dead and observe death pollution. On the tenth day purificatory rites are performed.

Important festivals observed by the tribe are *Biswakarma puja*, *Karma*, *Dusserah*, *Makar* and *Nuakhai*. They pay homage to the famous *Kichakeswari* temple at Khiching in Mayurbhanj district.

As the inhabitants of multi-ethnic villages they come under the jurisdiction of traditional village *panchayat* and obey its decisions.

Planned change and modernization have made inroads into Kol Lohara society. They are showing a great deal of interest in educating their children more and more and modernizing their profession by availing assistance under various development schemes.



## K O L - L O H A R A S \*

*A. B. Ota* <sup>1</sup>

*S. C. Mohanty* <sup>2</sup>

### IDENTITY

The Kol-Loharas belong to the great and ancient Kolarian tribes who are called in various names like Munda, Kol, Kolha, Ho, Larka Kol etc. in different localities. They are also known as Mundari tribes who inhabited in the Kolhan region in Singhbhum district of Bihar and in course of time migrated to the neighboring districts of Odisha, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. All the eminent and early ethnographers namely, Dalton, Risley, S. C. Roy, Russell and Hiralal unanimously say that Munda, Ho, Kol, Kolha and Kol-Lohra are one and the same as they belong to the same ancestral stock. However each of them has been notified as Scheduled Tribes presently.

They are distinguished as artisans who worked as village blacksmiths. In local language, "Lohar" or "Lohra" is a term derived from "LOHA"- the iron. So "Lohar" or "Lohra" means the man who works with iron. As the name indicates, the Kol-Lohra is an occupational group, who served the local peasant community by way of manufacturing and supplying iron implements.

The Kol-Lohara are mainly found in Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha. In Odisha they are largely distributed in the Northern and Western districts namely, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sundergarh. They recall their history of migration from the bordering districts of West Bengal and Bihar.

As per 2011 Census, their total population in Odisha was 9558 comprising 4707 males and 4851 females. Their population has registered a decadal growth rate of -0.87 % between 2001 and 2011. Their total literacy rate is 52.68 %. It is 62.40% for males and 43.25 % for females. The sex ratio is 1031. They speak the

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Kol-Loharas, 2020, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>1</sup> Advisor-cum-Director & Special Secretary, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

Kolarian or Mundari language among themselves. They also speak the regional languages such as Odia, Bengali and Hindi while communicating with others.

### Settlement pattern and housing

They reside in multiethnic settlements in separate hamlets, maintaining social distance from other communities. Their houses are arranged in a linear pattern but detached from each other leaving a narrow street in between. Their settlements are established near the foothills where perennial hill streams are flowing which provide them drinking water throughout the year.

Individual houses are built with mud walls and are thatched with *piri* grass. The walls are cleanly polished using white or red clay. Houses have two rooms with no window for ventilation and are low roofed. At present some of them have constructed asbestos or tiled roofs under various housing schemes.

They construct their workshops (*kammarsala*) at the village outskirts where three to four families jointly undertake the blacksmith works.

### SOCIAL LIFE

The Kol-Loharas have no sub-tribes. Their society is divided into a number of totemistic and exogamous clans or septs namely Tudwar, Hansdawar, Golwar, Kaithwar, Bandwar, etc which they call Killi. These names are derived from the names of certain trees, animals, villages, household objects and natural objects. It is easy to know the clan of a Kol-Lohra as he often uses his clan name as his surname. They also use Lohra or Lohar or Kol-Lohra as their surname. In these days, they prefer to call themselves as Munda-Lohra which they consider to be more prestigious. However in the social hierarchy of the greater Kol society, the Kol-Lohra are ranked lower than other sections of the tribe.

Their clan or Killi is associated with totemism. The members of each clan are believed to have descended from a common mythical ancestor. The mythical ancestor represented by a totemic object is highly respected. Clan members observe certain taboos against killing or injuring the totemic object. By virtue of tracing their descent from a common mythical ancestor, the members of each clan, claim to be related by common blood ties. So, marriage of persons belonging to the same clan amounts to clan incest and therefore strictly tabooed. Thus clan exogamy is the rule.

Family constitutes the elementary social unit in their society. Monogamous and nuclear families are quite common. However some cases of polygynous and extended families are also found. The nature of authority in the family is patriarchal. Father or senior most male member is the head of the family. Inheritance and succession is partilineal. Only sons and male heirs have the right to inherit father's property which is equally distributed among the sons after

father's death. Usually the eldest son succeeds to any traditional office held by the father. Girls after their marriage cease to be members of their natal family.

There is a relationship of avoidances between a man and his younger brother's wife, his mother-in-law and his wife's elder sister. Joking relationship exist between grandparents and grand children, a man and his wife's or his brother's wife's younger brothers and sisters and his elder-brother's wife.

## **Life Cycle**

### **Pregnancy & Child Birth**

Pregnancy is a welcome event and some minor taboos are observed by a pregnant woman regarding her food, work, movements and sexual activities. An elderly and experienced woman of Ghasi caste, a scheduled caste community, attends the pregnant woman during child birth. Other elderly women such as her mother-in-law, sister-in-law also attends her at this time. To facilitate easy delivery, the mother squats on the floor on her heels and bends over a large basket. The naval chord of the baby is cut off with a sharp arrow head or a razor. The newborn baby is bathed in luke warm water and gently massaged with *til* oil. The relatives who remain present at the time of child birth are served with rice-beer.

On the ninth day, Chautkate - the first hair shaving ceremony is observed when the stump of the umbilical cord has fallen off. The mother comes out of seclusion on the twelfth day. She takes bath and resumes her daily activities on that day. The twenty first day ceremony called Ekosia is observed to name the child. No first-feeding and ear-piercing ceremonies are observed.

### **Puberty Rite**

Puberty rite (Jubasta) is performed when a girl attains puberty. She remains in seclusion for seven days. During this time she is to avoid the sight of male members. On the early morning of the eighth day she takes bath, wears new clothes and comes out of seclusion.

### **Marriage**

Marriage is the most important social event in a Kol-Lohara's life. They strictly practice tribal endogamy and clan exogamy. Cross-cousin marriage, junior levirate, junior sororate widow remarriages are allowed. Marriage by mutual negotiation and arrangement between the groom's side and bride's side is quite common and it is considered prestigious. Marriage by capture (Opertipi andi), marriage by elopement or love marriage (Raji Kusi), marriage by exchange (Badal andi), marriage by intrusion (Anader), and son-in-law-in-house (Gandi Jamal andi) type of marriages are also permitted in their society.

Monogamy is the common practice and cases of polygyny are few. If a man wants to have a second wife he should preferable marry his wife's younger

sister with the permission of his first wife. Bride-price (Ganang) comprising some cash, clothes, few heads of livestock and some amount of rice is paid by the groom's side to the bride's side to settle the marriage. The wedding rituals are performed at the bride's house, and on the fourth day, the nuptial ceremony is observed at the groom's house. As a matter of custom, married women put a vermilion mark on their forehead and wear earrings and glass bangles.

Divorce (Chhadpatar) is allowed on the grounds of adultery, maladjustment, cruel treatment etc. among the partners. Either of the partners can initiate the divorce proceedings before the traditional community council. The aggrieved party demands compensation from the accused. Once the divorce is sanctioned the children become the liability of the father. Both the partners are free to remarry after the divorce. The remarriage of widows, widowers, and divorcees is socially permitted.

### **Death**

The dead bodies are buried. Death pollution is observed for ten days, during which the bereaved family members and close kins abstain from taking non-veg food items. On the tenth day, purificatory rituals are observed. The deceased's family members and kinsmen cut their nails and shave following the Hindu traditions. A feast is also given to the villagers and guests.

### **Inter-community Relationship**

They accept cooked food and water from other tribesmen Santal, Munda, Bathudi, Gond and Dharua and Hindu castes like Tanti, Kamar, Teli etc. but not from the untouchable Scheduled Castes like Ghasi, Pano, Dom, Mangan etc. The Brahmin and Dharua Castes do not accept food and water from them. As the Kollohara live in multi-caste villages, they are treated at par with other service castes like Carpenter, Barber, Oil man, Potter etc. and are allowed to share the common water sources with other clean castes where as the Scheduled Castes are not allowed to do so. But they are not allowed to use the cremation ground of the clean castes and so they have their own separate burial ground. However they are permitted to enter in to the Hindu-temples and participate in fairs and festivals.

### **LIVELIHOOD**

The tribesmen had been earning their livelihood mainly from their age old occupation of black-smithy that was supplemented by wage earning, marginal agriculture and seasonal forest collections. They were manufacturing and selling agricultural, hunting and household implements to the peasants in traditional rural economic setup. They maintained patron-client relationship with the neighboring castes and tribes to whom they were supplying implements. As such as a community of professional and skilled iron workers, they were an integral part of the productive organization of the rural society in north-western Odisha.

In these days, the potent forces of modernization, industrialization, urbanization and high technology are pushing the traditional rural economic system to the point of obsolescence. The age-old profession of the Kol-Lohara is also hit hard as their crude implements unable to stand competition from their modern counterparts are gradually being replaced by sophisticated, factory-made precision implements. So they are now trying to switch over to agricultural pursuits. Since most of them are landless and few of them are marginal farmers, there is no way other than wage earning by working as daily agricultural labourers, contractual labourers and herdsmen. The number of unemployed and under-employed persons, wage-seekers and wage-earners among them are increasing day by day.

They are non-vegetarians and relish on fish, meat, egg, chicken, buffalo meat and pork. Rice is the staple food, supplemented with maize and *ragi*. They eat onion and garlic and use sesamum and *til* oil as cooking medium. They drink tea, milk and milk products. Seasonal fruits like mango, jackfruit and guava and other edibles collected from the forest are eaten. They consume pulses, roots, tubers and leafy vegetables. Both men and women drink alcoholic beverages and smoke beedis, cheroot, chew tobacco and betel leaves.

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS & PRACTICES

The religion of Kol-Lohara is a mixture of their own tribal religion and Hindu religion. Their supreme deity is Sing-Bonga- the Sun God who is also the supreme deity of other Mundari or Kolarian group of tribes. He is worshipped “to avert sickness or calamity and to this end white goats or white cocks are offered to him. Next to him comes Marang Buru, the mountain god who resides on the summit of the most prominent hill in the neighborhood. Animals are sacrificed to him here and the heads left and appropriated by the priest. He controls the rainfall, and is appeased in time of drought and when epidemic and sickness is abroad. Other deities preside over rivers, tanks, wells and springs, and it is believed that when offended they cause people who bathe in the water to be attacked by leprosy and skin diseases”. There is also the village deity who “lives with his wife in the *sarna* or sacred grove, a patch of the primeval forest left intact to afford a refuge for the forest gods”. (Russell and Lal; 1916, 512).

In addition to their Kolarian deities they also worship some Hindu deities namely Siva, Durga, Kali, Vishwakarma etc, and observe certain Hindu festivals and rituals. Being an artisan group they observe Biswakarma Puja to propitiate God Biswakarma- the Hindu God of architecture and technology. They pay reverence to other important Hindu Gods such as Siva, Parvati, Maha Laxmi, Jagannath, Durga, Kali etc. They pay homage to the Kichakeswari temple at Khiching in Mayurbhanj district. They also observe regional festivals like Karma Puja, Nuakhia, Dasahara, Makar, etc.

The Kol-Loharas are strong believers of magic, witchcraft and the dominant influence of ghosts and spirits on human life. All the happening and mis-happening are attributed to the action of spirits, magic and witchcraft. Magic-practitioners, shamans and witch-doctors are dreaded and respected in their society. Their help is sought after to diagnose and prescribe remedy for human suffering caused by the magic and evil spirits.

### **SOCIAL CONTROL**

Being the inhabitants of multi-caste villages, they come under the jurisdiction of the traditional village Panchayat headed by the powerful and influential village chief called Gaontia belonging to the dominant caste of the villages in western Odisha. At the regional level they have their own informal community council which prescribes and administers the customary code of conduct and punishes the offenders by way of fine and social boycott. Marriage and sexual intimacy among persons of prohibited category and the acceptance of cooked food and water from the members of the Scheduled Castes like Dom, Ghasi, etc. are treated as serious offences for which the offender is socially boycotted and he is allowed time to pay the penalty in form of cash, kinds, food and liquor so as to be readmitted in to the society.

### **DEVELOPMENT & CHANGE**

As a numerically small tribe the Kol-Loharas lived a life undisturbed in remote area with their age old traditional subsistence economy in the past with little change. But, after independence, changes have occurred in their way of life as the democratic State and its government has launched many welfare and development programmes for uplifting their socio-economic conditions. Implementation of various income generating and infrastructures development schemes for the benefit of the tribal people has helped their exposure to the modern world and also influenced their outlook to accept the modernity for self development. With the passage of the time, they have accepted many new cultural elements from the neighboring communities.

In present time, developmental programmes initiated by Government and non-government agencies have some impact on socio-economic life of the Kol-Lohra. Now they send their children to schools. They are trying to modernize their profession by availing bank loans and subsidies. They are also coming forward to adopt birth control measures and accept modern health-care services instead of relying on their traditional magico-religious methods. Yet they remain relatively socio-economically backward.

The impact of planned change and modernization are visible in their life style. Still, in their socio-cultural system they have retained some basic tribal features and kept intact their cultural identity which distinguish them from others.

## KOLI, MALHAR \*

*M. Behera*<sup>1</sup>

The Koli and Malhar have been identified as one and the same tribe in Orissa and are jointly enumerated by the census organization. According to the 1991 Census their population is 5093, of whom 2392 were males and 2701 females. In 1981 their population was 4710. Hence, the growth rate during this decade is 8.11 per cent. The sex ratio is 1129 females per thousand males. The percentage of literacy in 1981 was 28.7 increasing to 34.96 in 1991.

According to Russell and Hiralal, the Koli are a primitive tribe who have been confused with the Kori caste, Hindu weavers of northern India, their name actually being derived from the Kol. They also suggest that in Marathi custom 'i' is added to any name, like Patwi for Patwa, Banjari for Banjara, and Halbi for Halba; thus the Koli may have derived their name from the Kol. They also suggest that the Malhar are one of the five divisions of Koli named after their deity Malhari deo, and are also called *Panbhari* or water carrier. But the Koli and Malhar have few common socio-cultural features. The Kori caste derived from the Kols and called Koli trace their origin from Kabir, the apostle of the weaving caste, whereas according to J. K. Das 'Malhars are a nomadic tribe in Orissa whose main occupation is collection of honey and Koli are a class of weavers. They are two separate tribes who bear apparently no regional or ethnic affinity. However, under what circumstances both these tribes have been clubbed together is a matter for more detailed enquiry.

The Madras Census report for 1901 mentions the Koli as a fisherman and boatman caste of Bombay who are found in South Canara. It is also stated that low-status Bengali weavers called Koli migrated to Orissa and were found in Ganjam district. J. K. Das says, 'the members of the tribe are known as Koli and there exists no other synonym or name by which the tribe is known to the outsiders. In spite of all attempts nothing much could be obtained so as to know the origin of their name and the history of their migration.' Some Koli, however, claim that the members of the tribe once had a numerical preponderance near and around Ichhapuram in Andhra Pradesh and lived in close association with the Telugu-speaking people. They were in primitive state. Some were weavers,

---

\* Published in *Tribes of Orissa* (revised edition), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2004, pp. 189-192

<sup>1</sup> Former Research Assistant, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

some were rearing goats and poultry. Later on they migrated to different regions of Orissa. Hence Koli who live in Ganjam District of Orissa use Telugu terms and call their father *dada*, sister-in-law *bani*, and aunt *pini* or *ata*. The Koli are spread over different parts of Orissa and mainly concentrated in the district of Ganjam.

The social status of the Koli is much higher than other tribal communities in Orissa. Irrespective of *gotra*, the Koli have free access to the village well and temples, and they are served by Brahman priests, washer men and barbers. They speak Oriya and Telugu.

The dress and ornaments of the Koli are just like those of the neighboring peoples. The men wear *dhotis* and women saris. The earlier hand-woven saris have now been replaced by mill-made cloths and silk and woolen garments. Women are very fond of ornaments. They wear glass bangles known as *kacha*. Their gold nose rings, nose tops, earrings and ear tops are locally called *besari*, *dandi*, *phula* and *noli* respectively. The heavy ornaments, like *bombai rupa khadu* (anklet) made of silver, have become out of fashion. Tattooing was very popular half a century ago. In the past women liked to tattoo their arms and legs. Nowadays tattooing is no longer practiced.

Generally, the Koli are non-vegetarians. They eat fish, pork and beef. Rice, which is their staple food, is eaten with different kinds of millet and pulse. Groundnut oil is used in the preparation of curry. Chewing pan and tobacco is popular. Drinking tea has become very common and is also offered to the guests.

Weaving is the main occupation of the Koli. Other than that they have no other occupation. They do not like agriculture. Although a few families own a plough, bullocks and land, they let them out for sharecropping by others. Weaving is mostly done with cotton yarn which is obtained from the nearby markets. Yarns are processed by both male and female members of the family and are woven in their own houses on hand looms.

Koli society is patrilineal. The father exercises authority over the family; after his death property is divided among the sons. Generally the Koli are endogamous. Gotra exogamy is strictly observed. The exogamous *gotra* divisions of the Koli are *Gangalama*, *Sodasa*, *Nagesa*, etc. Persons belonging to the *Gangalama Gotra* and *Sodasa Gotra* claim to be superior to the members of other *Gotras*.

The first delivery of a woman generally takes place at her parents' house and the subsequent deliveries take place at her husband's house. A country *dhai*, generally of the Bauri caste, serves as the midwife. Nowadays the assistance of a midwife from a maternity centre or hospital is sought. The *dhai* cuts the umbilical cord using either a shell or a sharp knife. The placenta is buried near the threshold by an elderly woman of the household. The mother is not allowed to eat marine fish or dried fish during the period of lactation. After delivery she is immediately given boiled water mixed with garlic and other spices to drink so



that she may not suffer from cold. Birth pollution is observed in two stages. The first stage runs from the child birth to twelve days later, when mother and child are kept segregated from others. The second stage continues till the 21st day after the birth, when mother and child are bathed ceremonially. The clothes are washed and a feast is arranged for the occasion. The newborn baby is presented with dresses and ornaments by the relatives.

The rituals associated with puberty are observed rigorously. A girl attaining puberty is kept segregated for seven days. During this period she is forbidden to see the face of any male person. At the end of the seventh day she is taken to the nearest water source to be bathed. She is then given a new sari to wear and led to the temple of the village goddess for worship. A feast is also arranged that day. In subsequent menstruation periods segregation is not observed so strictly. However she is not allowed to touch anybody for seven days and not allowed to enter the kitchen.

By and large marriage is celebrated according to Hindu customs. Usually an altar is made. A sacred fire (*homa*) is lit, and the sacred joining together of the hands of the bride and groom (*hataganthi*) and sacred playing of shells by both bride and groom are undertaken as among Hindus. A Brahman priest also officiates at the marriage and the services of barbers are sought. Separation from the parents does not occur immediately after marriage. The boy continues to stay with his parents in a joint family. Quarrels in the family occur which breaks the household into nuclear families.

Among the Koli there is a preference for cross-cousin marriage. A boy marries his maternal uncle's daughter. Sororate and levirate are practiced. Most marriages are arranged by negotiation. The initiative may be taken by either of the two parties. If the girl's parents are rich, the function is held at their house; otherwise the girl is brought to the boy's house for the marriage. There is no system of bride price or dowry but the girl's parents give presents to their son-in-law, according to their financial capacity. Divorce is allowed. The person at fault is penalized by the caste council. Now the system has been abolished. The remarriage of widows and widowers is allowed.

According to the *kulaniyam* (caste rule) of the Koli, the *patra* is the secular headman. He is called *kula behera*. It is a hereditary and honorable post. The *kula behera* is especially honored by placing a new cloth on his head on *makar sankranti* day in January-February every year at the temple of village goddess. A grand feast is arranged on this occasion to honour the *kulabehera*.

The most important village deity is Thakurani, who is worshipped on *makara sankranti* day. The presiding deity of each household is called Ista Debata or Isana. The deity is worshipped in the kitchen. Special offerings are made to the deity on *maker sankranti* day for which the services of a Brahman priest are not required. The Koli also celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi on Sankranti day for which

again the services of Brahman priest is not required. On this day the looms are cleaned and placed in front of the god Ganesh for worship.

The tribe is highly acculturated. Many are highly educated and some have become doctors or engineers. In social status they occupy a higher status among the scheduled communities.

## MALHAR

The Malhar are a semi nomadic community mainly found in Dhenkanal district. They have their own spoken language which other caste people can partly understand. The Malhar also speak Oriya. Malhar men wear short dhotis and the women wear saris. Children wear small rags to cover their bodies. The Malhar have different surnames like *Behera*, *Dehuri*, *Pradhan*, etc.

The traditional occupation of the Malhar is the collection of forest products, which mainly include wild roots and fruits. Having no land or ploughs, they do not practice cultivation. They also work as day labourers to supplement their income from forest collection. Since the forests have become denuded, the economic condition of the tribe has declined. The Malhar are non-vegetarian but do not eat rats and snakes like some other tribal communities of Orissa. Some do not eat chicken or goat either. They drink a local liquor called *khajurmada*. On festive occasions they indulge themselves in excessive drinking.

Their secular headman called *behera* solves quarrels among the villagers. He also supplies information required to outsiders and collects contributions from the villagers for the observance of common rituals. There is no dormitory system but they have a common house in the village called the *kothaghar*.

Birth pollution among the Malhar continues for nine days after the birth of a child. During this period no outsider takes water or food. The Malhar are endogamous. Marriage outside their community is not allowed, and arranged marriages are most common. Widows and widowers can remarry. Divorce is also allowed. The dead are either buried or cremated depending on the status and economic condition of the deceased's family. Mourning continues for ten days. Pollution is observed by all lineage members, and the funeral rites are performed according to Hindu customs.

The priest is called the *dehuri*. The Kondh *dehuri* performs religious rites for the village gods and goddesses whereas the Malhar *dehuri* performs rites for household deities. The Malhar have their own deities called Bana Durga, Kalika, Mangala and Grama Devati. They also worship Hindu gods and goddesses.

Due to their poor economic conditions and traditional occupation of forest collection, the Malhar have not developed like the Koli. They have remained backward as before.

## SOCIAL STATUS OF THE KOLIS OF ORISSA \*

### THRTI <sup>1</sup>

The Kolis are enlisted as a Scheduled Tribe of Orissa. The Census have enumerated Kolis jointly with the Malhars and so it is difficult to say the exact population of the Kolis. However the population of both Kolis and Malhars in the state has been returned at 1504 as per 1971 census.

The Kolis are mainly concentrated in Aska, Belguntha, Polosara, Patrappur, Municipentha, Chikitigunia villages of Ganjam district. The Kolis of this locality claim that they have migrated from Ichhapuram areas of Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. In the past they had as they say, cultural affinities with the Malhars of the Ichhapuram area and still now they establish marriage relationship with them.

Russell & Hiralal (Vol.-III, 1916, 534) describe Malhar as one of the five sub-divisions of the Koli community who are named from their deity Malharideo. But the studies conducted by the Tribal & Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute (now SCSTRTI) and Census organization reveal that the Malhars of Orissa are a nomadic tribe found mainly in Dhenkanal district. Collection of honey and other forest products constitutes their main occupation whereas the Kolis are a weaver class.

This report is based on field investigation conducted among the Kolis of Polosara village of Ganjam (undivided) district. The Kolis of the study village claim that Telugu is their mother tongue. But now they have forgotten their own language and speak Oriya. Certain Telugu words such as Naina, Akka, Anna, Amma and Odina are still used by them which stand for father, sister, brother, mother and sister-in-law respectively. Like Telugu speaking people they have Inti Peru the house name which is identified as their *gotra*. Gangalama, Naineru and Tunkuru are the *gotras* found among the Kolis of the study village. They have Patra and Behera as their titles.

In their dress and ornaments the Kolis do not exhibit any distinctive feature. Koli men put on *dhoti*, shirt and women wear mill made saree. Previously they were wearing self-woven hand-loom *gamchha* (napkin) and

---

\* Unpublished report of THRTI (now SCSTRTI)

<sup>1</sup> Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, Bhubaneswar

sarees respectively. Their traditional ornaments consisting of silver anklets, earring and nose-ring of abnormal size and shape have been replaced by the glass bangles, small sized golden nose-rings and earrings.

Rice constitutes the staple food of the Kolis. They are non-vegetarian but beef and pork which are held unclean by the neighboring Hindu castes are not taken by them. Although drinking is deemed as taboo for the community yet some of them occasionally drink Mahuli or Chauhi liquor. Unlike other tribals they do not offer liquor to their deities in the religious ceremonies.

The Kolis live in the villages of multi-ethnic composition. The other weaver castes who are found in Koli inhabited villages are Rangani, Tanti, Pano, Patasalia etc. Except Pano other castes are served by the Brahmin, barber and washer man. The Kolis consider themselves superior to certain castes such as washer man, barber, Bauri, Hadi, Dandasi etc. They do not accept water from their hands. The Koli women do not even touch these lower caste people. A Koli has free access to the village wells, river ghats, tanks and temples. The higher caste Hindus do not consider themselves polluted if touched by a Koli.

Weaving is the traditional occupation of the Kolis and still it constitutes as their main occupation. Previously, they used to rear goat and poultry. Now-a-days these are practiced in a limited scale. In the study village it is seen that those who have land let it out for share cropping by others. But sometimes they work as wage earners to supplement their income from weaving. In the past they used to organize communal hunting with the help of matches and wooden staves. They were not using arrow and bow which other tribal communities of Orissa use. At present hunting is no more in practice.

Weaving as stated above is their main occupation in which members of both the sex are employed. Cotton yarns are purchased usually from the nearby market or co-operatives. The women assist their male members in every stage of weaving. Many women weave themselves.

Tumbeswar Mohadeb who is installed at Pratappur village is their most important deity. They also worship Lord Jagannath, the Hindu deity. The next important deities are the Thakurani and Banadurga. Thakurani is worshipped on Makar Sankranti day. The presiding deity of each household called Ista debata is worshipped in the kitchen. They like other tribal communities do not sacrifice animals to appease their deities. Either for worship of Thakurani or Ista debata the service of a Brahmin priest is not requisitioned. Besides Makar Jatra, the Kolis observe the local Hindu festivals.

It is reported that in the Koli society the first delivery of a child takes place in the residence of the woman parents and subsequent deliveries are done in the house of her husband. In the past an elderly Bauri woman used to act as midwife but now she is replaced by the midwife of the local maternity centre.

The mother and child are kept segregated for 12 days. On the 12<sup>th</sup> day they take purificatory bath. Then the mother is allowed to touch others but she can not enter in the kitchen. Again on 21<sup>st</sup> day both mother and child take bath and their clothing are washed and household is cleaned. The name giving ceremony of the child is held on that day.

The puberty rites are observed according to the procedures followed by the local non-tribal communities. When a girl attains puberty she is kept segregated for seven days. She is not allowed to move out the room and see the face of male members of the family. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day the girl takes bath early in the morning. She wears a new sari and offers worship to the village deity.

The common way of acquiring bride is through negotiation. They do not practise marriage by capture, love marriage, marriage by service and marriage by elopement as most of the Orissan tribes do. Marriage within the same *gotra* is forbidden though this rule is not strictly followed now-a-days. Marriage with maternal uncle's daughter is preferred. Remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcee are allowed in their society. Sororate and levirate are also practiced.

Marriage takes place in the house of the girl. If the girl's parent cannot afford to bear the marriage expenditure the girl is brought to the house of the groom and marriage ceremony is performed there. The custom of paying bride-price as it is prevalent among almost all the tribes of Orissa is absent in Koli society. Marriage rites are performed following Hindu custom. A Hindu Brahmin performs *homa* and tie the hands of bride and bride-groom.

The Kolis generally bury the dead. Now-a-days some are going for cremation. A male is buried with his face upwards and a female, with her face downwards. The lineage members of the dead eat *pitabhat* or bitter rice for 3 days. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day some food stuff is offered to the spirit of the deceased at the burial ground. On the 11<sup>th</sup> day all the male members of the deceased's household are shaved, their nails are pared and for the first time after pollution they take ghee and non-vegetarian food. Women take a purificatory bath. A Brahmin priest officiates in the mortuary rite.

The Kolis have their traditional headman called Behera and his post is hereditary. The headman is supposed to be the spokesman of the community. He also plays important role in Makar Sankranti festival and worshipped as *Ista debata* by the Kolis of the locality. The Behera presides over their caste council called Koli Sabha. Previously the Kolis were not engaging the Brahmin priest and the Behera was acting as the priest.

The Kolis are greatly acculturated. They occupy a high place in the caste hierarchy of Hindu society. Their economic status is low.

# ETHNIC STATUS OF MALHAR \*

## THRTI <sup>1</sup>

The Malhar a semi nomadic community is found in the interior jungles of the Kuchinda and its adjoining areas of the Sambalpur district. A study was undertaken in the Pata bindha village of the Kuchinda sub-division from 26<sup>th</sup> December 1992 to 5<sup>th</sup> January 1993 to determine the social status of the Malhar. The studied village Pata bindha is situated at a distance of 30 Kms. from the sub-divisional headquarters of Kuchinda and 60 Kms. from Sambalpur district headquarters. The village comes under the jurisdiction of Jamankira Block and Jamankira Police Station. To reach the village one has to go from Jamankira through interior forests. The road is jeepable or else one has to go by foot.

The village is surrounded by the Badarama forest in the north and Khuni bhanja forest in the south. Towards the east of the village is the Jamankira Block headquarters and towards the west is the Katang pani G.P. headquarters. A stream flows towards the north of the village. The climatic condition of the village is extreme. It experiences severe cold during winter and scorching heat during summer. Incessant rains are also experienced during the rains. There are not much of infrastructural facilities available in the village. There is no electricity. Only one *chatsali* of the Education department is located there.

Mahila Samity and Anganbadi Centres are located in Arjunapali village which is about 9 Kms. far from the village of Pata bandha. It is a multi-caste village inhabited by Kandha, Oraon, Gond, Malhar and Goudas.

In the study village most dominating community is the Gond who occupy numerically the top-most position followed by the Kondh and the Oraon occupying 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> positions respectively. The Malhar community occupies the fourth position in this respect.

The following table will indicate the tribe wise population in the village.

---

\* Unpublished report of THRTI (now SCSTRTI)

<sup>1</sup> Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute, Bhubaneswar

	<u>Name of the tribe</u>	<u>Total No. of H.Hs</u>	<u>Population</u>
1.	Gond	54	203
2.	Kandha	37	113
3.	Oraon	22	110
4.	Malhar	13	41
		<hr/> 126	<hr/> 467

As recorded from the village and subsequent investigation at Rairakhhol areas the Malhar are also found in the following villages of Rairakhhol sub-division area.

	<u>Name of the village</u>	<u>Name of the Block</u>	<u>Total No. of Households</u>
1.	Giripur	Naktideoul	7
2.	Badabahal	Naktideoul	3
3.	Bhalukhol	Naktideoul	9
4.	Dhalpur	Naktideoul	2
5.	Ghusuramala	Naktideoul	8
6.	Penthabahal	Naktideoul	13
7.	Hiraloi	Naktideoul	11
8.	Machhadiha	Naktideoul	17
9.	Panibera	Naktideoul	4
10.	Musakani	Naktideoul	2
11.	Manakenda	Naktideoul	9
			<hr/> 85

### **Living conditions:**

The living condition of the Malhar is extremely poor as their only source of income is the collection of forest products and catching of birds and some other forest animals. Mainly they collect honey from the jungles. At the same time they catch big rats, snakes, rodents and mongoose. They move from place to place in jungle to collect honey for about eight months in a year. Their income from this collection of honey is very meager. During rainy season they eke-out their existence by wage earning. Their approximate annual income from all sources ranges from Rs.1,000 to Rs.2,000 per family. None of them possess any farm land.

The Malhars reside in a separate hamlet of the village separated from other communities. Their houses pattern is very simple. Most of the houses are rectangular in shape and built in one row. The houses are not strongly built as they keep on moving from one place to another in search of forest products. A house consists of one room only along with a small back verandah where they invariably cook. Their staple food is rice. Apart from rice they also eat tubers,

roots etc. which they collect from the forest. In the morning they take some food and then proceed to the jungle for collection of honey. Again in the evening after return from the jungle they cook and eat. The household contents of the Malhars are a few in number. Their utensils are made of aluminum metals.

The MALHARs have a language of their own which seems to be identical with the language of the Kolhas.

### **Socio-cultural life:**

The Malhars are divided into 4 sections, such as Ghantar Malhar, Khadar Malhar, Khudka Malhar and Dang Malhar. The Ghantar Malhars and Khadar Malhars collect honey and other forest products. But Khudka Malhar wander from place to place and dance a particular dance known as 'Khudka nach'. They also perform different acrobatics. During festivals and *hat* days in the village the Dang Malhars dig a big pit and sit there with the head inside the pit. The visitors throw away some paise to that pit. In this way they earn some money.

Gotra system is prevalent in their community. Marriage within their own gotra is forbidden. Gotras are named as Bagh, Nag etc. The Malhars use Dehury, Sabara, Behera as their surname.

Malhars are endogamous. Marriage outside their community is not allowed. In their community negotiated type of marriage is prevalent. When a young man selects a girl to marry he informs his parents to make arrangements for his marriage through negotiation with the girl's parents. The parents however have to arrange all preliminaries, including the payment of bride price which is about Rs.101/-. Apart from that the groom has to give three new clothes to the bride's party, one for the bride, one for the bride's mother and another for the bride's brother.

Prior to marriage, betrothal takes place where the groom's party is sumptuously fed with alcoholic drinks, meat etc. by the bride's party. The marriages rites are performed by their own priest called 'Dehury'.

Marriage by elopement is also permitted by their society. Polygamy is allowed in their society but it is practiced rarely. Sororate and levirate type of marriages and remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees are also prevalent. In widow remarriage the female relatives of the bride-groom only smear vermilion on the bride's forehead.

Divorce is allowed in their society subject to the approval of the traditional community panchayat. If the husband divorces the wife on any ground other than adultery, he is required to contribute for their maintenance the children. Similarly, when a wife deserts her husband not on account of ill-treatment, but merely because she wants to marry another man, her parents may be called upon to repay the bride price which the bride groom's parents have paid during their marriage.



In case of birth of a child in the Malhar community the pollution period continues till the 21<sup>st</sup> day. On the 21<sup>st</sup> day the child as well as the mother is purified by ceremonial bath. The name giving ceremony is also performed on this day when a feast is hosted for the kin members of the family.

In the Malhar community the dead is either burnt or buried. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the death, the 'Pitakhia' ceremony is observed. The death pollution continues till the 10<sup>th</sup> day when all the members of the deceased's family after shaving their head take bath anointed with oil, soap etc. On the 11<sup>th</sup> day a feast is organized for the kith and kins of the deceased. From the 12<sup>th</sup> day, they take meat and other non-vegetarian food.

### **Religious Activities:**

The Malhars have their own autonomous tribal religion. They have a supreme God known as Dharmesh, the Creator who is benevolent. But they believe that the benevolent acts of the Dharmesh is thwarted by the malignant spirits whom human beings must propitiate. Hence spirits are adored and appeased. On the Chaita Purnima day when the Malhars go for communal hunting they worship the jungle spirits known as 'Banaspati' 'Banarai' and 'Barabhoi Malani'. Every year in the month of Chaita (March) they offer a goat and coconut to 'Mata' - the deity of smallpox.

### **Political Organisation:**

The headman of the Malhar community is known as Pradhan whose post is hereditary. All disputes pertaining to their own community is decided by the 'Pradhan'. Apart from Pradhan, they have their own priest known as 'Dehury'. The Behera another office bearer of the village council is nominated by their own people. He works as a village messenger to intimate all the community men about the fixation of the date of a meeting convened by the village Pradhan.

### **Inter-Community Relationship:**

The Malhars do not come under the fold of Hindu caste system. Beef, pork, fowls, all kinds of fish, alligators, field rats, mongooses are considered to be their favourite food. Malhar, in fact eat almost any edible things and therefore are looked down upon by the caste Hindus as well as by other castes and tribes. They are not served by the Hindu Brahmin, barber and washerman. In social occasions they manage their own affairs.

*In the local social hierarchy they are ranked very low. Being very backward socially, economically and educationally they deserve to be included among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of Odisha.*

# MALHAR \*

*A. B. Ota* <sup>1</sup>

*S. C. Mohanty* <sup>2</sup>

*B. K. Paikray* <sup>3</sup>

## IDENTITY

The Malhar are a semi nomadic Kolharian tribe of Odisha. They are also found in Thane district of Maharashtra State where they enjoy ST status. In the Scheduled Tribe list of Odisha they have been enlisted with another community Koli at Sl.36 whereas, Koli and Malhar are two separate communities and bears apparently no regional or ethnic affinity. Being listed under one serial, they are jointly enumerated by the census for which the individual population figure of Malhar Tribe in Odisha is not available. The Malhar are numerically a minor community and are distributed in Sambalpur, Dhenkanal and Keonjhar districts of Odisha.

The Malhars are named after their deity *Malharideo* and are also called *Panbhari*, which means water carrier. But in Thane Gazetteer p.173, it is stated; Malhar, the name has been probably derived from the Dravidian word *Mala* meaning hill. But early ethnographer, Sir Risley (1891) in his literature "Tribes and Caste of Bengal" (Vol-II, P.51), described Malar as a sept of Mundas and Ghasis of Chhotanagpur. The actual name of the tribe appears to be "Mal and Maler" and according to Lieutenant Shaw, the name of the tribe Malar is the third person plural of the name Mal and Maler.

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Malhar, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2015

<sup>1</sup> Commissioner-cum-Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Former Joint Director and then Officer on Special Duty, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Former Research Assistant, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

About the origin of Malhars Dalton opined, "According to their legend, in ancient age when man race was first created, only seven brothers were created who were food gatherers and were vegetarians in their habit but the seventh brother was born sick and unable to travel distant places when edible fruits and tubers in one place of their habitat become scarce, but he managed food by killing animals which were then abundant in the locality; for which the elder brothers out casted him and left and he after his marriage to a woman established in isolated hill area. From him, many children were born and in due course of time, their number raised and during Aryan people invaded the area, they were divided into two groups of which one section moved towards Rajmahal hill, the other seek the high lands as their place of refuge. They dwell also in West Bengal where they are referred to as *dhokra* or *dokra* since they are an artisan group and are engaged in making tinkering bells (*ghungur*) and measuring pots for grains such as *pai* and *pua* in brass metal and many other *dokra* items such as deer, peacock, other animals with *Lakshmi* and images of Gods and Goddesses."

Malhars in Odisha identify themselves as Malhar or as Jara Sabar to glorify their identity but others call them as *madhuwalla* or *mallay*. The term *madhuwalla* has been derived from the word *madhu* meaning honey and *walla* meaning the person who professes its trading. They speak their own mother tongue, a non literary dialect, interrelated genetically and structurally with proto Munda group of languages and schematically classified as Northern Munda family of Languages. They are bi-lingual and are well versed with the local tongue Odia and Sadri and also use the Odia script for inter group communication. Malhar use Dehuri, Pradhan, Malik, Laru, Bahera, Baru, Sabar, Naua and Patiar as their surname.

### Personal adornments

During early days, their dress pattern was in primordial stage due to their isolation and ignorance during their food gathering state. At that time males wear only a loin cloth (*langoti*), a short piece of worn out cloth to conceal their pubic regions and females wear a short piece of coarse old cloth which had not been washed days together, around their waist which covered their waist to knee only leaving the upper portion completely bare. The males of well to do family sometimes wear sleeveless shirts (*bandee*). Little children up to seven years of age go completely naked.

At present due to the process of acculturation with the modern civilization, their dress pattern has been greatly influenced by the trend of modernity. Now their males wear pants, *dhoti*, *lungi*, shirts, banyan etc and females wear coloured and printed *saree*, *saya* and blouse etc. Women love to adorn themselves with varieties of ornaments in order to enhance their beauty.

Malhar women wear varieties of coloured glass, iron and brass bangles i.e., *bangadya* /*patalya* on their wrist, beautiful designed bead necklaces on their neck such as *garsoli*, *barmal* and *putali* etc, aluminum *tada* and armlets like *kade*, *pabachi* on their arms, *bandaria* on their wrist, *godamudi* (*tode*) on their legs' fingers, imitation ornaments such as necklaces like *cargota*, *cartoda*, bangles and earrings, nose stud, *fuli*, finger ring (*anguthi*) etc on their neck, wrist and earlobes, nose helix and fingers respectively. They decorate their buns with wild blossoms and coloured ribbons to beautify themselves. Malhar women bear tattoo on their arms and legs with different pattern of beautiful emblems done by experienced women belonging to their own community in order to enhance their beauty. At present tattooing is regarded as an old fashion by the younger generation.

### **Population & Distribution:**

The tribe is mainly distributed in Sambalpur, Dhenkhal, Keonjhar districts and its adjoining areas in Odisha and in Thane district of Maharashtra and Medinipur district in West Bengal. As per 2011 census their population in Odisha along with Koli community is 6423 out of which male population is 3268 and female is 3155. The sex ratio is 965. Their total literacy rate is 57.57% out of which male literacy is 65.27% and female literacy is 49.56%.

### **HABITAT, SETTLEMENT & HOUSING**

Malhar habitat is located amidst picturesque topography with amazing landscapes surrounded by deep forest, hill terrain or hill slope having the climatic condition of medium humidity and rainfall. They settle near the perennial hill streams which provide them drinking water throughout the year.

Malhar settlements are always homogeneous and are located near foot hills or hill slopes amidst deep forest where the perennial hill streams are flowing from which they can fetch their drinking water throughout the year. In heterogeneous settlements they always dwell in separate wards maintaining distance with other ethnics, keeping their own identity intact. As they are nomadic in nature, they do not settle in one place permanently and shift from one forest area to another in search of forest produce and honey.

Malhar houses are arranged in linear pattern leaving space as village street. Individual houses are usually made with wattle of tree branches and bamboos and plastered with mud and polished by females using cow dung paste.

Their houses are generally of one room with a small verandah where they invariably cook food for the family. They possess few household assets such as aluminum dishes like plates, cups, jugs to fetch water, mug, pots for cooking food and a tumbler and their hunting weapon bows and arrows etc. They only rear goats and fowls for their own consumption purpose as well as to be sacrificed during magico-religious functions.

### LIVELIHOOD

The Malhar are nomadic in nature and hunting and food gathering is the mainstay of their subsistence which they supplement with allied pursuits like wage earning, seasonal forest collection, fishing and livestock rearing. All of them possess small kitchen gardens adjacent to their house where they produce different vegetables like brinjal, *jhudunga* (cow-pea), *semi* (pea) *lau* (gourd), *kumuda* (pumpkin), maize, chili and green leaves for their own consumption.

Malhar females contribute substantially to their family income by participating in wage earning and by collecting minor forest produce like seasonal fruits, green leaves, mushrooms, flowers, fuel woods, tubers and wild grasses to thatch their house besides their household chores.

#### Food and drinks:

The Malhar are purely non-vegetarian. Rice and ragi are their staple diet. Besides that they also relish on fish, meat, chicken, eggs and dry fish etc but abstain from taking beef or pork. During lean seasons, they consume different edible roots, tubers, leaves, mushrooms and fruits which they collect from forest. They are addicted to consume alcoholic beverages like country made wine (*mohuli*), rice beer (*handia/ pachhi*), sago palm juice (*salap*) and toddy etc. Both males and females smoke hand- rolled cigar (*pikaor bidi*) and chew tobacco paste. They do not take milk or milk products.

### SOCIAL LIFE

The tribe Malhar is an endogamous community which is divided into two sub-groups such as *baraghor*i/ *badaghor*i and *chhotghor*i. In social hierarchy within the tribe the *baraghor*i/ *badaghor*i division are regarded higher and the *chhotghor*i, lower. These sub-groups are sub-divided into four sections such as *ghantar*, *khadar*, *khudka* and *dang*. Each of these sections are again sub-divided into many clan (*gotra*) groups like *bagh*, *nag*, *kachhap*, *barha*, *baansa*, *kerketta*, *toppo*, *kujur* etc. Within the clan are various lineage groups (*gusti / hardipaka*) namely *rajmaral*, *kuliar*, *chowdhuri*, *charmundi*, *tokoyar* and *nagpuria* etc.

These clan groups are totemistic and exogamous in nature. The members of a clan regard themselves as descendants of a common ancestor. To regulate their matrimonial alliances, they practice their sub-groups and section endogamy and lineage and clan exogamy. The members of each clan revere their totemic objects and observe taboos in honour of their totem and refrain from causing any harm to it, but do not observe specific rituals in honour of it.

#### Family:

In Malhar community adult marriage and monogamy is the traditional norm. Child marriage was a past tradition, which is not practiced now.

Polygamous families are also found in rare cases where the first wife is found to be a barren or physically handicapped or suffering from contagious disease.

Malhar families are predominantly nuclear although vertically extended families and joint families are found among them in few cases. They follow patri local rule of residence after marriage and patrilineal rule of descent. Inheritance of ancestral property follows the rule of equigeniture in male line only. In the family having no male successor, the married daughters inherit the parental property and an issueless family may adopt a male child from the nearest lineages who later on inherits the property.

### **Life Cycle**

#### **Pre delivery rituals:**

The Malhars do not observe any pre-delivery ritual for the pregnant woman but certain taboos. During pregnancy, the woman is prohibited exposure during solar or lunar eclipse. She is also forbidden to travel near the cremation ground, to move solitarily during deep night or to sleep in isolated rooms.

#### **Childbirth:**

In Malhar society, the birth of a child is conducted in a separate hut specially constructed for the purpose in the backside of their living room or in an enclosure set up in the rear verandah as lying-in room. They engage an experienced woman as midwife (*dai*) from Hari or Maghaya Dom community to assist the expectant mother during child birth for easy delivery of the child. The umbilical cord is cut by using a sharp bamboo splinter after the base tied by a thread. The placenta is buried at the backside of their house by the midwife to avoid the effect of black magic. The midwife attends the mother and child for a period of five days and is remunerated for her service with a *tambi* of rice or millets, salt, some money and a *saree*.

#### **Post-delivery ritual:**

They observe birth pollution (*chhut*) after the birth of a child. The pollution period continues for six days and during the pollution period, observances of festivals and rituals are tabooed. On the sixth day they observe the cleansing rite *chhetti* on which the mother and the new born baby take the purificatory bath.

The name giving ceremony of the newborn baby is observed on the 21st day in which the baby is given a name through the rice divination method. They perform the first hair cutting ceremony *telikatta* / *mundan* after two months. On this day they also conduct the first cereal feeding ceremony *muhjutti* conducted by their traditional priest the *gosain/patiar* and their traditional barbar, the *naua*.

### **Puberty Rite:**

The Malhar observe puberty rites for the girl on attainment of her first menarche. The pubescent girl is segregated in an isolated hut or in a separate enclosure for a period of five to seven days and within this period she is socio-religiously prohibited to look or be looked at by any male person. After the pollution period is over she takes purificatory bath at the dawn in the nearby hill stream, anointing turmeric paste and castor oil accompanied by her friends. The girl disposes her used clothes there and wears new clothes presented by the family after which the pollution lapses. When the girl approaches home, her maternal uncle presents her new cloths and some cosmetics. In the evening her parent hosts a non-vegetarian feast with country liquor to their kinsmen, guests and relatives.

### **Marriage:**

They consider marriage arranged through negotiation (*biha*) as the ideal and prestigious mode of acquiring a mate. The other modes of marriages are by mutual consent (*manaraji / rajikhusi*), by elopement (*udulia*), by capture (*jhikka*), by service (*gharjammam*), by exchange (*badalkania*), by intrusion (*gharpasa*), junior levirate (*ditiaghara*), junior sororate (*salibiha*) and cross-cousin marriage. Remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees are also socially permitted.

Payment of bride price (*kaniamul*) is obligatory which is paid both in shape of cash and kinds, depending upon the socio-economic status of the groom's family. It consists of goats, fowls, some grains, money and dresses for the proposed bride and her mother. After negotiation, they consult their traditional astrologer (*ganak*) to select an auspicious date and moment for performing marriage rites.

The marriage rites are held in the residence of the bride which includes the rites of *aiburobhat*, *gayhalud*, *kaniadan*, then *sindurdan* and lastly *baubhat* respectively. The groom's parents proceed to the bride's house with the groom, their kinsmen, relatives and villagers in a marriage procession along with the tune of music provided by the drum beaters belonging to Dom community. The bride's family entertains the marriage party with non-vegetarian wedding feast along with country liquor *mahuli*. Their traditional priest the *gosain* belonging to *rajmoral* section or in his absence, village leader of the the community conducts the marriage rites.

The following morning the bride and the groom return to the groom's residence in a procession with the tune of music played by the Dom musicians. The marriage is consummated on the fourth day at the groom's patrilocal residence. In the evening the groom's family hosts a non-vegetarian feast to guest's relatives, villagers and kinsmen along with country liquor (*mahuli*).

### **Divorce:**

Divorce is allowed in their society and either party can divorce his/her spouse on the grounds of maladjustment in conjugal life, barrenness or impotency, cruelty, suffering from contagious diseases or indulgence in extramarital affairs etc.

Generally a special session of their traditional community council, comprising the traditional office bearers, village elders and parents of divorce seeking couple and both the appellant and accused take part in the proceedings. The appellant seeking the divorce generally arranges the refreshment for the participants.

On this aspect, if the wife desires to divorce the husband, her parents have to return the bride price, paid by the groom's parents earlier during marriage negotiation but if the bride deserts her husband and marries another male, the new husband has to repay the bride price with a penalty which may be stipulated according to the demands of the former husband. The father is allowed to keep the young children after the divorce but the mother is allowed to keep the breast feeding baby with her for nursing and has to return the child after he/she grows up. If the husband divorces his wife on the above ground, no compensation for divorce is paid to her.

### **Death:**

The Malhar usually practise burial to dispose of their dead but at present, those who can afford go for cremation. The death news (*moda, bartani*) is first communicated to the sister's house of the deceased and then to all the relatives, clansmen and villagers by a special messenger. After they congregate to take part in the mortuary rite, the dead body is bathed, anointed with turmeric paste and castor oil and then dressed with a new white cloth. The pall bearers prepare a pall using *sal* poles and *siali* fiber to carry the dead for funeral along with all his personally used items such as clothes, umbrella, utensils, tobacco container, tobacco etc.

In case of death of babies having no teeth, smallpox victims and victims of snake bite, tiger attack, suicide or falling from tree, their corpses are buried in a burial pit with its head towards north and face upwards in sleeping position.

The pall bearers dig the burial pit and place the dead body and the eldest son of the dead throws a handful of soil on the corpse avoiding to look at the face of the dead and then returns home. Then the pall bearer fill up the pit with soil, take bath near the hill stream and return to the house of the deceased, where they drink the water mixed with mango barks for purification.

When a pregnant woman dies, the foetus from her womb is taken out and is buried but the dead body of the woman is cremated keeping a handful of



rice grains on her side lest the departed soul might cause harm to the people. The corpse of man/woman who die untimely are disposed of in a distant isolated place in the forest far away from the village, as they believe that the departed soul might be an evil spirit due to his/her unfulfilled desires and can harm to their family members and also to the inhabitants of the settlement. For that reason, after disposal of the body, the pall bearers keep thorny branches over the burial spot and their traditional witch doctor - the *gunia*, on the day of performance of purificatory rites, visits the burial spot to offer sacrifices of fowls and food items to satisfy the soul of the dead and uttering magical spells.

They observe death pollution for a period of eleven days and within this time, observances of rituals and festivals, visiting sacred places and sacred shrines, giving alms, eating non-vegetarian foods and sexual union are strictly tabooed. On the tenth day, the purificatory rite is performed and they wash their used clothes. The floors and walls of the houses are polished by cow dung paste and all the earthen wares are thrown away. The males shave their head hair and beards and also cut their nails using the services of their traditional barber - the *naua*. The women also cut their nails.

The final purificatory rite is observed on the eleventh day and is conducted by their community leader of the village or by any elder belonging to Rajmoral section. In the evening the bereaved family hosts a non-vegetarian feast to the relatives, guests and lineage members along with country liquor *mohuli* and rice beer (*pachhi*).

They have no tradition to construct any monument to commemorate the dead or to immerse bones of the deceased in holy water for salvation of the departed soul. But they observe the annual *shradh* after a year of the death in honour of the dead.

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The Malhar profess their autonomous tribal religion based upon 'animism' which is amalgamated with few elements of Hinduism. They worship lord Dharmesh (the Sun God) and his consort Basumata (Goddess Earth) as their Supreme Deities who are benevolent.

Their pantheon also includes a number of deities. The important deities they propitiate are *karmasain*, *chadrabati* (the moon), *banadurga*, *banarai* or *banaspati*, the forest deity, the jungle spirit whom they appease during *chaitpunia* to save their life as well as to be successful in communal hunting in the forest. On this month they also worship goddess *barabhaimalani*, the deity of small pox by sacrificing a goat and offering coconut to protect them from the disease.

Their village deity Gaondevi is represented by an oblong stone smeared with vermilion (*sindur*) and installed at the village outskirts or on the hill top under the shade of a tree. Their traditional priest the Patiar worships the deities.

They believe in the existence of ghosts, evil spirits and witches who are malevolent and cause harm to humans. They also believe that illness and misfortune are caused due to the wrath of supernatural agencies such as ancestral, cosmological and spiritual forces. In order to avert their ill omen they solicit the help of their witch doctor - Gunia to gratify the forces by offering prayers and animal scarifies.

Apart from their own tribal deities, they also worship many Hindu deities like lord Jagannath, Mahadev, Ganesh, Laxmi, Saraswati, Durga, Kali etc. and observe many Hindu festivals such as *raja*, *gamha*, *nag panchami*, *moulamas diwali* and *holi* etc.

The Malhar possess rich oral tradition of folk tales, folk songs as well as folk dances such as *golwari* which they perform during observances of birth ceremony of a child, the wedding dance, *karma* dance performed at the time of celebrating *karma* festival and *jhumur* dance which they perform at any time of leisure for merry making.

### SOCIO POLITICAL LIFE

The Malhar possess its own traditional community council (*jati panchayat*) both at village level as well as at the regional level headed by their secular head such as Pradhanin the village council and Malikat the regional level. The other office bearers are Patiar, the sacerdotal head who conducts their religious functions and their traditional head the Gosain who hails from their Rajmoral section. The Gosain presides over their marriage and death rites. Their village messenger - Dakua hails from Dom community.

The village council adjudicates cases pertaining to family disputes, partition of family property among sons, theft, rape, adultery, incest and arrangements for village level rituals and festivals. Complicated cases which are not settled at the village level council are referred to their regional level council for final decision. Likewise the regional council is also empowered to adjudicate cases pertaining to inter village rifts, divorce cases and can also mitigates intra and inter community disputes.

The office bearers i.e., Pradhan, Malik, Gosain and Patiar succeed to their seat on hereditary basis whereas the messenger Dakua is appointed by nomination and is paid remuneration for his service annually in shape of some grains by every individual family of the settlement.

Their traditional community councils act as the custodian of their traditional norms and customs and the office bearers are respected in their

society. The council is empowered to award punishments to offenders and can excommunicate the culprits adjudicating the degree of intensity of the crime committed by the alleged.

### CHANGING SCENE

Change is a continuous process. With the advancement of science and technology, changes have occurred in Malhar way of life during last few decades. Education plays a great role behind the introduction of such changes in their society. Besides, the Malhars have accepted many new cultural, social and religious elements from their neighboring castes and tribes as a result of their long association with them. Their material culture and its correlated customs have changed significantly. Their household articles have been replaced by many modern mechanical gadgets. Now many well-to-do Malhar families have radio, cycle, motor cycle, television, mobile phone and modern furniture. The role of science and technology in the life and living of the Malhar tribal community is very apparent in these days.

The role of Government in the sphere of economic upliftment of the tribal groups is very vital and extensive. Government has launched many development programmes for the tribal people including the Malhars through Income Generating and Infrastructure Development Schemes. Government has introduced development interventions through education, agriculture, communication, drinking water, housing, health and sanitation both in Gram Panchayat and Block level. Awareness has also been created among them on different development schemes so that they can reap benefit from these plans and programmes. At present, obvious change is seen in their life style, economic pursuits, social celebrations, food habits, dressing pattern, cultural and religious activities etc.

The ST and SC Development Department, Government of Odisha under the aegis of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, GoI has established a Museum of Tribal Arts and Artefacts in the Premises of SC and ST Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) at CRPF Square, Bhubaneswar for preservation and exhibition of material culture of different tribes. In this tribal museum, the ornaments, personal belongings, hunting weapons, fishing implements and musical instruments of different tribes including the Malhar have been displayed in different show cases which reflect their inherent talent in creative art and craft.

It is also true that the Malhars still maintain a colourful cultural life in their green surroundings. Their core culture is hardly influenced or prejudiced by the external agencies.

# KONDA DORA \*

*S. C. Mohanty<sup>1</sup>*

Konda Dora is a small Dravidian speaking tribe of southern Orissa. In local language Konda Dora (*Konda* - hills and *Dora* - Chief) means "Lords of the hills". They are known as Konda-doras, Konda-Kapus, and Ojas". (Ref. Thurston, P.351). They have ethnic affinity with the Kandha tribe.

They are largely concentrated in the areas bordering Andhra Pradesh in Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Kalahandi and also in Bolangir districts. In 2011 census, their total population is 20,802 including 10,222 males and 10,580 females registering the sexratio of 1035. In 1981 their literacy was 10 per cent in the State. By 2011 it has jumped to 48.27 percent (males - 58.85% and females - 38.16%). They have forgotten their mother tongue Konda and now speaking Kuvi, Telgu and Oriya.

The tribe according to Thurston (1909: 351) has two broad divisions viz – *Pedda* (big) and *Chinna* (little). The *Pedda* is the traditional group while *Chinna* is the Teluguised section of the tribe. They are divided into a number of exogamous totemistic septs such as, *Sodalu* (*ragi*), *Bidikolu* (earthen vessel), *Palakolu*, *Boralu* (Cobra), *Koku* (cow), *Kotra* (wild goat).

In their society, though polygyny and child marriages are not prohibited, adult marriage and monogamy are commonly practiced. Cross cousin marriages are preferred and parallel cousin marriages are strictly prohibited. The most prestigious type of marriage is by negotiation (*Unigulu Purugulu Peli*). Since this is very expensive, there are other options for marriage such as by elopement (*udulia*), by capture (*Jhika*), exchange (*Konda Marpu*) by service (*illarikam*), junior levirate, junior sororate. Payment of bride price (*Chintambiyam*) is in vogue in all types of marriages. Divorce is permitted with the approval of their traditional council (*Kulam Panchayatam*). Among them family is predominantly nuclear patrilineal and patrilocal. Descent, inheritance and succession go along the male line.

---

\* Unpublished article of 2000 updated in 2019

<sup>1</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

Pregnancy and childbirth are welcome events in Konda Dora household. A mid-wife called *Dadi Budhi* assists in childbirth. After undergoing seven days birth pollution, name giving (*puruditirumanam*) is done on the eighth day. After one year tonsure (*putukapu*) is performed. They also observe puberty rites for the girls involving seven days pollution and seclusion. Persons dying a natural death are cremated. In case of unnatural deaths, burial is done. After observing the death pollution for three days, they observe purificatory rites on the fourth day.

In the religious sphere, they are in transition between animism and Hinduism. They have an elaborate pantheon comprising Hindu deities and their own tribal deities. Their priest, *Pujari*, worships the village deities. Animal sacrifices are made on various occasions to appease the deities. Their important festivals are *Makar*, *Thakurani Parab*, *Dhanya Nuakhia*, *Ugadi*, *Dassara*, etc. There are other magico-religious functionaries like *Disari* (astrologer), *Beju* (male shaman) and *Bejuni* (female shaman) who act in their respective fields of specialization.

They have their traditional village council (*Kulam Panchayatam*) headed by a *Kula Peda* who is assisted by a bearer-cum-messenger called *Pillipudamari*. They also have inter-village community council – *Jati Panchayatam* headed by a *Jati Peda*. These councils deal with their customary affairs in their respective jurisdictions.

The economic organization of the Konda Dora centers round land and forest. Agriculture is the mainstay of their subsistence economy. It is supplemented by a variety of vocations like wage earning, contractual labour, shifting cultivation, forest collection, cattle herding, etc. They are socio-economically backward. Spread of education among them is slow.

# KONDA-DORA\*

*Manmohan Mohapatra*<sup>1</sup>

The Khonds are a well-known tribe found in the different parts of Orissa especially in the district of Koraput, Ganjam and Phulbani. The Konda-doras are a section of this major tribe and are found in different parts of Orissa. The major concentration of this tribe is in the district of Koraput. They have been described by Surgeon Major W.R. Cornish as-“Contrasting strongly with the energetic patriarchal and land-reverencing Paraja (Poraja) are neighboring indigenous tribe found along the slopes of the Eastern Ghats. They are known as Konda-doras, Konda-Kapus, and Ojas”. (Ref. Thurston, P.351). They are a Telugu and Oriya influenced tribe of Orissa. The tribes of Orissa can be divided into three major categories according to their nature of present position, and occupation such as:-

- (1) Real Primitive Tribe.
- (2) Tribes in transition.
- (3) Assimilated tribe.

The Konda-doras about whom this entire paper is devoted come under the category “Assimilated tribe”, as they have been completely assimilated with the neighboring Telugus and Oriyas. The sporadic distribution of this tribe is as follows: - Koraput, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Boudh- Khondhmal, Ganjam, Sundergarh, Keonjhar etc.

According to the Census of 1961, the Konda-doras number 16,526 out of which 8,341 and 8,185 are males and females respectively. The district-wise population with males and females are represented in the table given below-

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No.3, (Spl. Issue), TRB, Bhubaneswar 1963-64, pp.55-56

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar

TABLE SHOWING THE KONDA-DORA POPULATION

Sl. No	Name of the district	Total population	Male	Female
1.	Koraput	15,808	7,929	7,879
2.	Kalahandi	271	133	138
3.	Bolangir	03	01	02
4.	Boudh-Kandhmals	24	12	12
5.	Ganjam	146	75	71
6.	Sundergarh	110	110	00
7.	Keonjhar	164	81	83
<b>Total</b>		<b>16,526</b>	<b>8,341</b>	<b>8,185</b>

Konda-doras speak Telugu and majority of them have retained it as their parent tongue. From what has been ascertained from their languages, it seems certain that, divested of the difference which have been engrafted upon them by the fact of the one being influenced by Oriya and the other by Telugu they are substantially of the same origin as the Paroja and the Khond language. (Ref. Koraput District Gazetteer P. 42). The Telugu assimilated section also speaks at places a mixture of Kuviand Telegu and sometimes pure Telugu. (Kuvi is the language of the Kondhs). But this tribe though is a section of the Khonds, feels shame to identify them as a section of the Khonds.

**Social Organization** –This tribe is mainly divided into two exogamous groups such as – “Pedda” (Big) Kondalu and “Chinna” (little) Kondalu. The Peddas are in a semi-independent position while the Chinna under the Telugu domination. The Pedda Kondalus have retained the totem divisions which occur among all caste Hindus. Their main totemic objects tally with their caste neighbours, such as – Naga (Cobra), Bagha (Tiger), etc. Among the Chinna Kondalu a custom known as “Menarikam” is prevalent. According to this custom a man marries his maternal uncle’s daughter and may further marry his own sister’s daughter. Family is the basic unit among the Konda-doras. They are patriarchal and patrilineal. Their social organization is fully designed according to the Telugus. The Konda-doras also accept bride from the Khonds and majority of them are polygamous. They have no youth organization and dormitory system like the other tribes.

Marriages among the Konda-doras are very interesting. Bride-price is prevalent among them. The marriage procedures are different between both the sections. The girls of both sections may marry either after or before puberty. Among the Chinna Kondalu after the marriage is decided the girl’s parents receive a present known as “Voli” worth four rupees and a saree. The astrologer (Chhukamurti) generally fixes the date for the marriage. On the day of the marriage the bride goes to the groom’s house where the couple bath in turmeric water and wear new clothes given by their fathers-in-laws. A wrist threads are

then tied round their wrists. On the same day or the day after, the bride-groom ties the Sathamam (marriage thread) on the bride's neck according to the instruction of the Chhukamurti. On the following day the wrist threads are removed and the newly married couple bathes together in ordinary water. The marriage of the Pedda Kondalus is described by Thurston as follows: -"when a man contemplates taking a wife, his parents carry three pots of liquor to the home of the girl, whose hand he seeks. The acceptance of these by her father is a sign that match is agreeable to him and a "Jhola tanka" (bride-price) of rupees five is paid to him. A Konda-dora marriage is followed by feasts in which pork and wine are served. During the marriage the girl is taken to the bride-groom's house and if she is matured she remains there, if not she returns home and joins her husband later on. This occasion is celebrated by grand feasts in which pork and liquor are served. Widow marriage is permissible among them. The Pedda Kondalus permit the younger brothers to marry the widow of his elder brother. Divorce is prevalent among the Konda-doras. Among the Chinna Kondalu a man who marries a divorcee has to pay her first husband 24 rupees of which half is divided among villagers in certain recognized proportions.

The Konda-doras have no specific dance among them as found among the other tribes of Orissa. During festivals and merry-making they sing songs which are mainly devotional and basing origin of the tribe. All their songs and musical instruments are borrowed from the nearby Telugus. While singing they play on beating drums and blowing wind instruments.

Material cultural of this little group tally with the Telugus of Andhra area. The houses of the Konda-doras are made of wattle and dub with thatched covering. In some cases they have built houses with stone pillars and walls. The houses are big and each quarter consists of 2-3 rooms of various purposes. They use bell-metal and brass utensils at home for the domestic uses. Their material culture, especially, domestic utensils are similar to those of the neighboring Telugus. The Konda-dora women wear glass bangles and beads like plains women. Males besides their cloth also wear shirts, etc., and females, long sarees.

Means of livelihood among both the groups are different. The Pedda Kondalu depend mainly agriculture both shifting and wet land cultivation. The Chinna Kondalus serve under government as Class IV servants such as peons, bearers etc. A few of them also work as labourers in the nearby villages. The Konda-doras are not only consumers but also producers. The Pedda Kondalus grow and harvest paddy, millets and other crops. Majority of this group won acres of paddy land and are very rich. They sell their surpluses to the nearby villagers and earn a lot by this. The shifting cultivation as practiced among them is mainly consists of cutting grand trees. Then after a week rest fire is set on the logs and it is left to be ashes. After another week the ashes are spread over the mountain slopes and the area is ploughed. Seeds are then sowed. This type of cultivation is also known as "Slash and burn cultivation". This type of cultivation



though require more labour yields less output and in spite of hard toil the cultivators do not get a year's food by this. So, they have not taken to wet land cultivation.

With the impact of industrialization and establishment of new townships around the areas inhabited by the Konda-doras, they have changed a lot. Changes in the economic, political, religious and social aspects are noteworthy. Due to the establishment of Dandakaranya Project, D.B.K. Railways and proposed MIG Aero-Engine Factory many Konda-doras have established shops and many have got employment in the new towns and factories around Koraput their original home. Generally, Konda-dora women are the store-house of gold. They purchase and store gold and give more importance on gold like their Telugu neighbors.

**Sources-**

Thurston-E. Tribes and Castes of Southern India, Vol. III, 1909

R.C.S. Bell- Koraput District Gazetteer.

\*\*\*\*\*

# KONDA-DORA \*

S. Das <sup>1</sup>

The Konda-Dora are a small tribe of Orissa numbering 19,235 according to the 1991 Census. W. R. Cornish describes the tribe as follows: 'Contrasting strongly with the energetic patriarchal and land-revering Paraja (Poraja) are the neighboring indigenous tribe found along the slopes of the Eastern Ghats. They are known as Konda-Dora, Konda-Kapus and Ojas.' In the Telugu language Konda means 'Hill' and Dora means 'Leader'. The Konda-Dora are said to be a section of the great Kondh tribe. Their culture has been influenced by Telugu- and Oriya-speaking people. The Konda-Dora are distributed in all the districts of Orissa, but are mainly concentrated in Koraput. Sizable population is also found in Kalahandi and Ganjam. Their population in other districts is negligible. The sex-ratio among the Konda-Dora is 832 females per 1000 males. The percentage of literacy is 10 percent in 1981 and 14 percent in 1991. This shows a trend of educational progress among the community. The tribe can broadly be divided into two groups on the basis of language. One group speak Oriya whereas the other group speak Telugu. There is no evidence to show that they ever had their own language.

The houses of the Konda-Dora are generally of the *kutch*a type and made of wattle and daub with thatch covering. Well-do-do families have built larger houses consisting of two to three rooms with stone pillars and brick walls. The household materials of this tribe tally with those of the Telugus of Andhra Pradesh. The Kondas use bell metal, brass and steel utensils. The dress of the Konda-Dora is just like that of the neighboring Telugus. The men wear a *dhoti*, *banyan* and shirt and the women wear long saris and blouses. Like Telugu women they decorate themselves with a number of glass bangles, nose-rings, earrings and bead necklaces.

The family is the smallest social unit among the Konda-Dora. It is patrilineal and patri-potestal. As the family is patrilineal, descent is always counted through the male line from father to son. A daughter is regarded as a

---

\* Published in *Tribes of Orissa* (revised edition), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2004, pp. 193-195

<sup>1</sup> Former Research Assistant, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

member of her father's extended lineage so long as she is unmarried. Property is always inherited by the sons after the death of the father. It is equally distributed among all the sons. The eldest male member of the family is considered the family head.

The Konda Dora have well-defined two exogamous groups known as the Pedda (large) Kondalu and Chinna (small) Kondalu. Of these two groups the former have retained their culture to a large extent whereas the later have come under Telugu influence. The Pedda Kondalu have totemic divisions such as Naga (cobra), Bhag (tiger) and Kochching (tortoise). The Chinna Kondalus have adopted the custom of *menarikam*, according to which a man marries his maternal uncle's daughter and may further marry his own sister's daughter. Generally it is seen that Konda-Dora social organization is entirely like that of the Telugus. The Chinna Kondalu, being *rayats* under *bhakta* or landlords, bear the title *Anna* or *Ayya*. The Pedda Kondalus usually have no title.

Marriage is polygynous among the Konda-Dora. Marriage procedures are different in both sections. The girls of both sections may marry either after or before puberty. The marriage negotiation of the Pedda Kondalus is described by E. Thurston as follows: 'when a man contemplates taking a wife, his parents carry three pots of liquor to the home of the girl whose hand he seeks. The acceptance of these by her father is a sign that the match is agreeable to him, and a *jholatanka* (bride price) of Rs. 5/- is paid to him.' The bridegroom's party has to give three feasts to the bride's party, and on each occasion a pig is killed. The girl is taken to the house of the groom, and if she has attained puberty, she remains there. Otherwise she returns home and joins her husband later the occasion being celebrated by a further feast of pork.

Among the Chinna Kondalu, after the marriage proposal is settled the girl's parents receive a present called *voli* worth some rupees and a sari. On an auspicious day fixed by the *chhukamurti* (astrologer) the bride is taken to the home of the groom. The bride and groom bathe in turmeric water and put on new clothes presented by their fathers-in-law, and threads are tied to their wrists. On the same day the groom under the direction of caste elders ties the *sathamam* (marriage thread) on to the bride's neck. The day following the marriage the wrist threads of the bride and groom are removed and the newly married couple bathes together.

The Konda-Dora accepts brides from the Kondhs. During marriage a feast is arranged in which pork and liquor are served. The Pedda Kondalus permit the younger brother to marry the widow of his elder brother. Among the Chinna Kondalu a man can marry a divorcee by paying some money to her first husband, of which a share goes to the villagers.

The dead are usually cremated by both the sections. The Pedda Kondalus kill a pig on the third day after the death and hold a feast at which

much liquor is drunk. Among the Chinna Kondalu the death ceremony is called *chinnarozu* (little day) ceremony.

The economic activities of the Pedda Kondalus are different from those of the ChinnaKondalus. The main source of livelihood of the Pedda Kondalus is agriculture, i.e. shifting and settled cultivation. The Pedda Kondalus grow paddy, millets and other crops on their land. Most of this group own cultivable paddy land and are very rich. They sell their agricultural produce in nearby villages and earn a lot of money. Now some landholders have become sensitive to the present day demands of the local market and have started to grow varieties of vegetables and sell them in market. This provides an additional income for them. The Pedda Kondalus also practice shifting cultivation. First they cut down all the big trees and small bushes on the hill slopes. Then, after a week, the logs are set on fire and left for a few days after which the ashes are spread over the hill slopes, the patch is ploughed and seeds are sown. This type of cultivation is also known as slash and burn cultivation.

Most of the Chinna Kondalus are in government service as peons, bearers, etc. A few also work as labourers in the nearby villages. With the impact of industrialization and the establishment of new townships around the areas inhabited by the Konda-Dora they have changed a lot. Due to the establishment of the Dandakaranya project and MIG factory many Konda-Dora have the opportunity to do business in the towns and factory areas. Some are employed in the factories.

# KONDADORA \*

*A. B. Ota* <sup>1</sup>

*S. C. Mohanty* <sup>2</sup>

*B. K. Paikray* <sup>3</sup>

## IDENTITY

Kondadora is a Dravidian speaking tribe. Etymologically, the term *Konda* denotes hill and *dora*, the lord. The term '*dora*' is an honorific title which appears to be broad and classificatory, as many Dravidian speaking communities suffix it after their name to identify themselves with pride. Thurston (1909) stated that the community is known as Kondadora, Kondakapu and Oja. But according to their belief, they identify themselves as the off springs of the great mythological heroes - the Pandavas. So they think it as a dignified way to be referred to themselves as Pandava Raju or Pandava Dora. They also like to recognize themselves as 'Kubing' relating to their legendary point of view as well as for speaking 'Kubi' as their mother tongue. Mr. W. Francis, in 1901 Census report opined Kondadora as a section of the Kandha tribe.

## Language

Their original mother tongue is Kubi / Konda, a non-literary central Dravidian language closely akin to Kui and Kuvi. At present it is in a transitional state of transformation due to the influence of local *lingua francas* - Telgu and Odia. The younger generation of the tribe has forgotten their own mother tongue Kubi/ Konda and now speak 'Telugu'- another Dravidian language, mixed with

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Kondadora, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2015

<sup>1</sup> Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Former Joint Director and then Officer on Special Duty, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Former Research Assistant, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

broken 'Odia' for which the neighboring communities call them as Telugu Dora/ Telenga Dora/ Telega Dora or Dora etc. They are bi-lingual and are well versed in Telugu and Odia.

### Population & Distribution

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

### Personal Adornments

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

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

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

Their favorite hair style is called *mukpaku* in which hair is combed from right side to left side and twisted in folds on the left. Tattooing (*tuti*) is compulsory for married women. They believe that tattoo marks of forefathers if not present in the right hand of their women; their ancestors will not accept any

offerings from them and can harm their family. They also make tattoos on their arms and legs with different patterns. Experienced women of their own community are expert in making beautiful design of tattoo emblems.

### HABITAT, SETTLEMENT & HOUSING

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

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

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

### LIVELIHOOD

Cultivation is the mainstay of their subsistence economy which they supplement with allied pursuits such as wage earning both in agriculture and industrial sectors, livestock rearing, forest collection, seasonal hunting and fishing, service, share cropping, small business. Few of them earn by money lending. Some poor people among them maintain their livelihood by trade of bullocks, cows and by performing a folk art called *ghungunadia* by exhibiting a

decorated ox, playing musical instruments and then collecting money or grains travelling from door to door. In the past, they practiced shifting cultivation (*kondapodu*) which they have given up due to Government restrictions and depletion of forest.

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

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

### Food and Drinks

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

### SOCIAL LIFE

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

Both the divisions are again sub-divided into a number of clans called *intiperu / kulam / vansam*. These are named *adari*, *amsaru*, *antadi*, *antalu*, *bidika*, *barli*, *boini*, *budura*, *chintadi*, *dalei*, *dandapeti*, *dipali*, *dubi*, *dudi*, *dumbari*, *gollapeli*, *gangu*, *gondalaini*, *ikkili*, *jaddora*, *jamu*, *janni*, *karingi*, *kirsani*, *kodeka*, *kondagari*, *kondagaru*, *kora*, *koringa*, *kurudi*, *lambaka*, *madapelli*, *mangaladu*, *mukuli*, *nandili*, *nukandra*, *nungri*, *oddalu*, *padalu*, *pahdi*, *palaka*, *palkonda/ palkunda*, *pandipal*, *pili*, *pipa*, *polam*, *pradhani*, *pundu*, *sabuku*, *salla*, *samali*, *sikali*, *sudulu*, *sunkuri*, and *upingi* etc. which are exogamous in nature. These clans are further segmented into



various exogamous totemistic lineages such as *surya* (sun), *antalu* (cobra), *pandipal* (coconut), *puli* (tiger), *kimudu* (bear), *dega* (eagle), *matsya* (fish), *peyya* (cow) etc. which regulates their matrimonial alliances.

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

### **Family**

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

### **Life Cycle**

#### **Pre-delivery Rituals**

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

#### **Child Birth**

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

#### **Post-delivery Ritual**

The birth purificatory rite (*purudukalutagama*) is observed on the twenty first day and on this day name giving ceremony (*peru* / *barsalu* / *perupetdama*) is

also observed and the new born baby is given a name by the maternal uncle, preferably by the name of the ancestors, kins or after the name of the day the child has been born. They hold the first feeding ceremony (*annamtinpetima / munduan namutinbetatar*) and the ear-piercing ceremony (*cheupercina / seulpedupodutuma / cheukutinchitaru / seulpedcina / bangaramkutu*) after the seven month or one year and after five years of the birth of the child respectively. For observances of these ceremonies they avail the services of their traditional community priest - *Guru*, their barber (*mangaladu*) and their washerman (*sakaladu*).

### Puberty Rite

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

### Marriage

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

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

Then they consult their traditional star gazer (*chukamurthi*) to fix an auspicious date and time (*muhurttam*) for holding the wedding rite. On the fixed day, the bride is escorted to the patrilocal residence of the groom, accompanied by her parents, family members, kinsmen and relatives in a marriage procession with the drum beaters playing music. Before the performance of wedding rites, the *chukamurthi* bathes the would-be couple by sprinkling turmeric water after which the groom ties a sacred thread *santhanam* around the neck of the bride indicating the acceptance of her as his life partner. Their traditional community

priest - *guru* and the astrologer - *chukamurthi* preside over the wedding ritual. The *guru* ties sacred thread (*kankanadu / kankanalu*) in the right wrists of both bride and groom as marriage symbol and the *chukamurthi* opens the tie after which the wedding rite is concluded. In the evening, the groom's family entertains the guests, relatives and villagers with a non-vegetarian feast served along with country liquor.

In the Kondadora society, consanguine marital alliances like, cross-cousin marriage (*pinniputulupelli*) is very popular. In this mode of marriage a man can marry with his mother's brother's daughter (*mama kuturapelli*) or with his father's sister's daughter (*attakuturupelli*) but, parallel cousin marriage (*abjellupelli*) is strictly tabooed. The other modes of marriages prevailing in their society, are marriage by capture (*gunjilapelilu/ etakalutiskelu*), by purchase (*kanipeli/ kanipali*), by service (*intialludu/ illaka allude*), by mutual consent (*gallalellipaindi/ premapelli*), by intrusion (*rampakarpupelli/ ram pukarpupelli*), by elopement (*gallalaelipaindi/ udulia*) and by exchange (*ramapelli/ kundamarpulapelli*) etc. Besides, junior levirate (*markapelli/ mard/ mardikipelli*) and junior sororate (*marbalupelli/ mardallupelli*) are allowed.

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

### Death Rites

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

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

log is kept as a symbol of mourning. The pall bearers and the eldest son after returning from the cremation ground, eat the *neem* leaves, sprinkle the turmeric water over their body and sit near the fire for purification.

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

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

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The Kondadora's belief system is basically based on animism with admixture of some elements of Hinduism. Being polytheists, their pantheon includes a number of deities. Their tutelary deity - goddess Ammatali/ Ammathali resides in the sacred grove at the village outskirts. They rever *Pandavas*, the spirit of the hells or the sons of Racha as their progenitor on whose name the community Kondadora are also known as *Pandava Dora* or *PandavaRaju*. They worship the deity *Bhiman* for adequate rainfall during observance of *bhimanpondei* ritual in May and in this month they also observe the *kadakapondei* ritual to repair their agricultural implements. Moreover, they worship the deity *nisanidevam* during March-April for bumper harvest in their *pogunyatra* festival sacrificing a goat and also in *undichittalayahar* ritual for the wellbeing of human beings and their crops and in *ashadayatra* during June for welfare of their livestock. They worship their deity *doddiganga* as the protector of their cattle from attack of wild animals and the goddess *desanganga/ paraganga* to protect them from epidemics like small pox and from cholera. The festival - *nandipondoi* is observed in February for re-thatching of their houses and collection of hill brooms. Besides that, they observe festivals like, *korrakota*, *korakpanduga*, *itukalapandugu*, *ugadi*, *pongaland* many Hindu festivals like, *dusserah*, *sankranthi*, *sivaratri* etc.

They install their village deity - *grampathy* at the end of their village street and their household deity *estidevudu* in one corner of their kitchen who is worshipped by females. They worship their deity *zankar* during observance of

*bandapanpondei* in August for soil fertility. Deity *peridevam* is worshipped during observances of *podu puja* ritual in May. The deity *gonga devam* is propiated in *pusa pondoi/ pusa ponduga* festival during January. Their other deities are *saralamma*, *talupullemma*, *mangalamma* (goddess Laxmi), *durgamma*, *thakurani*, *mothyaluamma*, *galidevudu* (wind god), *sankudebudu*, *nunibai*, *peddadebudu* and *paderu kondamma* etc. who are worshiped by their sacred specialists like *disary*, *pujari* and some others by their witch doctors such as *desludu*, *beju* or *bejuni* on different festive occasions.

### SOCIO-POLITICAL LIFE

The Kondadora, possess their own traditional community council (*kotam*) both at the village level as well as at the regional level headed by their community secular head - the *naidu* who is supported by the other office bearers such as *guru*, their community priest, *desladu* - the executor, *chukamurthi/ chettumurtakad* - the star gazer, *dehuri/ deuradu* - the sacerdotal head, *jani*, *jhankar*, *aijuguddu*, *disari* - the magico-religious specialists and their messenger the *barik/ challan* etc. All of them belong to their own community except the *barik/ challan* who is recruited from the Domb community. The posts of *naidu*, *guru*, *chukamurthy*, *desladu*, *dehury*, *jani* are hereditary and the *barik/ challan* is appointed by nomination and paid annually for his services in kinds by each family. The community council adjudicate cases pertaining to family disputes, theft, rape, adultery, incest, extramarital relations, inter community marriage and inter and intra community rifts and acts as the guardian of their traditional norms and customs. The session of the council sits annually on day of *pus punei* or can be convened at any time on an emergency. The Kondadoras honour the traditional leaders of their community council with great esteem.

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

### CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

Change is a continuous and inevitable process. With the advancement of science and technology, visible changes have occurred in the Kondadora way of life during last few decades. Education and mass media have played a great role in effecting such changes in their society. Besides, the Kondadora have accepted many new cultural, social and religious elements from their neighboring castes and tribes owing to their culture contact. Their material culture has changed to

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

The impact of change and modernization and introduction of planned development intervention by Government and Non-government agencies have brought developments in the fields of health and sanitation, education, agriculture, communication and infrastructure. During last six decades Government has initiated various welfare and development schemes to bring about socio-economic development of the Kondadora. The Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) and the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) functioning in the Kondadora inhabited areas of south Odisha have been implementing various socio-economic development programmes for development and modernization of horticulture, agriculture communication and irrigation for the sustainable development of the Kondadora. So now, they have gradually adopted modern agricultural practices by using High Yielding Varieties of seeds, better irrigation facilities and chemical fertilizers. Some of them have adopted horticulture, poultry and fishery schemes for their livelihood enhancement.

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

## KORA \*

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

Kora tribe has synonyms like, Kuda, Kura, Kuria, Kisan, Khaira, Kaora, Khayra, etc. They are Dravidian speaking "having totemistic similarities with Munda tribe" (Sahoo; 1990 ;168) and "akin to the Kisan community" (Singh, 1994 : 603). The community's name Kora, Kuda or Kura "seems to be a generic name signifying the occupation of earth digging" (Das, 1964).

Their total population in the State as per 2011 census is 331589 including 165079 males and 166510 females accounting for the sex ratio of 1009. Their level of literacy was 13.3 % as per 1981 census which by 2011 has jumped to 64.21% (74.60% for males and 53.96% for females). They are mainly distributed in Western Orissa having the largest concentration in Sundergarh district. They speak Oriya and Laria.

Economically and occupationally, the Kora are noted for their traditional skills and specialization in digging tanks and doing other kinds of earth works. It is said that they had acquired monopoly over this trade in the past. In course of time they have added the trade of Catechu-making for which their neighbor called Khaira or Khayra. Now they are settled agriculturists. As many among them are landless and marginal farmers, they have taken to sharecropping, wage earning and contractual labour. They supplement their livelihood by forest collections, occasional hunting and animal husbandry. Now they have given up their traditional trade of Catechu-making and claim to be Suryavanshi Kshatriyas.

The tribe has several endogamous groups. The Kora of Orissa claim that they belong to the *Suryavansi* group. They are divided into a number of totemistic patri-clans or septs(*gotra*) such as *Kaich*, *Nag*, *Mankad*, *Khapur*, *Dhan*, *Nun*, *Adower*, *Maghi*, *Prodhan*, *Bagha*, *Bahera* etc. These exogamous clan groups are further divided into lineages. The tribe itself forms an endogamous group with

---

\* Unpublished article of 2000 updated in 2018

<sup>1</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI

the belief that they have originated from a common ancestor. They are patrilineal and patrilocal. Descent, inheritance and succession are reckoned through the male line.

Nuclear family and monogamous marriages are common in the Kora society. The most common and ideal type of marriage is marriage by negotiation. However, polygyny, cross-cousin marriage, junior levirate, junior sororate, marriage by elopement, marriage by capture, divorce and remarriage are also permitted in a few cases. Bride price is paid in cash. Wedding rituals are performed at the bride's house and marriage is consummated at the groom's residence. They have adopted some Hindu marriage customs in which they utilize the services of Brahman priest and barber.

They observe post-natal pollution for 21 days. They cremate the dead for natural death and practice burial in cases of unnatural deaths. They undergo ten days mortuary pollution and conduct purificatory ritual on the eleventh day. Following Hindu customs they perform annual Sradha ceremony, for the deceased.

"Hinduism has left deep impress upon Kora religious beliefs and rituals. Yet, they have not assimilated into the core of the upper caste pattern of Hinduism and they retain elements of their original tribal religion. They participate in the Hindu festivals of the region while they maintain some festivals exclusive of their own. Along with worshipping the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, the Kora retain their traditional deities of hills, sacred grove, and forests. "To a Kora, Magico-religious rites have purely utilitarian considerations" (Banerjee; 1996:498).

They have their traditional *Panchayat* headed by *Majhi* who is assisted by *Parmanik*. It plays an important role in ensuring conformity to social norms by the members. It deals with customary matters like breach of norms of clan exogamy, killing of cow, sins of suffering from dreadful diseases, and the like. The tribesmen maintain traditional lines with Nahako, Kumbhakar, Kamar, Goura, Barika, Dhoba, Ghasi and Mali in connection with socio-economic activities.



## K O R A \*

*Gopinath Satpathy*<sup>1</sup>

According to Mr. Risley Kora, Khaira, Kaora, Khayra, is a Dravidian tribe. Probably they are offshoots from the Munda tribe. They are good earth workers and cultivators. In Orissa, especially in the districts of Dhenkanal and Sambalpur, a large number of Khaira are found. It is told that they owe their name Khaira from their occupation of making catechu (Khair). Their district-wise population is given below:

Sl. No.	Name of the district	Male member	Female member	Total Population
1.	Dhenkanal	1, 521	1,836	3,357
2.	Sambalpur	900	1,300	2,200
3.	Koraput	219	213	432
4.	Keonjhar	197	161	358
5.	Cuttack	184	119	303
6.	Mayurbhanj	147	123	270
7.	Bolangir	59	49	108
87.	Balasore	48	43	91
9.	Puri	16	16	32
10.	Kalahandi	06	10	16
11.	Sundargarh	06	08	14
12.	Ganjam	04	04	08
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,307</b>	<b>3,882</b>	<b>7,189</b>

Their total population is 7,189, of which 7,186 live in rural areas and only 3 inhabit in urban area.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No.3, (Spl. Issue), TRB, Bhubaneswar 1963-64, pp.171-172

<sup>1</sup> Former Research Assistant, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

They speak Oriya. It seems that they have no other language of their own except the language of the region, in which they inhabit.

The tribe is divided into a number of endogamous divisions. *Dhalo*, *Molo*, *Sikharia*, *Badamia*, *Surajvansi* etc., are a few of such divisions. The folk living in Orissa claim themselves to be of *Surajvansi* division and do not recognize any other division. They have a number of totemistic septs such as Kaich, Nag, Makad, Khajur, Dhan Nun, etc. Some of the totems denote the names of trees, some animals and a few indicate the names of food stuff or articles. Whatever may be the nature of these totems, they honour them.

The family is the smallest social unit. It is nuclear patrilineal, patrilocal, patripotestal. Larger than the family, is their kin group, which is counted up to three generations both in the father's and mother's side. Marriage is strictly prohibited within this kin group and the members of a same sept. They adopt both infant and adult marriage. A bride-price varying from, five to ten rupees is paid at certain localities. The Hindu marriage ritual had been adopted. The astrologer or the Brahmin fixes the auspicious hour, does sacred fire (homo) and gives the sacred thread to the bridegroom to wear for the entire life. The barber is employed. At certain places, the marriage ceremony is finalized by simply smearing vermilion upon the forehead and at the parting of the bride's hair by the bridegroom. Polygyny is permitted. The widow is allowed to marry again. She is under no obligation to marry husband's younger brother, though such marriages are deemed both respectable and convenient and very commonly take place. The husband can divorce the wife, but not the vice versa and he has to pay food and clothes for six months to her. They have been influenced by the examples of the rest of the population of the area and divorce has been prohibited by their caste assembly. In case, a woman is divorced, she can marry again.

The birth pollution is observed for 21 days by the mother of the issue. In case of a girl issue they perform the birth ritual on 12<sup>th</sup> day. Her mother pares her nails and is allowed to touch water but she cannot cook up to 21<sup>st</sup> day. A feast is given. In case of a boy the feast and the birth ceremony is observed on 21<sup>st</sup> day.

They bury the dead. Hindu custom of cremation is gradually entering into the society and to-day all the well-to-do families like to adopt cremation. The corpse is laid in the pit with face downwards and the head to the south. Those who die of cholera or small pox are buried. They observe mourning for 10 days and abstain from non-vegetarian diet. A Sradh in imitation of the Hindus is performed on the 11<sup>th</sup> day. They observe annual Sradh ceremony and offerings of rice, molasses and ghee etc. are made to the deceased in the month of Kartika.

The Koras claim to be Hindus, worship Hindu Gods, and call themselves Saktas or Vaishnavas. Their village and household deities are Bhairabi, Gram Deoti and ancestral spirits, who are offered rice, sugar, plantain and sacrifices of

fowl and goats. They worship these Gods and Goddesses, through the degraded Brahmins.

The main festivals are Dasahara in Asin, Purnima in Kartika, Gurbar in Magusir, Pusa Punia in Pusa, Nuaamkhia and Holi in Fagun, Mangalbar in Chaitra, Akhi Mathi in Baisakh, Rakhi in Sraban and new rice eating ceremony in Bhadrab.

The condition of Koras has not developed. Their houses are very small, made of walls of clay and wattle. The roofs are thatched with straw, forest grass. A few tile-roofed houses are seen.

They opine that digging tanks, making roads and earth work is their traditional profession. In course of time, they had adopted the profession of making of catechu, which involves the following procedure. Having cut down a tree, they strip off the bark. The inner wood is cut into pieces and the pieces are boiled with sufficient water for 4 days. A black paste is obtained. The water is let out and the residue is dried under the sun in the form of cakes. It is eaten with betel-leaf. The adoption of this profession has made them to roam from place to place with their families as the procedure involves the co-operation of both male and female and depends on the availability of catechu plant near at hand. The trees being exhausted, they shift their camp. This wandering life, in the forest with females and children has brought them down in others estimation and they have lost their social position. Most of them have now given up this profession and have taken up agriculture. In Orissa, nearly all of this caste does some amount of cultivation either on their own land or on share-basis. To-day, they are first rate agriculturists and labourers. They produce paddy, pulses, different kinds of grams, oil seeds, etc., from their field. Hunting is rarely practiced. Collection of edible roots and forest products supplement their food and economy.

They do not eat beef. Pork has been given up. It is reported by them, as well as, Mr. Risley that the Chhotnagpur Koras eat beef, drink wine, and practice degraded occupation of catechu making. In Orissa, there are localities, where the Koras have given up even drinking habits. They are trying to be as clean and respected as their Hindus brothers.

The most interesting thing is their caste or tribal organization. In the village level all their disputes are adjudicated. If anyone is not satisfied, he can invite outsiders to reconsider it. Superimposed on this village Panchayat, is their Caste Council. The Caste Council sits at least once in a year. Representatives with the village head attend the meeting. Usually matters relating to the reform in the caste organization are formally discussed here. Admitting an ex-communicated Khaira individual and taking in a non-Khaira into their caste fold; adjudicating grave social offences come under the purview of this council. If an individual ranking above Khaira caste is turned out of his own caste for carrying on an

intrigue with a Khaira woman and eating food which she has prepared, they usually admit him into Khaira caste structure by taking a feast at his expense.

This Caste Council is pressing much for excluding their caste name from tribal order. They put forth points to show that they are *Surya Bansi Khatriya* and are called Khaira, due to their occupation of making catechu. Since they do not practice it any more, they may be raised to *Khartiya* status. They have referred the matter to *Mukti Mandap Pandit Sabha* at Puri citing the award of the judge of Dhenkanal about their caste. A book named "*Suryavansi Khartiya Jati Bikas*" has been published, where the author has stated the points. This clearly shows that the tribe or caste men are now conscious of their status and are keen for its growth.

They are interested to send their boys and girls to school for education. They are aspiring to improve. It is likely that their condition will change and they will secure the position they deserve.

\*\*\*\*\*

# K O R A\*

*G. B. Sahoo*<sup>1</sup>

According to Risley, the Kora are a Dravidian tribe of the Mundari group. They have various synonyms such as Khaira, Kaora, Khayra, etc. The tribe have well-marked totemistic similarities with the Munda tribe. They are well known for their earthwork and cultivation.

Numerically the Kora are a small tribe in the State of Orissa. They are mainly confined to the districts of Dhenkanal, Keonjhar and Sambalpur. According to the 1981 census, their total population was 5822. But during the 1991 Census, it has increased to 10 313. The growth rate of the tribe is 77.11 per cent. The Kora have no separate dialect of their own and speak Oriya. The percentage of literacy was 13.30 according to the 1981 Census. But during 1991 this increased to 26.02 per cent. The sex ratio is 850 females per 1,000 males.

Ethnically, the tribe is divided into a number of endogamous groups such as Dhalo, Molo, Sikharia, Badamia, Suryavansi, etc. Those living in Orissa claim to be of the Suryavansi division. They have a number of totemistic clans, such as Kaich, Nag, Makad, Khajur, Dhan, Nun, etc. Some of the totems denote the names of trees or animals and a few indicate the names of foodstuffs or articles. These totems are always honoured. The family is regarded as the smallest social unit, which mainly consists of father, mother and their unmarried children. Property is generally inherited through the male line, and in family life the authority of the father is always recognized. In other words the tribe is patrilocal, patrilineal, patriarchal and patripotestal. The kin group is a group larger than the family, and is usually counted up to three generations both in the father's and mother's side. Marriage is strictly prohibited within this kin group and the members of the same clan are regarded as brothers and sisters.

---

\* Published in *Tribes of Orissa* (revised edition), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2004, pp. 196-198

<sup>1</sup> Former Research Officer, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

They have both infant and adult marriages. In the adult marriage system, the boy marries at the age of 18 and the girl at the age of 15. At the time of marriage, the bride price is given by the groom to the bride's parents, and usually varies from Rs.50/- to Rs.500/-. They have adopted Hindu marriage rituals. Like Hindus they use the services of Brahmans and barbers at the time of marriage. In some places, marriage is performed by smearing vermilion on the forehead of the bride by the groom. In Kora society polygamy is permitted. A man is permitted to keep more than one wife if the first wife proves to be barren or economically inefficient in doing agricultural work. Widow marriage is practiced. The widow is not bound to marry her deceased husband's younger brother, though such marriage is considered both respectful and convenient. The husband can divorce his wife but not vice versa and he has to pay her food and clothing for six months. Now being influenced by rest of the population of the area, divorce has been prohibited by their caste assembly. If a woman is divorced, she can marry again.

Birth pollution is observed for 21 days by the mother of the newborn male baby. In the case the issue is a girl, they perform the birth ritual on 12<sup>th</sup> day. On this day her mother pares her nails and is allowed to touch water but she cannot cook up to the 21st day. In the case of male issue the birth ceremony is observed on the 21<sup>st</sup> day and a feast is given to the co-villagers.

Previously the dead were usually buried. But nowadays the Hindu custom of cremation is gradually entering into the society and well-to-do persons cremate the corpse. Those who die of cholera or smallpox are buried. They observe mourning for ten days and abstain from eating a non-vegetarian diet. A *sradh* in imitation of Hindu customs is performed on the 11<sup>th</sup> day. They observe an annual *sradh* ceremony for the deceased.

They worship Hindu Gods and Goddesses. They think of themselves as Saktas and Vaishnabs. Their village and household deities are Bhairabi, Gram Decti and ancestral spirits, who are offered rice, sugar, plantain and sacrifices of fowls and goats. Like Hindus, they observe Dasara, Kartik Purnima, Laxmipuja, Pus-Punia, Holi, Rakhi Purnima, etc.

Their houses are small in size and rectangular in shape. The walls are made of mud and wattle and thatched with straw or jungle grass. Some well-to-do families have constructed tile-roofed houses. The houses are not provided with windows for ventilation.

They consider digging tanks, making roads and earth working to be their traditional occupations. In course of time, they have adopted the making of catechu as their profession, which involves the following procedure. Having cut down a tree they strip off the bark. The inner wood is cut into pieces and the pieces are boiled with sufficient water for four days. A black paste is obtained. The water is let out and the residue eaten with a betel-leaf. Adopting this

profession has led them to roam from place to place with their family, as the procedure involves the cooperation of both men and women and depends on the availability of the *catechu* plant near at hand. After the trees are exhausted in one place, they shift their camp to another place where such trees are available. This wandering life in the forest with their family members has brought them down in other's estimation, and they have thus lost their social position. Most of them have now given up this profession and have taken up agriculture. In Orissa, nearly all of them have taken up cultivation either on their own lands or on the lands of others on a share basis. Today, they are regarded as first-rate agriculturists. They produce paddy, pulses, and oil-seeds in their fields. Hunting in the forest is carried out at times. Fishing is rarely practiced. They mostly collected edible roots, fruits and tubers from the local forest to supplement their food and economy. Unlike the Koras of Chotanagpur who eat beef, drink wine and practice degraded occupations like making *catechu*, those living in Orissa no longer make *catechu* or eat beef. They have even given up their drinking habits.

They have their own traditional panchayat system, which plays an important role in their caste organization. All disputes are settled at village level. If anyone is dissatisfied he can invite outsiders to reconsider the case. Superimposed on their village panchayat is the caste council, which sits at least once in a year and is represented by the headman of each Kora village. Usually matters relating to reform in the caste organization are formally discussed here. Besides this, the admission and ex-communication of Kora individuals, the taking of a non-Kora into their caste, and the adjudication of other grave social offences come under the purview of the council. Nowadays, their caste council is pressing hard for the exclusion of their caste name from the tribal category. They say that they are Suryavansi Kshyatriya, and as they are no more practicing the occupation of making *khaira* or *catechu* they should not be called Khaira.

# K O R A\*

*A. B. Ota*<sup>1</sup>

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>2</sup>

*S. C. Pattnaik*<sup>3</sup>

## IDENTITY

Kora also known as Koda and Kuda is one of the little known and numerically small tribe of Mundari group. (According to Risley, 1891) Kora are akin to the Kisan tribe and are also known as Kora -Kisan, Kuda-Kora. The Kora is derived from the word 'Kuda' which means 'digging of earth'. Some other ethnographers opine that they are basically Hindus who have been influenced by prolonged contact with the aboriginals. Russell and Haralal (1975: 300) believed that they belong to the *Oraon* tribe. Prof. U.C. Mohanty has the view that Kisan has "different names in different areas such as *Koda* in the districts of Sambalpur and Bolangir." Their traditional occupation "is digging and carrying of earth and hence they are known as *Koda*" (1964 : 181).

The name Kora, Koda, Kuda or Kura "seems to be a generic name signifying the occupation of earth digging". Our recent field study also show that *Koda* or *Kuda* appear to be same as *Kisan*, *Mirdha*, *Kora* and *Matya*. Marriages take place among them freely. Economically and occupationally, the Kora are noted for their traditional skills and specialization in digging tanks and doing other kinds of earth works. It establishes the fact that *Koda* /*Kuda* who are also known as *Mirdha*, *Kisan* and *Matia*/*Matya* are synonymous to *Kora* which is a phonetic variation of *Koda*. In course of time they have added the trade of catechu (*khaira*) making for which their neighbor called *Khaira* or *Khayra*.

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on KORA, SCSTRTI, 2020, Bhubaneswar

<sup>1</sup> Director & Special Secretary, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Research Assistant, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar



The district Gazetteer, Sambalpur mentions, "A Mirdha is generally referred as *Kuda* meaning an earth digger". They "speak 'KunBoli'... the dialect of the *Kisans*..." Their main occupation "is digging the earth and other works connected to it. Generally they work in groups. The headman is called *Mirdha*. In course of time the whole tribe is known as *Mirdhas* or *Kunhar* as is called in their mother tongue ... They have many similarities with *Kisan* and are believed to be a section of the *Kisan* tribe" (1971 : 118). Now they are well versed with Odia and speak Odia and use Odia script for inter-group communication. Some of them are conversant with the Laria language also.

They are mainly distributed in the districts of Anugul, Dhenkanal and Nayagarh. According to 2001 census the population of Kora tribe is 11,340, but during 2011 this increased to 54,408( 27,173 males and 27,235 females). Their sex ratio is 1002 females for 1000 males. Their total literacy rate is 68.54% in which male literacy is 80.14% and female literacy is 57.04%.

### **Dress and Ornaments**

The Koras do not show any peculiarity in their dress and ornaments. In old days men worn loin clothes and women, sarees and inner garments. Women wear ornaments like bangles, ear rings, anklets and *pahuda* as traditional ornaments. Some old women have tattoos on their arms and feet. Now-a-days, due to modernization their dress pattern has been changed. Now men wear *dhoti*, *lungi*, *banian* and women wear short sarees and under garments purchasing from local vendors. During market days and during visit to relative's house or on festive occasions they put on their best dresses.

### **Settlement & Housing**

Koras live in the hilly terrains of Anugul and Dhenkanal districts which slopes down towards the north of Keonjhar and Sambalpur districts. Their settlements are generally homogeneous and are located near the foot hills, plains and inside forest where perennial hill streams are flowing to provide them drinking water throughout the year. Their houses are arranged in a linear pattern leaving a narrow space as their village street.

Their houses are very simple in structure and are made of mud walls, low roofs thatched by paddy straw or with the *naria* tiles. They live in small house which is rectangular in size and have one or two rooms. The bigger room is used as their living room and to store their grains. The smaller one is used as kitchen room. There are no windows for ventilation. They construct a separate shed in the rear of the house to accommodate their livestock. The houses have wide verandah polished with black clay which is found to be higher than the plinth of their house. It is used as sitting place and to provide shelter to their guests.

They have scanty households articles like earthen pots made by the local potters, aluminum or bell metal utensils, water vessels, wooden ladles, leaf

umbrella and wooden bells for cattle. They use agricultural implements like, sickles, ploughs, levelers, yoke, spades, pick-axe and hunting implements like bows (*Dhanu*), arrow (*Tir*) and traps. To catch fish they also use fishing net and other fishing implements.

### LIVELIHOOD

Koras are primarily earth diggers and it was their only source of income. But now-a-days, besides earth works, they depend on cultivation to earn their livelihood. Many of them are share croppers. Apart from that, a few of them earn their livelihood through small business, pig rearing and wage earning. Kora women also work in agriculture fields and construction works.

Seasonal forest collections provide them supplementary source of livelihood. They mostly collect edible leaves, roots, fruits, tubers from the local forest for food. The surplus is sold in the market.

Some of them have taken up catechu (*khaira*) making as their profession which involves the following procedure. They cut down a catechu tree from the forest. Its inner tree rings are cut down into small pieces and are boiled with sufficient water for four days. After that it turns into a thick black paste. The water is let out and the residue is collected. The procedure involves the engagement of both men and women. It also depends on the availability of the catechu plant near at hand. After the trees are exhausted in one place, they shift their camps to another place where such trees are available.

In their kitchen garden they produce vegetables such as pumpkin, brinjal, green leaves to supplement their foods.

### Food and Drinks

Koras are mainly non-vegetarians. Rice is their staple food which is taken two to three times a day with a side-dish of green leaves or vegetables. During lean period they consume different kinds of pulses, roots, tubers, vegetables and flowers etc available from the forest and in their kitchen garden. Besides they eat fish, chicken and other delicious foods like *ragi* cakes during the festive occasions. They avoid eating beef as they consider it as unclean food.

Rice beer and *mahua* liquor are the common alcoholic drinks. They are habituated to smoking *bidi*, chewing betel leaf and to take tea occasionally. Both men and women use '*Gurakhu*' (Tobacco paste) regularly.

### SOCIAL LIFE

Koras are an endogamous community divided into a number of exogamous totemistic clans like *Kaich* (tortoise), *Nag* (cobra), *Mankad* (monkey) *Khajeur* (date palm), *Nun* (salt), *Bagh* (tiger) and *Dhan*(paddy) etc. Some of the

totems denote the names of trees or animals and few indicates the names of food stuff and articles. They use Majhi as their surname.

### **Family**

The family is the smallest social unit which mainly consists of father mother and their unmarried children. The tribe is patrilocal, patrilineal, patriarchal and patripotestal. Seniors are respected. The kin group is a group larger than the family and is usually counted up to three generations both in father's and mother's sides. Inheritance of ancestral property follows the rule of primogeniture in male line only and properties are equally divided among the son's and the eldest son gets (*jet bhag*) slightly more than others. Avoidance relationship is maintained between elder brother and younger brother's wife. Joking takes place between grandfather and grandchildren.

### **Life Cycle**

#### **Pre-delivery:**

Koras became happy when a married woman in their society becomes pregnant. So they offer various sweet meats to the pregnant woman according to her will as they believe that some ancestor might take rebirth in their family. For the well-being of the pregnant mother and the baby in her womb certain taboos are followed by the pregnant woman. Her movement in the outside is restricted. She is not allowed to go to the burial ground or out of the house during an eclipse and even she cannot visit a temple during the advanced stage of pregnancy and is not allowed to take dry fish etc.

#### **Child birth**

An experienced mid-wife (*Dhai*) of the *Ghasi* community is engaged for safe delivery of the child. The child birth usually takes place in a separate room used as their lying-in chamber where male members are not allowed to enter. A bundle of *siju* twigs is kept hanging at the entrance door of the house as a symbol of child born in that particular house. After the birth of the child both mother and child take bath in tepid water mixed with turmeric paste. The umbilical cord is cut off by *Dhai* and the placenta is buried outside the house. Birth pollution continues for twenty one days.

#### **Post Delivery Rituals**

The *sasthi* rite is observed on the evening of the sixth day of child birth by worshipping *Sasthidevi*. On the seventh day the mother and the baby are shifted to another portion of the house. After ceremonial bath of the mother and baby anointed with turmeric paste, the house is cleaned with cow dung paste and all the used earthen pots are replaced with new ones. The horoscope of the baby is prepared with the help of a *Jyotisha* or *Nahaka* (Astrologer). On the twelfth day the

mother pares her nails and after purification she is allowed to touch the water for family's use but not allowed to cook food for family up to twenty one days.

On the twenty first day, final purificatory rites i.e. *Ekosia* is observed. A Brahman priest is invited to perform '*Satyanarayan Puja*' and give a name to the baby. Kinsmen are invited to the function and they are served special dishes like, rice porridge and cakes and celebrate the function with great enthusiasm. In case of birth of a female child, *Bararatri* is observed in place of *Ekosia*. When the child is about one year of age they observe the tonsure rite and the ear piercing ceremony. There is no provision to celebrate thread ceremony but they perform it before the marriage of the boy.

### **Puberty Rite**

Koras observe 'Puberty rite' for the adolescent girl on her first menarche. A girl on attaining puberty is kept segregated for a week. She only steps out clad with cloth and accompanied by women to attend the call of nature. Food is served to her by a female member of her family. In the early morning of the seventh day she anoints turmeric paste and mustard oil, takes a purificatory bath and wears a new saree. Their traditional priest sprinkles holy water over her after which she becomes purified to resume her routine activities. Then she visits a Siva temple for worship. In the evening her family hosts a non-vegetarian feast to guests and relatives.

### **Marriage**

Kora community strictly follows the principle of community endogamy and clan exogamy. Marriage within the same clan and outside the tribe is strictly forbidden. Marriage is strictly prohibited within the clan group and the members of the same clan are regarded as brothers and sisters as they believe that they are descendants of the same ancestor. Koras follow adult marriage. A boy can marry at the age of 18-25 and girl at the age of 16-21. The earlier practice of child marriage has been stopped.

They consider marriage through negotiation as the most ideal and prestigious mode of acquiring a life partner. At the time of marriage negotiations members of traditional community council are present to finalize the proposal. Marriage ceremony is held at bride's residence on the auspicious date and time fixed by the astrologer. A Brahman priest is invited to officiate in the marriage ritual and in some cases tribal priests are present. At the time of marriage bride price (*Jholla*) is given by the groom to the bride's parents and this amount usually varies from Rs.50/- to Rs.500/-.

The priest presides over the marriage rite and unites the hands of the couple who later move around the marriage altar seven times. Then the groom puts vermilion mark on the forehead of the bride. The bride wears glass, lac or shell bangles as symbol of marriage. The groom puts a cowry (shell of a sea snail)

with some fruits in a ditch of mud and water and the bride tries to find it out and offer it to the groom. Thereafter the groom agrees to give some gifts as demanded by the bride with the promise to provide her lifelong company. As soon as the demand is fulfilled, the bride and the groom along with their friends make amusement by dancing and singing their traditional amorous wedding folk songs and cutting jokes by smearing the mud and water on each other's face. Then they go to the nearest river and bathe and the bride is carried back on the shoulder of the groom. After that the groom's parents host a non-vegetarian feast along with country liquor (*mohuli*), rice beer (*handia*) and *ragi* beer (*landa*) to the guests, relatives and the bride's party.

Nuptial ceremony (*chouthi*) is performed on fourth day at the bride's patrilocal home for consummation of marriage. After marriage the bride lives in her husband residence.

In their society a man is permitted to keep more than one wife if the first wife is found to barren or physically handicapped. In some cases well-to-do persons having more landed properties prefer polygyny as they think that more women in family will support the family in cultivation and allied pursuits. The widow is not bound to marry her deceased husband's younger brother unless she is willing. Junior sororate and junior levirate are permitted but rarely takes place. In some cases marriage by mutual consent, by pseudo capture, by elopement and by service are also allowed and inter caste marriage is strictly prohibited.

Marriage by capture is resorted to avoid the complexity and expenses of arranged marriage. Similarly sometimes a poor boy who is unable to afford the expenses of arranged marriage and payment of the bride price seeks relief by resorting to marriage by service.

### **Divorce**

In the Kora society either of the spouses can demand divorce on the grounds of maladjustment in conjugal life, indulgence in adultery, barrenness or impotency or cruelty etc. This can be effected with the approval of the traditional community council. Usually wife gets the divorce compensation from the husband and children are the liability of the father. When a husband is found to be guilty he is liable to pay compensation to the wife as imposed by the community council but if a wife is found guilty she is ostracized from the community and forbidden to remarry.

### **Death Rites**

Previously Koras buried their dead and death pollution was observed up to the eleventh day. But now-a-days, they follow caste customs. Some well-to-do families cremate the corpse. After death the corpse is anointed with turmeric paste and is carried to the cremation ground in a bier or a charpoy. The eldest son first sets fire to the pyre. After that he collects the bones and observes mourning. After

cremation the pal bearers take bath and return to the deceased's house where they purify themselves.

The bereaved family observes mourning for ten days (*Barapatri rite*) and abstains from eating non-vegetarian diet. On the tenth day houses are swabbed with a mixture of cow dung and water. All the earthen pots are replaced and clothes washed. The male members get shaved and female get their nails pared off by the barber. On the eleventh day a *Sradh* is performed and the family hosts a non-vegetarian feast to the relatives and villagers. They observe an annual *Sradh* ceremony for the deceased on the day of '*Mahalaya*'.

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS & PRACTICES

The Koras profess their autonomous animistic tribal religion amalgamated with few elements of Hinduism. They worship different gods and goddesses representing objects of nature. *Istadevata* is their family deity; '*Mangala*', '*Pitabali*' and '*Gramasree*' are their village deities. They believe in the existence of benevolent and malevolent spirits. The latter can cause the diseases and misfortune affecting their crops and domestic animals. To appease them, they seek services of their witch doctor (*Gunia*) and offer rice, sugar, plantain and sacrifices of fowls and goats. The traditional magico-religious head (*Dehuri*) or low ranked Brahman priest is called to officiate in rituals and pray for the mercy of the concerned deities and spirits for the betterment and wellbeing of humans as well as their domestic animals.

Like Hindus they observe *Dasara*, *Kartik Purnima*, *Laxmipuja*, *Pus Purnima*, *Holi*, *Rakhi Purnima* etc. They also worship Hindu deities like '*Lord Jgannath*', '*Lord Siva*' '*Durga*', '*Kali*' and '*Laxmi*' etc.

#### Dance and Music:

Unlike many tribal communities of the state, Kora do not have any folk tradition of communal dance and music. Rather as the devotees of Lord Krishna they organize '*Kritans*' in which the *Bhajans* of '*Lord Krishna*' are sung. During the performance of *Kritans* they use their traditional musical instruments like *mrudang*, flute, harmonium, *gini*, *madal*, *dolki* etc.

### SOCIAL CONTROL

Koras have a traditional village council called *Jati Sabha* headed by *Mukhiya* who is assisted by the *Dakua* (messenger). The selected group of elders called *Bhalabhai* are the members of the council. The posts of *Mukhia* and *Dakuas* are hereditary. The council regulates marriage and settles the disputes within the community at the village level.

They have a regional council known as *Pargania* headed by *Behera* and several other office bearers with modern nomenclatures like *Savapati* and *Sampadak*

who are elected. This council settles inter village disputes, decides serious social offences like adultery, breach of traditional norms, killing of cow etc and initiates social reforms. It also organizes the religious functions. In the cases of violation of customary rules, the council punishes the offenders by imposing a cash fine or social boycott (*Alak*).

There are some social restrictions for exchange of food and water among various communities. Kora males can accept water and all types of cooked food from higher ranked castes but not from the scheduled caste communities but women cannot accept any food and water from any community except Kisan and Mirdha whom they consider socially at par with them. They maintain inter community linkage through patron client relationship and mutual exchange of goods and services.

### CHANGING SCENARIO

Society is dynamic and the Kora society is no exception to it. Changes have occurred in the Kora society with the passage of time. They have borrowed many social and religious elements from their neighboring castes and tribes owing to their long association with them.

After independence Government have launched several development programmes exclusively for the tribal areas and tribal people. With the opening of schools and special hostels for the scheduled tribes the Koras have availed formal education facilities for their children. There are a few Kora students who have reached graduate level.

Government has also made massive development intervention for education, agriculture, communication, drinking water, housing, social security, health and sanitation. The Koras are benefited from various schemes for tribal development, community development and infrastructure development as well as for Self-Employment, Child Welfare and Immunization and the Public Distribution System (PDS). At present the banking facilities are made available in their localities. Now they adopt both modern and indigenous medicines. Their women have also accepted family planning programme. They now prefer to have two to three children.

Kora women have formed *Mahila Mandal*, SHG etc. and taken up economic and social welfare activities. Some well-to-do Kora families have modern gadgets like radio, mobile phone, watches, television, motor cycles, modern dresses, wooden and synthetic furniture.

# KORUA \*

*A. B. Ota* <sup>1</sup>

*S. C. Mohanty* <sup>2</sup>

*B. K. Paikray* <sup>3</sup>

## IDENTITY

The term Korua or Korwa has been derived from the tree Kodera or from *Dodawas* which means the earth digger. In Odisha they are notified as a scheduled tribe under the nomenclature Korua. The Koruas are original inhabitants of Sarguja and Jashpur and Bilaspur area in Chot Nagpur plateau of Central Provinces. According to Colonel Dalton, they are mixed up with the Asuras and another cognate tribe the Kurs (Korkus) or Muasis of Central Provinces and inhabit the passes from the Vindhayan to Satpura range. It is believed that during the past they have migrated from Satpura range to their present habitat in Odisha in course of their food quest. The Korua have a sub tribe called Korku. In Satpura range they are also known as Muasi which denotes raider or robber. Crooke defined that Korwa and Korku are probably branches of the same tribe.

By their physical traits, Korua are of short stature having average height of five feet four inches with good muscular development and dark brown in complexion. They are predominantly dolicho-cephalic with a broad facial profile and broad or flat nose

The Korua is numerically a very small and little known Kolarian tribe thinly dispersed in the districts of Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj and Kalahandi. They are also found in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

---

\* To be published in the Photo Handbook on Korua, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>1</sup> Director & Special Secretary, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Former Research Assistant, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar



According to 1971 Census the Korua population in Odisha was 3484; that declined to 986 in 1981 Census, increased to 1989 in 1991 census, again came down to 1280 in 2001 Census and further reduced to 499 (250 males and 249 females) in 2011 Census. The cause of fluctuation of their population across successive censuses may be attributed to that some of them have been enumerated as Kora. Their total literacy as per 2011 census is 32.60 percent. Gender wise it is 40.30 percent for males and 25.12 percent for females.

The tribe is divided into two endogamous territorial divisions like *Paharia Korua* and *Diharia Korua*. The name of *Paharia Korua* is bestowed upon them by their neighbors as this section dwells on hills. They are also called as *Benwaria* as they practice *bewar* or shifting cultivation. The *Diharia Koruas* are permanent settlers who dwell in villages called *dih*. They are also known as KisanKorwa. These divisions are subdivided into various totemistic exogamous septs (*gotar*) such as *Edge*, *Hansda* and *Kachmi* etc. which regulate their matrimonial alliance.

The Korua has its own mother tongue called Korwas. It is a nonliterary dialect which ethno-linguistically belongs to Austro-Asiatic (Mundari) family of languages under north Munda group and they use it for their intra group communication. Sir G. Grierson states that Korwa dialect is closely related to Asuri and resembles to Mundari. They are well-versed with *Sadri* an Indo-Aryan dialect which they use to talk to others. Korua living in Odisha are well conversant in the regional language Odia which they speak and use its script for inter group communication.

### **Dress and Ornaments**

Dressing pattern of Korua is very simple and has resemblances with that of their neighboring communities. Traditionally, Korua men wear only a short piece of loin cloth around their waist during the working hours or in their leisure time but during their visit to the relative's house, market days and festive occasions they wear shirt and dhoti with under garments.

Women wear mill made coloured and print sarees with under garments such as *saya* and blouse. To look beautiful and charming Korua females adorn themselves with varieties of ornaments. They wear different coloured bead necklaces, ear rings, anklets, armlets, glass bangles as well as hair pins and hair clips. They purchase their ornaments from local vendors or from the weekly markets. On festive occasions they decorate their bun with wild blossoms. Their ornaments are made of brass or silver. Women of well-to-do families wear gold ornaments purchased from local gold smiths or from the jewelry shops.

### **SETTLEMENT AND HOUSING**

Korua settlements are exclusively homogenous and are located near foot hills or hill slopes amidst forest where perennial hill streams are flowing in proximity to provide them drinking water throughout the year. In multi ethnic

settlements they dwell in separate hamlets maintaining distance with the neighboring communities. In their settlements individual houses are arranged in linear pattern keeping space in between as Village Street.

Their houses are simple and are built with locally available raw materials. The walls are made with clay plastered over bamboo poles and polished with red clay paint. Individual houses consist of two rooms having wide verandahs both in front and rear sides which they use to sit and gossip with their friends during their recreational hours and to accommodate their relatives during night. Their houses are always low roofed, thatched with wild grasses and have no windows for ventilation. They possess few household belongings which includes their grass mats, cooking pots, brass or aluminum utensils, earthen jars, agricultural implements, hunting weapons, fishing traps and bamboo baskets etc.

### LIVELIHOOD

Koruas are primarily hunters and gatherers. With rapid depletion of forests around their habitat and strict enforcement of wild life conservation laws their traditional pursuit of hunting has declined to the stage of a past time. As regards agriculture, majority of them are landless. Few among them possess small land holdings which are unfertile terrace lands where they cultivate rainfed crops. In addition to that they practice shifting cultivation (*bewar*) where they get the scope. This archaic pursuit is not very economical. The annual yield from settled and shifting cultivation hardly meet their need for food for three to four months in a year. Under the pressing circumstances they take up other economic pursuits such as seasonal forest collection, livestock rearing, fishing and wage earning to supplement the earning for their sustenance. They rear, cows, bullocks, buffalos, goats, sheep and pigs.

### Food and Drinks

Koruas are purely non vegetarians. Rice and *ragi* are their staple cereal which they take with pulses like *moong*, *kulthi* or *khesri*. Besides that they consume wheat or maize and during lean season they also take edible green leaves, mushrooms, fruits, shoots, roots and tubers which they collect from forest. They relish on meat, fish, chicken, eggs, dry fish and pork etc. but abstain from taking beef as they consider it unclean. They use mustard oil as cooking medium.

Both males and females are addicted to drinking various kinds of alcoholic beverages such as country liquor (*mohuli*) and rice beer (*kusuna*) distilled at their own house or purchased from the local vendors or markets. They are habituated in smoking indigenous self-made cheroot containing raw tobacco rolled in Sal leaves.

## **SOCIAL LIFE**

### **Family**

In Korua society family is nuclear in structure consisting of father, mother and their unmarried children. Vertically extended families are also seen in rare cases. Residence after marriage is patrilocal and descent is patrilineal. The eldest son succeeds father's office. Inheritance of ancestral property follows the rule of equi geniture in male line only. Issueless family may adopt a male child from the nearest kin of the patri-lineage who might inherit the ancestral property and late adopted father's office. If the family has no male successor the married daughters may inherit the paternal property.

In the family inter personal relationship is very cordial and the elders are highly respected. The eldest brother enjoys superior status next to father. In their society joking relationship exists between the grandparents and grandchildren and between a man and his wife's younger brother and younger sister and the wife of the elder brother. They maintain avoidance relationship between a man and his younger brother's wife, his and son in law or daughter in law, father in law and mother in law.

In Korua society, women enjoy important social status as mistress of the family for their significant contribution to the family economy by way of their domestic works indoors and subsistence activities outdoors. They enjoy the privilege to participate in socio-religious activities and their opinion matters in family management and matrimonial alliances. They are consulted by the husbands in decision making in all socio-economic matters of the family.

### **Life Cycle**

#### **Pregnancy**

A married woman is considered to be pregnant when her monthly courses has ceased. They believe that pregnancy as the blessing of the ancestors and gods and that a new member is going to take birth in their family who might help them in future in their economic pursuits.

For the safety and well-being of the pregnant woman and the baby in her womb, she is subjected to certain taboos and prohibitions such as to abstain from doing hard works, to fetch heavy load of fuel wood from forest, to be exposed during solar or lunar eclipse, to touch a corpse, to sleep alone, to go near the burial pit, to go out in dark night and to eat the meat of ritually sacrificed animals etc.

On the seventh month of pregnancy they observe the *Sadakhai* rite in which the pregnant woman is provided with various sweet meats by her paternal family first and then by her lineage members and relatives according to her desire.

During this month they worship their village deity to obtain the blessings for safe and easy delivery as well as wellbeing of the mother and the fetus.

### **Child Birth**

The pregnant woman continues her routine household chores till she feels labour pain. When the pain becomes unbearable she is confined in a separate chamber or enclosure in the rear verandah used as lying in room (*Chhutghar*). An experienced elderly woman of a lower caste is called to attend her as mid wife and to help for easy and safe delivery of the baby. If any obstruction is detected and delivery pain becomes acute or delivery is delayed they call their traditional medicine man who administers herbal medicine to the pregnant woman for easy and quick delivery of the baby. After child birth the naval cord (*navi*) is cut by a sharp razor or blade and the placenta is buried in the backyard of their house.

### **Post Birth Rites**

Birth pollution is observed for a period of two months in case of birth of a male child and three months for a female child. After twenty one days of the child birth they observe the first purificatory rite *ekusia* in which the new born baby and the mother are allowed to enter into the living room from the lying in chamber. They also observe the name giving ceremony of the baby on the same day by availing the services of their traditional astrologer - the *jatuk*. They observe the tonsure ceremony after the baby attains three months of age when natal hair of the child is shaved by the maternal uncle. The mother is allowed to resume her routine household chores after the final purificatory rite is observed.

### **Puberty Rite**

The Korua observe puberty rite for their adolescent girls on reaching the first menarche. The pubescent girl is segregated in a separate room for a period of seven days and during that time she is prohibited to look at or talk to any male member. She is looked after by her mother or girl companions. Pollution period continues for seven days and on the early morning of the eighth day she is escorted to the nearest hill stream by her mother or girlfriends where she takes her purificatory bath anointed with turmeric paste and mustard oil. There she disposes of her used clothes and wears new clothes presented to her by her family or maternal uncle. After that she becomes free from pollution. In the evening, her family hosts a non-vegetarian feast to the lineage members along with country liquor *mohuli*.

### **Marriage**

Korua tribe is an endogamous community which consists of two non-inter marrying territorial divisions such as *Paharia Korua* and *Diharia Korua* and these endogamous divisions are further sub-divided into various exogamous lineages (*gotra*) such as Eggs, Hansda, Kachmi etc to regulate their marital alliances.

Korua society is mostly monogamous but polygynous families are also seen in their society where the first wife is found to be a barren or physically handicapped. Many we-to-do males practice polygyny although the first wife is surviving for the purpose of getting extra helping hands in their economical pursuits.

They consider marriage arranged through negotiation as prestigious and ideal mode of acquiring a spouse. For negotiation of marriage they engage a mediator of their own lineage to find a suitable proposal. Generally the boy's parents take the first initiative. Several visits are exchanged by both the proposed groom and bride's sides for negotiation of the alliance. The betrothal rite is concluded after consent of both the parties and the date of marriage is fixed on an auspicious day in consultation with their traditional astrologer- the *jatuk*. In their society, payment of bride price is obligatory and is paid in cash and kind on the day of betrothal at the bride's patrilocal residence.

On the wedding day the groom and the bride take ceremonial bath anointing turmeric paste and oil. The groom accompanied by his parents, lineage members, guests and relatives proceed to bride's house in a marriage procession dancing and singing their folk marriage songs to the tunes of music provided by musicians of their community. The wedding rite is performed in bride's home. *Jhadua* Brahman priest conduct the marriage rites reciting sacred hymns and offering oblations of ghee to the sacred *homa* fire. The newly married couple encircles seven times round the marriage alter (*Satapadi*). Then the priest unites the hands of groom and bride (*hastalagan*) and the groom puts vermilion mark on forehead of the bride (*sindurdan*) after which the marriage rite is concluded. The bride's parents host a non-vegetarian feast to relatives and guests along with country liquor (*mohuli*). The nuptial rite (*chauthi*) is observed on the fourth day at the patrilocal residence of the groom where the marriage is consummated.

The other modes of marriages prevalent in their society are by exchange, by mutual consent, by capture and cross cousin marriage. Junior sororate, junior levirate and re-marriage of widows, widowers and divorces are permitted in their society. Divorce is allowed and either party can demand divorce on the grounds of maladjustment in conjugal life, cruelty, adultery, misconduct, extramarital relationship, impotency etc. After divorce children are the liability of father. Divorce cases are decided by the traditional community council (*Jatisamaj*).

### Death

The Korua community practice burial to dispose of their dead. When a death occurs, the death news is communicated soon to all their lineage members and relatives by a special messenger after which all of them congregate in the dead person's residence to console the bereaved family and take part in burial rite. The dead body anointed with turmeric paste and oil is given a bath and is cladded with a white cloth.

Usually their burial ground is located near the river bank. The pall bearers prepare a bier (*derua*) with bamboo poles to carry the corpse to the burial ground. They dig a deep pit in their burial yard and place the corpse in it keeping its head towards south with some rice to serve as meal for the departed soul. Then they fill the pit with soil and cover it with Sal branches to protect from wild animals. They make a fire at a little distance and put ghee and incense on it as offering to please the ancestor spirit.

At present some of them practice cremation to dispose of their dead. They lay their dead on pyre keeping its face towards north and the eldest son of the deceased sets fire to the pyre (*mukhagni*).

Death pollution continues for eleven days. During this period they abstain from observance of rituals and festivals, relishing on non-vegetarian dishes or delicious sweet meats, visiting sacred shrines, worshiping deities, use of oil and *ghee* and giving alms to beggars etc. They observe purificatory rite on the eleventh day in which the lineage males shave their head and beards and the females pare of their nails near the river bank. Then they take purificatory bath and wear new clothes provided by the bereaved family. Then they perform the *shradh* rite offering cooked vegetarian foods to the departed soul after which the pollution period lapses. In the evening the bereaved family hosts a feast for his lineage members, relatives and guests.

Corpses of small children below five years of age and those who die abnormally due to snake bite, small pox and cholera are buried. They usually bury the dead body of small children either within their own homestead land or under an evergreen banyan tree with the belief that the departed spirit might live there well until its next birth.

## RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The Korua profess their own autonomous tribal religion animism amalgamated with elements of Hinduism. They rever the deity *Thakur Deo* and his consort the *Dulha Deo/ Khuria Rani* as their principal deities, who reside in the sacred grove (*Deothan*) located at the outskirts of the village. The sacred grove premises are treated as a holy area from where cutting of tree or branches is strictly prohibited. The breach of this customary rule is considered as a serious offence and the offender may be imposed with heavy penalty. They consider *Thakur Deo* as the deity of crops whom they worship to please in order to achieve good harvest and they believe that the deity protects them from epidemics like cholera and smallpox. Therefore they observe a festival on full moon day of the month of Pus and perform worship in the *Deothan* to gratify the deity by offering sacrifices of goat, fowl and country liquor (*mohuli*).

The deity *Garam Thakur* is their village deity who is worshipped during the new rice eating festival *nawanna*, held during August after harvest of their crops by offering first the cooked rice to the deity. They worship *Larha*- their traditional iron instrument used for clearing stones from their swiddens, during observance of *makar* festivals in January. *Karma* is their major festival which they observe during autumn season with dance and music to propitiate the rain god to get good rain fall and procure bumper harvest.

At present as they are coming in close contact with the caste neighbours many marked changes are seen in their religious practices and they are worshipping many Hindu deities such as Lord *Jagannath*, *Siva*, goddess *Laxmi*, *Samaleswari*, and observing Hindu fairs and festivals like *Dussarah*, *Makar*, *Dola*, *Diwali*, *Raja*, *Holi (faguwa)* and *Rathayatra* etc. and making pilgrimage to sacred places like Puri, Kasi and Gaya.

### SOCIAL CONTROL

The Korua tribe possesses its own traditional community council *Jati Samaj* both at village level as well as in the regional level to deal with their customary affairs. It is headed by the *Sabhapati* who is assisted by village elites who hold their office by selection. The *Samaj* acts as the custodian of traditional norms and customs and deals with their intra community customary matters to maintain orderly life in the society. It adjudicates cases pertaining to intra family disputes, misunderstanding in conjugal life, theft, rape, adultery, incest, molesting, extramarital affairs, matrimonial disputes, divorce, breach of traditional norms, inter and intra village rifts and delivers its verdict unanimously. It imposes penalty on the offender by cash or kind or in both according to gravity of offence. Its verdict is final and binding the disobedience of which may result in social boycott of the offender. It can readmit the offender into the society after his due penance. The council also regulates social functions and festivals of the village.

After introduction of statutory Gram panchayat system the role of the traditional panchayat is declining. Now the Panchayatraj leaders are taking an active role in the village affairs.

### DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

Over period of time changes have occurred in Korua society and culture. The Koruas have accepted many new cultural elements from the neighboring castes and tribes in course of their prolonged contact with them. They have advanced with time. Apart from the development interventions of Government, the role of external agencies like NGOs as well as the spread of education and awareness has been important in their transformation.

On the other side, their age old traditional social institutions are declining under the impact of development and modernization. The way of life of the neighbouring castes has made inroads in to the Korua society and culture.

Government has launched various development programmes exclusively for tribal areas and tribal people with two fold objectives i.e. economic upliftment of tribal beneficiaries through Income Generating Schemes and area development through Infrastructure Development Schemes in various sectors. Government's initiatives by establishment of ITDAs in Korua concentrated areas has created a lot of positive impact on development of education, agriculture, communication, drinking water, housing, health and sanitation. Initiative have been taken at GP and Block level to create awareness among them about different development schemes so that they can reap the benefit out of it and become prosperous.

Implementation of PESA Act in tribal area has also brought a lot of changes in the quality and pattern of leadership among the tribe. Korua's occupational pattern and means of subsistence have been changed. Money economy has replaced the traditional barter system. Change is observed in their living pattern, social customs, food habits and dress pattern. There is increasing use of modern electronic gadgets; mill made cloths, cosmetics etc. A majority earn enough to sustain themselves and to purchase several varieties of modern articles like watches, radios, cycles, motor cycles, dresses and other household articles. Their area has become accessible, and many villages have approach roads and electricity.



## KOTIA \*

*F. Bara*<sup>1</sup>

The Kotia, also known as Kotiya and Kutia, are a little known and numerically small tribe found mostly in Koraput, Kalahandi and Phulbani Districts of Orissa. They are mainly concentrated in Mathili Police Station of Koraput District. According to the Madras Census (1901-1902: 163) the community is regarded as a section of the Oriya cultivators found in Vizagapatnam Agency. In *Adivasi* (63-64 :182) the Kotia are described as being identical with the Kutia Kondh. J.K. Das refuted this view and says that the tribe is more allied to the Bhumia than the Kutia Kondh. He writes that the Kotia and Bada Bhumia are almost identical tribes. A few case of intermarriage were found in the study area.

According to the 1981 and 1991 Censuses the total population of Kotia in the state was 19,136 and 28 607 respectively. The growth rate during the period 1981-91 was 49.49 per cent and the sex ratio 969 females per thousand males according to the 1991 Census. They are mainly rural dwellers. The percentage of literacy is 11.26 according to the 1991 Census. The Kotia speak a corrupt form of Oriya.

Two-roomed houses are mostly found among the Kotia. The inner room is used as the storeroom. The other room is usually divided into two parts by half a mud wall, one part of which is used for the kitchen and the other part for other purposes. An adjoining verandah is the most common feature, which is used for sitting and occasionally sleeping during summer season. Bamboo, timber, mud and straw are the usual building materials. Timber or bamboo platforms are sometimes constructed inside the room to store different articles. Two doors are the common features in their houses, of which one is at the front

---

\* Published in *Tribes of Orissa* (revised edition), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2004, pp.199-202

<sup>1</sup> Former Joint Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

of the house and the other at the back. The construction of a new house is accompanied by some specific rituals like the worship of Mati Padmini or the earth goddess. Consulting a *disari* is considered essential before the construction of a new house in order to determine the auspiciousness of the site. A small peg is placed at the spot where the new house is to be constructed and a little turmeric paste is kept on it. A chicken is sacrificed in honour of the earth goddess. The mud walls are made with cow-dung and red ochre. The floor of the house and the courtyard are cleaned regularly.

The joint family is common among the tribe. Married sons with their children and wives live with their parents. If a married son wants to be separated, a new room and a kitchen are constructed for him, but the landed property is never divided. Joint cultivation of land is found among the divided families.

Rice and *ragi* constitute their staple food. These are supplemented by roots and tubers like *pitakanda*, *darikanda*, *baliakanda*, etc. Mahua flowers and seeds are collected for food, alcohol and oil. Mango kernels are also collected and stored for future consumption. *Tola*, *kusum* and *alsi* oil are used in cooking. Onions, chilies, tamarind, turmeric and other spices enrich their curry. Dry fish and tortoise flesh are their favorite food. Except for beef and buffalo meat, they eat all kinds of meat. The Kotia use earthenware pots, aluminum and bronze vessels as their kitchen equipment. Leaf cups and plates made of *sal* leaves are commonly used.

Kotia men wear only two pieces of napkins as their dress. Ornaments are rarely worn. Women wear three-yard-long saris woven by the Doms. The traditional hand-woven coarse saris have now been replaced by fine mill-made clothes. One can find Kotia women today wearing long saris when going out. Small children under five usually go naked. Children of about 6-7 years wear a *gochi* or *koupin* (loin cloth). Kotia living in urban areas wear dresses like pants, shirts, frocks, blouses and petticoats, etc. bought from the local market. The traditional ornaments of the Kotia are the *kadu* and *pahnri* made of brass and aluminum, which are now replaced by gold and glass bangles. *Nanguli* or nose ornaments are no longer used and have been replaced by the *khanja* and *phuli*. The *nothu* and *dandi* are mostly made of gold. The *kalasorisa mali* and *nanpatti* are used as neck ornaments. The *pahnri* is worn on the ankle. Tattooing is not common. The sacred thread is worn by Kotia men at the time of marriage, but it is not compulsory to wear it later on. Perhaps they do not place so much sanctity on this sacred thread.

Restrictions are imposed in respect of some food items and the movements of a parturient woman. She is forbidden to eat molasses, bananas or sweets. She works until the day of the childbirth and resumes her day to day work just after the purification and name-giving ceremony. There is no practice of constructing a separate hut for the delivery. Birth usually takes place in one of

the living rooms. An experienced old woman of their own community assists in delivery. She cuts the umbilical cord of a male child with an arrow and of a female child with a knife. The placenta is buried in the backyard of the house.

The mother and the newborn are given a hot water bath and anointed with turmeric paste. A *palakanda* (a tuber) is served to the mother with hot boiled rice and salt. Birth pollution is observed for nine days. On the tenth day, the purification and name-giving ceremonies are held. Both mother and baby are given a purificatory bath. The house is properly cleaned. After the purification ceremony two black beaded strings are tied on to the neck and waist of the child. The Kotia believe that these strings guard the baby against evil spirits. The Disari officiates at the name-giving ceremony. No special feast is held, but the woman who had assisted in delivery is served delicious food.

Three days of seclusion is observed by a girl attaining puberty. On the fourth day she takes a bath and wears a new cloth. Girls marry at or close to puberty. Boys marry when they are capable of earning their livelihoods. There are usually three types of marriage, marriage by force, by consent, and by negotiation. In the first category the girl is taken out forcibly by the boy who takes the girl to his house and obtains her consent which is very important. Unless the willingness of the girl is forthcoming marriage will not be possible. When the father of the girl comes in search of his daughter she must be released if the girl wants to go away. But if the girl is willing to marry the boy, the father of the girl is presented with a brideprice consisting of some rice, fowl and goat. Their marriage is then socially recognized.

The second category of marriage is called *udulia* or love marriage. In this type of marriage the boy and the girl both are willing to marry but finding some resistance from one side or another they run away from home. The father of the girl then visits the boy's house. The boy's father is blamed at first but the marriage is finalized when he gives one *putti* of rice, a goat and a fowl to the girl's father. A feast is held in which both parties participate. In the negotiation or arranged form of marriage, more initiative is taken by the boy's party, which pays visits to the girl's house several times. On their second visit the party accompanied by a *nayak* carries some flattened rice and molasses. The proposal is confirmed when the parents of the girl accept the gift. On the third visit the father of the girl settles a date for marriage for which a *disari* is consulted. Their marriage is usually celebrated during the months of Magh (January-February) and Phalgun (February-March).

Marriage is celebrated in the groom's house. On the morning of the day of the marriage five people from the groom's village visit the house of the bride with some molasses and flattened rice. They hand over these to the girl's parents and return, except for two members of the party who stay on to accompany the bride and her kinsmen. A feast is arranged for the girl's party by the boy's parents. *Lenga* or an auspicious time for marriage is prescribed by the *disari*. At

this moment the father of the boy presents the girl's father with one *putti* of rice, a goat, four earthenware pots, one fowl and one gourd. A feast is arranged in which both parties participate. The bride and groom sit on the platform under a shed constructed for the purpose. The *disari* officiates at the wedding. A piece of cloth is held between the bride and the groom. At *langa* time the *disari* puts the leg of the groom on top of the bride's. The cloth is then taken away. The *disari* sprays water on their heads, and other members of both parties anoint turmeric paste on each other and enjoy the night. The bride and groom with some villagers visit the house of the bride after four days and the newly married couple stays there for three to four days.

Widow Remarriage is prevalent. A divorcee can also remarry. If a married woman leaves her husband to marry another man the previous husband has to be compensated with double the amount of the expenditure he incurred for the marriage. However such practices are discouraged nowadays. Marriage with the maternal uncle's daughter and maternal aunt's daughter is allowed.

The cremation of the deceased is the general practice in their society. But the dead bodies of children and those who die of epidemics are buried. The dead body is washed in tepid water and anointed with turmeric paste and oil. Its hair is combed. Mourners of both sexes accompany the funeral procession to the outskirts of the village where bier is kept for some time. The widow's bangles are broken there and after that women are not allowed to proceed further. The dead body is placed on the funeral pyre face upwards and with its head towards east. Usually the maternal nephew lights the fire. All those who accompany the dead body to the cremation ground go to a pond or river to take a bath. There the nephew says, 'Your house is on fire from today'. The mourners then sprinkle water on each other with a mango leaf. The mourners are offered milk and oil. On the fifth day all members of the deceased's household visit the cremation ground. A small image of the dead is made of rice and is covered with a cloth smeared with turmeric. Three *kendu* (*Deospyros Melayion*) twigs are placed crosswise. A new earthenware pot with water is placed on it in such a way that water trickles down through a hole and falls right on the bosom of the image. Finally, the *dasa* or *buda* (final death ceremony) is held on any convenient day when the family members of the deceased become able to afford the cost of the ceremony, as the ritual involves heavy expenditure to feed all the friends and relatives. Four or five *puttis* of rice and a few goats have to be arranged for this final purification ceremony.

The Kotia are an agricultural tribe. Most of those who have landed property are settled agriculturists. Those who do not have land take to agricultural labour and wage labour. Catching fish is a subsidiary occupation, as the Kotia like fish very much. Fish traps and nets of various types are found in their houses. Dried fish is preserved for future use.

The *nayak* or the village headman is consulted in matters of social disputes and conflicts. He is assisted by the *chalan*. There is no formal caste organization among the Kotia. The priest is known as the *pujari*. The *disari* acts as the sorcerer.

The most important deity of the tribe is Mauli Debta, whose shrine lies under a *kendu* tree. Nisaniguda is their goddess who protects them from smallpox. Both deities are worshipped in the month of Chaitra (March-April). They have also adopted Hinduism to a certain extent. Many Hindu gods and goddesses are worshipped. Chait parab is the most important festival of the Kotia. It is observed for a period of seven days with great joy and merriment. There is no fixed date for observing the festival but the *disari* fixes a date during the month of Chait (March-April). During this festival they eat mango for the first time and cease working. Another important festival is Nua-Khia, which is observed on any Monday during the month of Sravana (July-August).

# KOTIA \*

*A. B. Ota*<sup>1</sup>

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>2</sup>

*H. B. Barad*<sup>3</sup>

## IDENTITY

The Kotia also known as Kotia Paik and Kutia is numerically a small hill tribe inhabiting Koraput, Malkangiri, Kalahandi and Kandhamal districts of Odisha and in the border areas of adjacent Andhra Pradesh. They are one of the endogamous sections of Paika community who are known for their past history of military service under the then kings and feudal chiefs of south Odisha. Most of the Kotia are found in Mathili Police Station of Malkangiri district. In the Madras Census Report, (1901-1902:163) the Kotias are described as a section of Odia cultivators found mainly in Vizagapatnam agency and are identical with *Kotia Khonds*. But as per the opinion of J.K. Das (1961) the tribe is more allied to the Bhumias than the *Kutia Khonds*.

As regards their origin, the Kotia people opine that the ancestors of both Rana (a brother caste) and Kotia were sons of the same father but given birth by separate mothers. According to K.S. Singh (POI, Vol. III, P.621), "It is believed that their name has been derived from their place of origin, Kotapadi in Orissa."

The Kotia have no separate language of their own and speak a corrupt form of local Oriya language called Desia. But some of them know Telugu. They use Odia script for writing. As per 2011 census the total population of Kotia is 7232 out of which male population is 3466 and that of females is 3766. The sex ratio among them is 1087 females per 1000 males. The percentage of literacy was 24.60% in 2001 census which remarkably increased to 44.36 % in 2011 census.

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Kotia, SCSTRTI, 2020, Bhubaneswar

<sup>1</sup> Director & Special Secretary, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>3</sup> Research Assistant, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

### Dress and Ornaments

In the past Kotia men put on two pieces of napkins and women mainly worn three yard long traditional hand woven coarse sarees made by the local Dom weavers. Now-a-days the men are wearing clothes like *dhoti* with shirt /banyan and lungi and the women are wearing coloured mill-made clothes. They usually wear long saris when going out for marketing, visiting their relative's house and during festive occasions. Small children under five years of age go naked. Children above six years of age wear a narrow strip of loin cloth called *gochi* or *koupin*.

In these days, under the impact of modernity their dress pattern has changed. Kotia living in urban areas wear dresses like pants, shirts, frocks, blouse and petticoats etc. purchasing from the local market. The traditional ornaments of Kotia women are the *Kadu* and *Pahnri* made of brass or aluminum, which are now replaced by gold and glass bangles. *Nanguli* or nose ornaments are no longer used and have been replaced by the *Khanja* and *Phuli*. The *Nothu* and *Dandi* are mostly made of gold. The *Kala Sorisamali* and *Nanpatti* are used as neck ornaments. They wear *Pahnri* on their ankle. Tattooing has become an old fashion and is not in vogue now-a-days. The sacred thread is worn by Kotia men at the time of marriage, but it is not compulsory to wear it later on. Perhaps they do not place so much sanctity on this sacred thread.

### SETTLEMENT AND HOUSING PATTERN

Most of the Kotia villages are situated in forest area near perennial hill streams which provides them drinking water throughout the year and they channel its flow to their crop fields for irrigation. Now many Kotia villages are electrified and individual consumers are provided domestic connection. Before construction of a new house, they worship *Matipadmini* or the earth goddess and consult with their traditional magico-religious functionary, Disari to determine the sanctity and suitability of the site. On the selected house site, a small peg of country liquor, *Mohuli* is placed and a little turmeric paste is kept on it. A chicken is sacrificed in honour of the earth goddess.

Kotia mostly have two-roomed houses. One room is used to store grains and the other is divided in to two parts by a mud wall; the smaller one is used as kitchen and larger one, as living room. An adjoining verandah is used for sitting and occasionally sleeping during summer and to provide shelter to their guests. The walls of the house are made with mud and cow dung, which is polished with red ochre paste. The floor and the courtyard are cleaned regularly by their women. They use bamboo, timber, mud and straw for house construction. Their house usually contains two doors, one in the front and the other in the rear.

They have limited household assets consisting of earthenware pots, aluminum and bronze vessels, wooden ladles, axes, sickles, leaf cups and plates and their hunting weapons such as axe, bow, arrow and traps etc.

## SOCIAL LIFE

Kotia is an endogamous community and divided into a number of exogamous totemistic clans (*bansas*) like *nag* (cobra), *honu* (monkey), *sukri*, *pangi* (kite), *dora*, *talab*, *majhi*, *godanga*, *khara* (sun), *nayak*, *khimundit*, *arlab*, *burudi*, *macha* (fish), *hantal*, *kurlati*, *tangul*, *guntha*, *anjar*, *khinbudi* (dear), *goripitta* (a bird), *killo/pulli* (tiger) etc. They use their clan name as their surname.

In Kotia community the family is mostly nuclear patrilocal, patrilineal and patriarchal in structure. Father is the head of the family. After marriage of sons, the residence is patrilocal for a year or so and then the married couple establishes a separate household by constructing a new house of their own. The brothers help in building the new house. The landed property is not divided among the sons but cultivated jointly. Kotia men and women work hard in their farm land.

### Life Cycle

#### **Pregnancy**

Kotia consider pregnancy as a divine blessing as they think that some ancestor might take rebirth in their family. Restrictions are imposed on some food items and the movements of the pregnant woman. She is forbidden to eat molasses, bananas or sweets, sleep alone, travel in pitch dark night, touch a corpse, be exposed during lunar or solar eclipses and go near the cremation ground alone, lest she and the fetus in her womb might be affected fatally by the evil spirits.

#### **Child Birth**

The pregnant woman continues her routine household chores till her labour pain starts. Child birth usually takes place in one of the living room, specifically arranged as a lying in chamber, into which entry of male members are prohibited. An experienced old Kotia woman assists the mother for easy delivery of the child. The naval cord of a male child is cut off using an arrow and of female child with a knife. The placenta is buried in the backyard of their house. After delivery of the baby, the mother and the infant are given bath in tepid water anointed with oil and turmeric paste. They administer an herbal medicine, *Pala Konda* (a tuber) to the mother with hot boiled rice and salt for quick relief of pain.

#### **Post Delivery Rituals**

Birth pollution continues for twenty one days and after that both mother and baby are given a purificatory bath. Then they observe the purification ceremony (*handidharani*). The new born baby wears two black beaded strings, one in his/her neck and the other on waist to be saved from the evil spirits. After observance of the ritual the mother is allowed to preform her routine household chores. The name giving ceremony is performed by their traditional priest Disari. No special feast is held, but the woman who has assisted in delivery is served with delicious foods as remuneration for her service.



When a newborn becomes six months old rice gruel is fed to him/her for the first time in a ritual called *pejakhia*. Till this time the mother should avoid eating sour items and garlic. When the baby is one year old they observe the tonsure ceremony, *batabiba* availing the services of a *Bhandari* (barber). For his service the barber is remunerated with Rs.5/- in cash and a new cloth. A feast is given to the community members, relatives and friends who attend the ceremony with their presents in shape of rice and vegetables and gifts for the new born.

### **Puberty Rite**

Kotia observe puberty rite (*kanyauthani*) when a girl attains her first menarche. The pollution period continues for seven days. During the period she is segregated in an isolated room and prohibited to look or talk to the male persons. She eats rice and molasses only during these days. On the eighth day she accompanied by her girlfriends goes to the nearest hill stream and takes a purificatory bath anointing her body with turmeric paste and put on new clothes presented by her relatives and friends. The *Disari* purifies her by sprinkling ritualized water with flowers. Family deities are also worshipped on this occasion.

### **Marriage**

In Kotia society the marriage, arranged through proper negotiation though expensive, is considered as ideal and prestigious. For negotiation the groom's parents take the initial step and visit the bride's house accompanied by their Naik(traditional village chief) to put forth the marriage proposal. A few days after they proceed again to the bride's residence taking with them the items of bride price consisting of some *putis* of rice, a buck, a fowl, a saree with some cosmetics for the bride and finally put forth the marriage proposal. If the bride's father accepts the offerings then it is considered that the proposal is accepted and then on the third day after the acceptance of the bride price the marriage date is fixed in consultation with their traditional priest *Disari*. Generally they perform their marriage ceremonies during the months of *Baisakh*, *Kartika*, *Magh* or *Phagun*.

On the marriage day five persons from the groom's village go to the bride's house, carrying with them molasses and flattened rice and return in evening with the bride accompanied by her relatives, lineage members and girlfriends to the groom's village singing their marriage folk songs. In an auspicious moment the *Disari* performs the wedding rites. The bride groom and the bride sit touching each other's feet concealed by a piece of cloth and the women sprinkle water drops over the couple. After that the hiding cloth is removed and women anoint the newly wedded couple with turmeric paste. A feast is given to the guests and all the relatives and lineage members who celebrate the occasion by marry-making, drinking and dancing. Consummation of marriage takes place on the third day. After four days the new couple visits the bride's father's house and stay there for three days.

The other forms of marriage prevalent in Kotia society are marriage by capture (*Jhika*), by elopement (*Udulia*) or love marriage. In *Jhika* marriage, the girl is abducted forcibly by the boy who takes the girl to his house and obtains her consent for marriage which is very important without which the marriage will not be possible. When the father of the girl comes in search of his daughter, if the girl is willing to marry the boy, the father of the girl is presented with the bride price consisting of some rice, fowl and goat. Then their marriage is socially recognized.

*Udulia* marriage takes place when the boy and the girl fall in love and want to marry but the bride's parents do not agree or demand huge bride price which the groom's parents are unable to meet. In this situation the boy and the girl elope to a distant place and live together as husband and wife. After some time they return to groom's village. Getting the news, the girl's father visits to the boy's house with his villagers to demand the bride price. In a joint meeting of the villagers of both the sides the matter is settled and the bride price is paid in kinds of one *putti* of rice, a he goat, a fowl, a saree and some cosmetics for the bride to the girl's father. Thereafter, a non-vegetarian feast with country liquor is held in the girl's village in which both parties participate.

In Kotia society cross cousin marriage junior levirate, junior sororate and also remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees are permitted. When a married woman elopes with another man abandoning her husband then her new husband has to pay a penalty i.e. double the amount of expenses the former husband has incurred for his marriage to the concerned woman. This matter is also decided in their traditional community council.

### **Divorce**

In Kotia society divorce is permitted and either of the spouses can seek divorce on the grounds of maladjustment, impotency, barrenness, cruelty, chronic sickness, adultery, extramarital relationship, poor maintenance and laziness in performing economic pursuits and misbehavior in conjugal life. After divorce, the children are the liability of the father and the wife is only allowed to keep the breast feeding children for nourishment for which the husband has to pay some compensation to her. If the wife deserts her husband she gets no compensation. The divorce cases are settled in their traditional community council.

### **Death Rituals**

Kotia practice both cremation and burial to dispose of their dead. Their death rituals have some resemblance with those of their caste neighbours. In cases of deaths occurring due to small pox or cholera and deaths of children the corpses are buried. The dead body anointed with turmeric paste and oil is bathed in tepid water and placed in a bier. The pall bearers carry it to the cremation/burial ground. When the pall bearers reach the village outskirts the widow of the deceased breaks her bangles and return home after taking bath. The pall bearers place the dead on the pyre keeping its head towards east and face upwards and

the maternal nephew sets fire on the pyre. After the cremation is completed all the participants take purificatory bath in nearest hill stream and return to the dead person's house where they sprinkle on their body sacred water mixed with mango leaves for purification. The pall bearers again visit the cremation spot where they make an image of the dead with rice flour and cover it up by a cloth smeared with water mixed with turmeric paste. In order to pacify the dead soul they place a pitcher filled with water having a small hole below, releasing drops of water over the idol, tied by ropes on three Kendu twigs planted around the spot.

Death pollution continues for eleven days. During this period, relishing on non-vegetarian food, observance of rituals and festivals, using oil, visiting sacred places, worshipping deities, giving alms to beggars and sexual intercourse are strictly tabooed for the bereaved family. They observe the final purificatory rite *dasa* or *bur* on the eleventh day availing the services of their traditional priest, Disari. After the purificatory rites are completed the bereaved family hosts a non-vegetarian feast to lineage members, relatives, guests, and villagers in the evening.

### LIVELIHOOD

In the past the Kotia were a hunting and food gathering community but now-a-days they eke out their subsistence by shifting and settled cultivation and agricultural labour. They have small patches of wet lands around the hill stream basin and dry land in hill slopes where they produce different crops like early variety paddy (*padadhan*), *ragi*, *bazra*, *suan*, minor millets like *kangu*, *kosla*, *jawar*, oil seeds such as mustard *tila*, *nizer*, pulses like black gram (*mung*), green gram (*biri*), horse gram (*kulthi*) etc. Besides that, they also possess small kitchen gardens in back side of their house where they grow varieties of vegetables like plantain, papaya, drumstick, brinjal, pea, tubers, gourd, pumpkin, cucumber etc. to meet their consumption needs and to sale the surplus in market for cash.

Besides agriculture, seasonal forest collection is their subsidiary occupation. From forest they collect fuel wood, seasonal edible fruits, roots and tubers, flowers (Mohua flower), seeds (Mohua seeds), fodders and grass to thatch their house, fibers for rope making, herbal medicines, honey, lac, mushrooms and green leaves and Sal leaves etc. from which they make leaf plate for household use and sale in market for cash. Women and grown up children are participate in forest collection. Women besides attending to their daily routine household chores contribute substantially in economic pursuits like cultivation, wage earning and forest collection etc. while helping for smooth management of the household.

### Food Habit

Kotias are non-vegetarians. Rice and *ragi* are their staple cereals which they take with pulses, vegetables. In lean season they live on fruits, roots and tubers like *pitakanda*, *darikanda*, *baliakanda* etc. collected from the nearby forest. Mango kernels are collected and its gruel is taken at the time of food scarcity. They

like to eat non-veg items prepared out of fish (*mass*), fowl (*kukuda*), goat (*cheli*), sheep (*menda*), forest animals such as squirrel (*tilmusa*), wild cat (*kada*) goat (*kotra*), rabbit (*kara*) and wild fowls (*dongor kukuda*). Dry fish and tortoise flesh are their favorite food. Eating pork, beef and buffalo meat is prohibited. They use *tola*, *kusum* and *alsi* oils as their cooking medium with onion, chillies, tamarind, turmeric and other species.

Both men and women are addicted to various alcoholic drinks such as *mahuli*, *pendum*, *landa*, *chauli* (rice beer) and *salap* (sago palm juice) etc. which they prepare at home or purchase from the local venders. They offer the drinks to their relatives, guests and deities in festive occasions to appease them. Both the sexes smoke handmade *picka* and *suta* or *bidi* and chew tobacco leave/ paste.

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES:

Kotia religion is animism which is amalgamated with some elements of the religion of the neighboring castes. *Mauli Munda* is their supreme deity who is installed under a *Kendu* tree in the village outskirts. *Betal Bhairab* is their family deity installed in a corner of their kitchen and worshipped by their females. Their Pantheon also includes *Nissaniguda* which according to their belief protects them from small pox and many other epidemics and is worshipped along with the family deity *Mauli Munda* in the month of Chaitra during observance of *Chaitiparab* festival by their traditional priest, Disari.

*Chaitiparab* is their major festival, held in the month of Chaitra (March-April) on the date fixed by the Disari. During this festival they also observe the *Aam Nua* festival for the new eating of mango offering it first to the deities. They observe newrice eating ceremony (*Nua Khai*) in the month *Sravana* (July-August) after the harvest of early variety paddy. In the month of *Asadha* they observe the *Asarh Jatra* in which they gather all the domestic animals of the village in one place and worship the deity by offering animal sacrifice for the welfare of their animals.

As their religion is influenced by Hinduism to a great extent they worship Hindu deities like Lord *Jaganath*, *Gupteswar*, Lord *Ganesh*, Goddess *Luxmi*, *Parbati*, *Saraswati* etc. and also make pilgrimage to worship Lord *Jaganath*. They observe Hindu festivals like *Ramanavami*, *Raja*, *Gamha*, *Ganesh Puja*, *Ratha Yatra*, *Basanta Panchami*, *Dola*, *Holi* etc. with great reverence.

They believe in black magic and existence of ghosts and spirits among whom some are benevolent and some, malevolent who cause disaster in human life by their evil powers. In order to gratify the evil spirits the Kotia appease them with the help of their witch doctor by offering animal sacrifices along with country liquor at the time of crises and also during festive occasions.

## **SOCIAL CONTROL**

Kotia have their own traditional tribal community council at the village level as well in regional level to deal with their customary matters. The village council is headed by their secular head called Naik who is assisted by the priest-Pujari, witch doctor-Disari and the messenger called Chalan. The posts of Naik, Pujari and Disari are hereditary whereas the post of messenger is by selection. The Naik, Pujari and Disari are from their own community whereas Chalan is from Dom community and appointed for a term of one year or till he remains in confidence of the village elites and leaders. The Chalan gets remuneration in kind food and food grains for his services on annual basis which he has to collect from every Kotia household in the village.

In their community council sessions, cases of family dispute, theft, rape, molestation, misbehavior, marriage, bride price, divorce, adultery, violation of customary norms, partition of family property, intra village disputes are adjudicated. Verdicts are given upon unanimous decision based on the merits of the cases and the offender is awarded punishment accordingly which are final the disobedience of which results in social ex-communication. The inter village disputes are referred to their regional community council for adjudication and settlement. The members of their traditional community council are highly respected persons in the society.

## **DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE**

In modern times due to planned change and modernization as well as their prolonged and close contact of with their neighboring tribes and castes, the Kotia society is undergoing a phase of transition. Different development works of the Government and non-government agencies has brought changes in their way of life. After Independence, various tribal welfare and socio-economic development programmes have been launched which include legal aid, rehabilitation of economically poor, housing facilities, establishment of residential schools and hostels, introduction of modern agriculture, horticulture and irrigation, road communication etc. It has made some impacts in their life and living. Now they are using different types of modern gadgets like television, radio, mobile phone, motorcycle, watch etc. Many of their villages are electrified.

The Kotia are no longer isolated from the world outside. Yet, in spite of the impact of the forces of modernization, the Kotia have, more or less, retained the core elements of their age-old traditional way of life, which distinguishes them from other tribal and non-tribal communities. But by all standards, they have remained socio-economically backward as compared to the communities of national mainstream.

## K O Y A \*

*S. C. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

Koya live in the southernmost part of Orissa, concentrated in Podia, Motu, and Malkangiri blocks of Malkangiri district. They are an ancient tribe credited with a unique way of community oriented life and arich cultural heritage. They call themselves '*Koya*' or '*Koitor*' meaning '*people*'. The Koyas living in adjacent Bastar region of Chhatishgarh are called Dorla and Madia.

As per 2011 census their population in Odisha is 1,47,137 including 71,014 males and 76,123 females having the sex ratio of 1072. Their percentage of literacy is 29.87 only (36.46% for males and 23.77% for females). Their mother tongue Koya is a Dravidian language and some of them are conversant in Odia.

Koya village settlements are unique having houses quite spread out. Typical palisade bamboo fencing all around is a distinguishing feature of Koya settlements. Very close to their settlements one notices stone pillars and wooden posts erected in memory of their dead ancestors. The number of houses in a village varies from ten to thirty. Each house, its courtyard and adjoining kitchen garden are nicely fenced by bamboo splits. They have mud houses beautifully thatched by a type of jungle grass. Houses are rectangular giving shelters to their pigs and fowls. Herds of cattle are put or tethered in front courtyard open air.

Traditionally, the Koyas are pastoralists and shifting cultivators but now-a-days, they have taken to settled cultivation supplemented by animal husbandry and seasonal forest collections. They own large herds of cows and bullocks. They sell milk and milk products but do not relish them. In their traditional system, *chom* or wealth means cattle, because a Koya without cattle has no status in the society. They are basically rice cultivators and seasonally they depend upon forest collections and fishing. They grow tobacco, maize, beans, vegetables, mustard, millets etc. in their fields.

---

\* Unpublished article of 2000 updated in 2019

<sup>1</sup> Former Joint Director and now Consultant (R&P), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

They have two important deities: *Bijagudi*, house deity and *Gudimata*, village deity. They worship mother-earth as village deity.

They observe a number of festivals like, *Bija Pendu*, *Kota Pendu*, *Bumud Pendu*, *Idu Pendu*, or *Ikk Pendu*, etc. Most of the festivals revolve round their agricultural calendar and associated with health and happiness of the family and the villagers. They offer sacrifices of eggs, pigeons, fowls, goats, and pigs, cows and buffaloes to their deities and spirits.

Koya society is divided into five broad social divisions, *katta*, such as, *Kowasi*, *Sodi*, *Madkami*, *Madi* and *Padiyami*. Each social division is further subdivided into several groups and sub-groups. Their kins, *kutumb*, and affine, *wiwalwand*, are clearly distinguished.

Marriage is termed as *pendul*. Koya parents have the liberty to select brides. Marriages by service, intrusion, and exchange are also practiced. The custom of bride price or bride wealth is prevalent. In some cases the wife is younger to the husband. Marriage negotiation starts at an early age. The children are considered as gift of God. Well-to-do and influential Koyas used to acquire two or more wives.

They observe rites de passage; secondary burial ritual is observed most elaborately. Birth pollution is observed for seven days. Name giving ceremony of the new born is performed after 2 to 3 months of birth. Puberty rites are observed for the pubescent girl attaining her first menarche. Some of her relations go to the nearby forest, select an isolated spot and make two small huts over two adjacent trees. An old lady accompanies the girl and they both stay in two different huts on the trees out of the sight of the male folks for the pollution period of seven days. During these 7 days of pollution no *puja* or festival is observed in the village. The Koyas think that if the girl during these seven days walks over the earth it shall become barren; the trees which she shall touch will not bear fruits.

The youth dormitories of Koyas play a major role for promoting their culture and tradition. The dormitories are the institution for unmarried youths. The Koya boys and the girls spend nights there in separate rooms. The girls' dormitory is called *Pikin-Kudma*. The girls gather there in the night for singing and gossiping and they sleep there together. But this practice is gradually being abandoned and in many villages *Pikin-Kudma* is not in existence. An open space left opposite the dormitory is meant for practicing dance. It would not be wrong to say it as school of dance for the Koya youths. This dormitory also facilitates selection of life partner by the youth. It is indeed a democratic institution for promotion and propagation of Koya culture.

The traditional village council used to be headed by *Pedda*, the village headman, and *Perma*, the priest. The posts of *Pedda* and *Perma* are hereditary. The

shaman, magician-cum-herbal medicine man is known as *Wadde. Kotwal*, hailed from the Domb, a scheduled caste community acts as the messenger.

The Koya dance is characterized not only by its originality and spontaneity but also for its wide range of movements. When happily inspired, they can coin a song then and there and sing it. When they see things of beauty and meet pleasantly, they express their pleasure and happiness by composing songs. The bison horn dances are distinguishing characteristics of the Koya.

In spite of the impact of modernization, the Koya have retained their varied rich cultural heritage in different forms including colourful dance and music which form an integral part of their festivals and rituals.



## K O Y A \*

*P. K. Mohapatra* <sup>1</sup>

The Koya constitute the principal tribe of Malkangiri, and are most widely distributed throughout this area. But it can be discerned that the Koyas gradually thin down as we go towards the east and north-eastern region. Their concentration is limited to the entire southern portion and some portions in the north up to Mathili lying at a distance of 29 miles north of Malkangiri, where they come in contact with the Ronas and Bhumiya.

The total Koyas population according to 1961 Census is 55,284. The table below indicates the distribution of Koya in various districts of Orissa although they are mainly concentrated in the Malkangiri sub-division of Koraput district.-

Sl. No	Name of the District	Total Population	Male	Female
1.	Koraput	53,590	26,428	27,162
2.	Sambalpur	383	340	43
3.	Boudh-Kandhamal	48	26	22
4.	Ganjam	711	355	356
5.	Dhenkanal	58	23	35
6.	Puri	153	65	88
7.	Keonjhar	165	95	70
8.	Mayurbhanj	87	40	47
9.	Balesore	89	45	44
<b>Total</b>		<b>55,284</b>	<b>27,417</b>	<b>27,867</b>

The Koyas of Malkangiri subdivision, though culturally a homogeneous group, can be divided into two groups according to the proximity of the local population of the subdivision with whom they come in contact and by whom

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No.3, (Spl. Issue), TRB, Bhubaneswar 1963-64, pp.81-88

<sup>1</sup> Former Deputy Director, THRTI, Bhubaneswar

they have been found profoundly influenced in many respects. The Koyas living north of the sub-divisional headquarters up to Mathili and in south up to Manyemkonda are of more primitive nature than the southerners living within villages Mallavaram and Mottu, the southernmost point of the subdivision. The Southern Koyas are greatly influenced by the Telugu people who come from adjacent area of Andhra Pradesh and most of the people living at Mottu happen to be Telugu business men.

### *The Koyas and their country*

The Koyas inhabit in the Malkangiri subdivision of Koraput district and number about 37,000 according to the 1951 Census. They are scattered all through the southern part of the Malkangiri subdivision which is covered with dense forests and is less hilly than other subdivisions of the district.

Though there have been recent improvements, communication is till poor. A *kacha* but motor able road connects the new Malkangiri subdivision with Jeypore town. This road extends up to Mottu the southernmost point of the subdivision but it is accessible only for six months in the year because the rivers and rivulets that cut through it have not yet been bridged. There are also similar *kacha* road which go round the western and eastern boundary of the subdivision.

### *The Koya villages*

The Koya villages are situated on patches of clearing in the midst of forests. Approaches to the villages are by narrow foot paths diverging from the *kacha* road. There are also villages which lie on the side of this *kacha* road. There is no specific demarcation to indicate the approach to village but in the northern part of the Koya region the approach to village is indicated by the presence a cluster of stone pillars of "Urs Kik" raised in memory of the dead ancestors. Split bamboo-fencing of gardens also indicate the presence of a village nearby. The villages vary in size, largest village may consist of 25 to 30 houses and the smallest often of 4 to 5 houses. In every village, one will find two or more clusters of houses indicating the late or early settlers of the village. The Koyas very often shift from one village to another either in search of new land or for fear of supernatural elements which cause, as they believe, natural calamities to their health and prosperity.

Each house consists of one or two small huts which are used as sleeping rooms. The walls of a house are made of branches of trees and bamboos which are thickly plastered with mud.

The roofs are thatched with a type of jungle grass collected by the Koya from the nearby jungles which is locally known as "Sindi". The houses are rectangular in size and are partitioned into rooms by means of walls of bamboos plastered with mud. As the house has no windows it is always dark inside and the oven is situated in one corner of this house where the Koya women cook

their meals. The boundary of each house site is demarcated by fencing made of bamboo splits neatly woven. Apart from the sleeping rooms there are raised small sheds for pigs, goats and fowls. Sometimes pigs also share the same house with the men. Attached to the house there is always a verandah almost on all sides. This serves the purpose of sitting and doing domestic work. The southernmost part of Malkangiri Taluk where the Koya have been much influenced by Telugu people, one finds the verandah of more elaborate nature. They are sometimes 3 feet high. The Koya do not have separate store rooms. The grain and collections are stored under the roof over a self inside the sleeping rooms. The shelves are made of bamboos and wooden pillars.

In each village there is one Bijagudi or 'House of God'. This is not always situated inside the village. Sometimes, the Bijagudi is situated near the village boundary or sometimes before the house of his 'Peda' or the chief. Besides, there are places which are taken to be sacred, such as a group of Mahul tree in or near a village where the villagers worship "Gudimata" the village goddess.

In each village there is a house which is used by the unmarried girls of a village for sleeping and gossiping at night. But this practice is probably going out of vogue. In some villages like Dharmapalli and Sikapalli the investigator found no particular house being used for this purpose. The boys sleep in their respective houses.

Each house has attached to it a garden where the Koyas grows tobacco, mustard and vegetables. There gardens are always either behind or near the house of the owner. Maize and millets are also grown in the garden. The roofs of almost all houses are seen covered with creepers of vegetables. "Sikud Koya" or the beans are planted by every Koya in his garden or near his house.

Among the trees that are commonly found in Koya village are "IK" or Mahul (*Bassia latifolia*). "Salap" (*Caryota urens*). When a path of clearing is made all the trees are felled except Mahul trees. These trees are found in abundance in the northern part of the Keya area. Towards the southern-most part of the Koya country these are rare but a large number of palm trees are found. All these trees provide liquor to the Koya without which they say, they cannot survive. A Koya can pull on without food for few days but not without such liquor.

The wide open spaces before each house are used by the Koyas for their cattle. The cattle are tethered by long ropes to posts or trunk of nearby trees. The Koyas do not have sheds owned either by individuals or groups. The cattle are always exposed to the weather.

### **Language:**

The language spoken by the Koyas belong to the Gondi dialect of the Dravidian group. This dialect also differs among the two groups of the north and the south. To certain extent the difference may be adduced to the fact that the

vocabulary of the Koyas is very limited; thus they depend on the major lingua franca of the region in which they live. There has been incorporation of Telugu and Hindi and Oriya words in the language of the southern and northern Koyas respectively. This was gathered from the Koya students of Gompakonda Ashram School where the southern and northern Koya boys live together and find the difference in their respective dialects.

From above description it is evident that the Koyas of the two regions of the subdivision are more or less similar linguistically, the slight differences being due to contact with Oriya or Telugu speakers. The southern have been much influenced in dress, ornaments and hair style by the Telugus while the northerners have retained their primitiveness to a great extent.

## **Social Organization**

### ***Family***

The Family may be taken as the smallest unit of the social grouping in the Koya society. A family called 'Lotam' in Koya language. It includes the parents and their children and in a way follows the Hindu joint family system by including the brothers with their wives and their respective children. In fact a family consists of the parents, their adult son, with their wives and children and unmarried daughters. Sometimes the family also includes the "Olaam" or the *gharjuain* who stays in his father-in-law's house with his wife. This is the form of marriage by service. As soon as the sons become adult and married they build up their own houses round the parent house to live separately with their wives but the cooking for the whole family is made in one place. If any of the adult son wants to be separated he asks his father to give him some land to put up separately from the rest of the family. This process is gradually becoming common among the Koyas. Example may be given of Madkam Masa, the Peda of the village Sikapalli, who is staying with his two sons and the other two being completely separated from them and are putting up in their separate establishments. There are many other instances which can be cited to show that the joint family system is gradually diminishing, the causes of which should be studied elaborately.

Though monogamy is the rule, many Koya families are found based on the system of polygynous marriage. As the expenses of getting a bride is high majority of the Koya cannot afford to marry more than one wife. A wealthy Koya can afford to marry three to four wives. The head man of village Sikapalli has three wives out of which one is dead and the other two are living. Madkam Bojja (36), son of the headman, has two wives. Madkam Dewa (38) who is also wealthy has married two wives one of whom died years back and other is living. On enquiry it was found that polygynous marriage in the Koya society was possible for those who were economically better off than others. Usually two considerations are made by those who marry more than one wife. One is that,

they get sufficient economical help from the wives as womenfolk in the Koya society take immense part in the pattern of economic activities of the Koya people. Secondly, it is a reinforcement of the source of gratification for sexual urge because in many cases the wives are older in age than the husband, and become old when the husband is still possessing youth and vigour. Besides, a Koya feels himself a man of position and status by marrying more than one wife.

### *Units of Kin group*

The Koya distinguish between two types of kin groups which they call as 'Kutuman' or the consanguine kin and the "wiwal wand' or the affinal kin. A consanguine kin of a person belongs to the same phratry of the person. There are five such phratries present in the Koya society. They are 1.Kowasi, 2.Odi or Sodi, 3.Madkam, 4.Madi, 5.Padiami. A Kawasi can take a wife from any of the four remaining phratries other than his own. Similarly, any person belonging to a particular phratry can choose wife from the rest of the groups. A person cannot marry a girl of the same phratry to which he belongs because all persons in that group are believed to have blood relationship with the person even though the person is not known to them and they live widely apart from each other. As such, when a man goes in search of a bride he is asked as to which phratry or 'Katta' he belongs to. This is because a phratry consists of a number of clans with different names some of which are detailed below:-

Edukatta Phratry:	Kawasi, Duber, Emala, Wanzamir, Korsta, Witer.
Aidukata Phratry:	Sodi, Wika, Galir, Gontpontalewar, Ganget, Lawar, Dagulwar, Pittalwar.
Mulkatta Phratry:	Madkam, Durwa, Madiam, Tai, Mottum, Dharmu, Pondur, Jondor, Joder, Undmir, Kalmu. Turramir.
Parengotta Phratry:	Jelier, Oyemir, Madir, Darer, Pujsemir, Punyem, Bogar.
Perumboi Phratry:	Omrar, Alwa, Bandam, Kurram, Padiam, Wetir, Kanjaru, Kunja, Kokral, Kattam, Ondi, Rova, Kotam.

The above information was collected from village Mallavaram and Mottu which is the region of southern Koyas.

### *The Koya system of marriage:*

Koya marriage or 'Pendul' is one of the important social functions without which a man has no place in the society. For Koyas, marriage is a necessity because they have to perpetuate their generations and satisfy the biological need of sexual urge. Moreover, wife is one indispensable partner in all spheres of their life and from a study of the division of labour on the basis of sex

it becomes evident that a Koya cannot do without a wife in the ordinary day to day life. The Koyas attach little or no importance to the physical beauty of a girl for marrying. The criteria for a coveted wife are her sound health and capability of undertaking arduous labour in economical as well as social activities. The criteria for a good husband lie in the fact of his being able to support the family and having a large number of cows and bullocks physically tall and healthy.

Freedom in the selection of spouse is very much limited and it is only the parents who take initiative for marriage negotiation. Where freedom is exercised by any girl or boy form of marriage bears a different name which is tolerated but after a much complicated method concerning the payment of compensation which will be discussed later. The commonly practiced form of marriage is known simply as 'Pendul'. The system of marriage in which a boy carries off a girl with the help of his friends while she is in forest or field is known as "Karsu pendul" or the marriage where compensation has to be paid to the bride's father". The other form where a girl having previous connection with a boy comes forcibly to the boy's house to stay is called "Lon-udi-wata" marriage. In this case the bride-price which is to be paid to the bride's father is much less than that of other forms of marriage, because she enters the groom's house according to her won will and without the consent of parents. In the case where a boy carries off a girl he has to gather directly or indirectly the consent of the girl. Then he tells his father of his motive and if his father gives consent he brings down the girl to his house with the help of his friends. The bride's father demands the boy compensation amounting to rupees three hundred, one she-calf for the girl's maternal uncle, 'chhada' or cloth for the mother of the girl. Out of rupees three hundred, rupees eighty are given to the bride's father for his own villagers because they help him in realizing the compensation from the other party. The villagers make a feast in it.

The age for marriage is fixed at the maturity of both sexes. The Koyas think a boy attains maturity when hairs develop in his armpit and mustaches come up. Usually these things happen when a boy is of age twelve to thirteen. Hence the marriageable age for boys starts from the age thirteen. For girl marriageable age beings when she has attained puberty (*etarta*) irrespective of her age. Hence the age of wives are found to be more than their husbands. Many instances can be cited to show that the husbands are younger in age than wives. This is one of the important reasons as to why the Koyas practice polygyny. Wives loose the urge for sex when their husbands are still youthful. But this is not always the case. The problem arises when a nubile girl marries a bridegroom who has not actually attained maturity but is thought to have attained it. This is because of the early development of sexual hairs. In this case the case the wife has to wait till her husband becomes fully grown up to perform sexual inter course with her. She sleeps with her husband and is expected to remain chaste but actually it does not happen so. Rare instance are found of an adolescent boy

marrying an infant bride in which case the boy has to wait till she matured to come and stay with him.

### *Marriage ceremony.*

### *Marriage Customs*

Koya marriage (Pendul) begins soon after the first harvest is over and continues till the month of April. In the selection of the bride preference is given to maternal uncle's 'daughter' (Erupiki) or father's sister's daughter ("Erupiki"). This is the generally approved form of marriage. There is another form of marriage known as "Karsu pendul" or marriage where compensation has to be paid to the bride's father because the bride is forcibly taken by the groom. On the day of marriage the bride is brought to the groom's house accompanied by her friends and relatives. Villagers from distant places come to dance in the marriage ceremony even without being invited. They are given rice beer ("landa") to drink and some ration for food. The Koyas perform the ceremonial dance wearing bison horns on their head.

### *Child Training and Education*

The Koyas are not able to understand the physiological phenomena of birth and to co-relate between sexual intercourse and conception. When a woman is conceived, it is thought that god has put the child inside the mother's womb. A pregnant woman carries on her routine work till the expected month of delivery when she is taken to a hut erected behind the main house. After six to seven days of delivery of the child she returns to her home. Delivery is assisted by some experienced woman of the village.

Naming ceremony is done after a few days of the birth of the child. It is interesting to note that the name of the Koyas are very much limited in number and in a single village more than one people are found bearing same name. This may be due to the way in which names are given. A child is put in cradle and some rice is put into the closed palms of the child. The shaman goes on telling names that comes to his mind. When the baby opens the palm and rice is thrown down the name uttered by the shaman at that particular time is given to the baby. Sometimes the practice differs. The shaman makes the baby crying while it is in the cradle. The shaman goes on telling the names. When the baby sleeps and stops crying the name uttered at that time is given to the baby. The Koyas have a belief in the reincarnation of life. A grandfather is supposed to be born as grandson i.e., a person's son. As such the names of the grandfather are seen being given to the grandson.

The Koyas divide the period from the birth of a child to the end of weaning 'period into seven stages. They are:

1. Ukadta Unzito (The period of sleeping in cradle)
2. Kapmundita (Rolling from one side to the other)

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 3. Kudigaitite      | (To crawl in a sitting position)            |
| 4. Marmindan        | (To crawl on all fours)                     |
| 5. Tagse Duder      | (To walk with the help of bamboomade frame) |
| 6. Gundugunduminite | (Little running)                            |
| 7. Gati Mirito      | (Running fast)                              |

When a child reaches the last mentioned stage he leaves suckling of mother's breast and learns to speak and is helped by the mother to know names of the kings. Till seven years of age, mother takes entire responsibility of a child by way of caretaking. Till the end of weaning period a child is treated with kindness and after that period he is lightly coerced if his impulse is found unruly. Fathers generally do not beat their daughters when they are above twelve. Mothers generally do not beat their sons when they are above twelve and become grown-up. The boys and girls are expected to show proper behavior to others even before they reach the stage of maturity.

Till the age of six neither boys nor girls use any cloth to hide their genitals but soon after that mothers teach them the way of wearing 'Chilwudsa', to both boys and girls. When the girls reach the age of nine or ten they know wearing of "Goladwudsa", the way in which women folk wear their clothes. The boys wear loin cloths, the way in which the men folk wear their clothes. The Koya boys use to learn their traditional knowledge of making bows and arrows and other things early even before they are adolescents. They prepare miniature bows and arrows (Juri) and play with them. A group of boys play the 'Jurikarsitor' game but aim to a particular place. Either they divide themselves into two groups or two boys play at a time. When a boy misses an aim the arrow is taken away by the winner. It is interesting to note that small boys of even age ten to twelve possess the power of accurately aiming at a particular spot. As a matter of fact the boys in a group go for hunting small birds, if they happen to find any, bring them and eat after roasting them in fire.

### *Religious beliefs*

The Koyas have incorporated a number of Hindu gods and goddess into their pantheon and local Hindu gods and goddess at Manyem Konda, Bezangwada, Mariwada and Malkangiri are worshipped by the Koyas. They also fear and worship the goddess of smallpox as is done by the local Hindu population. Smallpox is not regarded as disease and a person affected by smallpox goes to the 'Perma' or the priest of the village who makes offering to that goddess for propitiation and cure.

The belief in the cult of village mother (Gudi Mata) and the cult of Earth (Bhum) is most common. In religious ceremonies, offering are made to their goddesses for good harvest of all crops and the eradication of disease and natural calamities.



The religious ceremonies which are observed by the Koyas are mainly four. They are 'Bijja Pandu', Kodta Pandu, Bumud Pandu and Idu or Ikk Pandu'. Bijja Pandu is observed in the month of Semiti corresponding to months of Baisakh and Jyestha when the earth goddess is worshiped with offering of cock, pig, eggs and mango. Goddess is requested by the priest to render a good harvest. Seeds of paddy are also placed before the goddess believing that those seeds will become good one by the divine touch. Mango is eaten ceremonially during this festival. Ceremonial hunting (Bijjaweta) is also done after this festival. Work during this festival is taboo. In the month of Kani (Bhadrab-Aswain) the Kurrum Pandu is observed when suan is eaten ceremonially. New rice eating ceremony is observed in the month of Dashara (Aswin-Kartik). 'Sikud Pandu' or the new bean eating ceremony is observed in the month Dewad (Kartik-Margasir). Bimud Pandu or the worshipping ceremony of Rain god is observed in the month of Magh (Magh-Phalgun). The festival is observed just after the completion of harvest of all types of crops. Two small clay models of raingod and his wife will be made and kept under a Mahul tree over a stone on the festive day. The villagers with the priest and the headman will gather on the spot and the villager carry crops of all types to the spot. The priest after worshipping the god fills the empty baskets with crops and this is followed by the headman and the villagers. An unmatured girl is made to stand in between the Nayak and the priest. The villagers throw water over them and laugh saying the marriage of rain god is over today (Gajje Binud Pendulnend Terta). Then begin ceremonial dancing and singing.

### *Economic activities*

The Koyas were primarily shifting cultivators. But now-a-days due to various reasons they have taken to settled cultivation. Their method of cultivation indicates their poor knowledge about wet cultivation. In the beginning of the rainy season, they plough their fields once or at best twice and sow seeds. When the plants grow up to a certain height they store water in the fields and pay no further attention till harvest. As a result of this they get a very poor yield of crop. As the yield of paddy does not suffice for a family to pull on for the whole year, the Koyas resort to other types of food quest, i.e., collection of roots and fruit from the jungle and growing of minor crops like *suan*, maize and pulse. It is found that collection of roots and fruits substantially helps the Koyas to solve their food problem. The Mahul trees abound in the Koya area and during the months of March and April large quantities of Mahul are collected, dried and stored for future use. During the months from July to September several types of roots are collected from the jungle and eaten.

Just before harvest, villagers go to watch their crops in the field against the depredations of wild animals and birds. The children are also engaged to drive the birds. During the harvest all the families go to their respective 'Ketuls' or the hutments raised near their fields where they spend the whole day and

come back to village in the evening. During this season, only old men and women are found in the village during day time.

The Koyas are very fond of hunting. Throughout the year they are found in the forests in the pursuit of wild birds, hares, squirrels and wild rats. In the months of April and May they observe a festival called Bijja Pandu or the sacred seed festival when ceremonial hunting is done for days together. Fishing in the rivers is done communally. They use different types of fishing implements and sometimes use poison for catching fish.

### *Use of Cattle*

The Koyas own large herds of cows and bullocks. Towards the interior regions, one will be surprised to see a family possessing three to four hundred heads of cattle. The Koyas do not properly maintain their cattle wealth. No shed is constructed for them and they are exposed to weather throughout the year.

The forest nearby are used as grazing field of the cattle and no other steps are taken to feed them.

According to their traditional economic system, "Chom" or wealth means cattle because a Koya without cattle has no status in the society. No man having no cattle can marry as these are given to the bride's father as bride price. Secondly, the cattle are exchanged for procuring clothes and other necessary household articles. Now-a-days direct barter of cattle are found less and cattle are sold for money which is used in purchasing other things. Thirdly, the cattle are used for ploughing fields and cows are no exception. Fourthly, the oxen and cows are slaughtered as offerings in funeral and other festivals. Lastly the cattle provide quantities of beef which the Koyas eat.

The Koyas seldom milk their cows. They say that the calves will die if the cows are milked every now and then. During rainy season the cows are milked, and from the milk, the Koyas make a little curd and butter. They do not prepare ghee as other people do.

### **THE LEADERS OF KOYA SOCIETY**

#### *The Peda or Headman:*

Leadership, both political and social revolves round the headman of each village. Until recently, as mentioned elsewhere, he had certain economic prerogatives which made him virtually all powerful in a village. Even in religious matters he is the first man to take initiative to ask the priest and villagers to perform religious ceremonies on various occasions.

Usually the office of headman is hereditary. After the death of headman his eldest son becomes the headman of the village. But this is subject to certain conditions. Certain attributes must be fulfilled by the new headman. He must be

a good and impartial man. He must be able to voice the difficulties of the villagers before any government official that visits their village. He must be wise in making decision in case of various types of disputes. In these days the headman is expected to know little Oriya so as to be able to converse with Oriya Officers and tradesmen. In every Koya village the headman are found to be wealthier than others. He may not be the wealthiest man but wealth and richness are always factors for enabling a man to become the headman. Although the office of headman is succeeded by the eldest son this principle is not always adhered to. If the eldest son does not satisfy the conditions mentioned above preference is given to the next son if he is found capable. It was also gathered that if the headman has no son to succeed him preference is then given to his brother's son. In the absence of any of such relations the priest of the village is selected for succeeding the headman in addition to his office of religious leadership of the village.

The headman of each village takes decision with regard to disputes that arise within that village. He asks for the elders of the village to sit round him and both parties involved in a quarrel sit before the headman each occupying a side. Headman also sits in the 'Kula Panchayat', the Panchayat of a particular clan, even though he does not belong to that clan. In Kula Panchayat members of that Kula or clan can only sit and discuss about a disputed matter concerning incest. By virtue of being the headman of that village he is asked to decide any dispute that arises within his own village.

The decision made by the headman of a village is never challenged. No instances could be gathered with regard to a headman who has never been unjust and unpopular. If a headman becomes unpopular due to some reason the villagers sit together and select another man. It is reported somewhere that the people of a village sit together once a year to discuss about the headman's activities. The headmen sit listening to what the people discuss. If he is abused or deprecated for some reason he tries to rectify himself accordingly. This occasion is known as 'Peda Gudam'. In village Mallavaram the author was told that in their area when a new headman is selected a ceremonial function in this connection is performed by the villagers. A new cloth is wrapped in his head like a turban by the priest of the village and he is taken to the village goddess to swear to remain just and good.

Apart from the village as political unit, there is another wider unit which is known as 'Mutha Panchayat'. A Mutha Panchayat consists of members who are headmen of different villages of a particular area. It consists of five headmen of five villages. The Mutha Panchayat controls a number of villages of that region with regards to disputes of serious nature which involve persons of several villages. The members of the Mutha Panchayat are selected by all the headmen of a particular region. Mutha Panchayat mainly deals with cases, like taking away of another's wife by somebody which is considered as 'Barhiyatapu or big crime.

The aggrieved person asks the headman of his village to call for the Mutha Panchayat to get the compensation from the accused person. Crimes like witchcraft and sorcery are also dealt with by the Mutha Panchayat if it happens to involve persons belonging to more than one village.

### ***Perma or Priest***

Next to headman the priest of a village who is called 'Perma' or Pujari assumes immense importance as a leader of Koya society. Although his functions are mainly religious, the Koyas have a great regard for this leader. He is believed to have power of communication with the supernatural beings and as such; he acts as an intermediary between the human beings and the unseen powers. The Koya like the other primitive people mostly depend upon their religious rituals to get relief from the natural calamities which are believed to be caused by angry gods who need to be propitiated. A bumper crop or a successful hunt is thought to be due to the blessings of their gods. Hence they constantly remain concerned with the supernatural beings with regard to all aspects of their way of life. The priest, as such, is the person who is to attend to all the needs of the supernatural beings by way of worshipping or propitiating them with the help of his villagers.

The office of the priest in a village is usually hereditary. In case the priest dies without leaving an heir, a son of his brother is looked for assuming the post. Before becoming a priest a person has to undergo a series of initiation rituals and is asked to observe sexual continence. He then is taught by another priest of some other village in case his father is dead. During religious festival, like Bijja Pandu, Makar Pandu and Idu Pandu, etc. he observes strictly the religious rituals. The night before the festival day, he observes sexual continence and never eats food cooked by a female. He has to fast till worship is over and he is the first man to eat after offerings to god is over. He is invited by the villagers to eat new fruits or drinks the liquor first before they enjoy the new fruits or drink and by doing so they think the gods will remain pleased upon them.

Apart from his religious duties he also attends the meetings of village panchayats and always has a say with regard to any type of dispute. He is, of course, treated as one of the village elders in these cases. At the time of the spread of small pox which is believed by the Koyas to be caused by the goddess, the priest gives orders to the villagers to observe certain taboos.

### ***'Wadde' or Magician***

The Wadde is a magician who occupies equally important position in Koya society like the headman and the priest. A man becomes Wadde not because he is the son of magician or selected by the villagers but because he is supernaturally bestowed with the qualities necessary to become a magician. After the birth of a child if 'Jatel' or matted hair is observed on the head of the child he is destined to become a magician in Koya society. From his childhood he is kept under the special care of his parents and certain taboos are observed with

regard to his food habits. From his boyhood he is kept under the training of an adult magician who teaches him the ways of doing his duties as a magician.

Like the priest he is also possesses power to communicate with the supernatural beings. He differs from the priest by being capable of molding and keeping under control the supernatural beings to achieve success in his designs. He can take the help of malevolent spirits to cause harm to anybody he hates and as such, he is dreaded by the Koyas. On the other hand he is able to drive away the malevolent spirits with the help of his magical performances. It is a very common affair in the Koya area to find the magicians chanting magical sermons before patients of various types. As a matter of fact most of the diseases are believed by the Koyas to be caused by spirits or angry gods. The Koyas run to the magicians for immediate help for dealing with such troubles.

As a member of the society he enjoys equal rights with other Koyas in a village. He can marry and lead a life like others in village in accordance with the social rules and regulations. The Koyas usually bear an ambivalent attitude towards him. He is liked as well as dreaded and as such hated. But his services are believed by the Koyas to be indispensable.

### *The Katwal*

The Katwal is usually considered to be just useful because he helps the headman in assisting him in his work. The headman calls for his help when a meeting of the villagers is to be held. At the time of religious festivals in a village the Katwal goes round the village to call the villagers to gather before the headman to decide the work to be done communally. In a matters of inter village gatherings the Katwal is sent to other villages as a messenger. When an outsider remains in a Koya village the headman makes arrangement for the guest with the help of Katwal. In this way the services of Katwal are also thought to be useful by the Koyas. Apart from this he enjoys equal privilege with others as a member of the society.

\*\*\*\*\*

## K O Y A \*

*P. K. Mohapatra*<sup>1</sup>

The Koya constitute the principal tribe of Malkangiri, and are widely distributed throughout this area. But it can be seen that the Koya gradually thin out as we go towards the east and northeastern region. Their concentration is limited to the entire southern portion and some portions in the north up to Mathili, a distance of 29 miles north of Malkangiri, where they come into contact with the Rana and Bhumiya. In Orissa, they are found in large concentrations in the district of Koraput, though in some other districts are distributed thinly. The total population of the tribe according to the 1991 census is 1 41 927 or only 2.02 per cent of the total tribal population of the state. The population of the tribe, which increased from 87 261 in 1981 to 1 41 927 in 1991, register a very high growth rate of 62.64 per cent as against the state average of 18.89 per cent during the same period. The sex ratio is 919 females per 1000 males. Their literacy percentage, which was very low (4.90) in 1981, had increased to 11.55 by 1991.

The Koya of Malkangiri sub-division, though culturally a homogeneous group, can be divided into two groups according to the proximity of the local population of the sub-division with whom they come in contact and by whom they have been profoundly influenced in many respects. The Koya living north of the sub-divisional headquarters up to Mathili and in the south up to Manyemkonda are of a more primitive nature than the southerners living within villages of Mallavaram and Mottu at the southernmost point of the sub-division. The southern Koya have been greatly influenced by the Telugu people, who come from an adjacent area of Andhra Pradesh. Most of the people living at Mottu happen to be Telugu businessmen.

The Koya villages are situated in clearings in the forests. Access to the villages is by narrow footpaths off the *kacha* road. There are also villages that lie by this *kacha* road. There is no specific demarcation to indicate the approach to a

---

\* Published in *Tribes of Orissa* (revised edition), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2004, pp. 203-212

<sup>1</sup> Former Deputy Director, THRTI, Bhubaneswar

village, but in the northern part of the Koya region this is indicated by a cluster of stone pillars of 'Urskik' raised in memory of the dead ancestors. The split bamboo fencing of gardens also indicates the presence of a village nearby. Villages vary in size: the largest village may consist of 25 to 30 houses and the smallest of 4 to 5 houses. In every village, one will find two or more clusters of houses indicating the later or early settlers of the village. The Koya very often shift from one village to another, either in search of new land or for fear of supernatural elements, which they believe cause natural calamities to their health and prosperity.

Each house consists of one or two small huts, which are used as sleeping rooms. The walls of a house are made of tree branches and bamboo, which are thickly plastered with mud. The roofs are thatched with a type of jungle grass that the Koya collect from the nearby jungle, known locally as *sindi*. The houses are rectangular in size and partitioned into rooms by means of walls of bamboo plastered with mud. As the house has no windows it is always dark inside, and the oven is situated in one corner of this house where the Koya women cook their meals. The boundary of each house site is demarcated by fencing made of neatly woven bamboo splits. Apart from the sleeping rooms there are small sheds for pigs, goats and fowls. Sometimes pigs also share the same house with the men. Attached to the house there is always a verandah almost on all sides. This serves the purpose of sitting and doing domestic work. In the southernmost part of Malkangiri Taluk, where the Koya have been much influenced by Telugu people, one finds verandahs of more elaborate nature, sometimes three feet high. The Koya do not have separate storerooms. The grain and collections are stored under the roof over a shelf inside the sleeping rooms. The shelves are made of bamboo and wooden pillars.

In each village there happens to be one *bijagudi* or 'House of God'. This is not always situated inside the village. Sometimes the *bijagudi* is situated near the village boundary, and sometimes in front of the house of the chief. There are also places that are considered sacred, such as a group of *mahul* trees in or near a village, where the villagers worship Gudimata, the village goddess. In each village there is a house which is used by the unmarried girls of a village for sleeping and gossiping at night. But this practice is probably going out of vogue.

Each Koya house has a kitchen garden always either behind or near the house, where they grow tobacco, mustard and vegetables. Maize and millets are also grown in the garden. The roofs of almost all houses are covered with vegetable creepers. Every Koya plants *sikudkoya* or beans in his garden or near his house. Among the trees that are found in Koya village are IK or *mahul* (*Bassia latifolia*), and *salpa* (*Caryota urens*), which are very common. When a patch of clearing is made, all the trees are felled except for the *mahul* trees. These trees provide liquor to the Koya, without which they say they cannot survive. A Koya can carry on without food for a few days but not without such liquor.

The Koya use the wide open spaces in front of each house for keeping their cattle. Long ropes to posts or the trunks of nearby trees tether the cattle. The Koya do not have sheds owned either by individuals or groups. The cattle are always exposed to the weather.

The languages spoken by the Koya belong to the Gondi dialect of the Dravidian group. This dialect also differs among the two groups of the north and the south. To a certain extent the difference may be attributed to the fact that the vocabulary of the Koya is very limited, so that they depend on the major lingua franca of the region in which they live. There has been some incorporation of Telugu, Hindi and Oriya words into the language of the southern and northern Koya respectively. From the above descriptions it is evident that the Koya of the two regions of the sub-division are more or less similar linguistically, the slight differences being due to contact with Oriya or Telugu speakers. The southerners have been much influenced in dress, ornaments and hairstyle by the Telugus, while the northerners have retained their primitiveness to a great extent.

The family called *lotam* in the Koya language may be taken as the smallest unit of social grouping in Koya society. It includes the parents and their children, and in a way follows the Hindu joint family system by including the brothers with their wives and their respective children. In fact, a family consists of the parents, their adult sons with their wives and children and unmarried daughters. Sometimes the family also includes the *olaam* or the *gharjuain* who stays in his father-in-law's house with his wife. This is marriage by service. As soon as the sons grow up and get married, they build their own houses round the parents' house and live separately with their wives, though the cooking for the whole family is done in one place. If any of the adult sons wants to separate from the family, he asks his father to give him some land separately from the rest of the family. This process is gradually becoming common among the Koya.

Though monogamy is the rule, many Koya families are based on the system of polygynous marriage. As the expenses of getting a bride are high, most Koya cannot afford to marry more than one wife. A wealthy Koya can afford to marry three to four wives. Polygynous marriage in the Koya society is thus possible for those who are economically better off than others. Those who marry more than one wife usually have two considerations in mind in doing so. One is to obtain sufficient economic help from their wives, as the women in Koya society play an immense role in the pattern of economic activities. Secondly, it reinforces gratification of the sexual urge because in many cases the wives are older than their husbands, and become old when the husband still has youth and vigour. Besides, a Koya feels that he becomes a man of position and status by marrying more than one wife.

The Koya distinguish between two types of kin groups, called *kutumam* or consanguineal kin and *wiwalwand* or affinal kin. The consanguineal kin of a person belongs to the same phratry as that person. There are five such phratries



present in the Koya society. They are 1) *Kowasi*, 2) *Odi* or *Sodi*, 3) *Madkam*, 4) *Madi*, 5) *Padiam*. A *Kawasi* can take a wife from any of the four remaining phratries other than his own. Similarly, any person belonging to a particular phratry can choose a wife from the other groups. A person cannot marry a girl of the same phratry to which he belongs because all persons in that group are believed to have a blood relationship with the person, even though they do not know the person and live widely apart from each other. As such, when a man goes in search of a bride he is asked which phratry or *katta* he belongs to.

This is because a phratry consists of a number of clans with different names, some of which are detailed below:

<i>Edukatta Phratry</i>	<i>Kawasi, Duber, Emala, Wanzamir, Korsta, Witer.</i>
<i>Aidukata Phratry</i>	<i>Sodi, Wika, Galir, Gontpontalewar, Ganget, Lawar, Dagulwar, Pittalwar.</i>
<i>Mulkatta Phratry</i>	<i>Madkam, Durwa, Madiam, Tai, Mottum, Dharmu, Pondur, Jondor, Joder, Undmir, Kalmu, Turramir.</i>
<i>Parengotta Phratry</i>	<i>Jelir, Oyemir, Madir, Darer, Pulsemir, Punyem, Bogar.</i>
<i>Perumboi Phratry</i>	<i>Omrar, Alwa, bandam, Kurabo, Podium, Wetter, KangarooKunja, Kokral, Kattam, Ondi, Rova, Kotam.</i>

Koya marriage or *pendul* is one of the important social functions, without which a man has no place in the society. For Koya, marriage is a necessity because they have to perpetuate their generations and satisfy the biological need related to the sexual urge. Moreover, the wife is the indispensable partner in all spheres of their lives, and from a study of the division of labour on the basis of sex it becomes evident that a Koya cannot do anything without a wife in his ordinary daily life. The Koya attach little or no importance to the physical beauty of a girl for marrying. The criteria for a coveted wife are her sound health and ability to undertake arduous labour in economic as well as social activities. The criteria for a good husband lies in the fact of his being physically tall and healthy, able to support the family and having a large number of cows and bullocks.

Freedom in the selection of a spouse is very limited, and it is only the parents who take the initiative in marriage negotiations. Where freedom is exercised by any girl or boy, the form of marriage bears a different name, which is tolerated but after a very complicated method concerning the payment of compensation, which will be discussed later. The commonly practiced form of marriage is known simply as *pendul*. The system of marriage in which a boy carries off a girl with the help of his friends while she is in the forest or field is known as *karsupendul* or marriage where compensation has to be paid to the bride's father. The other form, where a girl having a previous connection with a boy comes forcibly to the boy's house to stay, is called *lon-udi-wata* marriage. In

this case the bride price to be paid to the bride's father is much less than that in other forms of marriage, because she enters the groom's house at to her own will and without the consent of the parents. In the case where a boy carries off a girl he has to obtain the consent of the girl directly or indirectly. Then he tells his father of his motive, and if his father gives his consent, he brings the girl to his house with the help of his friends. The bride's father demands compensation from the boy amounting to three hundred rupees, one she-call for the girl's maternal uncle, a *chhada* or cloth for the mother of the girl. Out of the three hundred rupees, eighty are given to the bride's father for his own villagers because they help him in obtaining compensation from the other party. The villagers use it for a feast.

The age for marriage is fixed at the maturity of both the sexes. The Koya think a boy attains maturity when hairs develop in his armpit and hair appears on the lips. Usually these things happen when a boy is aged twelve to thirteen. Hence the marriageable age for boys starts at thirteen. A girl becomes marriageable when she has attained puberty (*etarta*), irrespective of her age. Hence the age of wives is more than that of their husbands. Many instances can be cited to show that husbands are younger than their wives. This is one important reason why the Koya practice polygamy. Wives lose the urge for sex while their husbands are still young. But this is not always the case. The problem arises when a nubile girl marries a bridegroom, who has not actually attained maturity but is thought to have attained it. This is because of the early development of sexual hairs. In this case the wife has to wait until her husband is fully grown up to perform sexual intercourse with her. She sleeps with her husband and is expected to remain chaste, but this does not actually happen. Rare instances are found of an adolescent boy marrying an infant bride, in which case the boy has to wait until she is mature and comes to stay with him.

Koya marriages begin soon after the first harvest is over and continue till the month of April. In selecting a bride, preference is given to the maternal uncle's daughter (*erupiki*) or father's sister's daughter (*erupiki*). There is another form of marriage known as *karsupendul* or marriage where compensation has to be paid to the bride's father because the bride has been forcibly taken by the groom. On the day of the wedding, the bride is brought to the groom's house, accompanied by her friends and relatives. Villagers from distant places come to dance in the marriage ceremony even without being invited. They are given rice beer (*landa*) to drink and some food. The Koya perform the ceremonial dance wearing bison horns on their heads.

The Koya are not able to understand the physiological phenomena of birth and the relationship between sexual intercourse and conception. When a woman conceives, it is thought that God has put the child inside the mother's womb. A pregnant woman carries on her routine work until the expected month of delivery, when she is taken to a hut erected behind the main house. Six to

seven days after delivery of the child, she returns home. Delivery is assisted by some experienced woman of the village.

The naming ceremony is done a few days after the birth of the child. It is interesting to note that the names of the Koya are very limited in number, and in a single village more than one person may be found bearing same name. This may be due to the way in which names are given. A child is put in cradle and some rice is put into its closed palms. The shaman goes on saying names as they come into his mind. When the baby opens its palms and throws the rice down, the name being uttered by the shaman at that particular time is given to the baby. Sometime the practice differs. The shaman makes the baby cry while it is in the cradle. The shaman goes on saying names. When the baby sleeps and stops crying, the name being uttered at that time is given to the baby. The Koya believe in reincarnation. A grandfather is supposed to be born as grandson, i.e. a person's son. As such the grandfather's name is given to the grandson.

The Koya divide the period from the birth of a child to the end of the weaning period into seven stages. They are:

1. *Ukadta Unzito* (The period of sleeping in the cradle)
2. *Kapmundita* (Rolling from one side to the other)
3. *Kudigaitite* (To crawl in a sitting position)
4. *Marmindan* (To crawl on all fours)
5. *Tagse Duder* (To walk with the help of a bamboo frame)
6. *Gundu Gundu Minite* (Little running)
7. *GatiMirito* (Running fast)

When a child reaches the last stage he leaves off sucking his mother's breast, learns to speak and is helped by its mother to learn the names of kings. Until seven years of age the mother takes the entire responsibility for the care of a child. Until the end of the weaning period a child is treated with kindness. After that period he is slightly chastised if his behavior is found to be unruly. Fathers generally do not beat their daughters when they are above twelve. Mothers generally do not beat their sons when they are above twelve and become grown up. The boys and girls are expected to show proper behavior to others even before they reach the stage of maturity.

Until the age of six neither boys nor girls use any cloth to hide their genitals, but soon after this their mothers teach both boys and girls how to wear the *chilwaudsa*. When the girls reach the age of nine or ten they know how to wear the *goladudsa*, the way in which women folk wear their clothes. The boys wear loin clothes. Koya boys learn their traditional knowledge of making bows

and arrows and other things early, even before they are adolescents. They prepare miniature bows and arrows (*juri*) and play with them. A group of boys play the *jurikarsitor* game but aim at a particular place. Either they divide themselves into two groups or two boys play at a time. When a boy misses a shot, the arrow is taken away by the winner. It is interesting to note that small boys as young as ten to twelve possess the power to aim accurately at a particular spot. As a matter of fact the boys in a group go hunting for small birds, and if they happen to find any, eat them after roasting them in fire.

The Koya have incorporated a number of Hindu gods and goddesses into their pantheon. The local Hindu gods and goddesses are worshipped at Manyam Konda, Bezangwada, Mariwada and Malkangiri. They also fear and worship the goddess of smallpox. Smallpox is not regarded as a disease, and a person affected by it goes to the *perma* or the priest of the village, who makes an offering to the goddess as propitiation and as a cure. Belief in the cult of the village mother (*gudimata*) and the cult of the earth (*bhum*) is the most common. In religious ceremonies, offerings are made to their goddesses for a good harvest of all crops and the eradication of disease and natural calamities.

The religious ceremonies that are observed by the Koya are mainly four. They are Bijja Pandu, Kodta Pandu, Bumud Pandu and Idu or Ikk Pandu. Bijja Pandu is observed in the month of Semiti, which corresponds to the months of Baisakh and Jeystha, when the early goddess is worshipped with offerings of cocks, pigs, eggs and mangoes. The priest requests the goddess to render a good harvest. Paddy seeds are also placed before the goddess, believing that those seeds will become good ones by the divine touch. Mangoes are eaten ceremonially during this festival. Ceremonial hunting (*bijjawata*) is also carried out after this festival. Work during this festival is taboo. In the month of Kani (Bhadra-Aswin) Kurum Pandu is observed when *suani* is eaten ceremonially. The new rice eating ceremony is observed in the month of Dashara (Aswin-Kartik). Sikud Pandu or the new bean eating ceremony is observed in the month of Dewad (Kartik-Margasir). Bimud Pandu or the worshipping ceremony of the rain god is observed in the month of Magh (Magh-Phalgun). This festival is observed just after the completion of the harvest of all types of crops. Two small clay models of the rain god and his wife are made and kept under a *mahul* tree over a stone on the festive day. The villagers, with the priest and the headman, will gather at the site and the villagers carry crops of all types to the site. After worshipping the god the priest fills the empty baskets with crops and is followed by the headman and the villagers. An unmarried girl is made to stand between the *nayak* and the priest. The villagers throw water over them and laugh, saying that the marriage of the rain god is over today (*gajjebinudpendul nendterta*). Then ceremonial dancing and singing begin.

The Koya used to be mainly shifting cultivators. But nowadays, for various reasons, they have taken to settled cultivation. Their method of

cultivation shows their poor knowledge of wet cultivation. At the start of the rainy season, they plough their fields once or at best twice and sow seeds. When the plants grow to a certain height they store water in the fields and pay no further attention until the harvest. As a result they get a very poor crop yield. As the paddy yield does not suffice for a family to survive for the whole year, the Koya resort to other types of food quest, i.e. the collection of roots and fruits from the jungle and the growing of minor crops like *suani*, maize and pulses. The collection of roots and fruits substantially helps the Koya to solve their food problems. *Mahul* trees abound in the Koya area, and during the months of March and April large quantities of *mahul* are collected, dried and stored for future use. During the months from July to September several types of roots are collected from the jungle and eaten. Just before harvest, the villagers go to watch their crops in the field against the depredations of wild animals and birds. The children are also engaged in driving off birds. During the harvest all the families go to their respective *ketuls* or huts in their fields, where they spend the whole day and come back to the village in the evening. During this season, only old men and women are found in the village during the day time.

The Koya are very fond of hunting. Throughout the year they can be found in the forest in the pursuit of wild birds, hares, squirrels and wild rats. In the months of April and May they observe a festival called BijjaPandu or the sacred seed festival, when ceremonial hunting is done for days together. Fishing in the rivers is done communally. They use different types of fishing implements and sometimes use poison to catch fish.

The Koya own large herds of cows and bullocks. In the interior regions, one may be surprised to see a family possessing three to four hundred heads of cattle. The Koya do not properly maintain their wealth in cattle. No shed is constructed for them and they are exposed to weather throughout the year. The forest nearby is used to graze cattle and no other steps are taken to feed them.

According to the traditional system, *chom* or wealth means cattle because a Koya without cattle has no status in the society. No marriage can take place without cattle, which are given to the bride's father as a bride price. Secondly the cattle are used as a means of purchasing clothing and other necessary household articles. Nowadays the direct barter of cattle for any purchase has grown less common, and cattle are sold for money, which is used to purchase other things. Thirdly, cattle are used to plough fields and cows are no exception. Fourthly, oxen and cows are slaughtered as offerings at funerals and other festivals. Lastly the cattle provide quantities of beef which the Koya eat. The Koya seldom milk their cows. They say that the calves will die if the cows are milked every now and then. The cows are nonetheless milked during the rainy season, and the Koya make a little curd and butter from the milk. They do not prepare *ghee* as other peoples do.

Leadership, both political and social, revolves round the headman of each village. Until recently, as mentioned elsewhere, he had certain economic prerogatives which made him virtually all powerful in a village. Even in religious matters he is the first man to take the initiative to ask the priest and the villagers to perform religious ceremonies on various occasions. Usually the office of headman is hereditary. After the death of a headman his eldest son becomes the headman of the village. But this is subject to certain conditions. Certain attributes must be fulfilled by the new headman. He must be a good and impartial person. He must be able to voice the difficulties of the villagers before any government official that visits their village. He must be wise in making decisions in respect of various types of dispute. These days the headman is expected to know a little Oriya so as to be able to converse with Oriya officers and traders. In every Koya village the headman is found to be wealthier than others. He may not be the wealthiest man but wealth is always a factor enabling a man to become a headman. Although the office of headman is succeeded by the eldest son, this principle is not always adhered to. If the eldest son does not satisfy the conditions mentioned above, preference is given to the next son if he is found capable. If the headman has no son to succeed him, preference is given to his brother's son. In the absence of any of such relationships, the priest of the village is selected to succeed the headman in addition to his office of religious leadership of the village.

The headman of each village takes a decision with regard to the disputes that arise within that village. He asks the elders of the village to sit round him, and the parties involved in a quarrel sit before the headman, each party sitting on one side. The headman also sits in the *kula panchayat*, the panchayat of a particular clan, even though he does not belong to that clan. In a *kula panchayat* members of that *kula* or clan can only sit and discuss a disputed matter concerning incest. By virtue of being the headman of that village, a headman may be asked to decide any dispute that arises within his own village.

A decision made by the headman of a village is never challenged. No instances could be found with regard to a headman who has ever been unjust and unpopular. If a headman becomes unpopular for some reason, the villagers sit together and select another man. It is reported somewhere that the people of a village sit together once a year to discuss the headman's activities. The headman sits and listens to what the people say. If he is abused or criticized for any reason he tries to justify himself accordingly. This occasion is known as *pedagudma*. When a new headman is chosen, a ceremonial function in this connection is performed by the villagers. A new cloth is wrapped around his head like a turban by the priest of the village, and he is taken to the village goddess to swear to remain just and good.

Apart from the village as a political unit there is another, wider unit known as the Mutha Panchayat. A Mutha Panchayat consists of members who

are the headmen of the different villages of a particular area. It consists of five headmen of five villages. The Mutha Panchayat controls a number of villages in that region with regard to disputes of a serious nature which involve persons from several villages. The members of the Mutha Panchayat are chosen by all the headman of a particular region. The Mutha Panchayat mainly deals with cases like taking away another man's wife, which is considered a *barhiyatapu* or big crime. The aggrieved person asks the headman of his village to summon the Mutha Panchayat to obtain compensation from the accused person. Crimes like witchcraft and sorcery are also dealt with by the Mutha Panchayat if it happens to involve persons belonging to more than one village.

Next to the headman the priest of the village, who is called the *perma* or *pujari*, assumes immense importance as a leader of Koya society. Although his functions are mainly religious the Koya have a great regard for this leader. He is believed to have the power of communication with supernatural beings, and as such he acts as an intermediary between human beings and unseen powers. The Koya, like other primitive people, mostly depend on their religious rituals to obtain relief from the natural calamities that are believed to be caused by angry gods who need to be propitiated. A bumper crop or a successful hunt is thought to be due to the blessings of the gods. Hence they are constantly concerned with supernatural beings with regard to all aspects of their way of life. The priest is the person who must attend to all the needs of supernatural beings by worshipping or propitiating them with the help of his villagers.

The office of priest in a village is usually hereditary. If the priest dies without leaving an heir, a son of his brother may assume the post. Before becoming a priest a person has to undergo a series of initiation rituals and is asked to observe sexual continence. He then is taught by another priest of some other village if his father should be dead. He strictly observes religious festivals like Bijja Pandu, Marka Pandu and Idu Pandu, etc. The night before the festival, he observes sexual continence and never eats food cooked by a female. He has to fast until the worship is over, and he is the first man to eat after offerings to the god have been made. He is invited by the villagers to eat the new fruits or drink the liquor first, before they enjoy the new fruits or drink. By doing so they think the gods will remain pleased with them. Apart from his religious duties the priest also attends meetings of village panchayats and always has a say with regard to any type of dispute. He is, of course, treated as one of the village elders in these cases. When there is an increase in smallpox, which is believed by the Koya to be caused by the goddess, the priest gives orders to the villagers to observe certain taboos.

The *wadde* is a magician who occupies as important a position in Koya society next to the headman and the priest. A man becomes a *wadde* not because he is the son of a magician or has been chosen by the villagers, but because he is supernaturally endowed with the qualities necessary to become a magician.

After the birth of a child, if *jatel* or matted hair is observed on the head of a child, he is destined to become a *wadde*. From childhood he is kept under the special care of his parents, and certain taboos are observed with regard to his food habits. From boyhood he is kept under the training of an adult magician, who teaches him the ways of magic while performing his duties as a magician.

Like the priest the magician also has the power to communicate with supernatural beings. He differs from the priest by being capable of moulding supernatural beings and keeping them under control in order to achieve success in his designs. He can summon the aid of malevolent spirits to cause harm to anybody he hates, and as such he is dreaded by the Koya. On the other hand he is capable of driving away malevolent spirits with the help of his magical performances. It is very common in the Koya area to find magicians chanting magical charms before patients of various types. Most diseases are believed to be caused by spirits or angry gods. The Koya run to the magicians for immediate help in dealing with such troubles.

As a member of society the magician enjoys equal right with other Koya in a village. He can marry and lead a life like others in the village in accordance with social rules and regulations. The Koya usually have an ambivalent attitude towards him. He is liked as well as dreaded and as such hated. But the Koya believe his services to be indispensable.

The *katwal* is usually considered to be just useful because he helps the headman in his work. The headman calls on his help whenever a meeting of villagers is to be held. At religious festivals the *katwal* goes round the village to call on the villagers to gather before the headman to decide the work that has to be done communally. In inter-village gatherings the *katwal* is sent to other villages as a messenger. When an outsider stays in a Koya village the headman makes arrangements for the guest with the help of the *katwal*. In this way the services of the *katwal* are also thought to be useful. Apart from this he enjoys equal privileges with others as a member of society.

The Koya are regarded as one of the primitive tribes of Orissa. Since their area of habitation comes under the Tribal Sub-Plan area, special emphasis has been placed on their development by the government. An Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), with its headquarters at Malkangiri, has been functioning for a long time to bring about the development of tribals of Malkangiri sub-division. Since its inception the Agency has implemented various development programmes for individual benefit and infrastructure development to promote the rapid socio-economic development of tribals of this region.



# HANDBOOK ON KOYA \*

*Prasant Kumar Mohapatra*<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

The Koya, one of the several Dravidian-speaking tribes of South Orissa, numbering about 55,000 according to Census of 1961, are found distributed in the Malkangiri subdivision of the Koraput district. The Malkangiri area is heavily forested and is the home of several other tribes such as the Bondo, Bhumia, Didayi and Poroja. The following account of the history of the area is found in the Koraput District Gazetteer.

“Very little is known of the ancient history of hill country of Jeypore. Hidden in its forests there are temples and monuments which bear the names of kings who reigned many centuries ago, but nothing is now known of these ancient dynasties except that they passed away leaving the land to the jungle and the jungle tribes. But these remains are so scanty and the silence of the chronicles of India regarding this country is so complete that it must be supposed that such civilization as the district never knew in the remote past was of brief duration and small intensity. The history of the land is the history of the primitive tribes who have made it their home, and of this scarcely anything is known. No doubt the earliest inhabitants were the wild Kolarian tribes which still inhabit the hilliest parts of the district and are still most tenacious of their old customs. Later to arrive were the tribes of Dravidian origin, and particularly the Kondhs. There are signs that the Kondhs entered the district by a gradual infiltration from the north. With coming of these strangers in increasing numbers it is probable that

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XI, No.4, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1963-64, pp.1-72

<sup>1</sup> Former Research Officer, TRB, Bhubaneswar

the deforestation of the district, which must one time have been a vast jungle, began to proceed with increased rapidity."

"The earliest historical record in the district is an inscription at Podagoda near Umerkot in the Nowrangpur taluk, in Sanskrit characters of the fourth century. It states that Bhavadatta of Nala family regained the kingdom lost during the time of his father and that he established on the Highway satram for wayfares and a temple for the worship of Hari Hara. In a forest within a few miles of Podogoda is an inscription in Nagari characters of the tenth century, which speaks of the gifts of a village, called Pappadahandi (Possibly Pappdahandi, near Nowrangpur). A Telgu inscription in the temple of Dantavada in Bastar State records that in the year A. D. 1061 a king of the Nagavamsi line purchased a piece of land from a cultivator at Borigumma and gave it to the god Bhairava. A large festival to Bhairava is still held every year at Borigumma. Western Jeypore thus probably formed part of the Kingdom of the Naga family who rules in Baster in the eleventh and twelfth centuries."

"There is evidence that the wild forest country of Malkangiri has known a former civilization. In Kondakamberu there are two inscriptions recording a gift to the god Nilakanthesvara by the queen of Pandu Singh in the year A. D. 1376. Kondakamberu is called Kambudiri, Singarazu, the husband of Ambika, is said to have been lord of Kondakamati (Possibly another name for Kondakamberu) from A. D. 1378 to A.D. 1381."

"Antiquities in the district are few, but certain old temples that are still standing in the neighbourhood of Nandapur and images which have been unmistakable signs of Jain origin. But there is no record either inscription or traditional to tell us who were the Jain inhabitants of this country and when they flourished."

### **Physical aspects of the Region**

The Malkangiri subdivision is but a vast jungle with the Eastern Ghats, which has an elevation of 3,000 feet as its eastern boundary. The northern region has an elevation of 800 feet near the foot of the Ghat. From north to south the elevation gradually diminishes and the southernmost point has an elevation of 400 feet where the rivers Sileru and Saberi join and flow together with a name 'China Godabari' towards the junction at Konnavaram where they meet river Godavari. The *Sileru* and *Sabert* rivers serve as the eastern and western fringe of the territory of the Malkangiri subdivision. The rest of the subdivision is full of forested plains with a number of rocky wooded hills, some of them rising to a considerable height. The subdivision is poor with regard to its forest wealth. There is little good timber and *Sal* is found on the Ghats and in the northern region Teak is found.

The southern region is full of trees like *Mohul (Bassia Latifolia)*, *Kendu*, *Kusum*, Blackberry, etc. However, the rich growth of bamboos are carried to the junction of Sileru and Saberi rivers at Motu and then floated down in the *China Godavari* and Godavari rivers to reach Rajmahendri town on the banks of Godavari. Unidentified grass with a height of 10' sometimes cover many square miles of this subdivision which provide good fodder for the good number of cows and bullocks possessed by the Koyas of this region.

The subdivision was famous for its wild games. Rare and precious games like bisons and wild buffaloes are found in the eastern and western region. Leopards, Tigers, Wild dogs, Bears, Wild bears and wolves are found widespread. Chital or spotted deer, Sambhar and barking deer also abound. The Koyas are good hunters and due to their practice of hunting throughout the year which adds to their food economy, the forests are becoming thin of wild game which has been scared away to other regions. Peacocks, wild fowls and other birds also are common in these forests.

The rainfall of this region is about 58". Extreme heat is felt in summer. Due to heavy rainfall the plains become swampy and a breeding place for mosquitoes. Recently, steps are being taken by Government to eradicate malaria but the success of programme is still awaited.

### History

Malkangiri was a Taluk since 1872 and recently in 1962 it has been made a subdivision of the Koraput district. "Local tradition carries back the early history of the Taluk to the times of one Orjon Mallick, who was set upon by confederacy which included the Jeypore Raja and was slain in a fort near Korukonda. Jeypore obtained the Taluk, and granted it on service tenure to the Oriya Paik who had shot Orjun Mallik in the fight whose family held it hereditarily until recently. They are called the Tat Rajas and apparently did much for the country, old tamarind groves, deserted tanks and forgotten forts testifying to their efforts. About 1835, the last of the line Paramananda, died; and his widow's dewan, Erramma Razu, being overthrown by a faction, produced the aid of some Rohillas from Hyderabad, regained the upper hand, and cut off the noses of four of his chief opponents. These men went and complained to the Agent to the Governor, Mr. Read, and he sent up a part of Sibbandis who captured Erramma Raju. The traitor was sentenced to transportation for life.

Soon afterwards Paramananda's widow died, and her daughter Bangara Devi succeeded. But all authority vested in one Sanyasi Patro, a very turbulent character, who gave trouble by refusing to pay any *Kattubudi* to Jeypore and by insisting on levying *moturpha* and *soyer* in spite of the Agent's orders to the contrary. He was eventually imprisoned in 1865, and about 1869 Bangara Devi obtained a lease of the Taluk from Jeypore for Rs. 3,500. Her exactions led to

much discontent and in 1872 she was deposed and granted a village for maintenance, the Raja appointing a new manager.

About this time Malkangiri was made the headquarters of a Taluk and a Magistrate was stationed there. In 1879-80 occurred the "*Rampa-fituri*" (rebellion) which spread to this Taluk. Since then there has been very little trouble in the Taluk and a steady increase of prosperity (Koraput District Gazetteer)".

### Communication

Though there have been some recent improvements, communication is still poor. A *Kutch*a road connected the Taluk with Jeypore town previously. This road was motorable for only one half of the year, because of the river Pangam which was not bridged. At present this has become an all-weather road for approaching the Malkangiri subdivision headquarters.

This road extends up to the southernmost point of the Malkangiri subdivision at Motu where the rivers Sileru and Saberi from a confluence which is thereafter called "China Godavari" and ultimately joins the Godavari at Konnavarm. The road was frequently cut by small rivulets which have strong currents during the rainy season. Mention may be made of river Poteru which cuts this road at a distance of about 17 miles from Malkangiri. This river which has been bridged recently kept the southern part of the Taluk completely isolated from the Malkangiri sub divisional headquarters for about 6 months a year. The distance covered by this main road from Malkangiri to Motu is about 102 kilometres. The road was jeepable but not without great difficulty, during the period from December to mid June. Another *Kutch*a road diverted from the Malkangiri-Motu road at the fifteenth kilometer towards Padia where it touched the western fringe of the Malkangiri subdivision and then taking turn to the south on the western boundary formed a semi-circle joining the main road at village Pusguda lying at a distance of about 72 kilometres from Malkangiri. A *Kutch*a road also diverged towards the west from Kalimela which is at a distance of 40 kilometres from Malkangiri on this main road and joined the other road near Padiavia Venkatapalam. There is another road of the same type which branches out from Govindapalli at a distance of 50 kilometres north from the sub divisional head-quarters and going towards east reaches Malkangiri forming a circle, via Balimela. The road was a *Kutch*a one previously and was motorable only during the period from December to June. At present all the roads mentioned above have been improved as a result of implementation of Dandakaranya and Balimela Hydroelectricity Projects.

During recent years new roads have also been constructed as part of the Dandakaranya and Balimela Projects. Steps are being taken by the Project Authorities to construct bridges and culverts on the main road from Malkangiri to Motu and make it an all-weather road approachable during all seasons.

### **The Koyas and their Neighbours**

The Koyas constitute the principal tribe of Malkangiri and widely distributed throughout this area. But it can be discerned that the Koyas gradually thin down as we go towards the east and north eastern region. Their concentration is limited to the entire southern portion and some portions in the north up to Mattili lying at a distance of 20 miles north of Malkangiri where they come in contact with the Ronas and Bhumiyas. The total population of Koyas, according to the 1961 Census is 55,284. There has been considerable migration of Koyas from Bastar area of Madhya Pradesh.

The northern region is inhabited by Runas and Bhumiyas who have become Hinduised and speak a very crude type of Oriya which is locally known as *desia* Oriya and is, not without difficulty, understood by the Oriyas. Other neighbours of the Koyas here are Matias who also call themselves Hindus. The Matias practice cultivation. The Bhumiyas and Ranas are professional wood cutters in the Mattili and Govindapalli area which is full of teak and other valuable trees. The Bondas inhabit the Eastern Ghat in the north-eastern region of the Taluk and practically, have no connection with the Koyas. Their only meeting place is the weekly market at Mattili where a few plain Bondas come for marketing. It is only the Koyas inhabiting the northern region who come in close contact with the Bondas. The rest are as ignorant about the Bondas as any layman might be.

In the south, the Koyas are the only tribal community. Since long, there has been migration of various other communities to this area and they share this region with the Koyas. The immigrants are limited in number and live scattered. They are Muslims, Telgus, Doms, who call themselves and also are known locally as Valmiki and Boiparis. The Boiparis are a group of fair complexioned, Hindi speaking people who have migrated to this region from the adjoining area of Madhya Pradesh and claim to be a professional group of traders. They live, wherever they are found, with the Koyas in the same village. The men folk provide dancing dresses for the Koya 'Wade' or magicians and other requirements, and receive goats, paddy and pulses in exchange. Their women folk are seen to sell different types of sweet cakes to the Koyas in exchange of paddy, rice and pulses etc. But these Boiparis are limited to a region within 10 miles south of Malkangiri, beyond which, they are not found.

The Doms, Muslims and Telgus take up various types of occupation but chiefly earn their livelihood by exploiting the Koyas by various means. They are found scattered all over the taluk but are very negligible in numbers.

### **The Name 'Koya'**

The members of the Koya tribe inhabiting the entire Taluk call themselves 'Koyas' or 'Koitor' meaning people. It is interesting to note that the members of the same tribe inhabiting the adjacent regions of Madhya Pradesh

and East Godavari district call themselves as 'Madias' and 'Dorlas' respectively. This is evident from the discussions made by Shri Wilfrid Grigson in his book 'The Maria Gonds of Bastar'. In this monograph he has tried to show the distinction between the Hill Marias and the Bisonhorn Marias. The latter are similar to the so called Koyas of Malkangiri.

"The Gond, says Grigson, where ever he speaks his own language, from Central India to the Eastern Ghats and Hyderabad, calls himself 'Koi' or 'Koitor', meaning 'people'. It is interesting to note that the members of the same tribe inhabiting the adjacent regions of Madhya Pradesh and East Godavari distict call themselves as 'Madias' or 'Dorlas' respectively." This is evident from the discussions made by Wilfrid Grigson in his book 'The Maria Gonds of Bastar'. In this monograph he has tried to show the distinction between the Hill Marias and the Bisonhorn Marias. The latter are similar to the so called Koyas of Malkarigiri.

"The Gond, says Grigson, wherever he speaks his own language, from Central India to the Eastern Ghats and Hyderabad, calls himself 'Koi' or 'Koitor, yet only in the Madras and Hyderabad, reports is he called by a name approaching this in sound, Koya, and in the literature of the Central Provinces there has, therefore, been a tendency to restrict this name to Teluguised members of the race". He also states that primitive tribes are more usually known by the local Hindu name for them, "So over much of India the prevailing Hindu name Gond, and not Koi, is used". The Koyas of Malkangiri also call themselves Koitor. It is obvious, therefore, that the Koyas are a branch of the Gondi-speaking people. The name Koya, presumably, therefore, is a name given to them by the local people since time immemorial. (Ref: "Godavari District Gazetteer").

Thurston's "Tribes and Castes of Southern India", Indian Antiquary. Vol. V, also mentioned that there are Koyas in the East Godavari district and Hyderabad now included in Andhra Pradesh. Grigson's "Maria Gonds of Bastar" also mentions of a small number of Koyas in the Bastar State of Madhya Pradesh which is adjacent to Malkangiri Taluk. But Grigson tries to prove that the Koyas are noting but the so called Bison-horn Marias, a name coined by him to distinguish between the Hill Marias and the Bison-horn Marias on the basis of certain differences in their cultural traits. He also merges the 9,988 persons returned at the census of 1931 as Koyas with the Bison-horn Marias. He does it on the basis of his study of Bison-horn-Maria culture which is almost same as that of the Koyas. But he further tried to show a real distinction between the Bison-horn-Marias and the plains Koyas living on the banks of the Godavari. The latter according to him have become and endogamous group and name themselves as 'Dorla'. "Inter-marriage still takes place between the Marias of Sukma and the 'Koyas' of Malkangiri". During the period of my investigation, I did not find any Dorlas in the Malkangiri Taluk. Thus, it appears that the Koyas of Malkangiri are more connected with the Bison-horn-Marias as suggested also by Wilfrid Grigson. But there are certain points which have yet to be clarified. I

was told by my Koya informants of village Sikapalli that the Koyas are known as Madias in the Sukuma and Bastar region of Madhya Pradesh. The name Bison-horn-Maria has been used by Grigson to distinguish the Hill Marias who are more primitive than the Bison-horn-Maria and also in the description of traits in both the cultures in the 'Maria Gonds of Bastar'. We also find considerable difference, between Koya and Madia though similarities are also not wanting. If it is to be believed that the local Hindu name for primitive tribes are more useful then, how is it that in one region the same people should be called by two different names such as Marias and Koyas'. We do not find the answer to this question in Grigson's monograph. It may also be mentioned that anywhere in Malkangiri Subdivision the Koyas are neither known nor call them selves as 'Madias' or 'Marias'.

The Koyas of Malkangiri Subdivision, though culturally a homogenous group, can be divided into two groups according to their proximity to the local population of the subdivision with whom they come in contact and by whom they have been profoundly influenced in many respects. The Koyas living north of the sub-divisional headquarters up to Mathili and in south up to Manyemkonda are more primitive than the southerners living within villages Malavaram and Mottu, the southernmost point of the sub division. The Southern Koyas are greatly influenced by Telugu people who come from adjacent area of Andhra Pradesh and most of the people living at Mottu happen to be Telugu business men. Certain points of differences between the two groups are given below.

### **Dress and Ornaments**

The Northern Koyas usually wear loin clothes except few headmen and wealthy men who wear the loin in a manner which covers their buttocks. The Teluguised Koyas of South use bigger cloths and sometimes use 'dhoti' covering the portion from waist to knee in the Telugu manner. Shirts have become common among both types and it is a common thing to see a Koya going to a market or to a festival putting on a shirt over the loin cloth.

The women of these two regions are conspicuously different from one another in their dress style. The southern Koya women are hardly distinguishable from the Telugu women. They wear saris, handloom and mill made, in the Telugu manner. Blouse and brassieres are becoming common among young Koya maidens of the South which they purchase from the local markets at Mallavaram and Khunta in Madhya Pradesh, which is adjacent to Mottu. The picture is completely different in the northern region. The Koya women here use very little cloth. They wear a loin cloth covering the portion from waist to knee and knotted just below the navel. Generally, they do not use a cloth to cover their breasts except when going to a market or a festival. One piece of cloth is loosely wrapped covering one hip and the opposite shoulder over which their necklaces rest. This practice is becoming common but women going without covering their breasts also are seen mostly while they are at work.

Most of the Koyas now wear a turban on their head while going for a dance, a distant market or to visit kinsmen. One end of the turban is made to hang in front and is brought behind the neck and over a shoulder. This is only among the male Koyas.

So far ornaments are concerned the difference among the Koyas of the two regions is also quite marked. The necklaces are called 'Nedek' or 'Nede' and are used in large varieties of size, material and colour by the northern Koya women. Necklaces of beads of various sizes and colours are very much liked and are purchased from the local markets. Armlets of various size and weight made of brass and aluminum are used, so much so, that the breasts get completely covered up by them. Armlets and bracelets are also worn in huge quantity. The ears are completely covered up with ear-rings of various shape and size. This is fully absent among the southern Koya women. They wear very little ornaments. Heavy ornament of neck and hand are not used and glass bangles have become very much common among them.

### **Language**

The language spoken by the Koyas belong to the Gondi dialect of the Dravidian group. This dialect also differs among the two groups of the north and the south. To certain extent the difference may be adduced to the fact that the vocabulary of the Koyas is very limited; thus they depend on the major lingua-franca of the region in which they live. There has been incorporation of Telugu and Hindi and Oriya words in the language of the southern and northern Koyas, respectively. This was gathered from the Koya students of Gompakonda Ashram School where the southern and northern Koya boys live together and find the difference in their respective dialects.

From above descriptions it is evident that the Koyas of the two regions of the sub division are more or less similar linguistically, the slight differences being due to contact with Oriya or Telugu speakers. The southerners have been much influenced in dress, ornaments and hair style by the Telugus while the northerners have retained their primitiveness to a great extent.

### **Koya Settlements**

Koya settlements lie in the midst of forests in patches of clearings. Except a few villages that lie by the side of the roads that pass through their country, most villages are approached by narrow footpaths in the forests. There is no specific boundary to demarcate the villages but the garden enclosures are the first sign of the villages that a visitor sees from a distance. Sometimes the cluster of "Urskalk" or the menhirs erected in memory of dead ancestors also indicate the approach of a village. Several footpaths lead on to the village from all sides.

The Koya villages are more or less permanent in nature but there is a tendency to shift the village from place to place. The Koyas have great fear of



supernatural powers. The outbreak of epidemics for men as well as cattle or attacks by wild animals on lives or any natural calamity by which the people may suffer loss are sufficient reasons for the Koya to abandon a village site without hesitation and shift it to another place which might be situated very near or at a little distance from the deserted one. The village Sikapalli was first established at a place where the village market is held at present. But it was shifted to the present site when the *perma* or the priest of the village found the former site ominous due to the outbreak of diseases like smallpox (*amatali*). Economic factors also play a part in the shifting of villages. Formerly the Koyas were depending mostly on shifting cultivation by burning a patch of jungle (Lankapodsenad) and sowing pulses, beans and millet. After harvest another patch would be taken up for such cultivation. A detailed description of the practice will be given later. When the neighbouring forests become thin by constant clearing the village is abandoned and a site near a virgin forest is selected for settlement. But the practice of shifting a whole village solely for this purpose is now being given up because of Government measures to stop the practice of shifting cultivation to save the forests. Villages have now become settlements of permanent nature. A single family or a group of families sometimes shift to some other villages or a site for reasons already stated above. This practice is still in vogue and in many villages the author has found people migrating from and to the other villages.

The village sites with their surrounding land and forest are said to belong to the founder's clan. A village is mainly inhabited by one major clan. Examples may be given of village Sikapalli with a majority of people having the surname Madkami. There are other villages also which have the majority of their population belonging to a particular clan. But people of other clans, from whom wives are taken, are also found residing with the founder clans.

In certain areas there are small hamlets of a village which are locally known as 'Gudas'. These hamlets are virtually small villages with their headmen and the usual village institutions. Though they are supposed to be sub ordinate to their parent villages, nowadays, they assert their separateness in almost all matters. The village Sikapalli has such a Guda or hamlet named Urmaguda but on investigation, it was found that Urmagoda had its own separate identity in most matters except certain religious festivals which were observed jointly with the villagers of Sikapalli.

When the practice of shifting a village to another place was in vogue, it was the *peda* or the head man with the help of Perma or the priest who took the responsibility of selecting a site in the month of Diwad, corresponding to October-November. Some trees are felled and a patch is cleared. The priest takes a handful of grain in a leaf cup (Dopa) in the evening and pours it over the cleared patch of land and chants some prayer to the earth god (Bhum). The grain is covered by the lead cup and in the morning they come to see if ants have

disturbed the rice. If the rice is found undisturbed the site is through to be a good one and then houses are raised. If the rice is disturbed the site is through to be a good one and then houses are raised. If the rice is disturbed the site is abandoned and a new site is searched.

On entering a Koya village what comes to notice first, is the irregular distribution of houses throughout the village. They are so unsystematically scattered all over that no regular street or a row of houses is found. There are open spaces in between then which are used to pen their cattle. This is also same with the Koyas of southern region although they have been considerably influenced their houses.

The number of houses in a Koya village varies from ten to thirty or more. The author has not seen, in course of his visit, the number of houses in any village exceeding one hundred. But such large villages are rare. In Sikapalli, the number does not exceed sixty. As a consequence of the Government policy of restricting shifting cultivation and the formation of new villages, the existing villages are getting more densely populated than before, Each family has two or three houses round the main houses which is constructed by the head of the family when he first settles in that village. When the sons get married, they construct new houses to live with their wives near the parents' house.

The Koya settlements have a central place which is called '*End Bayul*' or the dancing ground. This is wide open space sometimes situated in front of the house of the priest or the headman. But this is not strictly adhered to and the boys and girls dance in place according to their convenience. The village burial ground is always situated at a distance from the village to keep the ghosts and spirits of the dead away from the village.

### **The Houses**

The size of the house varies according to the need and capacity of the house owner. The size of the house often indicates the economic status of the individual. The wealthier man needs a bigger house for storing his grains and other household articles whereas a poor man has but a small house to accommodate everything within it. Thus there are houses, which have a length of thirty to forty feet and a breadth of 15 feet and 6 feet, respectively. This also depends on the pattern of labour of the Koya society. The houses are constructed on basis of co-operative labour. The individual constructing a house asks the villagers to help him and after the general frame-work is completed by the men, the women and small girls help in plastering the house with mud and cow-dung. After the completion of the house the owner kills a pig and distributes pork among the workers. Some part of the meat is kept reserved for a feast. The workers sit together and eat the feast given by the owner. The owner can employ as many or as few labourers as his capacity and needs permit.

In the construction of a house there is remarkable difference in the workmanship between the Koyas of southern and northern regions. The walls in the southern region are mostly built of split bamboo coated with mud and pole stockadings of uniform size. Each house has a varendah to pass to enter the house. This varendah is comparatively much higher in southern region and some times a small varendah encircles the entire house which is completely absent in the houses of northern Koyas. The house is partitioned to make it two rooms. One of these rooms is called 'Wija Lon' or the store room for grains. The other is "Rana gad" or the kitchen". In the store room not only grains but also dried fruits and *Kendu* and *Mahul* flowers are stored to be used during the scarcity period. Generally, a loft is made of bamboos and wood and on these the grains are stored in baskets made of leaves of Siali creepers or bamboo containers.

The varendah (*arra*) is of much importance to the Koyas and in fact, it is the most frequently used place in the entire house. From morning to evening all types of household works are done here by both men and women. Occasionally, there may be a fireplace where cooking is sometimes done. 'Ukkad' or a basket which hangs from a beam of the roof by ropes is used for cradling babies on this varendah. This is a place where the guests are entertained. The wall which stands as a partition between the varendah and the inside of the house is seen from the outer side to be the hanging place of all sorts of household articles such as bows and arrows, the *dol* or drum, the *perma kok* or the dancing head dress, *kassers* or the sickle-like knives, flutes, *ahkum* or musical horns, etc. These are hung from pegs on the wall made by fixing deer or sumbhur horns or bamboo pegs. The members of the house also sleep on the varendah during all seasons. There are mortar holes in this varendah for husking rice. The surface of varendah is raised a little higher than the surface of the floor inside the house. Thus the varendah serves as a part and parcel of the house and from outside appears as an open hall. The whole house is surrounded by a neat fencing made of split bamboos.

There are no windows in the houses, so complete darkness reigns inside the house during day time and without a lamp it is difficult step inside. A small space is left in the partition of the inside rooms making a door way to pass from one room to the other. The first room is used as kitchen. In one corner of this room water and rice beer pots are kept.

The roof of the houses is thatched with *piri*, a type of jungle grass which is found in abundance in the nearby forests. These are collected every year and made to dry before being used for thatching the houses.

Each house has a side shed for pigs and goats. Sometimes these sheds are situated within the fencing (*vellum*) of the house. Fencing on all sides of a house is a regular feature in the Koya settlements. The wattle work is highly decorative.

Each house has a *guda* or kitchen garden raised behind it. It is also fenced all around and the Koyas grow tobacco, mustards and vegetables like tomato,

brinjal and beans in it. Sometimes, these kitchen gardens are situated inside the village in the wide open spaces that have been acquired by the first settlers of the village. Cattle dung is gathered in a heap inside the garden by the Koya women and girls. These are spread all over the garden before sowing any seeds.

The trees that are commonly found in a Koya village are Mohul or '*Ikk or Idu* (*Basia latifolia*), Salp (*Caryota Urens*), Kusum and Jamu which are not felled while clearing a patch either for settlement or for cultivation. The two trees mentioned first provide the Koya with substantial liquor without which, the Koyas say, they cannot survive. The flowers of Mahul tree are dried and stored in large quantities to be used in times of food scarcity. To the south the abundance of Mahul tree diminishes and instead palm trees abound. Here, the Koyas depend much on the palm trees for liquor and pull on for days together without food with a belly full of palm liquor.

In some villages a house is erected which is called '*Pikin-kudma*' or the house for the unmarried young girls which serves the purpose of a dormitory. The girls gather there during the night for singing and gossiping and sleep together. But this practice is gradually being abandoned and in many villages the author was told that they are not erecting such a house in these days. The girls sleep in a house of an old woman or a window for the same purpose.

In all villages a guest house or *Chaudi* is erected as a shelter for any outsider or Government servant. The headman, with the help of the villagers, erects this house and maintains it in good conditions.

### **Living Conditions:**

#### **Sanitation and Hygiene in the Village**

The appearance of the Koya villages at the first sight indicates the callousness of the Koyas towards sanitary conditions. All over the village the sight of un-cleanliness becomes the common experience for any newcomer to the Koya country. Cocks, pigs, goats and cows defecate anywhere and everywhere of which little notice is taken. Dogs, pigs and goats frequent the *arra* or the verandah attached to the house and makes it dirty. No serious attention is paid to keep the house clean. The open spaces in front of the house are used for tethering cattle as a result of which these become very unclean with heaps of dung. The dung is cleared in the morning by the female members and heaped in the guda or the kitchen garden. The open spaces before the houses are swept only during morning. There is no drainage system in any of the Koya villages but, as has been mentioned before, due to the undulating surface of this area each settlement has a natural drainage, during heavy rainfall. Nevertheless, the villages become damp and muddy during rains, with small pools of dirty water inside the village. It is only the villages, which are situated on hill slopes that are less dirty during rainy season.

### **The Houses**

The houses, as mentioned above, are equally dirty in all respects. Though occasional plastering of cow dung is made by the women, the house, as a whole, appears like a store house of dirt. The verandah which is an essential parts of the house is frequented by domesticated pigs, dogs, goats, cocks hence becomes unclean. The inside of a house is generally clean where cooking is done. The places where *landa* or rice beer pots are kept are neat and clean. The insanitary conditions of the northern Koyas do not hold true in the villages of the southern Koyas. The houses and the open spaces before them indicate the positive attitude of the villages with regard to maintain cleanliness. The houses are regularly plastered with cow dung once in a week and neatly swept twice a day. The high verandahs which are so neatly plastered can be compared with any admirable sitting platform of a Hindu family house and where one completely feels at home. The open spaces before each house are not used for tethering cattle as is done by the northerners.

### **Bodily Cleanness**

The Koyas are equally callous in keeping their bodies clean. The dress which they wear is dirty and is not washed frequently. The womenfolk wash the dirty clothes at long intervals of days, i.e., once or twice a month. They do not hesitate to sit on a dirty place. While taking bath they put off the clothes and enter the water naked. They do not take pains to wash their bodies properly nor use oil regularly for their hair. The only oil they use is from the dried seeds of the fruit of Mahul tree. This is preserved very carefully and the women use it while going for dancing on festive occasions.

The Koyas wash their teeth with tooth-sticks but cleaning of the mouth is not properly done. The tongue is not properly cleaned and after cleaning the tongue water is not used to clean the mouth. They wipe themselves with leaves after defecation.

The Koyas use leaves for taking their meals and the womenfolk collect leaves of which leaf plates and cups (Doppa) are prepared. The Koyas wash their hands and mouth before and after taking meals.

The Koyas habitually spit wherever they happen to sit and gossip. This is not an exception even when they are sitting inside a room. With regard to bodily cleanliness the southern Koyas seem to be more particular and in many respects they behave and act like any other Hindus.

The use of cheap soap is becoming common among the young boys and girls who purchase them from the local market. These are used on festive occasions while taking bath. The author has seen wealthy middle aged Koyas also interested in using the cheap soaps.

### **Water Supply**

The Koya women, especially the northern Koya women, fetch water from the 'Kuta' or the water holes lying in the low farm lands. There are large tracts of low lying paddy fields, in one corner of which there happens to be a large pool of water. There is no restriction for others to bring water for drinking purposes though the land might belong to another individual. These pools of water begin to dry up during summer and the Koyas dig pits in the bed of the pool and there are also places where water does not dry up.

There are small rivulets which also pass by most of these Koya villages. The Koya women also fetch water from these sources. During summer they dig a little and get water from the bed of the river.

The same water source is used for both bathing and for drinking. The water is not boiled before drinking. The problem of water becomes acute during summer and the author has seen people coming from a distance of two or three miles to the 'Kuta' or the small pool in the rice fields, for purposes of bathing and washing clothes. The Koyas say that during summer they carry water bottles made of gourds while they go to any distant place because water is not available during long walks in these regions.

In village Sikapalli a well has been sunk by the Government. The villagers never use the water from well for drinking. On enquiry, the author was told that the well water is not fresh because it is stagnant. They believe that water in a river or pool in rice fields is fresh. The other reason is the water in the well is sweet (Minkta) hence not suitable for drinking purpose. In many villages like Mariwada, Gompakonda, Dharmapalli the author was given the same reply as at Sikapalli with regard to the use of well water. The well water in village Sikapalli is used for bathing and washing purpose.

In village Mallavaram inhabited by the Teluguised Koyas, a completely different picture is seen. There is a well sunk by the Government and in morning and evening a huge crowd of women is seen around the well who come to fetch water for drinking and other purpose. On enquiry the villagers said that they have become habituated to well water and find it suitable for all types of use.

### **Disease and Treatment**

The various types of diseases that the Koyas suffer from are attributed to either supernatural aggression or sorcery. If a family continues to suffer from diseases for a considerable period they abandon the site and settle in a fresh one to get rid of the evil look of the supernatural elements. Any deviation from the normal life is thought to be caused by supernatural forces. If a baby does not suckle its mother's breast which he was doing normally is attributed to the evil eye of a spirit. Any natural calamity like the attack of a tiger or a bear is also thought to be caused by the angry spirits or gods.

The Koyas have their traditional way of dealing with all these problems. It is a common sight in the Koya area to find a 'Wadde' who would be engaged in chanting incantations, either to ward off the evil spirit or pacifying a god who might have made an aggression against the person. In each village 'Waddes' are found more than one in number. Among these some specialize in giving medicines "Mat" for different diseases and others cure by way of divination.

The Koya word for disease is 'nupu' that is distinguished from the cuts, wounds or burns though, they would take the help of the same 'Wadde' or 'Gunia' (traditional healer) for their treatment. The Koyas explain the symptoms of their disease to the 'Gunia' who after diagnosis gives medicine which consists of the roots, leaves or barks of wild plants and trees. This knowledge is kept as a secret because the practitioner thinks his medicines will be fruitless if its secrecy about is divulged to anybody else. Madkam Irma (48) of village Sikapalli told the author that he learnt the art from his father when he was a boy. This indigenous knowledge is transmitted from one generation to the next in this way. He said he would teach his son when he grows up. The knowledge is not transmitted to either wife or daughter or any outsider. He said he also blows out the disease by divination which is known as "Uditan". All the diseases, which he cures, do not need the system of 'blowing out'. He applies them only when it is necessary.

Some common diseases that are found among the Koyas are detailed below. This information was collected from Madkam Irma of village Sikapalli who happens to be a specialized practitioner in medicines.

1. Dur. (burning sensation on legs) - The disease is 'blown out' by divination with the help of a broom (*chhanchuni*) - No medicine given.
2. Toita. (Swelling of foot) - No medicine is given - The disease is blown out by the wadde with the help of 'Kasur' (*chhanchuni*).
3. Daiparab. (It is also a type of 'Dur' with a biting sensation inside the leg). The patient suffers from sleeplessness and diary hoes - Herbal medicine from jungle is given.
4. Edek. (Fever with shivering and a high temperature on the body) - Medicine procured from the jungle is given.
5. Kank. (Burning sensation on the body) - Herbs from the jungle are given. The Medicine man blows out the disease by divination. Medicine is taken twice daily for one and half days. It is cured within three days.
6. Pula (Swelling of body) - Medicine from jungle is given to the patient which is a strong purgative by which swelling comes down gradually. Three doses are given. The medicine is mixed with powdered rice added to small quantity of hot water.

7. Talanota. (Headache) - Herbs from the jungle are given. If patient requests blowing out, it is done by the medicine man.
8. Potomandita or Matia (Colic pain) - Herbs from jungle are given.
9. Orgoba. (Aching of one side of the forehead) A nose drop prepared from the juice of some wild plants leaf is applied once and it is cured.
10. Netur Pota. (Blood dysentery) - Medicine from jungle is given two times.

Information on the plants or leaves used for a particular type of disease could not be collected as the informant was unwilling to disclose the secret.

After much persuasion he agreed to the proposal under certain conditions. The conditions were that the author should observe certain restrictions and should not divulge the secret to anybody. There are a few other disease which the Koyas described to the author. These are detailed below :-

1. 'Masa Nopu'. This is the common Koya disease i.e., the yaws.
2. 'Netur (blood) dogg' (cough) (T.B.) - The Koyas fear this disease most.
3. 'Rompa dogg' - Cold and cough.
4. 'Parsa Pandto' - Eyes, body and stool look like 'Kamka' or turmeric-Jaundice.
5. 'Pandananad' - The Koyas say that their children when affected by this, become reduced to skeleton day by day till they die or recover when proper steps are taken.
6. 'Param nopu' - The Koyas say that a person affected by this disease feels acute pain while passing urine which looks like pus.
7. 'Pidanganad' or 'Jiva-Tindananad': - This is a disease which acts like eating the 'Jiva' meaning soul. When a person is affected by this disease he always gasps and the disease takes out the soul from his body of the. 'Tindananad' in Koya language means eating.
8. 'Uhtam' - Blood discharge in urine.
9. 'Edmoitit' - Urine looks like "Kamaka err" or turmeric water and is discharged frequently.
10. 'Kid nopu' - The Koyas say, a person affected by this gets reduced day by day till the bones become prominent without any flesh in the body.
11. 'Gajj' - Itches.
12. 'Ahkanad Gajj' - Ringworm.



Most of the Koyas suffer from these two last mentioned diseases. They show great interest in using ointments they are offered by any outsider. They will immediately make a crowd if they hear that somebody is distributing medicine. Skin diseases are mainly due to their uncleanly habits which are seen much less among the Koyas of the southern part.

There are few other diseases like '*Amatali*' or '*Yayotosimata*' '*Dulama*' and '*Sudul yayo*' which constitute a different group so far as the nature of their treatment, by the Koyas is concerned. Yoyotosimata or '*Amatoli*' believed to be goddess of smallpox and '*Dulama*' is the goddess of chicken pox and Sudulyyo or small goddess is the goddess of measles. Persons affected by these diseases are exclusively treated by the '*Perma*' or the priest of the village who makes offerings to pacify the respective goddesses. The diseased persons are kept aloof from other members of their family till they recover. Certain taboos are also observed in the village. Beating of drums (*dhols*) and dancing and singing by the womenfolk are completely tabooed during this period. The Koyas believe that if the taboo is violated the goddess becomes angry and severely attacks the villagers on a large scale.

The Koyas have another way for dealing with the wounds caused either by accident or attack of tigers, bears and leopards. These are thought to be the direct attack of malevolent spirits who make an aggression against the persons who either carelessly pass them or trespass in their region or have not made sacrificial offerings to pacify them. The patients are treated by '*Wadde*' (*Gunia*) who makes "*Wallam Uditan*" or finds out the particular cause of such accidents by way of divination and makes offerings to pacify the spirit or god causes the wound. Some times more than one Gunias are found engaged to cure the patient.

The Koyas have a local reputation for skill in curing severe types of wounds, cuts or fractures with the help of their knowledge of medicine made from wild roots and herbs. This is not totally untrue. The author has seen a person in the village Sikapalli who was badly attacked by a bear and the wound on the legs were of so severe a nature that the author advised them to take him to Malkangiri hospital, for medical treatment to save the patient. This was not accepted and the father of the patient took this help of the '*gunia*'. After few months when the author visited the village the former patient was seen running after cows and was as good as any man except for certain scar marks on his leg.

*Chapter II***ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND THE QUEST FOR FOOD**

The type of economy that the Koyas practice cannot be strictly classified as agriculture, though, agriculture at present, is their major productive occupation. Information from the older generation and old records of the Taluk reveal that traditionally the Koyas of Malkangiri region was shifting cultivators. They made little or no effort, in the past, for practicing wet cultivation since large tracts of virgin forest corner, were available for shifting cultivation. With the passage of time their economic activities have been influenced by the changes caused by innumerable factors. The population growth due to migration and birth had an obvious effect in limiting the individuals' share of the natural resources. Besides, Government agencies have made every effort for stopping the practice of shifting cultivation which was responsible for the evil effects like deforestation, soil erosion and wastage of forest resources. Forests have now been declared as reserved ones. All these factors have led the Koyas to reduce their dependence on shifting cultivation and forced them to practice wet cultivation, a system, with which they were completely unfamiliar. The method of cultivation, as practiced by them is very crude. They lack the knowledge and the comparatively elaborate technology useful for the purpose of practicing wet cultivation. As a result, the yield from the field becomes inadequate for an average family, in spite of the fact that the amount of land owned by that family is in no way less than that of similar families in other regions of Orissa.

The inadequate yield from the type of wet cultivation done by the Koyas does not suffice for a family. There are other types of economic pursuits which the Koyas take up. One of them is the slash and burn type of cultivation or the shifting cultivation of which detailed description will be given later. Another type of pursuit is the collection of roots, tubers and fruits from the forests in large quantities which save them, as they say, at the time of scarcity. For meat they depend on the wild games and the Koyas are expert hunters. The cows and the bullocks also provide the Koyas with quantities of beef which they eat.

The other economic activities of the Koyas are directed towards getting a shelter and clothing. The techniques to meet these needs are simple. The materials needed for construction of a house are available from the nearby forests and these are collected by them and as the structure of the house of the Koya are not very elaborate. The construction is done by the members of a Koya family, or sometimes, if help of some others is required 'Landa' or rice beer and pork or fowl is provided to the helpers as remuneration for the help.

For clothing the Koyas used to sell their cows or bullocks for cash. Though this practice is still in vogue it is gradually diminishing because of the

emergence of the new markets in their country. There the Koyas sell their crops or vegetables for cash to purchase clothing for family members.

From the above facts it becomes obvious that the economic activities of the Koyas centre mainly round the satisfaction of their primary needs like food, shelter and clothing. Their simple technology has not enabled them to exploit fully the resources at their disposal.

The emergence of markets and the primary dependence on wet cultivation are certain to bring about great changes in their economic activities. A systematic study on the subject has yet to be made.

### **The System of Land Tenure**

The Koyas distinguish between three main types of land used for different types of cultivation. Firstly, the low land which can hold water for a considerable period in a year is called "*Barhia Kuta*". Secondly, the land which is situated in comparatively high level and where water can be stored by making small earthen dams on all side is called "*Usk Beda*". The third type is known as "*Elka*" or the slopes where water cannot be stored and is full of trees and bushes. These are the sites where shifting cultivation is practiced.

The Koyas do not always possess sufficient amount of "*Barhia Kuta*" or low lying land suitable for wet cultivation because of the dearth of such land due to various reasons. It has been mentioned elsewhere that the region inhabited by the Koyas is full of thick reserved forests and the land is mostly undulating. Hence, low lying land for wet cultivation is extremely limited.

When a new settler comes to a village he has to meet the 'Peda' (the village headman) with a pot of *landa* (rice beer) as *bheti* (gift) because the headman was granted 'Mustadadri' i.e. the right to collect cess from the villagers by the Raja of Jeypore as Malkangiri Taluk was a part of his estate. He was required to deposit a fixed amount either in cash or kind in the Raja's treasury. This practice continued till recent times. Now these are being deposited in Government treasury at Malkangiri. The headman was authorized to dispose of any part of the individual holdings in favour of a new-comer to the village. Assessment of rent was the exclusive right of the headman. Assessment never exceeded the amount of rupees five in cash and one 'Puti' or 120 Lbs. of paddy for each plough used in a single family. The amount of land owned by an individual family depended on its capacity to bring land under cultivation. This was of course applicable to the first settlers in a village as there is a limit to the availability of cultivable land in a village which is demarcated by the Government at present.

The amount of land possessed by individual families could not be exactly ascertained as in this region no survey has been made till recent times. Regular land survey and settlement was made a year back which is not complete by the time when the author undertook field work in the Koyas area. When a Koya was

asked as to how much land he possessed the answer was three ploughs, or four ploughs as the cases were. This was according to the prevalent method of assessing rent on the basis of the number of ploughs used by each family.

It was found after enquiry that the Koyas show a great craving for 'Elkas' or the village forests where they are allowed by Government agencies to practice slash and burn or shifting cultivation. As this practice is being sharply restricted by the Government and as this type of land is extremely limited the late comers to a village cannot get such land solely and depend on wet cultivation. This fact was corroborated from the new settlement records of a village named Sikapalli where preliminary survey was almost complete. Out of forty families twenty-nine possessed the 'Elkas' and eleven went without them and obviously, those eleven families were late settlers in that village.

Now-a-days, the Koyas of Malkangiri grumble against the Government policy of rehabilitating the Dandakaranya refugees in these areas as this region is included in the Dandakaranya Project area. The main reason for their complain is that if the Government implements the scheme of rehabilitation in their region the extent of their use of village forests will still further be limited and they will lose the source of fodder for their cattle.

### **Method of Cultivation & the Agricultural Implements**

The Koya agricultural implements consist of spade (*godad*), axe (*godel*) and plough (*nangel*). The ploughs are of a archaic type and the Koyas make these by themselves. The axe and spade are procured from the Kamar Koyas who are an occupational group of black smiths among the Koyas. In these days, due to the emergence of markets in this area, the Koyas buy the agricultural implements like axe, spade and hoe from the Oriya Kamaras who regularly visit these markets. The sickle used by the Koyas has no saw like teeth for smooth cutting of crops. This is also the type of sickle used by the local caste people. The use of crude and simple types of agricultural implements bears testimony to the fact of their ignorance of a developed type of cultivation method.

Manuring of corn fields is not done by the Koyas in spite of the fact that they have large herds of cows and bullocks. All the dung is heaped in the kitchen garden and spread there for growing tobacco, mustard and other vegetables. On enquiry they said that the best manure of which they know is the ashes of the burnt tree and bushes. The implication is that when they practiced shifting cultivation they were burning the patch of jungle which they cleared and seeds were sown on the ashes spread over it. As they were getting bumper crops they thought those ashes to be the best manure. In the paddy field the Koyas leave the straw to dry after taking away the paddy by reaping it from the neck of the plant. The rest it left to dry up or be grazed by cattle and the Koyas also set fire to it believing that the ashes will serve as manure to yield a good harvest.

Cultivation of land starts with the outbreak of the monsoon in mid June. Before that they do not till the soil to get the fields prepared for sowing. The men and womenfolk remain busy in ploughing the fields. Even girls above twelve years of age are engaged. Sowing of seeds and ploughing are done simultaneously. After the field is ploughed once, no second ploughing is considered to be essential by the Koyas and the seeds are spread over it. The seeds are sometimes made to germinate before sowing. After sowing seed there is a short gap in the agricultural activities. When the plants grow to a certain height operation for storing water in the paddy fields begins. If a comparatively larger earthen embankment is needed to store water in an individual's field, the owner invites the villagers and the work is done on a co-operative basis. The land owner does not pay cash or paddy as remuneration to the workers. He provides sufficient amount of 'landa' or rice beer, and kills a pig to distribute the pork among the villagers as remuneration for the work done for him.

After the storing of water in fields is over, which is said to be one of the major agricultural activities the field is left till the crops begin to ripe. Weeding is never done by the Koyas. When a newcomer approaches a paddy field at the time of harvest he is perplexed to find the fields full of wild grass of which the Koyas always grumble saying "gate gadd" meaning "much grass". In most cases weeds constitute more than half of the total number of plants that grow in a field.

When the crops begin to ripe the Koyas take precautionary measures to save them from the depredation of wild animals and birds. They have to keep a watchful eye constantly because during the day time the wild birds are a source of great trouble. All the boys beginning from the age of eight onwards in a family go to watch with their small bow and arrows. Sometimes groups of boys also go to hunt wild birds. The adult members go to sleep in the field where they have constructed small platforms known as "Ketul". Sometimes hutments over raised platforms made of bamboos are made to sleep in night. While sleeping they blow "ahkum" (horn made buglas) and beat drums to drive away the predatory animals from the paddy fields. This kind of watch continues from the month of Dasherā till the end of the harvest of "Barhiya Wanzi" or big paddy.

The Koya differentiates between the two types of paddy, i.e., the one called "*Sudul Wanzi*" or small paddy which ripens earlier and the seed of which is sown on high level land called "*Isk beda*" and the other one called "*Barhia wanzi*" or big paddy which ripens later and is harvested much later than "*Sudul Wanzi*" and the seeds of which are sown in lowlying lands called "*Barhia Kuta*" where water remains for long time. Some of the varieties of *Barhia Wanzi* are *Gudma Wanzi*, *Meadko Wanzi*, *Maipali Wanzi*, *Pusbanda Wanzi*, *Gumod* and *Jandari Wanzi*. The names of some small paddy or *Sudul Wanzi* are *Boidanda*, *Ratan Chudi*, *Dud Chaik*, *Gangabark*, *Kike Polk* and *Ati Wanzi*, etc.

No sooner the "*Sudul Wanzi Koidana*" or the harvest of small paddy begins in the month of November the Koyas are found busy day and night in

their fields. This is a period when nobody except the old men and women and infants can be seen in the village. Sometimes a whole family is seen in the field hut (Ketul). The "Ketul" is a raised earthen platform with no walls but a thatched roof supported by bamboo pillars on all corners. Creepers of pumpkin, gourd and beans are found spread over the roof. The surroundings of a field house are kept clean by clearing the bushes and grass.

Inside the house there is an oven where cooking is made and earthen pots for water and cooking are kept. From outside it looks like a miniature house. At day break all the villagers go to their respective field huts and the womenfolk cook there for the day and help the men folk in reaping paddy. Infants are also taken to the field hut where they are put in a basket hung from the roof of the hut. Reaping of paddy goes on till evening and then all the family members return to their village. Sometimes food for night is also cooked in the field hut and brought home to be taken.

By the time the harvest of 'Sudul Wanzi' is over, the 'Burhia Wanzi' gets ready to be harvested. Paddy is reaped from the neck of the plant and the rest is left to dry up. The straw is not collected because the Koya do not thatch their houses with straw. During harvest efforts are made to reap the corn as soon as possible to save it from the depredation of wild animals.

After the reaping is over the paddy is kept in a heap in a particular place cleared for this purpose known as 'Kada' or 'Kalam'. This is situated near the field hut also. Paddy is threshed in this place and collected in baskets made of the leaves of the elephant creeper (Siali). The baskets are then carried home where they are stored in containers made of bamboo.

### Other Crops

Though paddy provides the staple food to the Koya in these days as a result of the practice of wet cultivation, it does not solve their food problem outrightly. No sooner the harvest begins the Koya perform the 'Nuakhi' or the 'Kodta Pandu' ceremony and start consuming the rice. Most Koyas can pull on for four to five months in a year with their stock of rice. This is the reason for which the Koyas make a very economical use of the store of their paddy. Cooked rice ("Chakur" or "Dowda") is not eaten always for two times a day. In the morning a gruel is made of rice, and pulses mixed together and cooked rice is eaten at night. Some millet maize and dried *mahul* flowers are substituted for the morning gruel of rice. From all these it becomes obvious that they depend on growing other crops like millet, maize and pulses as food crops.

All the Koyas possess pieces of land either inside the village or very near the village where they can keep a constant watch over the land. In the beginning of rains or just before it the Koyas neatly fence these plots of land either with spilt bamboos or wood fetched by cutting trees. Here, they sow maize ('Pot Jana')

and millet (*Khed Jana*) in the months of "Pedaman" and "Burdabata" corresponding to the Oriya months from 'Jyestha' to 'Srabana'. These are harvested in the months of 'Diward' and 'Pand' corresponding to the Oriya months from "Kartik" to "Pouso".

A variety of pulses like *pesli* (*Phasedus Radiatus*) *mung*, *kandul*, *permi*, oilseeds like "*nunk*" (sesamum) and '*tarson*' (mustard), beans like "*Sikud*" and "*Junk*" (*Vigna Typisa*) are sown in the Elkas or the sites where slash and burn type of cultivation is made. A brief account collected from the villagers of Sikapalli with regard to the system of shifting cultivation is given below.

### Method of Shifting Cultivation

The sites for shifting cultivation are situated above the low lying lands used for wet cultivation. *Landkapodsand* or burning of the jungle starts in the month of *Pedamanlenz* corresponding to the second half of April and first half of May, respectively. After harvest the sites selected for this purpose are cleared by felling trees. While clearing, certain fruit bearing trees like Tumir, Bengur, Idu (*Bassia latifolia*), Korka and Kosu, etc are spared as they provide fruits to be consumed by the Koyas at the time of scarcity. As the operation of shifting cultivation demands more labour than an individual family possesses, it seeks the help of neighbours and every day provides them with *landa* or rice beer for drinking till the cutting and clearing are over. The labour required for clearing an acre of land could not be measured accurately. One informant, Madakm Dewa said, he required the services of nine persons for two days to clear one of his sites and eight persons for 3 days for another patch. As the cleared land could not be surveyed accurate information on acreage could not be had. But his indication of the sizes led to assume that he has cleared approximately one and half to two acres of land for purposes of shifting cultivation. When the site is cleared the wood and branches are left to dry. After a week, they are burnt and then the site is left till onset of rains. Then it is ploughed once, and seeds of *Gora* (Ragi), *Kohla* (millet), *Permi*, *Junuk* (*Vigna Typisa*), *Tasu* (a kind of fruit), *Sikud* (bean), *Pesli* (*Phaseolus Radiatus*), *Nunk* (Sesamum), *Benda*, etc. are broadcasted.

The seeds of *Gora* (*Eleusine indica*), *Permi* (*Cajanus Indicus*), *Kohla* (millet) are broadcast thickly whereas others are broadcast thinly. The sites are left till harvest of *Gora*, *Permi* and *Suan* in the month of October and November. At the time of harvest the sites which are situated a mile or so away from the village are watched during night and day to prevent damage of crops by predatory animals.

After one harvest is made, the *puna elka* or the new patch of jungle becomes '*panta elka*' or old one. Next year also the same site is used for shifting cultivation but the yield is reduced to certain extent in the. Then that particular site is abandoned for 3 to 4 years, when again it is cleared for shifting cultivation. As the site is freshly over grown with trees and bushes the Koyas again call it "*puna elka*" or the new one.

It was difficult to assess accurately the yield from shifting cultivation as the Koyas start eating the crops soon after harvest and they do not have their standard measure. Though they are getting used to the local standard measure very few can measure accurately. The local measure for corn is given below: -

- (1) Gadisa --- 30 *putis*  
 (2) Puti --- 20 *mans*

One *mana* is equivalent to 160 *tolas* (approximately 4 lbs). An approximate measure of crops was made while collecting information on the total yield from a piece of land used for shifting cultivation by an individual named Madakam Dewa (35). Several other villagers were also interviewed. But for precision the information of one individual is being dealt with here.

As mentioned above the *elkas* are distinguished as 'puna elkas'. Last year (1960) Madkam Dewa's *puna elka* yielded two *putis* of Gora, 3 *manas* of Junuk, 4 *manas* of Benda, 10 *manas* of Permi and 5 *putis* of Kohla. The total yield in pounds is 62 lbs. He cultivated 1 ½ acres of land approximately. Another individual named Madkam Pandu who cultivated an acre got a total yield of 2 *putis* of 'Gora', 10 *manas* of 'Permi', 2 *manas* of 'Junuk', 3 *manas* of 'Benda' and 3 *putis* of Kohla. The total yield in terms of pounds is 400 lbs (5 mounds.)

Per acre yield of each crop is difficult to measure as intercropping is practiced and no specific part of land is used for any particular crop. An attempt has been made to show per acre yield of the mixed crops on the basis of the above data which shows that it is about more than 300 lbs. and on enquiry it was found that the per acre yield varied from 3 1/2 mounds to 6 mounds.

The crops are mainly used as food. Ragi is used for making rice beer and its gruel is taken at the time of scarcity during rainy season. The headman of the village informed the author that previously they sold all other crops except ragi and beans in exchange for other necessities such as salt, tobacco and cloths. These days the children invariably eat *permi* and other pulses that are grown. But the previous practice is also in vague and excepting ragi all pulses are sold.

A chart showing the seasonal activities of the Koya is given below. The Koya month is the period from one new moon to the next instead of the period from one full moon to the next as calculated in Oriya.

Months		Major Seasonal Economic Activities
Koya	Oriya	
Pus	Pusa-Magha	Harvest of big paddy, maize ( <i>Khed Jana</i> ), and Suan collection of Piri, a jungle, grass for thatching house, collection of bamboos from the jungle for the same purpose. Attending marriage feasts and dances. Hunting in jungle.



Magh	Magha-Phalgun	Collection of 'Piri' and bamboos, observance of <i>Bimud Pandu</i> (worshipping ceremony of rain god), hunting in the forests and fishing from ponds and rivers.
Pagul	Phalgun-Chaitra	Collection of Mahul, Kendu and other fruits, hunting in the jungle, attending marriage feasts and dances
Chait	Chaitra-Baisakha	Collection of Mahul, Tumid (Kendu), fishing from rivers and ponds, hunting in forests and attending marriage feasts and dances. Observance of Idu or Ikk Pandu (new Mahul eating ceremony).
Semiti	Baisakha-Jyestha	Collection of <i>Mahul</i> and <i>Kendu</i> and other seasonal fruits from the Jungle, observance of Bijja Pandu and ceremonial hunting of Bijja weta.
Pedaman	Jyestha-Asadha	Ploughing of fields and sowing ceremony or "Bijja Witanad", fencing of kitchen gardens and other gardens where maize etc., are sown. Clearing and burning of 'Elka' or the land where Gora ( <i>Eleusiua Coraoana</i> ) and pulses, oilseeds and bean are sown, sowing of the same and suan
Burdabata	Asadha-Sarabana	Sowing of paddy in rice fields and pulses, Mandia, Suan in the Elka.
Mundkhol	Srabana-Bhadrav	Collection of roots and tubers from the Jungle, storing of water in the fields wherever necessary and sowing of paddy.
Kani	Bhadrav-Aswin	Collection of roots and tubers from Jungle, observance of 'Kurum Pandu' or the new Suan eating ceremony, storing of water in the fields. Hunting in jungle.
Dashera	Aswin-Kartik	Collection of roots & tubers from the jungle, watching birds & wild animals to save the crops to be harvested. Harvest of small paddy & observance of Kodta Pandu or new rice eating ceremony. Fishing from small rivulets & low lying land where water gets deposited. Storing of water in fields. Hunting in jungles.
Dewad	Kartik-Margasir	Storing of water in the fields, fishing from small water deposits and collection of roots and tubers. Harvest of small paddy and observance of Sikud Pandu or the new bean eating ceremony. Watching birds and wild, animals to save crops.
Pand	Margasir-Pusa	Harvest of big paddy from the low lying lands which ripens later, begin storing of paddy. Harvest of maize, suan and pulses and oil seeds begins, watching birds and wild animals in the field and work near the field huts for collection and storing of paddy.

From the description of the seasonal activities of the Koyas one fact stand out clearly that their economic pursuits mainly centre round their primary need of the quest for food and shelter. Hunting and collection of roots and tubers are regular features of their economic pursuit and throughout the year they are found in groups with their bows and arrows amidst the forest in search of wild games, hares, birds, rats and squirrels. Considerable time is also seen devoted for collection of roots and tubers, a detailed account of which will be dealt with later. Time devoted for wet cultivation seem to be very much less in comparison with other types of food quest. In fact, they devote a great part of their time for watching and harvest of the ripening crops rather than the systematic effort for obtaining a bumper crop. The marriage season of the Koya seems to begin with the end of harvest of crops when they become free to attend and perform marriage ceremonies in and outside their villages. The season ends with the first breaking of monsoon when they become busy with their agricultural activities.

### **The Cattle wealth of the Koya**

The Koyas of Malkangiri Sub-division possess large herds of cows and bullocks and in the southern part of the Subdivision the number of cows and bullocks of a family increases and sometimes exceeds a hundred or more. Cattle herds of few villages collected are detailed below.

<b>Name of the village</b>	<b>No. of families</b>	<b>Bullocks</b>	<b>Cows</b>	<b>Calves</b>	<b>Total</b>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Gampakonda	6	39	96	67	208
Tumkimadka	10	50	118	72	250
Gagrimatla	10	45	73	72	200
Marigeta	12	39	159	77	287

The figures indicated are not of a representative sample but they indicate the large number of herds that are generally possessed by the Koyas. Their cows and bullocks resemble the cows and bullocks that are found generally all over Orissa. The number of herds of such animals varies from one family to another in each village and the inequalities in possession are due to the natural calamities and epidemics that occasionally destroy their cattle. Grigson in his monograph 'Maria Gonds of Bastar' writes about the large number of buffaloes that are also owned by the so-called 'Bisonhorn Marias' of Bastar whom he calls also Koyas. But it is interesting to note that nowhere in the Malkangiri subdivision the Koyas are found having buffaloes in their herds of domesticated animals.

The Koyas do not have Kraals (sheds) to shelter their cows and bullocks in their villages. The open space before or by the side of each house is used for tethering them with one long rope tied at one end to the trunk of a tree or a bamboo post stuck into the ground. Sometimes, ten to twelve or more animals are tethered on a single long rope. Throughout the year they are kept exposed to

the weather. On enquiry the Koyas informed the author that making large sheds for cows would demand much arduous labour for collecting building materials. As such they avoid doing it thinking this to be a heavy task for them.

The animals are driven to the forests nearby which provide good fodder to them. The forests are covered with many types of unidentified grass and creepers. They graze in the forest and drink water from the water holes. No effort is made to feed them at house. They are essentially watched only when the crops ripen in the fields. No sooner the crops are harvested the cows and bullocks are let loose for grazing in the fields and are only driven back in the evening. The villagers select watchmen in order of families who send their men in turn to tend the cattle. Usually the boys of ages ten to fifteen go to watch the herds and in the rainy and harvest seasons adult person accompany the herds.

Castration of male calves is done at a much later period when they have already become grown up bulls. The Koyas say that if a calf is castrated earlier it will not have a strong and stout growth. They have their own indigeneous method of castration. There are specialists who undertake this job. The testis of the bulls are crushed and made to pulp by constantly grinding them with the help of two pieces of sticks and turmeric paste is plastered over the scrotum. In these days stockman centres have been opened in Koya areas. But the author was told by the veterinary stockmen that the Koyas seldom come to them for help.

These animals suffer from disease for which the Koyas have their names. They are Yagotosi (pox), Bukatoi, Gera, Patadarsik, etc. The Koya adopt the traditional way of dealing with these animal diseases. They ask for the help of their shamans who cure them by way of divination and use medicines prepared of juices of the leaves and roots in the jungle. In this case also the Koyas do not ask for the help of the stockmen.

The Koyas seldom milk their cows. During rainy season when the fodder in the forests have a wild growth the Koyas milk their cows. They say that the calves will die if milking is done frequently. They prepare curd and butter but not ghee as others do. The ghee that is prepared unsystematically gives a bad odour. The Koyas say in the days of the reign of Jeypore king each headman was forced to supply few pots of ghee as 'bheti' during Dashera festival at Jeypore.

It remains for further investigation as to how and why the Koyas keep such large herds of livestock. The neighbouring tribes and castes like Bondos, Bhumias and Ranas of the same subdivision are devoid of such a possession. There is no doubt that the topography of the area is favourable for rearing herds of cows and bullocks. It may be noted that the possession of cows and bullocks serves an important purpose in the society and economy of the Koyas.

The Koyas use both cows and bullocks for ploughing their fields. It was gathered that when the Koyas solely depended on shifting cultivation where

ploughing of fields was of little importance the cows and bullocks were made to trod over the patch of clearing after which seeds were sown in that land. At present when they have taken resort to the wet cultivation, they have learnt to use ploughs to cultivate their fields. The use of cows in ploughing the soil and growing crops bear testimony to their lack of developed knowledge about wet cultivation. From the list given in the beginning it is interesting to note that out of the total number of cows and bullocks in each village the number of cows exceed that of bullocks. The reason may be that the bullocks serve the purpose of a medium of exchange. They are sold either directly for ready cash or exchanged on the system of barter for any other necessity. The Koyas require money for purchasing their clothings and other necessities. The bullocks provide money to the Koyas. They do not sell the bullocks in the market. It is only when a customer comes to the village the Koyas sell them. The value of a bullock varies from an amount of rupees fifty to one hundred and rarely more if it is of big size. Direct barter of bullock for many commodities like fishing nets and rugs are also made.

They wear a head dress of bison horn during ceremonial dances. These are treated to be their precious possession. They purchase bison horns from the neighbouring people who sometimes demand a pair of bullocks for a pair of bison horns. The cows are never sold as the Koyas say that the cows will give birth to calves thereby increasing their stock possession of cows and bullocks.

In the social field these animals also play an important role. The possession of this wealth gives status to a man in the Koya society. In fact a man becomes wealthy by possessing a large herd of cattle. The man who does not possess the livestock is considered low in the social scale. No man can marry without possessing cows and bullocks because these are invariably included in the bride price that has to be paid to the bride's father. A man who has no cow or bullock has to serve under another man who posses a large herd. In return for his service he is provided with a cow and a bullock to be paid as bride price. It was also gathered that when a man is without any animal of this kind he goes to one of his relations, residing in another village with a pot of *landa* or rice beer. He is provided with few heads of cattle to improve his economic status and then returns the same number to his benefactor after few years when he is capable to do so. This is a widely prevalent practice among the Koyas and a deeper study on this may reveal fact relating to the nature of indebtedness and the terms, conditions and the type of social obligations involved therein.

The Koyas were prolific beef eaters in the old days. In these days also the practice has not been completely abandoned but they hesitate to reveal it to any outsider which they think will lower down their status in the social scale. The slaughter of cows and bullocks in the funerary ceremony is a regular feature in the Koyas society. When a man dies all his kinsmen living in some other villages are invited to come to see the dead man. The dead body is preserved in the house, till all the kinsmen gather and in the meanwhile cows and pigs are

slaughtered to arrange the feast. When a menhir is erected in memory of the dead person a cow is slaughtered and its tail is hung on the stone slab.

In a nutshell, this animal wealth of Koya gives a respectable status to a man, enables him to marry and it is used as a capital whose productive function is of immense importance to the Koya. The Koya term for wealth is 'Chom' or 'Shom' and when a man is asked as to when he will marry; he replies that when he has got enough 'Chom' or cattle wealth.

### **Other Domestic Animals**

Pigs are domesticated in large number by the Koyas because pork is not only relished but constitute a regular dietary item of the Koyas. In all types of ceremonial feasts pigs are slaughtered to provide pork for the feast. When a Koyas employs certain numbers of persons to do some work for him one or two pigs are killed for the feast.

### **Seasonal Collection of Roots and Fruits**

Collection of roots and fruits constitutes one of the important activities in their quest for food. In fact, a Koya substantially adds to his store of food through the collection of roots, tubers and fruits from the forest. The most important of these is the 'Mahul' or the flower of '*Bassia latifolia*' tree. The period for collection starts from the month of Phalgun to Baisakh continues for about three months a year. The Koyas go to collect them from morning after taking gruel. Women and children take more initiative and return home with full baskets as these trees are found in abundance in their area. It was found after enquiry that a family collected an average of three hundred pounds of Mahul in a year. After collection the flowers are dried in the sun to make them suitable for storing to be used in the scarcity period. Poor people, who apprehend shortage of rice and other food grains, start consuming Mahul with some other food stuffs. Koyas are also found completely dependent on Mahul when all other food grains get exhausted.

Mahul apart from being used as food also serves the purpose of an intoxicating drink. They prepare a kind of alcoholic beverage by boiling Mahul in their indigenous way. This beverage is called 'Suram' or 'Uram' and is deep red in colour. All the families prepare it and almost all the family members consume it. It is as common as the rice beer or *landa* but due to their limited stock of Mahul all the families cannot afford to drink the beverage throughout the year.

The Koyas also collect the fruit of this tree and prepare oil in an indigenous method. This oil is very common among the Koyas who use it in their food as well as for toilet purpose.

Next in importance is the fruit called Tumri or Tumid (Kendu). Kendu fruits also ripen at the same time as that of Mahul. Huge quantity of the fruit is

collected, eaten and stored after being dried in sun to be used at times of scarcity. The dried Kendu fruits are made to soak in water and eaten. There are several other seasonal fruits which are collected and eaten but not stored. They are 'Nendu' (Jamu), 'Edka' (Kusum) and Marka (Mango), etc.

Collection of roots and tubers from the forests is also important for the Koyas as they depend on these when their stock of paddy gets exhausted. These are not stored but consumed immediately after they are collected. All the types of fruits are not available in any one season but in different seasons. Collection of roots begins from the corresponding Oriya months of Jyestha and Asadha. 'Mati' is the Koya word for any type of edible root. Roots like Kaimul-mati, Kirsi-mati and Keska-mati are available during these months. From the month of 'Kani', i.e. the Oriya months Bhadrab and Aswin, Gonde-mati is available. This particular root or tuber is kept under flowing water for twenty four hours after which it is washed and eaten. If it is not eaten in this way it causes swelling of joints and pain all over the body. There are also *ola-mati* and *Ladi dorap-mati* which are collected by the Koyas. A systematic study and analysis of these roots and tubers is apt to reveal facts that may be conducive for the betterment of health and hygiene of these people.

Various types of seasonal greens (*kusir*) are also collected by the women folk from the edges of the standing water and forests. These are called "Kusir" and eaten with gruel. Most important among these greens are 'bende kusir' (collected regularly when available and constitute a common item of the Koya diet for most parts of the year. Among others are 'narde kusir', 'emel kusir', 'toto kusir', 'owal kusir', 'etol kusir', etc. They also collect 'alang' i.e. the eggs of the red ants to prepare curry with it.

### **Markets and the System of Exchange of the Koyas :**

There are very few markets in the whole Koya country and they number four to five only. They are the markets at Malkangiri, Sikapalli, Mallavaram and Bejangwada. Besides, there are certain other markets which do not sit for the whole year. As communication to the Koya area is still poor, merchants in large numbers cannot visit these markets. The market at Malkangiri is the biggest among those mentioned. This is because of the advantage in communication to the place as it happens to be the headquarters of Malkangir Sub-division. The other markets are situated in the north of the Koya area whereas Bejangwada and Mallavaram are the southern most markets of that area. In the old days, few Koyas attended the markets because of the distance they had to travel to the reach the market. The distance to these markets exceeds twenty miles except in case of Malkangiri and Sikapalli which lie at a distance of 10 miles from each other. Apart from the spatial dimension another factor has also to be taken into consideration. The Koyas have a limited number of needs or wants which they could satisfy without going to a market in a far-off place.

All these weekly markets those sit only once a week. In these days the Koyas are found attending the markets in an increasing number. People from villages at a distance of ten miles from a market also come to the markets regularly. After the harvest season markets are more crowded than in other seasons. New markets are emerging in these days because of the growing interest of the Koyas to attend them

The Koyas have a very limited number of needs. But these needs are of much importance to them. The most important among them is cloth for both men and women. The men who carry on this business come from Bastar in Madhya Pradesh and sometimes they are the local Telugu people. Mainly the businessmen are people from Bastar or Muslims, Telugus and occasionally Oriyas with whom the Koya make transactions. The size of the markets is very small in comparison with the markets seen in other parts of Orissa. Approximately, some two hundred people transact business in a market. Both men and women come to the market. The Koya women come for shopping as well as selling their products but the men mainly come to purchase, not to sell.

The immediate needs of the Koyas are salt, cloth, oil, onion, dry fish, *gud* (jaggery) and turmeric. Among these, salt and cloth are given top priority. Salt is purchased by barter. Some times itinerant vendors come to sell salt in the Koya villages. The Koya exchange 'mandi' millet and especially, mustards for salt. On one *mana* unit of measuring pot made of brass or iron, the mustards is exchanged for 3 to 5 *manas* of salt. In case of millet or rice one 'mana' of rice or millet is exchanged for two or three 'manas' of Slat. Commodities like cloth, oil, dry fish and *guda* are exchanged for money. The price of cloth varies from Rs. 4 to Rs. 10 according to the demand by the Koya. At the time of harvest, the prices of cloth rise because the Koya need cloth for wearing on ceremonial occasions which begin after harvest.

The Koya women are seen mostly interested in purchasing different varieties of glass and metal bangles and varieties of necklaces of beads. These are sold by outsiders like Telugu women and Boipari women who come from Andhra and Bastar in Madhya Pradesh. Apart from different types of ornaments, the Koya women also purchase combs, mirrors, sweetmeats, soaps which are articles of luxury for them. But there is a growing interest among the younger generation who take fancy in purchasing the luxurious items.

Mention may be made of what the Koya bring to sell in the market. Mainly they are 'mirchi' (Chillies), brinjals, Mahul, millet, Kolath, rice, tomato, Mung, Biri and especially dried tobacco leaves. The vegetables are seasonal which the Koya grow in their gardens. All these are sold by Koya women. Vegetables and tobacco leaves are sold for one anna or two annas, Rice, Mahul, pulses and millets are sold in measures of *mana* which are standardized and are sometimes not.

The Koyas do bargain at the time of purchase. But that does not benefit the Koya much as the traders are more intelligent and cunning. There were instances observed by the author where the Koya women fall an easy prey to their counterparts who take advantage of their simplicity and their ignorance of the measures and values of commodities. If a Koya woman knows that the price of Mahul is one rupee for five *manas* she will not hesitate to dispose of her goods at the previous rate which goes to the advantage of the traders. Likewise they are cheated in ways by the business men because of the Koya's ignorance of measures in terms of money. This fact was corroborated by the statements given by the business men themselves in the markets of Sikapalli and Mallavaram.

The Koyas go to markets in large numbers after harvest with their commodities like rice, Mahul maize, millet and pulses for sale. The business men like Muslims and Telugus collect these at a cheaper rate from the Koya either in exchange of cash or salt or cloth. These are again sold to the Koya at the period of scarcity when the Koyas again purchase these at a higher rate. This is one of the regular features of Koyas' transactions with the outsiders. This indicates the lack of knowledge regarding business transactions. They meet their needs immediately after harvest by selling whatever they produce at a cheaper rate.

In spite of these short comings the Koya by now have been stimulated to produce commodities for sale in the markets. Emphasis is now being laid more on the garden produce which finds a ready market for the local people other than the Koya. Towards south of the Koya country where civilized Telugus and men from Madhya Pradesh have made a profound influence upon the Koyas, the money transactions are taking first place over the barter system. There is a class of people called 'Boiparis' who have migrated to the Koya country from the adjoining Bastar State and have now become settled in the Koya villages. They investigator found such people settled in many villages. They also carry on business with the Koyas by providing them with the ceremonial dresses of the Koya magicians and headdresses. These decorative dresses are purchased by the Koyas at a very high rate sometimes costing more than thirty rupees.

Markets are the place where the Koyas come in contact with the outsiders. The relationship is always commercial except with the 'Boiparis' who also take part in their social activities. The market is also a place of social interaction where the Koyas meet their relations living in distant villages.

### **Division of Labour and Craft Specialization**

Division of labour on the basis of age and sex varies among the Koyas. Small children up to the age six or seven are not assigned any work. But as they grow older they learn to take up the roles of adult men and women. When the boys are of the age twelve or more they work like adults. The girls of this age also learn to perform the household works like adult women. But hard work like ploughing, storing water in the field and going to jungle for hunting are not done



by the boys. As soon as they reach the adolescent period they work like adult members of their family.

Division of labour on the basis of sex is given below.

Men	Women
<b>Daily Duties:-</b>	
(a) X (Nil)	(a) Fetching water from the spring
(b) X	(b) Bringing firewood from jungle.
(c) X	(c) Sweeping house and surroundings
(d) X	(d) Cooking food
(e) X	(e) Making bed
(f) X	(f) Search for edible leave and grasses.
<b>Work in Gardens and Fields:-</b>	
(a) Tree felling	(a) X
(b) Fencing of garden	(b) X
(c) Ploughing	(c) Ploughing
(d) Sowing	(d) Sowing seeds
(e) Reaping	(e) Reaping
(f) Threshing paddy at 'kalams'	(f) Threshing paddy at home
(g) Gather fruits and roots	(g) Gather fruits and roots
(h) Preparing large stock of rice bear for marriage and other ceremonies.	(h) Preparing rices and Mahul liquor
(i) Storing of water in field	(i) X
<b>Hunting and Fishing:-</b>	
(a) Hunting wild games in Jungle	(a) X
(b) Fishing in rivers and streams	(b) X
(c) X	(c) Search for crabs, fishes from the water inside corn fields.
<b>Domestic Animals:-</b>	
(a) X	(a) Attention to fowls, pigs and goats.
(b) Taking cattle to jungle	(b) X
(c) Tethering cattle after return form jungle.	(c) Tethering cattle after return form jungle.
(d) X	(d) Carry cow dung to the garden
<b>House Building :-</b>	
(a) Building houses, bringing wooden poles and bamboos, house thatching.	(a) X
(b) Treading mud for plastering	(c) Treading mud for house plastering

<b>Baskets and Mats Making:-</b>	
(a) Preparing bamboo mats & baskets	(a) X
<b>Wooden Utensils Making :-</b>	
(a ) Plough making	(a) X
(b) Wooden handles for spades and axe	(b ) X
(c ) Drums and frames for cots	(c ) X
<b>Musical instruments and Weapons:-</b>	
(a) Prepare all kinds of musical instruments, bows and arrows.	(a) X
<b>Personal Adornments :-</b>	
(a) Feather and cloth dressing on bison horns.	(a) X Varieties of hair dressing
<b>Miscellaneous: -</b>	
(a) Going to market	(a) Going to market
(b) Going to attend marriage	(b ) X
(c ) Milking the cows	(c ) X
(d ) X	(d) Preparing milk products

From the above table it is noticeable that the Koya women are more laborious and even share with their menfolk in difficult agricultural works except such hard work as tree felling, storing of water, house building and thaching and hunting etc. What is more important is the fact that the women folk do not share those works where some technical knowledge is required. Basketry, fencing of gardens and preparation of musical instruments and weapons bear testimony to this fact.

There is an occupational group among the Koya called Kamar Koya who specialise in making iron implements like axes, knives and arrow heads. They cannot intermarry with the Koyas though they live in the same villages and even in the same hamlet. The Koyas claiming social superiority over them do not eat food in the house of Kama Koya. They are thought to be inferior in social status. For making iron implements they get remuneration from the villagers in kinds of paddy and millet. Earthen pots are provided by the Kumbhars who inhabit the region. They bring pots to the markets for sale. These people are not Koya. Pots are exchanged in barter system and sometimes on payment of money.

Another occupational group of the Koya tribe is called 'Musri'. The Musris are considered even lower in social status than the Kamar Koyas. The Kamar Koyas do not accept water from a Musri. Though they have the same clan and other cultural traits of the Koya tribe they cannot intermarry with the other groups of the Koya. They are an endogamous occupational division like the Kamar Koyas. They are not found in all the villages like Kamaras and remain

scattered all over the Koya region. They are also very few in number. Their occupation is to make ornaments of brass and aluminum which the Koya women use. They are also paid in kind by their customers.

### **Koya Indebtedness**

During enquiry about family land holdings and other property, it was found that the standard of living of the Koya varies from family to family. Some families in a village are wealthier than others and there are poor people. The latter lacks sufficient land for cultivation and cows and bullocks as productive capital. Those who live at the subsistence level are forced to incur debts.

The Koya ordinarily does not like to speak out as to how much loan he has incurred from anybody. They are always suspicious about outsiders and hesitate to reveal anything concerning their property and wealth. After much difficulty the author was able to collect data about the nature and amount of debts that the Koyas have incurred. Villages like Sikapalli, Kursuwada, Ponaru Mariwada, Khuntagada, Cheriguda and Markheligada were visited and information was collected with the help of the village level worker.

The Koyas incur debts most often from among themselves and rarely from the Doms who call themselves Walmikis. The Doms reside in the same villages as Koyas sporadically and occupy separate hamlets of their own. Their chief business is to advance loans to the Koyas when they are in need and collect the loan with heavy interest. Ten *manas* of paddy is returned with an additional five mans of paddy after a year. One villager of Sikapalli named Madkam Dewa informed me that his father incurred a loan of one puti of paddy equivalent to 1 mound approximately from a Dom of the village Kursuwada named Dwari Kanaya. He could not tell the year of taking the loan. After the death of his father ten years ago he is still repaying the loan. He has paid back one cow one calf and twenty eight rupees and has yet to pay for three 'Gadisa' of paddy equivalent to 90 maunds of paddy which is due on him.

Credit transactions are also made between kins. But these are repaid without any interest. If there does not exist any type of relationship, the debtor has to pay interest at the rate of half of the amount taken per annum.

From the instances gathered, it was revealed that the Koyas incur debt mainly for maintain livelihood, to meet the expenditure on marriage ceremonies and funerary feasts. Most of the instances referred to the need for maintaining livelihood. At the time of scarcity the Koyas go to the rich persons in their village or some other village to get loan either in cash or kind which is paid back soon after the harvest is over. The Koya has the customary practice of paying to the bride's father a pair of cattle consisting of one male calf and one female calf at the time of marriage besides he has to spend a lot of money and paddy including other domestic animals to provide for the marriage feast. He has to feed the

bride's men who accompany her to the groom's village. For all these a man has to possess a substantial sum, failing which he cannot marry.

Likewise, when a person's father or any of his family members dies he has to invite all his relations to see the dead body. He has to provide feasts for the villagers and kinsmen at the time of erecting a menhir. There are other social as well as economic obligations he has to fulfill for which he needs the means and if he lacks them, he incurs debt.

### **Goti System among the Koyas**

The system of employing 'Goti' (bonded labour) is prevalent among the Koyas. The wealthier Koyas often employ them to get help by way of manual labour. In village Sikapalli and others a number of servants of this nature are employed. There are certain factors which lead the Koyas to serve as a Goti. The primary reason is due to poverty and the other is to get a bride. A man living barely on subsistence level cannot afford to get a bride by paying the customary amount of bride price and if he is to incur loan he has no means to repay the amount. In this case he serves a rich man not in his own village but outside it. The author has not found any instance of a man serving as a 'Goti' in his own village. Out of several case histories, some may be given here to show how circumstances sometimes force the Koyas to serve as 'Goti' under somebody.

One Madkam Sukra (22) is also employed as Goti in the house of the Priest of the village Sikpalli and his younger brother Madkam Jagga (12) is also employed as Goti in the house of the elder brother of the same priest named Madkam Bimma (30). The two brothers went to Assam with their parents leaving their property with their maternal uncle to look after. When their father died at Assam their mother went away with another person by marrying him, the two brothers returned to their village in Bastar and found their family property misappropriated completely by their maternal uncle. They could not be helped by their villagers and came in search of employment. On the way they begged and in the village Tondpalli a Koya employed them to clear a patch of jungle for him and as remuneration paid them two *manas* of paddy. They came to village Sikapalli next and an Oriya man from Malkangiri was asking them to work for him as his servants. The priest of the village Madkam Bimma told them to stay with him and sent the younger brother to serve in his elder brother's house as *goti*. They preferred to stay in the house of Koya and not in the house of Oriya because they were assured that their wages would be paid in a lump sum at the time of their marriage.

Madkam Sukru informed me that when a Goti is employed he is assured by his employer to get him married to a Koya girl bearing all the expenses adjustable towards the remuneration of their service. When the employer gets a girl for his *goti* he is obliged to serve for another five years after which he is free

to move to any place or live separately building a house for himself in the same village. If the *goti* wants to go away before the stipulated period he has to pay some amount of paddy and other things like a cow or a pig as compensation to his employer.

The Koyas also employ *goti* who ultimately becomes the 'La-am' or the (*ghar-jwain*). If a man has a daughter or sister he keeps a *goti* who is a poor man and not able to pay the bride price. He is assured to get the girl if he serves him or his brother for five years. This is a form of marriage by service.

The relation between the employer and the employed is like the relation between two family members. They are never treated differently. They work together and eat together. They have access to all places in the house. The servants also adopt certain terms of address to their employers on the basis of the clan to which he belongs. If he belongs to the same clan he calls his employer as uncle or brother as the case may be or if he belongs to any other clan he calls either 'mama' or in any term for affinal relations that may fit the case.

### **Habits of Food and Drink**

The food of Koya is of a wide variety. A brief description given below:-

1. Paddy – Paddy is husked and the rice from it is boiled and gruel (*jawa*) is made. The Koyas mostly eat the gruel instead of rice as eaten by others.
2. Pulses – Biri, Peshli, Mung are also mixed with rice and gruel is made.
3. Suan and Maize and Mandia (Gora) are boiled and gruel is made.
4. The vegetables like pumpkin, gourd, Kerala, eggfruit are eaten as curry with *jawa* (gruel) or *chakur* (parched rice) which is a delicacy for the Koyas. During the harvest season or just after harvest when the Koyas have plenty of paddy at their disposal they take 'chakur' two times daily. At all other time parched rice is only eaten once in the evening and the gruel of rice in the day time.
5. 'Idu' or 'ikk' (*mahul*) is fried with little oil extracted from the dried seeds of the Mahul fruit called *idu kaya*. This provides a substantial food to the Koya during scarcity seasons.
6. Tumid (Kendu fruit) - collected in large quantities when they ripe and are stored after being dried in sun to be used during scarcity period.
7. The women folk collect a large variety of wild greens (sag) which they call 'Kusir' from the fields, jungles and the edges of the water which is cooked as a curry item to be eaten with *jawa* or *chakur*.
8. Collection of roots from the jungle is another important source of food for the Koyas. A large variety of them are collected, boiled and eaten.

The Koyas for a considerable period of time can live on various roots collected from the jungle.

9. They eat the young green shoots of bamboo.
10. Fishes or 'Kike' are eaten by preparing curry. Various kinds of fish are sun dried and stored for future use.
11. Carbs, snails, tortoise collected during rainy and other seasons are eaten after being roasted in fire.
12. 'Alang' or the large size red ant-rest full of eggs is relished by the Koyas. These eggs are grinded and paste is prepared to make curry out of it.
13. The meat of all types of wild animals and birds except tigers and bears are eaten without hesitation. Pigs, goats and fowls are domesticated in large number to provide meat.
14. The squirrels, wild rats and hares are often hunted and their meats are relished. A group of Koya hunters will not hesitate to run for hours after a squirrel and ultimately shoot it down which is roasted and eaten by all.

The Koyas are very addicted to different types of liquors. Liquor is not used as a luxury drink but a necessity without which, the Koyas say, they cannot survive. Traditionally, it has ritual as well as social uses. No marriage or religious ceremony can be performed without liquor.

The most commonly used alcoholic beverage is the '*Landa*' or rice beer. This is prepared from the fermented rice and drunk by all men, women and children. In marriage ceremonies, *landa* is the principal item served to the guests.

'*Idu Kalu*' or the liquor distilled from Mahul flower has a restricted use and all the Koyas cannot afford to drink it, very often. The Koyas also brew another kind of liquor from the Mahul by a special method which is called '*Suram*' or '*Uram*'. *Suram* is most commonly used by all the Koyas because of the abundance of Mahul trees in these areas.

Sago-palm (*Salap*) juice is also drunk by the Koyas but these trees are rare in their area and are individually owned. The date palm juice (*toddy*) is also drunk by the Koyas. To the south of Malkangiri these trees are abundantly found and the Koyas can live for days together on this drink without taking food.

A new comer to the Koya area should be fully aware of the types food eaten by them. Detailed information with regard to the quality and quantity of each item of food may reveal the underlying causes of the typical type of diseases to which the Koyas are mostly susceptible. The Koyas say that there are roots which cause swelling of joints and pain, if eaten improperly. The variety of wild roots should be examined by the medical and dietary experts.

**UNITS OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION****Family**

The family may be taken as the smallest unit of social grouping of the Koya society. A family is called '*lotam*' in Koya language. It includes the parents and their children and in a way follows the Hindu joint family system by including the brothers with their wives and children. In fact, a family consists of the parents, their adult sons, with their wives and children and unmarried sons and daughters. Sometimes, the family also includes the "*Olaam*" or the *ghar juain* who stays in his father-in-law's house with his wife. This is the form of marriage by service. As soon as the sons become adult and married they build up their own houses round the parent house to live separately with their wives but the cooking for the whole family is made in one place. If any of the adult son wants to be separated he asks his father to give him sons wants to be separated he asks his father to give him some land to live separated from the rest of the family. This process is gradually becoming common among the Koyas. Example may be given of Madkam Masa- Peda of the village Sikapalli, who is staying with his two sons and the other two sons being completely separated from them and are putting up in their separate establishment. There are many other instances which can be cited to show that the joint family system is gradually declining in the Koya society the causes of which should be studied elaborately.

Though monogamy is the rule, many Koya polygynous families are found. As the expenses of getting a bride is high the majority of the Koyas cannot afford to marry more than one woman. A wealthy Koya can afford to have three to four wives. The headman (Peda) of village Sikapalli has three wives of whom one is dead and the other two are living. Madkam Bojja (36) son of the headman has two wives. Madkam Dewa (38) who is also wealthy has two wives one of whom died years back but the other is living with him. On enquiry it was found that polygynous marriage in the Koya society is possible for those who are economically better off. Usually two considerations are made by those who marry more than once. One is that they get sufficient economic help from the wives as womenfolk in the Koya society contribute substantially in economic activities. Secondly, plural marriages are necessary to meet the sexual needs as in many cases the wives are older in age than the husbands, and become old when the husband still has youth and vigor. Besides, a Koya feels himself a man of position and status by marrying more than one woman.

A man sleeps with all his wives in one room and sex relation with any one is not envied by others. All the unmarried girls above age ten go to sleep either with their grandparents or any other old woman of the village living

alone. The boys above age ten also sleep in different places in groups or in a single group if accommodation is available.

As an economic unit the family functions for the maintaining of the livelihood of its members. All the members of a family co-operate in all types of economic activities, but due to division of labour on the basis of sex, certain types of work are done exclusively by one sex and certain others by the other sex which has already been described in the previous chapter. The functions of preserving cultural traditions are perpetuated from one generation to the other in co-operation with other people of the society.

The father is the central pole of the family and all authority is vested with him. He directs other members to work and also works with them. He owns all the family property except a few owned by the female members. He is succeeded by his eldest son. He is the man through whom descent is traced. Hence, the Koya family is patrilineal.

Regarding the female members of a family it can be said that wives assume a position subordinate to their husbands and the co-wives of a man remain peacefully with mutual adjustment with each other. But quarrels among them are not infrequent. The mothers train their daughters to work whereas the father trains up his sons for work. When the father becomes old the eldest son assumes importance and virtually becomes the head of the family. Reports have been received that the sons beat their fathers when they become old in case the father ignores the authority of his adult son but such cases are rare. Generally, old parents are treated with affection and devotion.

### Units of Kin group

The Koyas distinguish between two types of kin groups which they call as *kutumam* or the consanguineal kin and the *wiwalwand* or the affinal kin. There are five exogamous phratries (*katta*) in the southern Koya society named (1) Kowasi, (2) Odi or Sodi, (3) Madkam, (4) Madi, (5) Padiam. The same number of exogamous phratries are found among the northern Koyas though with different names but have clans (*bansas*) of the same names. Each group believes to have descended from a common ancestor and are identified with their respective totems like tortoise (Emul) for Madkam, goat (Meka) for Madi and buffalo (Podh, 'Bare') for Sodi Padiam and Kowasi. Each of the groups does not kill or eat their respective totemic animals.

A man of Kawasi *bansa* can take a wife from any of the four remaining phratries other than his own. Similarly, any person belonging to a particular phratry can choose a wife from the rest of the groups. A person cannot marry a girl of the same phratry to which he belongs because all persons in that group are believed to be related by blood relationship. As such when a man goes in search of a bride he is asked as to which phratry or *katta* he belongs to. This is because a



phratry consists of a number of clans (*bansas*) with different names, some of which are detailed below: -

Sl. No.	Name of the Phratry of Southern Koya	Name of the constituent <i>bansas</i>
1.	Edukatta	Kawasi, Duber, Emala, Wanzamir Korsta, Witer.
2.	Aidukata	Soid, Wika, Galir, Gontpontalewar, Gangetlawar, Dagulwar, Pittalwar
3.	Mulkatta	Madkam, Durwa, Madiam, Tai, Matum, Dharmu, Pondu, Joder, Undmir, Kalmu, Turramir
4.	Parengotta	Jelir, Oyemir, Madir, Darer, Pujsemir, Punyem Bogar
5.	Perumboi	Omrar, Alwa, Bandam, Kurram, Padiam, Wetir Kanjaru, Kunja, Kokral, Kattam, Ondi, Rova Kotam

The above information was collected from village Mallavaram and Mottu which is the region of southern Koyas.

Sl. No.	Name of the Phratry of Northern Koya	Corresponding Phratry name of the Southern Koya	Constituent <i>bansa</i> (Clans) names
1	Madkam	Mulkatta	Kalmu, Nupod, Dadir, Guisalo, Gondse, Tati, Badse, Bogam, Ponder, Gaita, Telsari.
2	Madi	Parengatta	Punyem, Emla, Oyami, Pusami
3	Sodi	Aidukatta	Odi, Wickalore
4	Padiam	Perumboi	Kunjam, Karta, Weti, Rawal Karrhami, Kartni, Komra
5	Kawasi	Edukatta	Korsta, Muskir, Padami Wanzami, Dir.

The Koyas are not always able to name the different clans under each phratry. Besides there are many clan names which are of local origin and not found in other regions. This is evident from the information received from Koyas of both the regions.

There are 'weshads' or mythological stories prevalent among the Koyas about the Origin of their different phratries. The name one of the story is 'Dada Burkakawas'. The story goes like this. There was a great flood in which all beings died except a brother and sister. The name of the brother was Kawas. Both of them created a gourd (Burka) which floated over the enormous mass of water. At last they landed on an island and cultivated crops with the help of a Kasal - a tool to dig earth and produced Gora (Ragi) and other food grains and ate these. Since there was nobody else they married each other and seven sons and two

daughters were born. The two daughters married the two eldest sons. Gradually the Koyas were born of these early unions.

The story is related differently in different places but one thing remains the same always that the brother and sister married and gave birth to children who became the ancestors of the Koyas. These children became the founders of each the phratries.

As the range of consanguinal and affinal kin is broad owing to the system of phratry grouping the people of which are scattered widely over the country, for all practical purpose the Koyas distinguish between the real and classificatory relations called "Jegtadi" or distant ones and "Boketadi"- the nearer. Consanguinal kin group comprises of a person's relations on the father's side beginning from grandfather to the Ego's own grand children. It also includes the brothers and their children. It does not include the sisters of his father. This consanguinal kin group of a person has certain duties to perform in the social field. When a man is going to marry they bring pots of 'landa' (rice beer) as gift that is shared among the members of the group. In death rites all of them will bring a apiece of cloth to be wrapped over the corpse. They are expected to come and attend all these.

The affinal kins (*wiwalwand*) are people who are connected with a person through marriage. Hence all persons on the mother's side related to a man are the affinal kins. The father's sister is also grouped in the affinal kin group as her daughter can to marry her brothers son.

The Koyas say that the affinal kins are more important in their society because of their close contact with them. In all the villages people belonging to different phratries are found. This is because the people of the founder phratry always bring bride from other phratries among them or else they may find difficulty if the village is inhabited by people of a single phratry.

The kinship terms used for designating various types of kins in the Koya society is interesting because there are terms which indicate the type of behaviors that is to be shown to a particular man, called by a particular term. Some of the terms are detailed below:-

English		Koya
Father	--	Yamal
Father's father	--	Dadu
Father's elder brother	--	Pepi
Father's younger brother	--	Koka
Father's father's brother	--	Dadu
Father's sister	--	Poye
Father's sister's daughter (Elder to ego)	--	Yange

Elder brother	--	Dada
Younger brother	--	(No term of address) term of
reference Tamusk		
Mother's father	--	Tata or Akko
Mother's Elder brother	--	Mama
Mother's younger brother	--	Mama
Mother's elder sister	--	Pedi or Barhiayaye
Mother's younger sister	--	Kusi or Sudiyoyo
Mother's brother's son	--	Bato
(Elder to Ego)		
Mother's brother's son Younger	--	Er-und
to Ego		
Father's sister's son elder to Ego	--	Bato
Father's sister's so younger to Ego	--	Er-und
Elder sister	--	Bai
Younger sister	--	No term of address, term of
		reference Elad.
Mother	--	Yayo
Father's mother	--	Bapi or Yappa
Father's elder brother's wife	--	Barhia Yayo or Pedi
Father's younger brother's wife	--	Sudiyaya or Jusi
Father's father's Brother's wife	--	Bapi
Father's sister's husband	--	Mama
Father's sister's daughter's husband	--	Dada
(elder to ego )		
Father's sister's daughter's husband	--	(Not term) Peka
(younger to ego)		
Elder brother's wife	--	Yange
Younger brother's wife	--	Kodiar
Mother's mother	--	Bhayo or Kakko
Mother's elder brother's wife	--	Poye
Mother's elder sister's husband	--	Pepi
Mother's younger sister's husband	--	Kaka or Babo
Mother's brother's son's wife elder	--	Bai
to ego		
Mother's brother's son's wife	--	No term for address Pekir
younger to ego.		
Elder sister's husband	--	Bato
Younger sister's husband	--	Erund
Husband	--	(term of reference) Mutpal
Wife's younger sister	--	Erupiki
Wife's elder sister	--	Podad
Wife's younger brother	--	Erund
Wife's elder brother	--	Bato

Wife's father	--	Mama
Wife	--	(Term of reference) Mute
Wife's younger sister's husband	--	Peka (term of reference)
Wife's elder sister's husband	--	Chadu
Wife's younger brother's wife	--	Piki (term of reference)
Wife's elder brother's wife	--	Bdai
Wife's mother	--	Yoye

The above mentioned kinship terms reveal facts as to how various types of kins are grouped together and called by single classificatory terms. For example the term 'mama' is used for three types of kins such as mother's brother, father's sister's husband and wife's father. As a result of the system of cross cousin marriage where a person can marry a mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter he is to show the same type of behavior to these people as he should have shown to his father-in-law. The term 'poye' also indicate the same thing. The term is also used for mother's brother's wife and father's sister and mother-in-law; hence all these kins expect same type of behavior from a person. Wife's elder brother, father's sister's son (elder to ego) and mother's brother's son (elder to ego) constitute a single group and all their wives also constitute a single group by being given single classificatory terms for each group. There were other kins a similar way. Another fact is also revealed that parallel cousins from a single group and cannot have marriage relations among themselves. Emphasis is laid on the patrilineal descent as all the male members on the father's side have a kinship term for each which is absent in the case of all the male members on mother's side. This is evident also from the behaviours shown to a person's tertiary relations on both father's and mother's sides. The son's children do not stand in joking relationship with their grandfather whereas daughter's children do stand in joking relationship.

### **The Koya System of Marriage**

Koya marriage or *Pendul* is one of the important social functions without which a man has no place in the society. For Koyas, marriage is a necessity because they have to perpetuate their generations and satisfy the sexual urge. Moreover, the wife is an indispensable partner in all spheres of their life and from a study of the division of labour on the basis of sex it becomes evident that a Koya cannot do without a wife in the ordinary day to day life. The Koyas attach little or no importance to the physical beauty of a girl for marrying. The criterion for a coveted wife is her being healthy and capable of undertaking arduous labour in economic as well as social activities. The criterion for a good husband lies in the fact of him being able to support the family and having a large number of cows and bullocks, physically tall and healthy.

Freedom in the selection of a spouse is very much limited and it is only the parents who take initiative for marriage negotiations. Where freedom is

exercised by any girl or boy the form of marriage bears a different name. Free choice is tolerated but after a much complicated method concerning the payment of compensation which will be discussed later.

The commonly practiced form of marriage is known simply as 'Pendul'. The system of marriage in which a boy carries off a girl of his choice with the help of his friends while she is in forest or field is known as "*Karsu pendul*" or the marriage where compensation has to be paid to the bride's father. The other form of marriage where a girl having previous connection with a boy, comes to the boy's house to stay, is called "*Lon-udi-wata*" marriage. In this case the amount of bride-price to be paid to the bride's father is much less than that of other forms of marriage, because she enters the groom's house according to her own will and without the consent of her parents. In the case where a boy carries off a girl he has to obtain the consent of the girl directly or indirectly, he tells his father for obtaining his consent and then he brings the girl to his house with the help of his friends. The bride's father demands compensation amounting to rupees three hundred, one she calf for the girl's maternal uncle, '*chhada*' or cloth for the girl's mother. Out of rupees three hundred, rupees eighty are given by the bride's father to his own villagers because they help him in realizing the compensation from the other party. The villagers make a feast in it.

The age for marriage is fixed at the maturity of both the sexes. The Koyas think, a boy attains maturity when hair grows in his armpit and moustaches come up. Usually these things happen when a boy is twelve to thirteen years of age. Hence the marriageable age for boys starts from the age of thirteen. For girls the marriageable age begins when she has attained puberty (*etarta*) irrespective of age. Hence the age of wives are found to be more than their husband. Many instances can be cited to show that the husbands are younger in age than wives. This is one of the important reasons as to why the Koyas practice polygyny. Wives lose the urge for sex when their husbands are still youthful. But this is not always the case. The problem arises when a nubile girl marries a bridegroom who has not actually attained physical maturity but is thought to have done so. This is because of the early development of sexual hairs. In this case the wife has to wait till her husband becomes fully grown up to perform sexual intercourse with her. She sleeps with her husband and is expected to remain chaste but actually it does not happen so. Rare instances are found of an adolescent boy marrying an infant bride in which case the boy has to wait till she is matured to come and stay with him.

The period of betrothal extends from one to two years and it is the parents of the boy who go in search of a bride. The father of the groom, goes with his kinsmen and villagers with a pot of *mahul* liquor to meet the bride's father and settle the marriage. If the bride's father agrees to the proposal he drinks the liquor with them or if he does not agree refuses to drink the liquor. The villagers

and kinsmen of both the parties select the day for marriage which takes place always after the harvest is over.

Sexual intercourse is prohibited among relations belonging to same clan whether classificatory or real which is regarded as *Barhia Tapu* or big offence. If any such thing occurs and the news leaks out all the clan members of the culprits will sit for discussion and punish them with heavy fines. It will be strictly confined to the members of that clan only. The system of preferential marriage is prevalent as indicated elsewhere. The first preference is given to mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter. If no such candidate is available bride is found out from any other clan by duly compensating to the mother's brother and father's sister of the groom.

The system of sororal polygyny is also practiced by the Koyas. A man can marry his wife's younger sisters one after another either after the death of the wife or while she is living. Widow marriage is also prevalent. A person can marry his elder brother's widow whom he calls 'Yange'. But marriage with the widow of younger brother is strictly prohibited as she stands in relation of a daughter-in-law (Kadiar) to the person. Instances are also found of marriage by exchange of sister's. (*Marsanad pendul*).

Adultery on the part of wife results either in divorce of the wife and the adulterer involved is demanded compensation by the husband. When the wife is divorced she is given a goat, one cloth, ten *manas* of rice and twelve rupees. The Panchayat sits in the village and the girl either goes to the man with whom she had connection or goes to her father if divorce is due to some other reason.

### **Marriage Ceremony**

The period of marriage ceremony continues for three days. It begins by the ceremonial fetching of water from the nearby water source by the 'yange' or the elder brother's wife. She is accompanied by a group of women to do this. They sing songs while bringing water. Singing is a regular feature and during the ceremony nothing goes without being accompanied by chorus songs sung by group of women relatives of the bride as well as the groom. The water that is brought is called 'Putu eru' or birth water. On the second day also the same bringing of water by the elder brother's wife continues. The groom sits on the lap of his elder brother's wife and tamarind and turmeric paste with ghee is smeared on the body of the groom. Water is poured over him and he goes inside to wear new cloth. Then he is made to visit all other families in that village belonging to his own clan where he is bathed by the women folk. He visits them with the accompaniment of drums and if he is a rich man with the sounds made by shots of muzzle loading guns. A few men are sent by the groom's father, to the village of the bride to fetch her. These people go with invitation and stay there for the night.

Next day the bride comes to the village of the groom surrounded by a number of women, her friends and relations singing all the way. The groom's father sends pots of rice beer to the mid path before the bride's party reach to the groom's village. They drink the rice beer and take rest for a while and then again start. By this time the 'endbayul' or the dancing ground has already become crowded with hundreds of people both male and female dancing. The men wear the *prema kok* or the bison horn headdress and garment which hangs from waist downwards. The women folk dance to the rhythm of the beating of drums. It is interesting to note that the villagers from a considerable distance come to dance in the marriage ceremony without being invited. They are given rice beer and Mahul liquor to drink and some rice and pork for cooking. Each group cooks its food and eat before they disperse. The Koyas say that they never go to dance in the marriage ceremony of a person who they know to be not well-to-do. It is the courtesy and prestige of a person not to deny any group or individual to participate if they have come out of their own accord. Thus before performing the marriage ceremony a man must be fully prepared to bear any amount of expenditure that might be required. Sometimes people incur loan at the time of marriage ceremony to save themselves from humiliation.

When the bride's party enters the village they slow down their pace and make a halt at every five to six yards. The women around the bride go on singing. The bride is seen crying and she rests her head on somebody's shoulder. In this way they cover the distance to reach the groom's house. When they reach near the groom's house a regular struggle ensues between the bride's and groom's parties. With much difficulty the girl is snatched away from the bride's escorts and the mother of the groom washes the feet of the bride and she is given a turmeric dot on her forehead. All the people sit and drink rice beer in leaf cups. The couple then is brought before the house and water is poured over their head and they are made to wear new clothes. A spot by the side of a stream near the village boundary is selected for the performance of ritual. The bride goes to that place with the friends and relations of her village. The groom is then taken to that spot by his elder brother's wife. The groom and bride sit on the laps of their respective 'Yange' or elder brother's wives and eat. Once of the cock's legs is eaten by the groom, he returns to his village to drink rice beer. The girl waits there till evening when she is brought and left in the groom's house. The bride sleeps with her people at the place selected in the groom's house. The bride's people drink rice beer known as 'Chakna landa'.

Next day in the morning, 'Ana landa' – the sacred rice beer is given to the couple by the priest of the village. It is first drunk by the bride and next by the groom which is followed by group drinking rice beer. Till that period the bride is not expected to eat in the house of the groom. In the evening the groom's elder brother's wife catches hold of the bride's hand and leaves her in the room which is known as 'Aan lon'. The couple spends the night there. After a week or

so the couple visits the bride's parents' house with a pot of *landa*, one cock and *mahul* liquor and spends few days and come back.

During the marriage ceremony several types of songs are sung by women folk of both the parties. Each song has specific purpose and is sung at a particular time. For example when the bride's people hand over the girl to the groom by joining their hands the friends of the girl sing very obscene verses by way of depreciating the physical features and attributes of the groom. When the girl is snatched by the groom's party there is competition in singing songs. A systematic collection of songs will reveal many interesting facts about the customs of the Koyas. There is particular song for the girl when she is captured and carried away by a man to marry. The song is known as "Arrmirranad pat" or running away on the way. Though this has become a formal song it indicates the old custom of actually capturing a girl and carrying her away while the girl weeps and calls her kinsmen to save her from the group of men.

### **Child Training and Education**

The Koyas are not able to understand the physiological phenomena of birth and the co-relation between sexual intercourse and conception. When a woman conceived, it is thought that god has put the child inside the mother's womb. A pregnant woman carries on her routine work till the expected month of delivery when she is taken to a hut erected behind the main house. Six to seven days after delivery, she returns to her home.

Naming ceremony is performed few days after the birth of the child. It is interesting to note that the name of the Koyas are very much limited in number and in a single village several people are found bearing the same name. This may be due to the way in which names are given. A child is put in cradle and some rice is put into the closed palms of the child. The shaman goes on telling names that comes to his mind. When the baby opens the palms and rice is thrown down the name uttered by the shaman at that particular time is given to the baby. Sometimes the practice differs. The shaman makes the baby cry while it is in the cradle. The shaman goes on telling the names. When the baby sleeps and stops crying the name uttered at that time is given to the baby. The Koyas have a belief in the reincarnation of life. A person is supposed to be reborn as his son's son. As such the names of the grandfather are seen being given to the grandsons.

The Koyas divide the period from the birth of a child to the end of weaning period into seven stages. They are

1. Ukadta Unzito (The period of sleeping in cradle)
2. Kapmundita (Rolling from one side to the other)
3. Kudigaitito (To crawl in a sitting position)
4. Marmindan (To crawl on all fours)
5. Tagse Duder (To walk with the help of a bamboo frame)



6. Gundu Gundu mirito (Little running)

7. Gati Mirito (Running fast)

When a child reaches the last mentioned stage he leaves suckling his mother's breast and learns to speak and is helped by the mother to know names of things. Till seven years of age the mother takes the entire responsibility of a child by way of caretaking. Till the end of the weaning period a child is treated with kindness and after that period he is lightly coerced if his impulse is found unruly. Fathers generally do not beat their daughters when they are above the age of twelve. Mothers generally do not beat their sons when they are above the age of twelve. The boys and girls are expected to behave properly even before they reach the stage of physical maturity.

Till the age of six neither boys nor girls use any cloth to cover their genitals but soon after that mother teaches both boys and girls the way of wearing '*Chil wudsa*' - the loin cloth covering the genitals. When the girls reach the age of nine or ten they know wearing of "*Gojas udsa*", the way in which women folk wear their clothes. The boys wear loin cloths, the way in which the men folk wear their cloths. The Koya boys learn their traditional knowledge of making bows and arrows and other things early even before they are adolescents. They prepare miniature bows and arrows (Juri) and play with them. A group of boys play the 'Jurikarsitor' game by aiming at a particular target. Either they divide themselves into two groups or two boys play at a time. When a boy misses a target the arrow is taken away by the winner. It is interesting to note that small boys of even ten years possess the power of accurately aiming at a particular spot. As a matter of fact the boys in a group go for hunting small birds, bring them if they happen to find any, and eat after roasting these in fire.

Chapter IV**LEADERSHIP & RELIGION****The Peda or Headman**

Leadership, both political and social, revolves round the headman (Peda) of each village. Until recently, as mentioned elsewhere, the Peda had certain economic prerogatives which made him virtually all powerful in a village. Even in religious matters he is the first man to take initiative to ask the priest and villagers to perform religious ceremonies on various occasions.

Usually the office of headman is hereditary. After his death his eldest son succeeds him. But this is subject to certain conditions. Certain attributes must be fulfilled by the new headman. He must be a good and impartial man. He must be able to voice the difficulties of the villagers before any Government official that visits their village. He must be wise in making decision in case of various types of disputes. In these days the headman is expected to know little Oriya so as to be able to converse with Oriya Officers and traders. In every Koya village the headman are found to be wealthier than others. He may not be the wealthiest man but wealth and riches are always factors for enabling a man to become the headman. Although the office of headman is succeeded by the eldest son this principle is not always adhered to. If the eldest son does not satisfy the conditions mentioned above preference is given to the next son if he is found capable. It was also gathered that if the headman has no son to succeed him preference is then given to his brother's son. In the absence of any of such relations the priest of the village is selected for succeeding the headman in addition to his office of religious leadership of the village.

The headman of each village takes decision with regard to disputes that arise within that village. He asks the elders of the village to sit around him and both parties involved in a quarrel sit before the headman each occupying a side. Headman also sits in the 'Kula Panchayat', the panchayat of particular clans, even though he does not belong to that clan. In Kula Panchayat members of that Kula or clan can only sit and discuss about a disputed matter concerning incest. By virtue of being the headman of that village he is asked to decide any dispute that arises within his own village.

The decision made by the headman is never challenged. No instances could be gathered with regard to a headman who has ever been unjust and unpopular. If a headman becomes unpopular due to some reason the villagers sit together and select another man. It is reported somewhere that the people of a village sit together once a year to discuss about the headman's activities. The headman sits listening to what the people discuss. If he is abused or deprecated for some reason he tries to rectify himself accordingly. This occasion is known as 'Peda Gudam'. In village Mallavarm the author was told that in their area when

a new headman is selected a ceremony is performed by the villagers. A new cloth is wrapped around his head like a turban by the priest of the village and he is taken to the village goddess to swear to remain just and good.

Apart from the village as a political unit there is another wider unit which is known as 'Mutha Panchayat'. A Mutha Panchayat consists of members who are headmen of different villages of a particular area. It consists of five headmen of five villages. The Mutha Panchayat controls a numbers of villagers of that region with regards to disputes of serious nature which involve persons of several villages. The members of the Mutha Panchayat are selected by all the headman of a particular region. Mutha Panchayat mainly deals with cases, like taking aways of another's wife by somebody which is considered as 'Barhiya tapu' or big crime. The aggrieved person asks the headman of his village to call for the Mutha Panchayat to get the compensation from the accused person. Crimes like witchcraft and sorcery are also dealt with by the Mutha Panchayat if it happens to involve persons belonging to more than one village.

### **Perma or Priest**

Next to headman the village priest who is called 'Perma' or Pujari assumes immense importance as a leader of Koya society. Although his functions are mainly religious the Koyas have a great regard for this leader. He is believed to have power of communication with the supernatural beings and as such, he acts as an intermediary between the human beings and the unseen powers. The Koyas like other primitive people mostly depend upon their religious rituals to get relief from the natural calamities which are believed to be caused by angry gods who need to be propitiated. A bumper crop or a successful hunt is thought to be due to the blessings of the gods. Hence they constantly remain concerned with the supernatural beings with regards to all aspects of their way of life. The priest, as such, is the person who is to attend to all the needs of the supernatural beings by way of worshipping or propitiating them with the help of his villagers.

The office of the village priest is usually hereditary. In case the priest dies without leaving an heir, a son of his brother is looked for assuming the post. Before becoming a priest a person has to undergo a series of initiation rituals and is asked to observe sexual incontinence. He then is given training by another priest of some other village in case his father is dead. During rituals and festivals, like Bijja Pandu, Marka Pandu and Idu Pandu, etc, he strictly performs the rituals. The night before the festival day, he observes sexual continence and never eats food cooked by a female. He has to fast till the worship is over and he is the first man to eat after offering to god is over. He is invited to eat new fruits or drink the liquor first by the villagers before they enjoy the new fruits or drinking and by doing so they think the gods will remain pleased on them.

Apart from his religious duties he also attends the meetings of village Panchayats and always has a say with regard to any type of dispute. He is of

course, treated as one of the village elders in these cases. At the time of the outbreak of small pox which is believed by the Koyas to be caused by the goddess, the priest gives orders to the villagers to observe certain taboos.

### **Wadde or Magician**

The Wadde is a magician who occupies equally important position in Koya society like the headman and the priest. A man becomes *wadde* not because he is the son of a magician or selected by the villagers but because he is supernaturally bestowed with the qualities necessary to become a magician. After the birth of a child if 'Jatel' or matted hair is observed on the head of the child he is destined to become a magician in Koya society. From his childhood he is kept under the special care by his parents and certain taboos are observed with regard to his food habits. From his boyhood he is kept under the training of an adult magician who teaches him the ways of doing his duties as a magician.

Like the priest he also possesses power to communicate with the supernatural beings. He differs from the priest by being capable of moulding and keeping under control the supernatural beings to achieve success in his designs. He can take the help of malevolent spirits to cause harm to anybody he hates and as such, he is dreaded by the Koyas. On the other hand he is able to drive away with the help of his magic the malevolent spirits who cause harm to the Koyas in various ways. It is a very common affair in the Koya area to find the magicians chanting magical verses before patients of various types. As a matter of fact most of the diseases are believed by the Koyas to be caused by spirits or angry gods. The Koyas run to the magicians for immediate help in dealing with such troubles.

As a member of society he enjoys equal rights with other Koyas in a village. He can marry and lead a life like others in the village in accordance with the social rules and regulations. The Koyas usually bear an ambivalent attitude towards him. He is liked as well as dreaded and as such hated. But his services are believed by the Koyas to be indispensable.

### **The Katwal**

The Katwal is usually considered to be just useful because he helps the headman by assisting him in his works. The headman calls for his help when a meeting of the villagers is to be held. At the time of festivals in a village the Katwal goes round the village to call the villagers to gather before the headman to decide the works to be done communally. In matters of inter village gatherings the Katwal is sent to other villages as a messenger. When an outsider stays in a Koya village the headman makes arrangements for the guest with the help of Katwal. In this way the services of Katwal is also thought to be useful by the Koyas. Apart from this he enjoys equal privilege without bar, as a member of the society.

### Settlement of Disputes

Settlement of all disputes arising within a village is usually made by the village Panchayat which consists of the village elders and the headman with other leaders mentioned earlier. In case of incest where a particular clan is involved the Kula Panchayat consisting of members from the concerned clan with the headman, decide the issue. Where particular case involves persons of several villages the matter is referred to the Mutha Panchayat the members of which are selected by all the headmen of a particular region constituting the 'Mutha'. This is also true of the Koyas of Southern region of Malkangiri subdivision.

Mutha Panchayat deals with cases of breach of marriage regulation. In case of elopement the aggrieved husband brings the matter before the Mutha Panchayat. The members of the Mutha Panchayat select a day for deciding the case. Two Katwals of two villages are sent to bring the culprit who took away the wife of another. On arrival of the culprit he is asked to return the wife of the aggrieved husband. If he denies he is compelled to pay the compensation to the aggrieved husband. Rupees three hundred in cash is usually demanded for such an offence out of which rupees two hundred is given to the aggrieved person and the rest amount is distributed among the members of Mutha Panchayat. Apart from the fine, the culprit is also demanded to give one cock, one pig, one puti of rice and some amount of salt to the aggrieved person which he has to pay. At the end both the parties have to give a feast to the Panchayat members for which five 'manas' of rice and one goat is arranged by both the parties. When the case is over all present in the Panchayat including the parties concerned gather near a water source. Meal is cooked and distributed equally to all.

All other cases like adultery, rape, witchcraft and divorce are usually decided by the village Panchayat and when they involve persons of different villages the headmen of such villages including the elders of respective villages sit together and decide the case. One case of divorce was observed by the author while it was being decided at village Sikapalli. The parties belonged to village Palkonda. Beti Muke (17) wanted to divorce her husband Beti Joga of the same village due to family quarrels. She ran to her parent's house in the same village and did not return to her husband. Beti Joga brought the matter before the Panchayat, the Sarpanch of which is Madkam Mass, headman of village Sikapalli. The father of the girl came as the supporter of her daughter and the brothers of Beti Joga came as his supporters. After long discussions and arguments, it was decided by the Panchayat members that the father of the girl has to pay compensation. Compensation amounting to Rs.136 was realized from him out of which Rs. 68 was divided among the Panchayat members. The rest amount was taken by the aggrieved person. In this case no feast was given to the Panchayat members.

Another hearing of a case of witchcraft was attended by the author in the same village. Madkam Bimma of village Palkonda complained before the headman of the village that Padiami Dogi who happens to be a magician has killed all the family members of Madkam Bimma whose father and brothers had died one after another within a period of five years. Father of Madkam Bimma had some quarrels with one Madi Kausa. Bimma suspected that Modi Kausa took the help of the magician and killed his relations by practicing witchcraft. Madkam Bimma also complained that he had a number of cows and bullocks but by now, all have died within a period of six to seven years. He pointed out the names of Sodi Mudal, Kawasi Kausa and others as witnesses who have heard Padiami Dogi telling Madi Kausa that he will try to uproot the family of Madkam Bimma. The Panchayat was composed of the headmen of village Sikapalli and Palkonda, the elders of those villages, the priest of village Sikapalli and the parties concerned. The two opposite parties sat facing each other and in between sat the village elders and at one end facing all sat the headmen. The headman of Sikapalli asked the magician Padiami Dogi to confess whether he has practiced witchcraft to kill the family members of Madkam Bimma. He denied. Then the headman asked Madkam Kausa to confess that he has taken the help of Padiami Dogi to take revenge upon the family of Madkam Bimma. He also denied the fact. The two headmen asked the witnesses to relate as to what they have heard. They said that what they heard from the two culprits while returning from a hunt. There was a long discussion between the village elders and the headmen. The culprits were repeatedly asked to confess but they did not. Then the headman of Sikapalli told them that he will report the matter to police. Hearing this they admitted their guilt and the magician was forced to take oath not to practice witchcraft failing which he was to be banished from the village. Then started the business of realizing compensation from the guilty party. The magician and Madi Kausa were fined Rs. 60 each. Again there was argument between them and the culprits pleaded their inability to pay such an amount. At last they were forced to pay Rs. 40 each out of which half went to the complainant for purchase of cows and bullocks and the rest was distributed among the headmen and village elders. No feast was arranged for the Panchayat members. On enquiry it was found that in these days almost all the cases of that Panchayat are heard by the headman of Sikapalli as he has been selected as Sarpanch of Sikapalli Grama Panchayat. It was observed that the headman of Sikapalli is thought by the Koyas to be invested with Governmental powers to exercise in cases of disputes. The author heard him saying to the different disputed parties that he will report the matter to government or police if his decisions are not respected.

The traditional system of the Koyas for settlement of disputes can be said to be perfectly harmonious with the Panchayat system of the Government provided the members of the Panchayat are chosen from among the tribals and not the non-tribals like Doms, Boiparis or Telugus who constantly find ways to

exploit them in every possible way. The realizing of fines from the guilty persons was limited to certain extent according to traditional rules. But in these days the tribals are being exploited by the non-tribals members or the tribal headmen who fall a victim to the influences of non tribal members in realizing heavy amounts from the poor tribals.

### **Religious Beliefs and Ceremonies**

The Koya Pantheon has incorporated within itself a number of Hindu gods and goddesses with the passage of years. But their original belief system centres round two cults namely the cult of earth (Bhu mata) and the cult of village goddess (Gudi mata). Whenever any religious ceremony is observed these two goddesses are worshipped first. The village goddess is believed to exist under a particular Mahul tree inside the village and the goddess of earth is seated in Bujjagudi a small thatched house at the outskirts of a village. Another God who is called 'Bimud' and is supposed to live above the sky is also worshipped only once in a year at the time of 'Bimud Pandu' festival. He is the Rain God who makes the rainfall for Koyas.

The religious ceremonies which are observed by the Koyas are mainly four. They are – 'Bijja Pandu, Kodta Pandu, Bimud Pandu and Idu or Ikk Pandu'. Bijja Pandu is observed in the month of Simiti corresponding to months of Baisakh and Jeystha when the earth goddess is worshipped with offerings of cock, pig, eggs and mango. The Goddess is requested by the priest to render a good harvest. Seeds of paddy are also placed before the goddess believing that those seeds will become good by the divine touch. Mango is eaten ceremonially during this festival. Ceremonial hunting (Bijja weta) is also done after this festival. Work during this festival is taboo. In the month of Kandi (Bhadra-Aswin) the "Kurru Pandu" is observed when *suani* is eaten ceremonially. New rice eating ceremony is observed in the month of Dashara (Aswin-Kartik). "Sikud Pandu" or the new bean eating ceremony is observed in the month of Dewad (Kartik-Margashir).

Bimud Pandu or the worshipping ceremony of Rain God is observed in the month of Magh (Magh-Phalgun). This festival is observed just after the completion of harvest of all types of crops. Two small clay models of Rain God and his wife are made and kept under a Mahul tree over a stone on the festive day. The villagers with the priest and the headman gather on the spot and the villagers carry crops of all types to the spot. The priest after worshipping the God fills the empty baskets with crops and this is followed by the headman and the villagers. An unmarried girl is made to stand in between the Peda and the priest. The villagers throw water over them and laugh saying the marriage of Rain God is over today "(Gajje Bimud Pandulnend Terta)". Then begins ceremonial dancing and singing.

Apart from the above mentioned ceremonies observed in connection with their ceremonial eating of crops, fruits and other things, the Koyas worship the gods of Manyemkonda and few others situated in the Koya area in different places. A story in this connection is outlined below as was gathered from the Koyas as well as the priests of those gods and goddesses. The story is related in different ways in different places but the central theme is as follows:-

Four brothers and two sisters came from the Warangal region of Andhra Pradesh. They were gods and goddess. Their names Kanamraju, Potraju, Balraju, Pedaraju and sisters were Mariwada Mawoli and Amatali. The Priest at Manyemkonda named Manyem Enkaya told the author that out of them Mariwada Mawoli went near the village Mariwada and established herself there. Pedaraju who was the elder brother went near Bejanguda village and established himself there.

These two have been kept aloof from the rest four as they did some unsocial activity. The Bejanguda God kept a Dom wife. Human sacrifice was being made before Mariwada Mawoli. Hence these two were excommunicated from the rest four at Manyemkonda. They did not see these two since then.

The story told by the priest at village Mariwada was, to certain extent, different. He said about their coming down to the Koya area from the south but could not name all those which were mentioned by the priest at Manyemkonda. The priest at Mariwada who also happened to be a Telugu man has married a Koya woman and has become a Koya. He said only about the two sisters namely, Mariwada Mawoli and Alur Mawoli and brothers Kanamraju and Bejangwada Balraju. Kanamraju is known to be the god at Manyemkonda. He also related the story that Bejangwada god kept a Dom wife and was kept aloof from the rest of the brothers and sisters.

One does not know the actual implication of the story but it can be well imagined that the cult of these have been introduced by the Telugus of Andhra Pradesh since time immemorial. During these days the Koyas worship these gods and goddess with utmost devotion. The god at Manyemkond is not only worshipped by Koyas but also by all other Hindu castes residing in the region.



## EPILOGUE

The set up of Dandakaranya Development Authority in the year 1958 by Government of India has effected changes of far reaching consequence in the Koya area by undertaking the project of resettlement of displaced persons from East Pakistan. Thousands of homeless refugee families have been resettled in about one hundred villages set up amidst the extensive forest belts and undulating plains. The task of clearing forests and reclaiming the land in this area have began since 1962 onwards with such rapid pace that by 1968 the face of the entire Koya area has undergone a radical metamorphosis. A report on Dandakaranya indicates that every such village set up for displaced persons is carefully planned. Families numbering 50 to 100 are accommodated in a village. Each village has a tank, deep masonry wells, two to four tube wells, internal approach roads and a primary school for children. The services of a Sevak are available to a group of two to three villages. While a pharmacist is available to a medical unit which gives free medical aid, a mobile library-cum-publicity unit shows films to the settlers and the tribals.

An agriculturist settler family is allotted about six acres of agricultural land. In addition, 800 square yards are being provided for homestead. The following resettlement benefits are given to each family:-

- (a) A house built mainly by the family itself with bellies and roofing material (e.g. OGI sheet) costing on a average Rs. 1,700 which is treated as loan.
- (b) An agricultural loan of Rs. 1,015 for the following purposes.

<u>Items</u>	<u>Amount (in Rs)</u>
A pair of Bullocks	-- 450
A milk cow and calf	-- 150
Implements	-- 100
Seeds, Manure and Fertilizers	-- 290
Weeding operations	-- 25
	-----
	1,015

- (c) An Irrigation loan of Rs. 150 for sinking well in the homestead plot.
- (d) Besides the above loans, a family is provided with maintenance subsidy for the first agricultural season at half these rates and for the third season at  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the rate. In addition subsidy is given for the off-season at six months immediately following the first agricultural season.

Non-agriculturist families settled in village and those settled in semi-urban or urban areas get the following benefits:

(a) In villages :-

Agricultural plot	--	2 acres
Homestead plot	--	8.0 sq.yds.
House building loan	--	Rs. 2,000
Small trade loan in village	--	Rs. 1,000
Agricultural loan	--	Rs. 300
Maintenance grant per month according to -- family size for three months following the date of payment of small trade loan	--	Rs. 30 to 70

(b) In urban and semi-urban areas:

Homestead plot	--	800 sq. yd.
House building loan	--	Rs 2,000
Business loan	--	Rs. 1,000
Additional business loan in deserving cases	--	Rs 500
Maintenance grant per month according to of the family for three months following the date of the business loan advanced.	--	Rs. 30 - 70

As each settler family is allotted a homestead plot of 800 square yards within which it builds its own house with a plinth area of about 67 square yards, it leaves sufficient area for kitchen garden and out houses.

Kondagaon Zone	--	388
Umerhote Zone	--	2,974
Paralkote Zone	--	3,592
Malkangiri Zone	--	3,460
<b>Total</b>		<b>10,404</b>

447 families were in the transit centres as on 30-09-1967 awaiting movement to the resettlement zones.

**Tribal Welfare**

Tribal population constitutes 61 per cent of the population of Koraput district and 72 per cent of the population of Bastar district. The Dandakaranya percentage would be about 66, compared to the all India percentage of 6.80. The welfare of the tribals constitutes an important thrust of the Dandakaranya Development Authority (D.D.A.).

As stated, 25 per cent of the land reclaimed by the D.D.A. is released to the State Government for the resettlement of tribals. 2,331 tribal families have

been settled on such land up to September 1967. Besides, funds are made over to the State Governments in the following manner for each tribal family resettled:

• For construction of house and purchase of bullock, Implements and seeds and etc.	Rs.1,300
• For subsistence till the first crop is harvested	Rs.200
• For contour-bunding of 7 acre agricultural holding	Rs.315
• For irrigation well	<u>Rs.150</u>
	<b>Total – Rs.1,965</b>

In addition, funds at the rate of Rs. 600 per family are placed at the disposal of the State Governments for the provision of common amenities like school building, community centres, village roads, well, etc.

The number of tribal families resettled so far is 1,836 in Orissa and 495 in Madhya Pradesh. The number of tribal houses completed is 1,386 on the Orissa side and 303 on the Madhya Pradesh side, totaling 1,689, 1,725 and 273 pairs of bullocks, respectively have been supplied to the tribal families.

The task of general development in the tribal area has demanded special attention. 80 miles of roads in Orissa and 71 miles in Madhya Pradesh have been constructed, while 63 miles and 52 miles of existing roads respectively have been improved. Funds have been made available to the two State Governments for the construction of 70 wells, 20 tanks and sinking of 30 tube wells. The tribals enjoy the benefits of irrigation becoming available with the execution of medium irrigation projects by the D.D.A. 85 per cent of the total commend area of the Bhaskal Dam and 20 per cent of the irrigable areas of the Paralokote and the Malkangiri Dams belong to tribals.

Besides, various other amenities are available to the tribal population. Chicks and birds are supplied from the poultry farms at subsidized rates to popularize poultry keeping as a subsidiary occupation. Veterinary services have been extended. Educational institutions of the Projects are open to the Adibasi children. 5 per cent of the seats at the Industrial Training Institute, Ambaguda have been reserved for tribal boys. The medical and public health facilities of the Project cover the tribals in equal measure with the settlers. Malaria Eradication Programme has been extended to tribal areas. Tribal leaders have been enlisted as convenors for tribal labour for construction works undertaken by the DDA.

The settlements given in earlier pages with regard to general development of the area envisages a rapid economic development of the Koyas. However, a survey conducted in three Koya villages in the year 1968 does not indicate any such progress. The average family income of a resettled family in 1966 has been found to be Rs. 815 where as the average income of a Koya family is Rs. 699. The discrepancy does not however, rule out the possibility of an economic progress of the Koya in the long run because the resettles are more

enlightened people and have been provided with sufficient economic assets to start with. The Koyas are still following their age-old traditional method of agriculture with their limited resources.

Although economic development has not been felt by a rise in family income ideas of improved agricultural practices have already crept into the Koya mind which was observed by the author while residing in a Koya village. One of these ideas was transplantation of paddy seedlings. Only few individuals experimented it. Madkam Sukra (26) of Sikapalli first started on high land which did not give a good result in the Kharif year of 1968. He was followed by Madkam Irma (50) in low land who got a good return. Madkam Deva, Assistant Headman of the village also was not successful in the experiment.

Next to transplantation was the idea of cultivating jute which happens to be one of the important commercial crops grown by the refugees. The Koya call it "Benda Nowde". Its cultivation has gained wide acceptance among the Koya of this village. Madkam Era (40) started at first and got a good return. Martam Kausa and Madkam Dewa were successful to a little extent. As this crop after harvest finds a ready market at Malkangiri the Koya of this village are planning to grow jute on extensive scale. Another crop which was not grown previously is gradually becoming popular among the Koya is *gingili* (Til). The Koya have taken this from the resettlers.

### **Koya and the Resettlers**

The implementation of Dandakaranya Project in the heart of Koya area has opened an avenue for an interesting study of inter-social and inter-cultural relationship between the resettlers and the Koyas. The contact between two alien cultures is apt to lead to problems of far reaching consequences. As such, it may be suggested that an intensive study on this line may be taken up by the Tribal Research Bureau to find out the trend of the culture contact. The author, during a short visit, has been able to observe the relationship between these two groups which may be stated in brief in the following lines.

At the outset the contact has resulted in the gradually developing the economic relationship. The Koya purchase varieties of paddy seeds from the Bengali resettlers at the rate of 1 Kg. per rupee. This facility was not available previously because an individual had to wait till sowing of seeds by fellow villagers was over. The Koya of the village Sikapalli always depended upon the weekly market for their needs like salt, kerosene and clothings. During these days the resettlers have opened small shops to cater to the needs of the local people. The shop-keepers belong to the nearby Malkangiri villages built by Dandakaranya Project. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this hand-book the Koya are great lovers of a favourite past time, i.e. cock fight. Now the Bengali resettlers rear cocks in large number and sell them to the Koya as a result of which this particular past time has gained wide momentum and has turned

small gatherings of the past to big fares with thousands of people gathering as competitors as well as onlookers. The author visited one such occasion and was surprised to find various stalls of sweetmeats, Pan and Cigarettes opened by the resettlers to provide additional pleasure to the people.

Similarly the Bengali resettlers purchase milk from Koya for domestic as well as other uses. The Koya hardly milched their cows previously. But in these days they regularly milk their cows and supply milk, whenever available, to the consumers who live close to them. Milk and ghee are being commercially produced by the Koya which find a ready market nearby. The Koya also sell goats to the resettlers whenever they are in need of money. 'Tola' or the seed of Mahul fruits which is pressed for oil is in great demand by the resettlers. As most of such trees are in possession of the Koyas, the resettlers purchase these from the Koya. Another commodity used by the resettlers for various purposes is bamboo and bamboo crafts. As the bamboos grow in dense forests of the local hills where the resettlers have no access the Koya sell them to the resettlers.

As this area is devoid of irrigation facilities the tribals depend upon rain for a good harvest. The low lands which are most suitable for paddy cultivation are mostly possessed by the Koya. But due to crude method of agriculture such low lands do not give a good return. The resettlers who happen to be expert agriculturists can not check the temptation of utilizing such low lands as share croppers. The author was informed that some villagers of Tondpalli have given their land to the resettlers for share cropping. This incidence has a far reaching consequence. Previously the surplus land at the possession of an individual Koya was being cultivated by fellow kinsmen living either in the same village or a nearby village. The resettlers are gradually becoming substitutes in their places which may hamper the social relationship among the Koya themselves.

Another instance may be cited in this connection. The natural depressions which serve as big tanks in many Koya villages contain varieties of fish which are caught and shared by the villagers after the owner is given a fairly big share. Now days, the owners are selling these tanks to the Bengali resettlers on a very nominal cost for which the resettlers make a big profit by selling fish. This is apt to hamper the age-old traditional co-operation among the Koyas.

There are instances of money lending by the resettlers to the local tribals in exchange of mortgage of land and providing harvested crops, at a cheaper rate. Practice of this kind may lead to exploitation of the tribals by the resettlers in future. The author was reported that several clashes took place between the Koyas and the local resettlers. The reasons were that the cattle of Koya ate away the crops of the resettlers. As such the Bengali resettlers wounded some of the cattle of the Koya. To retaliate the Koyas shot the cattle of the resettlers with their bows and arrows and threatened to attack the resettlers. There was police and official intervention and a compromise was made. Clashes of this sort were common in the initial stage. However, these are coming to an end gradually.

A feeling of envy was observed among the Koya when few villagers of Sikapalli stated before the author that no help is extended to them whereas the resettlers receive adequate help from the Government beginning from cultivable land to pecuniary help for constructing houses and purchasing seeds. Another feeling was that Government have deprived them of their age-old right on village forests by converting these into cultivable lands for the settlers. The Koya possessed large herds of cattle and now most of them are destroyed.

Apart from these apathetic attitude there has also to a very limited extent, grown social relationships between the resettlers and the Koyas. Bond friendship has developed between Bandi Dewa of Sikapalli and one resettler of Malkangiri village No. 17. Both of them co-operate with each other in economic pursuits and exchange gifts. The relationship developed as a result of juxtaposition of cultivable lands of both. While working side by side they talked and became friends. Although this is one of such relationship observed by the author many more may be found in future as a result of similar circumstances. The Bengali resettlers organize open air drama which is very much liked by the Koyas who go in large number to witness it although they hardly understand the language of the resettlers. Similarly on the occasion of Koya's festivals the resettlers participate by offering cocoanut, etc, to the Koya's deities.

To end it may be stated that the implementation of Dandakaranya Project is apt to bring a general development of the area by opening up roads, irrigation and health programmes. At the same time the relationship between the two communities, if not properly channeled may lead to constant strife and feuds ending in political unrest in the area.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Castes and Tribes of Southern India -- E. Thurston
2. Bulletin of the Anthropological Survey of India -- Synopsis of Summer School in Anthropology, 1961.
3. Adibasi (Special Issue) -- 1963-64, No. 3
4. Maria Gonds of Baster -- W.V. Grigson
5. Indian Antiquary Vol. V -- --
6. Report on impact of Dandakaranya Project -- Tribal Research Bureau.  
on the local tribals.
7. Social Structure -- Murdock

# K O Y A \*

*A. B. Ota* <sup>1</sup>

*T. Sahoo* <sup>2</sup>

## IDENTITY

The Koyas are an ancient tribe credited with a unique way of community life and a common cultural heritage. In the long past the Koyas were identified as a warrior tribe. The last Queen of Malkangiri, Bangaru Devi who ruled over Malkangiri from 1855 A.D. to 1872 A.D had a powerful large Koya Army and defeated King Ramachandra Deva III of Jeypore. During the British period in 1880, Koya Rebellion led by a Koya youth Tama Dora took place. Then the Koyas started offering resistance off and on to the British Government.

In Malkangiri, Koyas constitute the principal tribe and are widely found in Kalimela, Mottu, Podia, Mathili, Korkonda and Malkangiri blocks. They call themselves *Koya* or *Koitor* meaning 'people'. Ethno-culturally, the *Koyas* of Malkangiri are more connected with the Bison-Horn *Murias* of adjacent Chhattisgarh. The *Koya* are known as *Madia* and *Dorla* in the Sukuma and Bastar region of Chhattisgarh.

The *Koyas* are a branch of the Gondi-speaking people. Their mother tongue comes under the Dravidian group of languages. This dialect also differs among the two groups of Koya- the north and the south. There has been some incorporation of Telugu, Hindi and Odia words into the language of the southern and northern Koyas respectively. It is evident that the Koya of the two regions of the district are more or less similar linguistically, the slight differences being seen due to the contact with Odia or Telugu speakers. The southerners have been much influenced

---

\* Published in the Photo Handbook on Koya, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2015

<sup>1</sup> Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

<sup>2</sup> Officer-on-Special Duty & Former Joint Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

in dress, ornaments and hairstyle by the Telugus, while the northerners have retained their primitiveness to a great extent.

Koyas of older generation use very scanty clothes, Men use only loin cloth. Older women wear narrow shorts covering the portions of body from waist to knee, and use another piece to cover the upper part of the body. Now-a-days women of younger generation wear *saree*, blouse and petticoat and young men wear dhoti, half pant, lungi etc. Women wear several ornaments on their wrists, ankles, ears, nose and neck.

According to 2011 census, the total population of Koya tribe in Odisha is 1 47 137 including 71 014 males and 76 123 females. Their sex ratio comes to 1072 females for 1000 males. The literacy among the Koyas is leveled at 29.87 percent (36.46 percent for male and 23.77percent for female). Their population has registered a negative growth rate of 20.08 per cent during the decade (2001-2011).

### HABITAT, SETTLEMENT & HOUSING

The Koyas inhabit the hills and forests north of Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh and Malkangiri district of Odisha. This district is comprised of vast forest areas in the Eastern *Ghats* mountain range, which has an elevation of 3000 feet at its eastern boundary. The northern region has an elevation of 800 feet near the foot of the *ghat*. From north to south the elevation gradually diminishes and the southernmost point has an elevation of 400 feet where the river *Sileru* and *Saberi* join and flow together with a name '*China Godavari*' towards the junction at Komanavaram where they meet river Godavari. The rest of the district constitutes of forest plains with a number of rocky wooded hills, some of them rising to a considerable height. The Koyas are most widely distributed throughout this area.

The Koya villages are situated on the patches of clearings in the midst of forests surrounded by different trees like *Mahul* (*Basia latifolia*), and *Salpa* (*Caryota urens*). In each village there is one structure called *bijjagudi* or 'House of God'. This is situated either inside the village, or near the village boundary or even in front of the head man's house. The sacred shrine of *Gudimata* – the village goddess, is located in a group of *Mahul* trees inside or near the village. In each village there is a dormitory house which is used by the unmarried girls of the village for sleeping and gossiping at night. But this practice is going out of vogue in these days.

Mostly, the access to the Koya villages is by narrow footpaths of *kacha* type. In every village, one finds two or more clusters of houses. The Koya live in low thatched houses. Each house consists of one or two small huts, which are used as sleeping rooms. The walls of a house are made of tree branches and bamboo, which are thickly plastered with mud. The roofs are low thatched with



a type of wild grass, locally known as *sindi*. The houses are rectangular in size and partitioned into rooms by walls of bamboo plastered with mud. The house is windowless and the hearth is situated in its one corner. A verandah (*arra*) runs almost on all the sides of the house. There are no separate storerooms. The agricultural produce and forest collections are stored under the roof over a shelf inside the sleeping rooms. The shelves are made of bamboo and wooden pillars.

The boundary of each house site is demarcated by fencing made of neatly woven bamboo splits. There are small sheds for pigs, goats and fowls. Each Koya house is attached with a kitchen garden. There they grow tobacco, mustard, vegetables, maize and millets. The roofs of almost all houses are covered with vegetable creepers. They plant *Sikad* or beans in the garden or near the house.

### LIVELIHOOD

In the past the Koyas were mainly shifting cultivators. But nowadays they have taken to settled cultivation. They cultivate mainly paddy, maize, *mandia* (millet) and tobacco leaf. During the harvest time, all the families go to their respective *ketuls* (field huts) in their crop fields, where they spend the whole day to watch the crop and come back home in the evening. As the agricultural yields do not suffice for a family to survive for the whole year, the Koyas resort to other types of food quest, i.e. the collection of roots and fruits from the jungle and the growing of minor crops like *suan*, *maize* and *pulses*.

Collection of roots, fruits, leaves, tubers, herbs etc. from the nearby forest constitutes one of the important livelihood activities of the Koyas which supplements their food and income. They collect *Tumid* (Kendu fruit) in large quantities from the forest when they are ripen and are stored after being dried in sun to be used during the period of food scarcity. *Mahul* trees grow in abundance in the Koya area, and during the months of March and April large quantities of *Mahul* are collected, dried and stored for future use. During the months from July to September several types of roots are collected from the jungle and eaten.

Roots collected from the jungle are another source of food for the Koyas. Roots constitute a major diet of the Koyas. These are also used as medicines. Young green shoots bamboo are also eaten. The women folk collect a large variety of wild greens which they call *Kusir* from the fields, jungles and the edges of the water. These greens are cooked and eaten with rice. There are also some seasonal forest fruits like *Nendu* (Jamu), *Edka* (kusum), and *Marka* (mango) etc. which are collected and eaten but not stored.

The Koyas own large herds of cows and bullocks. According to the Koya traditional system, *chom* or wealth means cattle, because a Koya without cattle has no status in the society. The cattle are used as a means of purchasing necessary household articles. Now-a-days, cattle are sold for money. The cattle and cows are used to plough fields. Oxen and cows are slaughtered as offerings at funerals and

other festivals. The Koyas do not properly maintain their wealth of livestock. The animals are not properly sheltered. The forest nearby is used for grazing and no other provisions are made to feed the animals.

They also rear pigs, goats, cows, duck and hens. They prefer hatching of chicks but do not prefer consuming eggs.

They are skilled hunters. Since the wild games have become scarce and hunting wild animals is totally banned now they go out for hunting rarely during festive occasions.

Koya women contribute a lot in the household activities, agriculture, livestock management, procurement, management and value addition of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), agricultural surpluses and collection of fire woods. But encroachment of forest resources and alienation of community land has restricted the scope of their participation in the livelihood pursuits

The community fund maintained in the form of both cash and kinds and circulated to the needy persons on low interest reflects their community oriented living and management skills. The functioning of their traditional seed bank and grain bank not only meets the emergency requirements of the villagers but also functions as the gene pool and ensures food security of the village.

### **Food Habit**

Koya take two principal meals a day, and a third minor meal. The morning meal mainly consists of *jawa* or rice gruel. Sometimes, they also take millet gruel. During the midday, they take either rice starch or millet starch. Children may take boiled horse gram or sweet potato. The evening meal consists of boiled rice and a curry of mixed vegetables or pulses and spinach.

Seasonal variation is noticed in their food habit. During the lean period roots, tubers green leaves, and wild fruits constitute important items of their food. All types of wild animals and birds except tigers and bears are eaten by the Koyas. The squirrels, wild rats and hares are also relished and are often hunted. During the monsoon they collect snails, oysters, crabs, fish and mushrooms for their supplementary food. They also eat eggs of red and white ants. They too take mutton, chicken, beef and pork. During summer months they almost subsist on palm fruits, mangoes, jackfruits, plums and Kendu (*Drospyros melanocylon*).

Mahula and Salapa are their ideal drinks. They take very little quantity of milk. *Mahul* flowers are used not only as food but also as an intoxicating drink. The Koyas prepare a kind of alcoholic beverage by boiling Mahul flowers in their indigenous way. This is called *Surate* or *Uram* and is deep red in colour. The Koyas also prepare oil from *Mahul*, which they use for cooking and also anoint it on their body and hair.

## SOCIAL LIFE

The Koya tribe is dichotomized between two types of kin in groups, called *kutumam* or consanguineal kin and *wiwalwand* or affinal kin. The consanguineal kin of a person belongs to the same phratry as that person. There are five such phratries present in the Koya society. These are (1) *Kowasi* (2) *Odi* or *Sodi* (3) *Madkam* (4) *Madi* (5) *Padiam*. A *Kowasi* can take a wife from any of the four remaining phratries other than his own. A person cannot marry a girl of the same phratry to which he belongs because all persons in that group are believed to have a blood relationship among themselves.

The family is the smallest unit of social grouping in Koya society. The family is called *lotam* in the Koya language. It includes the parents and their children. Sometimes, the family also includes the *olaam* or the groom who stays in his father-in-laws house with his wife under the custom of 'marriage by service'. As soon as the sons grow up and get married, they build their own houses near their parent's house and live separately with their wives, though they may share a common kitchen. If any of the adult sons wants to live separately from the rest of the family, he asks the father to give him some land for his livelihood.

## LIFE CYCLE

### Pregnancy & Child Birth

When a Koya woman conceives, it is believed that God has put the baby inside her womb. A pregnant woman carries on her routine work until the expected month of delivery. When her labour pain starts, she is taken to a hut erected behind the main house for delivery. The *wadde* (magico-religious functionary) conducts necessary rituals to save the child and mother from the evil spirits and facilitate smooth delivery of the baby. An old lady along with two or more ladies constitutes the team of nurses to facilitate the delivery. They cut off the umbilical cord of the newborn with the help of a heat treated arrowhead or a sharp piece of new broken earthen pot after tying the base and apply turmeric mixed oil there. In the early days, they used to apply freshly prepared ash with oil. The new born and the mother are bathed with warm water after turmeric mixed oil has been applied twice. Six to seven days after the delivery of the child, the mother returns home.

Name giving ceremony of the new born is performed after 2 to 3 months of birth and in some cases even earlier, when the family has the means to afford the expenses. On this occasion all the village ladies take bath and assemble in the house of the new born along with the team of women present at the time of delivery. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday are considered auspicious for this ceremony. Uncles and maternal grandparents are invited. They come and apply turmeric paste on the forehead of the child and place some coins on a plate. The lady who had severed the umbilical cord holds the child and starts singing song, which the other ladies recite. She starts with the name of a dead ancestor and says

“We don’t know in which heaven you are. We want to have you; shall we call the child by your name? You will bless the child” etc. Then she disperses some rice over a piece of bread and breaks it in to two. If it ends with an equal distribution, then the child will be named after him and if it does not, she throws the rice and starts singing again with another name. After the child is named, a pig is sacrificed and a feast is organized for the village women.

Till the end of the weaning period a child is treated with kindness and after that period he/she is lightly coerced if his/her impulse found unruly. After the age of ten or twelve the mother trains the daughters and father trains the sons to work as per the division of labour. The children participate in all works of the family.

### **Puberty Rite**

The maturity of a girl is known as *erata*. When a girl attains her first menarche some of her relations go to the nearby forest, select an isolated spot and make two small huts over two adjacent trees. An old lady accompanies the girl and they both stay on two different huts on the trees for 7 days. Then, the villagers are informed about the stay of the girl in the particular forest area. The girl remains secluded and out of the sight of men for those 7 days. The old lady cooks for the girl. Both of them sleep in different places during night. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day the girl is bathed with turmeric mixed water. During these 7 days of pollution no *puja* or festival is observed in the village. The Koyas think that if the girl during these seven days walks over the earth it shall become barren; the trees which she shall touch will not bear fruits.

The Koyas think that a boy attains maturity when hairs grow in his armpits and face. Usually these things happen when a boy is aged twelve to thirteen. Hence the marriageable age for boys starts at thirteen. A girl becomes marriageable when she attains puberty (*erata*), irrespective of her age. During the time of adolescence they learnt how to live independently. They co-operate the family in all socio-economic activities along the lines of division of labour. In Koya society division of labour is observed along all the grades of age and sex.

The youth dormitories of Koyas play a major role for promoting their culture and tradition. The dormitories are the institution for unmarried youths. The Koya boys and the girls spend nights there in separate rooms. The girls’ dormitory is called *Pikin-Kudma*. The girls gather there in the night for singing and gossiping and they sleep there together. But this practice is gradually being abandoned and in many villages *Pikin-Kudma* is not in existence. An open space left opposite the dormitory is meant for practising dance. It would not be wrong to say it as school of dance for the Koya youths. This dormitory also facilitates selection of life partner by the youth. It is indeed a democratic institution for promotion and propagation of Koya culture.

## Marriage

Koya marriage or *pendul* is one of the most important social functions. In selecting a bride, preference is given to the maternal uncle's daughter (*crupiki*) or father's sister's daughter (*crupiki*). In arranged marriages the groom's parents take the initiative in marriage negotiations. Where freedom is exercised by any girl or boy in choosing their mate, the marriage is settled but through a very complicated procedure of the payment of compensation. In many cases the age of wives is more than that of their husbands.

The commonly practiced form of marriage is known as *Pendul*. In *Karsu Pendul* form of marriage, the boy with the help of his friends picks up the girl of his choice in the forest or field. In this case compensation has to be paid to the bride's father by the boy's side. In the case where a boy selects a girl he has to obtain the consent of the girl. Then with his father's consent, he brings the girl to his house with the help of his friends. The bride's father demands compensation in terms of cash and kinds. The compensation amount is shared by the villagers and the bride's father. The marriage can take place by giving cattle to the girl's father as the bride price.

In another type of marriage, when a girl loves a boy intensely, she forcibly enters into the boy's house to stay there. It is called *lon-udi-wata* marriage for which the payment of bride price is much less than the other forms of marriages.

The marriage ceremony continues for three days. It begins with the ceremonial fetching of the water (*putueru* or bath water) from nearby stream by the *yange* - the elder brother's wife accompanied by a group of women singing songs. The groom sits on the lap of his elder brother's wife. Tamarind and turmeric paste with ghee is smeared on the body of the groom. Water is poured over him and he wears a new cloth. Then with the accompaniment of drums he makes visit to all other families of his own clan in the village. On being invited a few men go to the village of the bride to fetch her.

On the day of the wedding, the bride is brought to the groom's house, accompanied by her friends and relatives. They are given rice beer (*landa*) to drink and some food. During the marriage ceremony several types of songs are sung by the women folk of both the parties. The Koyas also perform the ceremonial dance, wearing bison horns on their heads during the marriage ceremony.

## Death

After the death of a person a new cloth is put on the dead body. Traditionally in the past, the dead body was being removed out of the house by making a hole in the roof. But this practice is being given up slowly. The dead body is bathed with oil and turmeric and then some salt and spade are kept over its abdomen. All his daily used items (arrows, bow, axe and sickle etc.) are kept by its side. The body is placed over a bamboo mesh and is raised to shoulders by the

family members and relatives. Before doing so, few coins are laid on its mouth and hand according to the capacity of the family. Then the dead body is carried to the cremation ground keeping the head towards the east. All the personal belongings are also brought there. In some places, even a bullock or a cow is also brought to the graveyard. The tail of such animal is touched to the hand of the dead man and then the tail is cut and the dead body is again laid facing east and the nephew lights the pyre. The animal is then sacrificed and a feast is arranged for the friends and relatives.

On the day of the disposal of the dead body, few logs of wood are burnt at the entrance of the village. The *wadde* puts rice and egg chanting mantras so as to prevent the spirit of the dead to enter into the village. He also worships the village God. During this time the women sing songs remembering the dead. Sometimes the spirit of the dead person enters into some of the close relatives or friends. He/she or (may be more) dances as per the songs. This is known as *Pretar dance* of Koyas. On the ninth day, an idol of a deity is made with rice and flour. All the family members and relatives put *kal* or *pendum* in the mouth of the deity so prepared. They erect menhirs in memory of the dead.

## RELIGIOUS LIFE

The Koya observe mainly four annual religious festivals such as *BijjaPandu*, *Kodta Pandu*, *Bimud Pandu* and *Idu* or *Ikk Pandu*. *Bijja Pandu* is the most important agricultural festival held to worship the Earth Goddess to get a trouble free agricultural season and a good harvest. The *Bijja Pandu* is the sacred seed from which the festival takes its name. It is celebrated in the month of Chaitra, when the earth Goddess is worshipped with offerings of cocks, pigs, eggs and mangoes. At the approach of monsoon, *Peda*, the village chief fixes a date for the festival in consultation with his co-villagers. Paddy seeds are also placed before the Goddess, believing that those seeds will become productive by the divine touch. The priest requests the Goddess to render a good harvest. Mangoes are eaten ceremonially during this festival. Ceremonial hunting (*bijjawata*) follows this festival. Koya men go out for hunting and fishing in groups and return home before dark. The women enjoy by singing and dancing, waiting for their men to come. In the evenings all of them unite, feast, drink and dance together. They have special variety of dance for this festival. They dance in circles singing songs of love. Work during this festival is a taboo.

*Bimud Pandu* is held in the month of *Magh-Phalgun* for worshipping the rain god. It is observed just after the completion of the harvest of all types of crops. Two small clay models of the rain god and his wife are made and kept under a *Mahul* tree, over a piece of stone on the festive day. The villagers, with the priest and the headman gather at the site with crops of all types. After worshipping the God, the priest fills the empty baskets with crops that is followed by the headman and the villagers. An unmarried girl is made to stand between the clay models and the

priest. The villagers throw water over them and laugh, saying that the marriage of the rain god is over today (*gajjebimud pendulnendterta*). Then, the ceremonial dancing and singing begin.

*Ikk Pandu*, the tamarind festival is observed during February-March to commence collection of ripe tamarind which is an important food item of the Koyas. The village priest worships a tamarind tree inside the village offering the sacrifice of eggs and chickens. Similarly the Koyas observe *Ikk Pandu* to start collection of *Mohul* flowers.

*TadiPandu* held in the month of March marks the beginning of collection of *Tadi*, i.e. the palm juice which is a favourite drink of the Koyas. In the month of *Kani* (*Bhadrab-Aswin*) *Kurum Pandu* is observed when *suan* crop is eaten ceremonially. The new rice eating ceremony is observed in the month of *Dashara* (*Aswin-Kartik*). *Sikud Pandu* or the new bean eating ceremony is celebrated in the month of *Dewad* (*Kartik-Margasir*). *Karta Pandu*, the new rice eating ceremony is held during September-October. *Sikud Pandu* or the new bean eating festival is observed in the month of February when the beans (*sikud*) ripens. In the month of *Kandi* (August-September) *Kurum Pandu* is observed when the *Suan* is eaten ceremonially. *Marka Pandu*, the new mango eating ceremony is performed in the month of June-July.

In all these new eating festivals the village deity (*Gama*) and ancestral spirits in the households are worshipped by the village priest and household heads respectively. Animal sacrifices are made and the new crop, fruit or vegetable are offered to the deities after which the Koyas eat them. No Koya dares to eat new fruits or crops before observing the new eating ceremony in which the fruit or crop is ceremonially offered to the Gods, village deities and the ancestral spirits.

The Koyas also worship few other Gods and deities installed in other parts of the Koya area. The three Gods in Manyemkonda temple are worshipped by the Koyas, other tribal communities and Hindu castes. The festival of worship is held in every three years and the devotees come from far and near spending couple of days on journey. On the day of the festival the temple priest conducts the rituals in the temple and the animals offered by the devotees are sacrificed before the Gods.

In Koya society, Magic and religion are complementary to each other. The Koyas worship their Gods and appease them and get their blessings. When this worship fails to bring them any result they resort to magical practices with the help of *Wadde* (the magico-religious specialist). *Wadde* is called upon to perform magical rites to cure diseases, effect smooth delivery of a child and ward off the calamities and epidemics.

### AESTHETIC LIFE

The Koyas have retained their rich and varied heritage of colourful dance and music forming an integral part of their festivals and rituals. Among them, the

dance, song and music are developed and maintained by themselves as a folk tradition without the aid and intervention of any professional dancer or teacher. The performance of these only gives expression to their inner feelings, their joys and sorrows, their natural affections and passion and their appreciation of beauty in nature and in man.

Although the pattern of dance and music prevalent among them vary one from group/section to another, yet there are certain features common to all. Koya dances have some accompaniments by means of which the rhythm is maintained. This consists of clapping of hands or beating of drums or an orchestra of different instruments. Every dance is accompanied by a song which is sung by the performers. Both men and women, young and old dance and invariably sing but the accompanying orchestra or music is usually provided by the male members. Koya dance is characterized not only by its originality and spontaneity but also for its wide range of movements. Many parts of the body such as head, back, arms, feet, finger, etc. are brought into play. Some of the groups put on colourful dancing costume during their performance.

Like dance, the songs sung by different groups differ from each other. When happily inspired, they can coin a song then and there and sing it. When they see things of beauty and meet pleasantly, they express their pleasure and happiness by composing songs. One finds in these songs humours, jokes, romance, satires, criticisms, accusations and anger. On the occasion of performing *pujas* and observance of festivals, the songs sung are different. Such songs are adopted from the past so many years describe the history of gods, the myths of creation, some epics and legends. In *Bija Pandu* dance, the Koyas form two separate groups: one of males and the other of females for dancing. The male dancers hold a drum and they beat them while dancing. They wear huge head gears of bison horn which are richly decorated with peacocks feathers and cowries. The girls adorn themselves in ornaments, wearing flat brass band in their foreheads and holding sticks fitted with tinkling bells they dance in circles striking the sticks during the dance in between the beats.

### SOCIAL CONTROL

Among the Koyas, if anyone breaches their tribal customary rule, the village community takes corrective action by imposing penalties like fine upon the wrong doer and then worships the deities to avoid the calamities expected to follow because of the anger of the supernatural beings. On the other hand such beliefs and practices ensure social discipline and conformity. Functioning of traditional institutions of social control among the Koya reflects that both secular and sacerdotal leaders play a major role in the village through the traditional village council which effectively manages inter and intra-village disputes and awards punishments and rewards.



The traditional head of the Koya village is called "Peda" around whom the leadership, both political and social revolves and the post is hereditary. He occupies a key place and enjoys certain prerogatives which make him virtually all powerful in a village. He functions as the secular headman in addition to his religious duties. He takes decisions in customary matters of his village. He sits with the village elders and the parties involved in a dispute - each party sitting on one side to conduct hearing and decide the cases. The Peda also sits in the *kula panchayat* of a particular clan, even though he is not a member of that clan to discuss and decide disputed matters relating to commitment of incest within the clan.

A decision made by the Peda is never challenged. If a Peda becomes unpopular for some reason, the villagers sit together and select another headman. The people of Koya village sit together once a year to discuss about the headman's activities. The headman sits and listens to what his people say. If he is accused or criticized for any reason, he is given a chance to defend himself. This occasion is known as *pedagudma*. When a new Peda is chosen, the villagers hold a. A new cloth is wrapped around the new Peda's head like a turban by the village priest and he is led to the seat of village goddess to swear to remain just and good.

Beyond the village organization there is another wider unit at the regional level known as *mutha panchayat*. It consists of members who are the headman of the different component villages. It takes a care of inter-village disputes of serious nature. This *panchayat* mainly deals with the cases like eloping with another man's wife, which is considered as a big crime. The aggrieved person asks the headman of his village to summon the *mutha panchayat* to demand compensation from the accused person. Crimes like witchcraft and sorcery are also dealt with in this body, if these happen to involve persons belonging to more than one village.

Koya traditional authority structure gives little scope for their women to participate in decision-making process both at household and community levels.

### CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

The Koya's habitat, economy and society and cultural life in Malkangiri have undergone a process of change from the nineteen seventies onwards due to rehabilitation of refugees from Bangladesh in Dandakaranya Development Project and Odia refugees from Burma and Tamil refugees from Srilanka on transit basis and displacement of Koya families due to Duduma, Balimela, UpperKolab dam projects. Besides, the influx of people of different cultures from outside, has affected the life and culture of the Koyas. At present the Koyas are struggling hard to survive vis-a-vis the resettlers, who are far superior to them in their life styles.

Rehabilitation of the refugees from Bangladesh in the *Koya* habitat in the 1960s has encouraged the in-flow of outside forces into the district. Increase of population in the area has conversely depleted the traditional natural resources of

the *Koyas*. The Government converted their traditional pastures for their cattles to agricultural lands for the resettlers. The *Koya* pastoral economy suffered a major setback for lack of adequate pasture. Thus, the *Koyas* are hard pressed economically in their own habitat. Over couple of years, the entry of market forces into their regions has affected their life and livelihood. This has immense impact on the traditional skill and economic base.

During the Fifth Five Year Plan with the introduction of TSP strategy and establishment of an I.T.D.A in Malkangiri, the *Koyas* and other tribal communities have derived some benefits. The Malkangiri I.T.D.A. has been launching multi-sectoral development programmes from 1975-76 onwards, mainly for income generation and infrastructure development in the area.

The extension services made available through different line departments in the sectors of agriculture, animal husbandry, health, education, soil conservation and horticulture have limited impact on their socio-economic life. The *Koya* have strong adherence to their traditional knowledge based practices and technologies and thus gaps have been observed in the planned development delivery mechanisms, skill up gradation approaches and technologies adopted at the provider's levels. For example, the modern allopathic health service delivery system is yet to be accessible to the *Koyas* both at physical, economic and knowledge levels. The traditional healing institutions among the *Koyas* are still performing and reaching at their doorsteps.

There is still a conspicuous gap between the expectations and achievements among the *Koya*. This has moderated the impact of various development programmes on their life and livelihood. It cannot be said that nothing has been achieved so far. However, in the planned development interventions of the Government the *Koya* people need to participate fully for successful implementation of projects/schemes for maximization of benefits for their sustainable socio-economic development.

## A SHORT NOTE ON THE SHIFTING CULTIVATION OF THE KOYAS \*

*P. K. Mohapatra*<sup>1</sup>

The Koyas inhabit the Malkangiri Taluk of Koraput district in Orissa and number 37,000 approximately according to the 1951 Census. They are scattered all over the Taluk which has an area of 2,288 square miles. The Taluk is covered with dense, forest, and a strip along the eastern boundary takes in the Ghats with the 3,000 ft. plateau and the valley of Machhkund which flows through this remote country. The climate is extreme and malarial, and rainfall is about 58 in. Excepting the Sal trees on the ghats and teak in the North, the taluk is not rich as regards timber trees. Several unidentified varieties of grass which grow wildly provide good fodder for the rich cattle wealth of the Koya. With regard to fauna it may be mentioned that tigers, leopards, Indian fox, bears and wolf are very common. Indian buffalo in larger herds and bison's are also found scattered in the eastern region of the forest. Chittal, Sambhar and barking deer are well represented. Monkeys and birds of various kinds including peacocks also abound.

The Koyas constitute the principal tribe of the Taluk. Bondas are found on the Eastern Ghat regions. Few Oriyas, Telugus and Muslims are also found.

The taluk is adjacent to the Bastar estate of Madhya Pradesh and East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. The Koya inhabits all these regions. A broad division of the tribe may be made on the basis of language and dress. The Koyas inhabiting the southern-most regions of the taluk are distinguished for their dress which they wear like the Telugu people of Andhra Pradesh. They have also incorporated more Telugu words into their language.

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No.1, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1963-64, pp.21-26

<sup>1</sup> Former Deputy Director, THRTL, Bhubaneswar

The construction of houses also differs as they make high sitting platforms or verandahs attached to their houses, which are not found among the Koyas of rest of the taluk. As regards dress the Koyas, both male and female, of this area are more primitive than the southern-most regions because the males use only loin clothes and female wear cloth covering the portions from waist to knee, all other portions remaining exposed. The females use heavy ornaments of brass etc., which is not found among the females of the southern-most region who use few glass bangles.

The village where the author worked in May 1961 is known as Sikapalli. It lies at a distance of 10 miles south of Malkangiri Sub-Divisional headquarters.

The villages consist of 40 patrilineal families with a total population of 400 persons approximately including children. Though monogamy is the general rule polygyny is also practiced by the Koyas of this village. The houses are scattered all through the village as a result of which no regular street is found in the village. Attached to the houses are kitchen gardens called 'gudas' where the Koyas grow mustard, tobacco and chilies.

The village of Sikapalli was nonexistent a generation back when the father of the present priest of the village came to settle in this place. The place was covered with dense forest infested by wild animals. Later on the Koyas migrated to this place from different regions and then the settlement was named Sikapalli by the then Government. The present 'Peda' or the headman of the village named Maddkam Masa (50) came next and after the death of his father, the present priest named Madkam Bimma, became the headman of the village. At present the old site of the village is being abandoned and a colony is being built near the village by the Government to settle the villagers. Each elementary family is being given a tiled house consisting of 2 rooms. The housing programme is now in progress. There is one Sevashram or School of L. P. standard established by the Tribal and Rural Welfare Department of Government of Orissa where the Koya children are being taught through the medium of Oriya.

### **Shifting Cultivation**

The villagers say they were practicing shifting cultivation extensively. At that time little or no attention was being paid to wet cultivation. The Government stopped the practice a few years back. They were compelled to resort to wet cultivation and were allowed to practice shifting cultivation only in those areas demarcated by the forest department, as village forests. Before going into details a brief account may be given of the system of land tenure of the Koya.

The headman of the village was granted Mustafadari or the aright to collect cess by the Rajah of Jeypore as this taluk was a part of his estate. The Peda was asked to deposit a fixed amount either in cash or in kind in the Rajah's treasury and the practice continued till right now when the cess was being deposited into the Government treasury. The 'Peda' was authorized to dispose of

any part of the individual holdings to new-comers to the settlement and assessment of rent was exclusively the right of the 'Peda'. Assessment never exceeded the amount of Rupees five in cash and one Puti or 120 lbs. of paddy for each plough used. There was no limit to any individual holdings of land which depended on an individual family's capacity to bring it under cultivation. As no survey was made, individual holding of land could not be measured till recently. Original settlement with regular survey has been made only a month back and from the records information regarding the total amount of land used for wet cultivation as well as shifting cultivation has been collected. Out of 40 families in the village, 29 families possess 'elkas' or sites for shifting cultivation whereas the remaining eleven families depend on wet cultivation. One of these eleven families is a milkman who has migrated from Bastar and has established himself in this village. These eleven families are the late comers to this settlement. The total amount of land for wet cultivation as estimated from the records is 542.40 acres and the total amount of land used for shifting cultivation is 120.06 acres. From this it becomes evident that gradually the Koya people are becoming more dependent on wet lands as the use of *elkas* or sites for shifting cultivation is being sharply restricted by Government agencies. It is a common grievance of the Koyas of this village that Government is not providing them with sufficient *punaelka* or virgin forests for shifting cultivation and on the other hand they are rehabilitating Dandakaranya refugees in these areas to occupy the adjacent areas by which they will not only be deprived of the advantage of shifting cultivation but also the source of fodder for their cattle.

The Koyas of this village mainly distinguish between types of lands used for different types of cultivation. Firstly the low land which can hold water for a considerable period in the year is called "Barhia Kuta". The second type called 'Usk Bada' is situated comparatively in higher level where water can be stored by making small earthen dams on all sides. The third one is called "elka" or the slopes where water cannot be stored and which is full of trees and bushes and these are the sites where shifting cultivation is practiced.

### **Method of Shifting Cultivation**

The sites for shifting cultivation are found, situated above the low-lying lands that are used for wet cultivation, 'Lankapodsenad' or burning of jungle starts in the month of *pedamanlens* corresponding to the later half and first half of April and May respectively. Cutting of trees and clearing of bushes are made fifteen days earlier. While clearing a patch certain trees are spared as they provide fruits to be consumed by the Koyas at the time of scarcity. These are Tumir, Bengur, Idu (*Bassia latifolia*), Korka and Kosu, etc. As the operation of shifting cultivation demands much more labour than what an individual family can afford for its own site, the work is done on a co-operative basis. An individual invites a number of persons he requires and every day he provides them with *landa* or rice beer for drinking till the cutting and clearing are over. The labour required for

cutting one acre of land could not be measured accurately. Modkam Dewa, one of the informants, said, he required the services of nine persons for two days to clear one of his sites and eight person for three days for clearing another patch of jungle. As the land which he cleared for the purpose could not be surveyed, accurate information could not be had. But his indication to the sizes led the author to assume that he has cleared approximately one and half to two acres of land for purposes of shifting cultivation.

When the site is cleared the wood and debris are left to dry up. After a week fire is set. Before setting fire the small undergrowth's are again cut down by the males while the female members pile up the debris. After burning, the site is left till it starts raining. The site is ploughed once, and when rain falls seeds are broadcast. They are seeds of Gora, Kohla(Millet) Permi, Junuk (*Vigna typisa*), Taut(a kind of fruit) and Sikud(bean), Pesli (*Phascolus radiatus*), Nunk (Seasum) and Benda.

The seeds of Gora (*Elesima coracana*) Permi(*Cajanus indicus*) Kohla (millet) are broadcast thickly whereas others are broadcast thinly. The sites are left till harvest of Gora, Permi and Suan which are ready to be reaped in the month of Dashara corresponding to the month of October and November. At the time of harvest the sites which are situated a mile or so away from the village are watched during night and day to prevent damage of crops by the predatory animals.

After one harvest is done, the *punaelka* or the new patch of jungle becomes '*panitaelka*' or old one. Next year also the same site is used for shifting cultivation but the yield is reduced to certain extent. Then that particular site is abandoned for 3 to 4 years, when again it is cleared for shifting cultivation. As the site becomes freshly over grown with trees and bushes the Koyas call it "*punaelka*" or the new one.

The yield from shifting cultivation was difficult to measure accurately as the Koyas start consuming the crops immediately after harvest. Besides they do not have their own standard of measure. Though they are getting used to the local standard measure very few can measure accurately. The local measure for corn is given below.

I Gadisa = 30 *putis*.

I Puti= 20 *manas*.

One *mana* is equivalent to 160 *tolas* which is approximately 4 lbs. An approximate measure of crops was made by the author while collecting information on the total yield from a piece of land used for shifting cultivation by an individual named Madakam Dewa (35). Several other villagers were also interviewed. But for precision the information of one individual is being dealt with here.

As mentioned above the *elkas* are distinguished as *punaelka* and *pantaelkas*. Madkam Dewa' *spunaelka* yielded last year (1960) two *putis* of Gora, 3 *manas* of Junuk, 4 *manas* of Benda, 10 *manas* of Permi and 5 *putis* of Kohla. The total yield in Pounds is 628 lbs. He cultivated 1½ acres of land approximately. Another individual named Madkam Pandu who cultivated an acre got a total yield of 2 *puti* Gora, 10 *manas* of Permi, 2 *manas* of Junuk, 3 *manas* of Benda and 3 *putis* of Kohla. The total yield in terms of pounds is 400 lbs = 5 mds.

Per acre yield for each crop is difficult to measure as intercropping is practiced by the Koyas, and no specific portion of the land is used for any particular type of the crops.

An attempt has been made to show per acre yield of the mixed crops on the basis of above information which shows that per acre yield is about more than 300 lbs., and on enquiry it was found that the per acre yield varied from 3½ mds. to 6 mds.

The crops raised are mainly used as food. Gora is used for making rice beer and gruel is made to be taken at the time of scarcity during rainy season. The headman of the village informed the author that previously they sold all other crops except Gora and beans in exchange for other necessities such as salt, tobacco and cloths. These days the children invariably eat Permi and other pulses that are grown. But the previous practice is also in vogue and except Gora (*Elesina coracana*) all other pulses are sold.

Before concluding the description of the methods of shifting cultivation, a brief account may be given of the different other types of economy on which the Koyas depend for their livelihood. Cultivation of paddy has been taken to be the major productive technique as is shown from the amount of wet land possessed by the Koyas. Wet cultivation as practiced by the Koyas may be said to be of very crude type. The land is ploughed after rainfall and seeds are broadcast. After that, storing of water is made wherever necessary. Weeding and transplantation are never made by the Koyas and they visit the field only when the crop is ready to be reaped. The per acre yield from the wet cultivation has been calculated to be much less than that of shifting cultivation i.e., about 300 lbs. or about 3 mds. approximately.

Among other minor crops that are raised mention may be made of mustard, maize and tobacco which the Koyas grow in the gardens attached to their houses. Mustard is sold in exchange for salt and gruel is made of maize which is consumed and tobacco is both sold and consumed.

The collection of roots and fruits from the jungle may be taken to be one of the important source of Koya livelihood. Flowers of *Bassia latifolia* tree are collected in huge quantities by all families. They are dried up and stored to be

used at times of scarcity which starts from the rainy season till harvest. On enquiry it was found that each family collected more than 200 lbs each year.

Among fruits Tumiror Kendu takes the first place which is also dried up and stored for future use. Roots of various kinds are also collected. Ten such kinds were recorded. Unidentified jungle grass of ten to eleven kinds are also boiled and consumed by the Koyas. The Koyas of the village say that they can live for days together only on various types of tubers collected from the jungle.

The cattle wealth of the Koyas is important—because of the fact that no marriage ceremony can be performed without cattle. Cattle are used for bride—price and the bullocks are sold in exchange for money to buy clothing's. Cattle are also bartered for bison horns which the Koyas prize most for using as head dresses in the ceremonial dances.

Hunting and fishing have become a past time for the Koyas as, they say, the forest have become depleted of the wild animals that one time infested these regions. For most part of the year the Koyas are seen wandering in the jungles in search of wild games but return without them. For fishing they go to the rivers during the summer season.



# BIODIVERSITY IN CROPS AND HERITAGE AGRICULTURE SYSTEMS OF KOYA \*

*Padmini Pathi*<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*In recent years the tribal agriculture and traditional systems of natural resources management has posed to be an important subject to be studied. The traditional agriculture and management systems of tribal communities in sustaining production systems is still relevant today and continue to justify its relevance in future. In this context, the author has reflected upon the traditional agriculture of Koya tribal community in Malkangiri in a perspective of biodiversity in crops. The paper presents the unique and distinct aspects of Koya agriculture with precise documentation of traditional crop varieties, especially that of paddy varieties, that are still preserved by the community through ages. The author further argues that there are elements in Koya agriculture that set standards for being considered for documentation under Tribal Heritage Agriculture Systems.*

**Key words :** Koya, biodiversity in crops, traditional agriculture, shifting cultivation, traditional knowledge

The traditional agriculture and land use patterns in tribal areas have come under direct influence of climate change. The innovations in agriculture popular as improved and scientific models are by and large oriented towards maximizing productivity and yield from unit area of land and also depict a clear shift from subsistence agriculture to cash crops or a mix of the two often with inappropriate proportions. In recent years the tribal agriculture and traditional systems of natural resources management has posed to be an important subject to be studied. Although literature in this regard, especially in the context of

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXV, No.2, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2015, pp.82-90

<sup>1</sup> Consultant, SC & ST RTI, Bhubaneswar ([ppathi.ssa@gmail.com](mailto:ppathi.ssa@gmail.com))

traditional tribal agriculture and climate change impacts, are very sporadic, yet what is emerging that the local practitioners know better and have reflexive coping mechanisms. This reaffirms the notion that the traditional management systems in sustaining production systems is still relevant today and continue to justify its relevance in future.

At an International level trends are emerging indicating efforts for reestablishing trust on traditional agriculture and natural resources management practices in the context of current climate change impacts worldwide. Realization is emerging that the connection of indigenous communities to their land is an important source of resilience, but this resilience depends on an ability to nurture and manage this relationship. In this context, an effort has been made in this paper to reflect upon the traditional agricultural systems of the Koya tribal communities in a perspective of indigenous management of biodiversity in crops.

### **The Koya Community**

The Koya tribal community has been of considerable interest from point of view of their society and culture. The Koyas are distributed in Malkangiri district of Odisha, and the neighboring states - Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The Malkangiri district is inhabited by 13 tribal groups, out of which two communities Bonda and Didayi are designated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). These tribal falls under the category of hunter gatherers and shifting cultivators. The Koyas are spread over five blocks of the district and are having the largest population share in the ST category.

The Census 2011 enumerates that there are 56 nos. of ST communities residing in Malkangiri district. Out of them the 'Koya' tribe has the highest population and the second highest population is that of 'Bhumia' Tribe. Bonda and Didayi are autochthonous communities in the area. The Gadabas live permanently in large villages mixed with other tribes and castes. Media, Lodha, Kulis, Koli, Malher, Kolah, Loharas, Kol, Baiga are some of the tribes migrated from other districts of the state.

The Koya language of Malkangiri district is said to be a dialect of Gondi, which is Dravidian in origin. Gonds and Koyas belong to the great Gond family and it is natural that their tongues preserve many resemblances. The language has no separate script.

### **Koya Agriculture**

The Koyas are mainly shifting cultivators. Shifting cultivation in their terminology is known as *Lankapodsend*. After years of cultivation on a particular patch of land or hill slopes when they realize reduced yield from the fields, usually they shift to some other place both for setting a settlement and taking up cultivation on the new site. However, over the years, as on now, they are not

generally shifting from place to place, rather have settled down permanently in a habitation (Mohapatra, 1992-93).

In the current scenario, Koyas practice both shifting cultivation and settled cultivation. While settled cultivation seems to be a recent development spanning over last two to three decades, the shifting cultivation is very ancient and has been deeply ingrained in their culture. Shifting cultivation in their terminology is called *Yelka Chaas* which is much different than the settled agriculture.

The Koya agricultural land use practice is unique and distinct. The community has identified four different kinds of lands on which different types of crops are grown in different combinations and compositions as well as pure cultures. The agriculture practice is sort of coded in respect of crops specific to land use units. They identify four kinds of lands suitable for agriculture. They are: Lamta Bhoom or wet lands; Yelka Bhoom or moderate to gentle slopes; Gop Bhoom or uplands; and Khaal Gundke Bhoom or stony and pebble lands. The different lands are characterized by slope mainly. While the wet lands are suitable for paddy and jute, the moderate to gentle slopes are suitable for pulses and vegetables. While cereals including hill paddy and millets along with tree crops are cultivated on the uplands, in the stony-pebble lands certain millets and oil seeds are cultivated. Vegetables are cultivated where they are suitable. Koyas do not eat a wide range of vegetables and hence only such vegetables are cultivated which suits to their traditional food habit. Hence a small diversity of vegetables are grown, most of which are grown in kitchen gardens. That apart, the kitchen garden or back yard of house favours cultivation of any kind of vegetables, root and tuber crops, fruit trees, and mainly vegetables that are by habit creepers such as pumpkin, carpet legumes and such.

### **Land and Water Management in Paddy Lands**

The paddy lands of Koya are relatively bigger in size and rectangular in shape. Most of the fields extend beyond one acre in size. The lands lie on a gentle slope and they are not terraced. They lay field bunds only on the downstream side of the field. The Koyas have their own explanations in favour of big sized fields. According to them they decide size of fields in relation to the upper catchments and the runoff from the catchments. If the lands are fragmented into small fields then there are chances that due to surface run off soil erosion becomes a regular problem. In many places where lands have been fragmented to smaller size the soil erosion starts with rill erosion and, if unattended, may lead to create gullies through which massive soil erosion occurs. With a bigger size land the runoff is distributed all through the fields and across the bunds so that the bunds are not damaged and moisture is well distributed. On the downstream side of the field they dig out small channels before the field bunds which catch the runoff and store water in the channel by which less pressure is

exerted on the bunds. The water stored in the channels spread moisture in the field and also becomes available for critical irrigation to save the standing crops in the field under conditions of erratic rainfall and dry spells even in the rainy season. Even if the water stored in the channels is not sufficient for critical irrigation, yet because of the storage the crops around the water channels survive. This prevents a complete crop loss. In the Koya area irrigation facilities are of very rare occurrence and hence the traditional practice of water management saves them from a complete crop failure. The downstream field bunds are made strong with stones and mud and in many places such plants which have good soil anchorage are planted on the bunds. Vegetation on bunds provides better stability to the bunds. In the wet lands paddy is cultivated as pure crop. The Koya cultivates a wide range of traditional paddy varieties in different types of land. Detailed lists of varieties in respect of upland, medium land and low lands have been listed below.

### **Varieties of Paddy grown on uplands**

The traditional paddy varieties grown on uplands under rain fed conditions have varied duration between planting and harvesting. The duration of harvest ranges between two months to four months. There are tall and dwarf varieties with varied yield quantity. Irrespective of the yield the Koya love to cultivate the varieties. The upland varieties are not transplanted.

<b>Variety</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Basana Kaveri	100 days
Dayabuti	90 days
Govinda	100 days
Kandiribali	100 days
Kakudimanji	120 days
Kata chudi	90 days
Mahulkochi	90 days
Matidhan	100 days
Siklakali	90 days
Satka	60 days
Telkasu	90 days

### **Varieties of Paddy grown on Medium -Up lands**

The paddy varieties grown on medium up lands count more in number as compared to those grown on uplands. The varieties grown on these lands are usually long duration crops that take about four months and more between planting and reaping. These varieties are grown under rain fed conditions and relatively yield better compared to the upland varieties. The upland varieties are transplanted under certain conditions but by and large they are not transplanted.

<b>Variety</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Badamanji	120 days

Benda	120 days
Budma	120 days
Chudi	150 days
DhegaChinamali	120 days
Godabanda	120 days
Gatia	120 days
Kania	120 days
Kaniangabuda	120 days
Kaparbela	120 days
Kandamali	120 days
LalDhana	130 days
Muliapati	120 days
Nadia rasa	120 days
Sana Bayagonda	130 days
Saguri	120 days
Sindur	120 days
Telatia	120 days

#### **Varieties of Paddy grown on Medium -Up lands**

The largest numbers of traditional paddy varieties are grown on low lands. They are usually tall varieties and grown under irrigated and waterlogged conditions. There are varieties that grow up to 6 to 8 ft height. These varieties not only yield better but also they provide quantitative fodders in shape of straw. They are very long duration crops ranging between five to six months. These varieties are transplanted.

<b>Variety</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Bagura	150 days
Asamchudi	150 days
Barengi	150 days
Batachudi	150 days
Bayaganda	150 days
Buda Chenamali	150 days
Baiganmanji	150 days
Bagudi	150 days
Tikilikata	150 days
Dulardei	100 days
Gudman	150 days
Guruji	150 days
Gatasaria	150 days
Ghalaka	150 days
Kalakas	150 days
Kinuri	150 days
Kalajira	150 days
Kalakhadika	150 days

Kaliapalsi	150 days
Khajurikoli	150 days
Lalkhadika	150 days
Maguramundi	150 days
Mandiamanji	150 days
Methi	150 days
Memalmatu	150 days
Machhakanta	150 days
Mahipal	150 days
Nageni	150 days
Osabal	150 days
Pande	150 days
Poda	150 days
Punjidhana	150 days
Ratanchudi	150 days
Renga	150 days
Suru	150 days
Suruja	150 days
Sikanhirate	150 days
Singapuria	180 days

### Cultivation on the Slopes

On the slope lands mixed cropping system is usually followed. This is sort of very typical to the shifting cultivators elsewhere in Odisha. The multiple cropping in a shifting cultivation system is very important in the context of food security, crop harvest security, and above all in a larger context helps preservation of crop germ plasm that are specific to the terrain and conditions. Koyas take up mixed cropping in all slope lands except the somewhat leveled paddy lands. Crops ranging up to 30 varieties are cultivated on the slope lands under rainfed conditions. The Koya, by dint of their age old experiences and by suitably employing their traditional wisdom have been able to plan out different combinations of crops in respect of specific land use units for assured production. The various combinations of crops are like: Hill paddy and black gram; Hill paddy, finger millet and *arhar*; Hill paddy and finger millet; little millet, sorghum, maize and *arhar*; little millet, sorghum, black gram or green gram; Maize and cow pea; little millets (*suan* and *kangu*), sesamum and sorghum, etc. With these combinations they have further improved their package of practices for better productivity and sustainability.

On the slopes a wide range of cereals, pulses, oil seeds, vegetables, and spices are cultivated. In a typical Koya shifting cultivation fields one would find hill paddy, little millets like *suan*, *koda*, *kangu*, finger millet or *ragi* (tall and dwarf varieties), maize, sorghum, fox tail millet, etc among cereals; *arhar*, horsegram, black gram, green gram, varieties of cow pea, *bargudi*, other legumes like

varieties of carpet legume, etc among pulses; niger, sesame, castor etc among oil seeds; tubers like Nangelmati (yam), Pandemati (sweet potato), *hema* (colocacia), tapioca, etc; vegetables like *appa* (brinjal), *wanga* (tomato), *sukarbhenda* (ladies finger), *wekum* (cucumber), *burkha* (Lau), *gumad* (pumpkin), *nirgumad* (ash gourd), *vira* (ribbed gourd), *kankad* (spine gourd), *benda* (small ladies finger like fruit, sour in taste), etc.

### **Crops grown in Kitchen Gardens**

In the kitchen gardens Koya cultivates brinjal, tomato, chilli and carpet legumes. They are also very traditional varieties. Amongst these crops the carpet legume (*samba/sembi*) has many varieties. The varieties are named as Bami Semi (long, slender with twisted ends), Bariha semi (medium length, flat, looks like ear of wild boar), Goti semi (appear as singlets, small but with compact seeds), Aat semi (its seeds are only eaten), Jhata semi (clustered fruiting, common type), Ganthi semi (fruits at nodes and internodes, yields well), Ranga semi (purple colored legumes, yields well). Semi is the most common vegetable in the backyard and kitchen garden of Koya. Semi is part of their every day diet. Similarly, a type of traditional tomato variety is raised by the Koya which is locally called Bhejiri which in mainstreams is known as cherry tomato. The Koyas are very fond of this vegetable. Along with that a variety of chilli, of the bird chilli type, is grown by them which is very hot. The chilli is very much a part of Koya food habit.

### **Preservation and Conservation of Crop Germplasm**

The Koyas carefully preserve the seeds of their traditional crop varieties. They employ their traditional wisdom and traditional technology for conservation of seeds. Usually they stock the paddy seeds in large sized bamboo containers. The containers made with bamboo splits are called Doli whose inner and outer side is smeared with cow dung. After storing paddy in the containers they are sealed with bamboo split made lids whose inner and outer side is properly smeared with cow dung. The containers are stored in moisture free places and are usually kept on a stage or platform at a height of about two to three feet from the ground.

The cow pea, *bargudi*, semi and other legume type seeds are dried and bundled with the pods and are stored in a basket above the hearth so that the smoke emanating from the hearth keeps the seeds safe from the insect and pest infestations. The Koya understand that if the seeds are kept away from moisture then they remain in perfect condition and when cropped they germinate well. Similarly they store the maize seeds without peeling the maize and without dislodging the seeds from the cob. The vegetable seeds are removed from the ripe vegetables, washed properly, mixed with ash, dried properly and stored in better conditions away from moisture.

Other types of cereals and pulses seeds are dried properly, stored in containers; some herbal insect repellents are mixed with the seeds in the containers that keep them free from any damage from pests and insects. Ash and cow dung are considered very important as insect repellents.

### **Koya Women in Agriculture**

Koya women are very adept to their traditional agriculture. They have good knowledge of the crops suitable to different types of land units such as upland, medium-up lands, low lands, backyards and kitchen gardens. They play a very important role starting from land preparation to harvesting and storing through mid-term agricultural processes like seeding, transplanting, weeding, manuring, plucking and reaping etc. women particularly play the most important role in storing and maintaining seeds in storage conditions for cropping in subsequent years. The Koya women have a very strong and conservative stance on preservation of traditional crops in field and at home. They have a profound knowledge on the biological and climatic indicators through which they forecast the productivity and yield of the field crops.

### **Tribal Heritage Agriculture Systems in Context**

The Koya agriculture has the merit and essence to be called heritage agriculture especially for the vast crop diversity that they have preserved since generations. The Koya agriculture has many elements that make it relevant to be studied in the context of Tribal Heritage Agriculture Systems (THAS) under the initiative towards GIAHS (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems) that was started in the year 2002 by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), intended to create public awareness and safeguard world agricultural heritage sites. The elements that qualify Koya for THAS are:

- The nature friendly agricultural practices
- The vast body of traditional knowledge and technology applied in sustaining agriculture
- High levels of agricultural biodiversity and associated biological diversity
- The conservation and preservation of germ plasm in traditional crops
- Climate resilient practices

### **Conclusion**

The Koya community has evolved their indigenous agricultural system for subsistence livelihood, which maintains ecological balance, and ensures food security, and perpetuates economic returns. This system is a three-tier agriculture system: where the terrain is divided into different land use classes based on the elevation, slope and ecological considerations. In their traditional agricultural practice they depict great deal of local indigenous knowledge applied to the management of the resources like land, water, biodiversity and in a larger context of the ecosystem services. The main feature of the Koya



traditional system of agriculture is the maintenance of bio-diversity in crops. Different local varieties of crops are grown suiting the climate conditions and depending on their needs.

The traditional agriculture and land use patterns in tribal areas have come under direct influence of climate change. In such a context, the Koya agriculture system has a lot to offer as solutions for maintaining climate resilience through traditional crops by employing traditional knowledge and technology. In the changing scenario when agriculture scenario is changing fast and there is growing appreciation for high yielding varieties to maximize production from unit area of land, there is a growing apprehension that these traditional biodiversity in crops might lose importance and as a consequence may be lost forever. In this context, it is important that the conservation of traditional germ plasm in crops be incentivized or encouraged so that these germ plasms are not lost forever in the better interest of the tribals, their culture and preservation of the traditional germ plasm in crops.

**Reference:**

Mohapatra, Ch. P.K. (1992-93): The Koya, Popular Series on Tribes – 5, THRTL, Bhubaneswar

# SYSTEM OF EXCHANGE AMONG KOYAS\*

*Manoranjan Acharya*<sup>1</sup>

Exchange in modern economic usage implies a mutual and voluntary transfer of property including services and a fundamental equivalence in the things exchanged, equality in value which rests upon economic rationality and developed market institutions. In a sense, exchange is the central concept of economic science, whether of theoretical or empirical type, in so far as the exchange economy is the characteristic form of economic organization in the modern capitalistic world.

The modern economic organization, however, is not an exchange economy pure and simple. It is not based upon actual exchange of goods and services by their producers, directly or through the medium of money, which has been the characteristic of an earlier stages of economic development.

The existing economic system, which may be regarded as an outgrowth of the exchange economy, is more accurately describable as an enterprise economy. Production in the responsible sense, is now typically carried on by an abstract entity the business unit or enterprise which is functionally distinct from the natural persons or persons composing it. Individuals and families get their livelihood through two fold mechanism of buying and selling which is not mere and simple property exchange; because the role of money in it is so important that it can't be replaced by barter, as should be possible in the case of true exchange. But the above mentioned facts never fit in the context of those who are known as simple societies. At the beginning of the economic society, the commodities exchanged must have been relatively, essential things. Objects of adornment are not indispensable for a primitive group dependent upon other groups for prime necessities. Trade was, under these conditions, an exchange of surpluses, a phrase which must be categorically avoided in application to the latter times when goods were produced expressly for exchange and exchange became a part of production. Under advanced conditions exchange is an incident

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XXVI, No.4, THRTI, Bhubaneswar, 1986, pp.33-39

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer in Anthropology, BJB College, Bhubaneswar.

of specialization and its significance lies in increasing the productiveness of labour and other resources.

The purpose of this article is to highlight the system of exchange prevalent amongst Koyas, a primitive tribe inhabiting the interior pocket of the district of Koraput in the State of Orissa by unfolding its various forms and their socio-economic ramifications both in their traditional and modern contexts. An in-depth study has also been made to highlight doggedness with which the system has stuck to the apron-string of traditionalist even during the present times of all-pervasive money economy.

The exchange relationship associated with Koyas takes place within the community. All Koyas are cultivators or more specifically shifting cultivators. Yet some are expert in some other skills like carpentry, smelting of iron, witchcraft, sorcery, etc. There are also Permas '(Priest)', Pedas '(Head-man)', Wades (Medicine man) and the like. In the course of rendering services to the people, they also get some payment from the beneficiaries. Thus all are mutually dependent upon one another though not fully, but partially. In course of my field study, I came to know from my Koya informants Bhimsen and others that the exchange system was in vogue in their society from time immemorial. In their language they call it 'MARSANAD'. Their primary need in the exchange system mainly concentrates on salt. They have also got other consumptive needs like chilly, turmeric and kerosene oil, etc. The women-folk need bead necklaces of different types and also bangles, which are not locally available and as such, are to be procured from others. Even in respect of the locally available goods also one is not self-sufficient. He has to depend on his brother Koyas for procuring the same. So they have to depend upon this exchange system to get their requirements fulfilled to some extent. This is how and why the exchange system has come into being and is still surviving.

The exchanges are done through the medium of money, rice, paddy and also through other agricultural and forest products like mustard seeds, black gram, maize, millet, *mohul*, etc.

Labour exchange also takes place in (i) thatching, (ii) sowing and (iii) harvesting of different agricultural products.

In the matter of house construction, thatching the roof and reaping the paddy fields, if the family members are not capable of doing the work, then the family takes the help of other members of the village. First of all the family head would request the kin members and in case of their refusal for such assistance he would seek the help of other members of the village. He will have to give meals (*chakur*) to those men and in the evening liquor (*landa*) to drink. If the household has got sufficient quantity of paddy or rice to afford, then he can also pay them in terms of paddy or rice. Usually no money is paid for their labour, though money payment is at present practised amongst a few affluent Koyas only.

Also I have found in one case of Tatiguda where one Rama Madhi has employed quite a sizeable number of his co-villagers in a bunding work. The length of that bund (embankment) is 10 metres, breadth 3.5 metres and height 2.5 metres.

#### **Internal Trade :**

It is prevalent among the Koyas in the village exclusively and it even extends up to other castes within or outside the village. At present, the Bengali stationery traders are found moving from one village to the other by foot for this business purpose. Both men and women trailers carry with them articles like dried fish, ribbon, comb, soaps, tobacco, container, mirror, turmeric powder, chilly, etc. with them. They supply these articles to the tribals on the basis of money payment in some cases and in yet some other cases, the traditional barter system is taken resort to. The itinerant traders have got with them one container which is made out of bamboo spikes known as 'Khaja'. They receive in exchange black gram, mustard, paddy, etc. for the articles supplied. The exchange amount varies according to the quality and quantity of articles.

#### **Exchange of Seeds :**

If a Koya cultivator needs a particular variety of seed suitable for his field, which is not with him and is with some other person belonging to his caste or to some other caste, he gets that seed from him by exchanging either paddy or seeds at the rate of exchange prevalent amongst them.

#### **Exchange of Land :**

Exchange of land is not there in pen and paper. On the other hand, it is done by mutual understanding only and by verbal bilateral agreement between the land-owner and the other party. If any household fails to cultivate the land due to some personal difficulties, the party consulted and contracted sows seeds in the field and after harvesting, he takes three-fourths of the total produce and gives one-fourth to the land-owner as his share.

In the village Sikapalli, one Madkami Muya was found to have borrowed Rs. 100 from the money-lender Podiyami Bhima by mortgaging his land. But there was no written agreement between these two. The land had been placed completely at the disposal of that money-lender and also there were no terms and conditions and interest on the loan. The owner got back his land after three years on payment of the principal money.

#### **External Trade :**

The Koyas usually go to market in the nearby town to sell their surplus products like *Suan*, *Kandul*, tamarind, paddy, rice, mustard, black-gram, red gram, kitchen garden produced vegetables and the like. Sometimes they get money by selling these commodities in the market and at times they barter their

articles to get their household requirements like oil, kerosene, salt, pepper, cheap clothes, bead necklaces and glass bangles, etc. Thus, the barter system, through the external trade, covers the whole gamut of their daily requirements.

### Pure Barter :

Nowhere excepting one case in Potteru market, where I came across the case of a pure barter, I did not find the type anywhere else in the whole area under my study, In all these cases the articles sent for barter were found to be valued in terms of money and are then transacted. I found one old man coming with some cucumber (2 big and 3 small) to sell it in the Potteru market to get 'gourd' which 'vas necessary for giving, a gift in connection with the marriage ceremony of his sister-in-law. He met a woman of Budli who had brought three gourds to sell in the market. Both of them came to know about their mutual necessities after an informal chat and finally, they agreed on the barter and its terms. One of the gourds of the woman was valued at Rs. 0.75 which she bartered with the old man Tor the entire cucumber stock which was also valued equivalently outside the market. In the village level also they exchange their own commodities for other commodities which they need. In the village level exchange they mostly prefer barter, exchange rather than exchange through the medium of money. The barter rates of different agricultural products as practiced amongst them are as below.

Agricultural Produce	Exchanged for
2mana paddy	1 mana rice (nuka)
1 manamuga (Popil)	1 mana Blackgram (pesi)
1 mana Mahul (ehk)	1 mana salt
1 mana paddy	2 manas janha
1 mana millet	2 manas salt
1 mana Tola(gaara)	2 manas salt
1 mana mustard (Tarsa)	4. manas salt
1. podimuga	1. podi mustard
2 manas blackgram	1. mana rice
1 mana maize	1. mana salt
1 mana rice	3. manas tamarind (John)
1 manabajara	8. manas salt
1 mana rice	4. manas endjohna

There are also exchange rates of livestock which are as below :-

1 Ox = 2 Calves : 1 Ox = 4 Goats: 1 Goat=2 Hens.

Many itinerant traders frequent the Koya villages. The Koyas fulfill their basic needs and including those for luxuries through these traders, These traders bring with them comb, chilly, dried fish, small mirrors, ribbons, bangles, soaps

etc. They also carry with them one container which is made of bamboo is locally known as 'Khaja'. By means of this measuring device they take paddy, rice etc. from the Koyas and give them articles of basic needs and luxuries. The cost of these articles would be within 25 paisa to 50 paisa. But in exchange of these articles they usually take more amount of paddy or any other commodities and this is due to the 'sheer ignorance of these innocent tribal people and their lack of knowledge about measurement. This has been an exploitive trading practice perpetrated on the innocent Koyas over the years and is found to be still continuing.

I saw an old woman buying a soap for bathing purpose. An idea had somehow struck her that by washing the face with the soap, she would regain her eye-sight. So, she never bothered for the amount taken by itinerant trader to get the soap in a small cake form, the cost of which was hardly 25 paisa or so. Superstitious belief has thus been another factor responsible for their exploitation by unscrupulous traders.

### **Exchange of utensils**

Their villages are also some times visited by the traders of aluminum utensils. They exchange paddy or rice for buying these utensils of domestic utility. They exchange their old and worn out utensils for buying the new ones. Since they are completely ignorant of the metric measurement and since they only know their traditional measurement of 'Mana' and 'Podi', they are usually cheated by the traders in their transactions.

### **Exchange of Handicrafts**

The Koyas also exchange their hand-made articles with their co-villagers and also with traders. At times they also sell these to strangers. Their hand-made articles are mainly mats, *sal* leaf *dana* etc. They also exchange these with potters visiting their villages in procuring earthen cooking vessels and, pots of daily use.

### **Money Barter**

When there is a barter system based on money, we call it money barter. At present this form of barter is prevalent to some extent among the Koya people. This type of money barter takes place both amongst themselves as also with outsiders in the market and even among the people of different castes and tribes. This is the influence of the Market economy where different goods are bought and sold and the prices of the commodities are fixed by the sellers in terms of money. Due to constant interaction with these people the Koyas have developed sophistication in their barter system by making it more and more oriented. In the villages they have started selling vegetables and other necessities of daily use through the money barter system.

If somebody dies then in the cremation ground nearly 10 *manas* of paddy are to be scattered around the deceased. More quantity of paddy is scattered in case of the death of a rich man to off his affluence. If a Koya has no capacity to scatter paddy, he has to borrow it from others and if the lenders are his kinsmen. It is not supposed to repay it back. If, on the other hand, they are not his kinsmen, he will have to repay back the paddy either in cash or kind. Also he can repay his debt by giving other articles of the same value. In the funeral ceremony the village members other than his own kinsman help according to their might. Whatever one's financial condition, the scattering of paddy around a dead body is a must for him.

### **Birth Ceremony**

In the birth ceremony of a child the head of the household has to give a feast to the women who happen to be present in the laying-in room and some elderly persons like Pedas, Ward Members, Wades, who have helped in the child-birth.

If some elderly person wants to perpetuate his memory after his death by giving his name to the new-born child, he can do so in exchange of some goods like paddy, money, landed property, etc. in favour of that child. In the process, he perpetuates his memory in the next generation.

### **Nuakhia Festival (*Kadia Pandu*)**

All the households are required to give one 'Dana' of rice to the village headman (Peda) for his services. One day before the Kadia festival the village Peda calls all the people of the village and give them advice to live like brothers in the village by avoiding all factions. This invocation of the village headman for the spirit of co-operation and unity is rewarded by the villagers in giving him one 'Dana' full of rice each.

### **Dashera Festival (*Wakli*)**

In this festival they usually give lands (liquor), rice, hen to their respective 'Wades'. This is the festival of the Wades. People of the village come to their Wades house for eating the *prasad* after the Puja.

### **Gift Barter**

Gift exchange is a term of barter used for gift .only when people expect certain goods in return in lieu of their gifts others, which may be either immediately or in the long run. These return gifts may also be diverted to others at the option of the original donors. But this differs from the system of deferred payment in the sense that in this type of transaction there is no stipulation of time limit for repayment and the donors cannot, as a matter of right, claim repayment. There lies the subtle difference between pure lending as practiced by

the Koyas in the form of gift barter and the system of deferred payment, as the term is ordinarily understood.

If some guests come to the Koya family and he does not have sufficient food-stuff and drinks to provide them, he first of all approaches his kin members. If he gets the requirements from them, he need not have the obligation to repay the commodities as the guests coming to his house are the guests of his kin-members also.

If on the other hand, he gets the requirements from other households, then he has to give back at the rate of one-half of the quantities borrowed by way of repayment. Again, if he gets his requirement from a Bengali family or from other castes, then the repayment rate becomes, double the quantity borrowed. Thus, the repayment rates appear to be quite heavy in both the cases.

After harvesting season, each household has to give 2 *manas* of their produced articles in the form of either paddy, or rice or black gram or mustard, etc. to the Peda (Village Headman) which are kept at his disposal for common benefits. From out of this stock, village development works are done-and at-times Government officials like Revenue Inspectors, police and forest officials are also fed. Relief is also given to the people affected by natural calamities like fire, cyclone, etc. from this common fund.

Daily or occasional or ceremonial exchange of rice or curry and even cooked meat among the consanguineal and neighborly relations takes place for strengthening their bonds of relationship which maintains the kinship structure rigidly and cohesively. But they do not give anything in non-eatable form like rice, black gram, etc. Without being asked for they do not take back small amounts given to their neighbors. When the amount is more, then it is taken back with interest. If they are in shortage of money, they first go to seek the help from their own kin-members. If they do not get their requirements from their kin-members or from their villages or from their tribal brethren, they go to money lenders to borrow money. They take no interest from the members who belong to their kin-group. On the other hand, they charge interest from other tribal s who are not their kin-members.

When a man borrows something in kind from others, then ordinarily in the next year the quantum of repayment is doubled. This means that the rate of interest is 100 per cent per annum which is quite heavy. But there are some exceptions to this. Suppose a man has borrowed something either from his own kin-member or from the other villagers for discharging the function of a marriage or death ceremony. In that case he is not required to pay the double amount; because no interest is charged for this purpose.



### **Gift Exchange:**

Gift is a form of social communication. This communication takes an intermediary position between persons on the one hand and symbols on the other. The exchange of goods and services has to be understood in sociological context but not in true economic sense.

According to Herskovits a gift is almost a venture, a hopeful speculation. To make return equal in value to initials, gift is sufficient to avoid disgrace. It is a network of obligations. He again held the view that gift exchanges are definitely valuable as a stimulus to work and for the need to which they give rise to co-operative effort.

Malinowski has divided gifts into a number of types. They are as below:

- (1) Pure gifts
- (2) Customary payments without strict equivalence.
- (3) Payment for services rendered
- (4) Gifts returned in economically equivalent form.
- (5) Exchange of material goods against privileges; titles and non-material possessions.
- (6) Ceremonial barter with deferred payment
- (7) Trade pure and simple.

Again, according to him gift-giving of this type is viewed not in relation to the absolute value or desirability (of the article itself but entirely in relation for the prestige of the donor. Although such giving is also reciprocal but there is no reciprocity- of value.

### **Pure Gift :**

By this term we understand an-act in which an individual gives an object or renders a service without expecting or getting any return. Pure gift constitutes different forms in society as illustrated below:

### **Gift to God**

- (i) This is a paradox of economic behavior at the people who hold God to be Almighty and the Life-giver. Ill-fed different gods and goddesses for their blessings. This gift to god varies in nature and form in different occasions. For example, in the Dasahara festival (*wakli*) each household has to offer one fistful of rice and a hen and also at times eggs to their village deity (Hundi) which is situated adjacent to the village periphery.
- (ii) Offering at the time of Paja or festive occasions—Most of the festive or ceremonial occasions are car-marked by killing and making sacrifice of a hen or a goat or a pig. Moreover they use fine sundried rice, milk, banana, wine, molasses and flowers for the decoration of the altar meant for the offerings.

The offerings are made at four levels, (1) Individual level, (2) Family level, (3) Community level and (4) Village level.

### **Gifts Associated with Marriage**

Relatives both affine and consanguineal come and participate in the marriage ceremonials and bring with them some gifts according to their capacity, but the capacity is not always independent of one's free will; it depends on society in an accepted manner. A person may be incapable of giving anything, but he has to borrow, beg or steal in order to satisfy the men concerned, thereby he keeps up his social prestige.

The items of gift constitute goat, hen, Bullock' rice, salt, oil, vegetable, clothes, wine and some money. Most of these are eatables and are consumed in that ceremony.

In a marriage ceremony in the "MATAKAL" (Betrothal Ceremony) the groom's party usually gives two bottles of 'Mohul wine', on the 'Bodikal' (Marriage day) the groom's father gives one pot of Mohul wine, two pots of Landa (Country Liquor) and *mana* of rice. After marriage the son-in-law has to give one calf as 'Poyawata' to the mother-in-law and one bullock as 'Mamasama' to the uncle-in-law.

### **Gifts among Ritual Friends of Different Communities.**

The Koya people have got ritual friendship with the people of other castes and tribes. In the village Tatiguda a Koya Bala wade has got ritual friendship with a Bengali itinerant trader.

On the ceremonial occasions he gives cooked food to his ritual friend and the latter takes food in a Koya-House without hesitation. During the marriage of his daughter, the Bengali trader Niren Dey has given two *manas* of rice and a hen to his Koya ritual friend.

### **Gifts Associated with Death Ceremony**

During death ceremony gifts are given in the same form excepting cows and bullocks. But the gifts here are of lesser amounts than those in the marriage ceremony. All the relatives send or bring with them one piece of cloth each to the deceased persons' house.

### **Gifts in Fishing & Hunting**

Just after BijaPandu (Chitra Parva) they go in for the hunting expedition. Hunting goes on just after Bija' Pandu (Chitro Prava) they go in expedition is distributed among all the villagers irrespective of the fact whether they have actually participated in the hunting expedition or not. They also give one more share to the Peda (Head-Man and 'Wade, (Medicine man) in consideration of their social status and prestige.

## Conclusion

The following conclusion can be made from the study.

- (1) Though the barter system of goods amongst the Koyas themselves helps them to some extent in meeting their daily requirements, it exposes them to gross economic exploitation when the transaction is made with outsiders operating as unscrupulous traders. The Koyas are cheated in weights and measures in these transactions.
- (2) The metric system introduced throughout the country in the early sixties has hardly any impact on the Koyas who continue to trade with their traditional weights and measures like *mana*, *podu* etc.
- (3) There appears to be lack of supervision of the officers and staff of the Weights and Measures Organization of the State Government, as a result of which the traditional weights and measures still dominates the Koya markets these days when our country is preparing for making a leap-forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Adequate education should be given to them about the metric system of weights and measures. Both the Weights and Measures Department and the Harijan and Tribal Welfare Department should work in a coordinated manner to achieve this end.
- (4) Many of the exchanges are superstition-based. The Koya is yet to develop a rational and scientific outlook towards things. Spread of education amongst them would help them in developing this outlook.
- (5) There is a very good point in the Koyas restricting these exchanges mostly amongst the kin-members which has helped them to develop a social cohesiveness and solidarity amongst themselves.
- (6) Mutual dependence for their requirements has been responsible for maintaining the village unity and individual contribution to the village common fund has helped a great deal in taking up village development activities, giving relief to the needy etc. This is in sharp contrast to the .so-called civilized villages which are now-a-days divided into various factions where personal good has primacy over the common good.
- (7) Sometimes they become preys to the avaricious doings of money-lenders. This has been so due to lack of adequate rural credit facility. Government should open up adequate Institutional credit outlets in the villages to meet their credit requirements.

# PROPERTY RIGHTS FOR WOMEN: A CASE FROM THE KOYA COMMUNITY IN ORISSA \*

*Madhumita Ray*<sup>1</sup>

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

While all other communities like the Hindus, Muslims, Christians etc have their own customary practices, which have been established into laws – there is neither any permanent law nor judicial precedence regarding property inheritance with regard to tribal women among various tribes of India. Taking this background into account, a study on the property rights of the Koya women was initiated. The Koya is a tribal community living in the Malkangiri district in southern Orissa. **An effort has been made in this study to understand the position of tribal women from the point of view of ancestral property inheritance. The study moves with the premise that economic empowerment is an essential catalyst for change in status of a group of people.**

## 2. PURPOSE OF STUDY:

To examine the rights and status of property inheritance and customary inheritance practices among the Koya tribe with reference to their women.

## 3. METHODOLOGY:

Some of the research techniques used for the study are:

- Interview Schedules for conducting interviews;
- PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) techniques like resource mapping, social mapping, seasonality and preference ranking;
- Group Discussions with women and older people to analyse traditional as well as present practices relating to their social position and inheritance of property;

---

\* Published in ADIVASI, Vol. XXXXIX, No.1, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, 2009, pp.1-20

<sup>1</sup> Action Aid International, Bhubaneswar Regional Office, 0674 - 2544503, 9437052961

- Key Informant Discussion;
- Use of secondary information from various gazettes, journals, court judgments etc and reference of established research work and publications done on similar areas.

A workshop with the Pedas in Malkangiri on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2007, to discuss about the customary laws of the Koyas and the status of women-economic and social. This was attended by the Pedas, China Pedas, youth leaders and a few villagers.

**Main Villagers met and discussed with:** Singa Madkami, Jaya Madkami, Adma Madkami, Meka Madkami, Waga Padiami, Irma Padiami, Singa Madkami, Dula Sodi, Soda Padiami, Rama Madkami, Tula Sodi, Ungi Madi, Shanti Padiami, Muda Madkami, Kosa Madkami, Kawasi Laka, Bhima Magi, Adab Bas, Muka Kawasi, Unga Makdkami, Singa Padiami, Ira Padiami, Ajit Kumar, Ramesh Padiami, Bhima Padiami, Sanumu Padiami, Bhimsen Madkami, Samu Kumari, Bandi Madkami, Krushna Madkami, Suleta Padiami

#### 4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The Study, not only explores the concept of property inheritance and distribution among Koya men and women, it also examines the status of tribal women as far as property issues are concerned. Besides, the study with the help of lawyers from the High Court and lower courts and a well known activist, has researched the judgments given by courts regarding inheritance of property among tribal communities, with special emphasis on women. The secondary data would also examine the relevant land laws like the Orissa Scheduled Area Transfer of Immoveable Property Act 1956) and Land Reforms Act 1962.

#### Property defined

Property designates those things commonly recognized as the entities in respect of which a person or group has exclusive rights. Important types of property include real property (land), personal property (other physical possessions) and intellectual property (rights over artistic creations, inventions, etc.). A right of ownership is associated with property that establishes the good as being "one's own thing" in relation to other individuals or groups, assuring the owner the right to dispense with the property in a manner he or she sees fit, whether to use or not to use, exclude others from using, or to transfer ownership. Some philosophers assert that property rights arise from social convention. Others find their origins from morality or natural law.

Various scholarly communities (e.g., law, economics, anthropology, sociology) may treat the concept more systematically, but definitions vary within and between fields. Scholars in the social sciences frequently conceive of

property as a bundle of rights. They stress that property is not a relationship between people and things, but a relationship between people *with regard to* things. Some philosophers like Karl Marx use it to describe a social relationship between those who sell their labor power and those who buy it.

There exist many theories. Perhaps one of the most popular is the natural rights definition of property rights advanced by John Locke. Locke advanced the theory that when one mixes one's labor with nature, one gains ownership of that part of nature with which the labor is mixed, subject to the limitation that there should be "enough, and as good, left in common for others".

**The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State**, where intra family gender relations are seen as structured primarily by two overlapping economic factors: the property status of the households to which the women belong and women's participation in wage labour. Engels argued that in capitalist societies, gender relations would be hierarchical among the property owning families of the bourgeoisie where women did not go out to work and were economically dependent on men, and egalitarian in property less proletarian families where women were in the labour force. In the context of industrializing Europe, Engels argued, the first premise for the emancipation of women is the re-introduction of the entire female sex into public industry. So is the emphasis on women's economic dependency a critical constituent of the material bases of gender oppression. Entry into the labour force is not the only way to reduce economic dependency; independent rights in property would be another, and possibly the more effective way. Left wing political parties in South Asia have given centrality to women's employment, but the necessary accompaniments emphasized by Engels, namely the abolition of private property in male hands and the socialization of housework and child care, have largely been neglected, as has the question of women's property rights.

Property advantage stems not only from ownership but also from effective control over it. In societies which underwent socialist revolutions, while private property was legally abolished, control over wealth generating property remained with men. Indeed in most societies today it is men as a gender that largely control wealth generating property. Even property that is under State, community or clan ownership remains effectively under the managerial control of selected men through their dominance in both traditional and modern institutions: castes or clan councils, state bureaucracies at all levels. Marxist analysis implicitly assumes that women belong to the class of their husbands and fathers. Hence women of propertied bourgeois households are part of the bourgeoisie and women of proletarian households are counted as proletarian, although they may also have a proletarian status by virtue of being workers themselves. Economic dependency renders women's affiliation with any class a tangential, vicarious and temporary matter. Property mediates relationship not

only between men and women but also between women. In other words there is an ambiguous character to women's class position.

Engels argued for instance that in propertied households the need to ensure legitimacy of heirs would necessitate strict control over women's sexuality within marriage and provide the logic for monogamy, which is unnecessary in property less families.

**But it is indeed very interesting to see that since the biblical years, there have been scholars who have zealously guarded private property and there has been much debate on the nature of property by capitalist, socialist and communist thinkers, but except for a brief mention by Engels, everybody else is completely silent on property ownership and women. William Blackstone goes as far as to say that, "every wanton and causeless restraint of the will of the subject, whether produced by a monarch, a nobility, or a popular assembly is a degree of tyranny." How should such tyranny be prevented or resisted through property rights? Then the indifference of the Indian state till late and customary laws among tribal communities in India which prevent women from owning property or at best are silent about their rights, can be defined as tyrannical towards women.**

## **5. LAW ON PROPERTY RIGHTS OF SCHEDULED TRIBES**

Before one attempts to understand the property rights of the Koya community and its various nuances, one ought to comprehend what it means by property rights of a Scheduled Tribe in India. It ordinarily means the bulk of norms or standards recognized by the community for guiding the members of a Scheduled Tribe, both men and women in respect of such matters as inheritance, succession, distribution, partition, transfer and gift etc. of property within a family and between the families. As is well known, the entire gamut of property rights of a community belongs to that sphere of civil law, which is otherwise known as personal law or family law. The personal law also encompasses such family related legislation which bears on marriage, divorce, adoption, maintenance, guardianship and custody of children. In India, unlike Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsis, the personal laws including the property rights of the scheduled tribes living in either 5<sup>th</sup> Schedule or 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule Areas since the British times have remained diverse i.e. un-uniform and largely unmodified, and their determination for all practical purposes has been left to the customary usage and practices prevalent in the concerned community handed down across generations. So much so that even when certain practices of some scheduled tribes were expressly found to be contradictory to the modern canons of equality and justice as enshrined in the Preamble and Fundamental Rights Chapter of the Constitution, the Courts in general and Supreme Court in particular refrained from interfering in them on the statutory plea that the Scheduled Areas were immune from general applicability of the laws made for the mainstream and the non-scheduled regions of the country. Of course a fierce debate has all along

been raged in the post-independence period as to the degree of legislative autonomy that a tribal area should enjoy, especially in respect of personal laws including the laws relating to the property rights.

### **Tribal Community vis-à-vis Hindu Law**

There reigns a fair amount of confusion among the jurists, legislators, administrators, and social activists, as well as common citizens as to whether the Hindu personal law is applicable to the scheduled tribes. In fact, the relevant Hindu laws also bear provisions, which have lent strength to such abounding confusion. For instance, the Section 2(2) of Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 says, "Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), nothing contained in this Act shall apply to the members of any Scheduled Tribe within the meaning of clause (25) of Article 366 of the Constitution, unless the Central Government, by notification in the Official Gazette, otherwise directs". Against such a categorical stipulation there however exists two other provisions in the said Section-2, which by implication convey a different meaning. For instance, Section-2(1-c) says that the Act applies "to any other person domiciled in the territories to which this Act extends who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion, unless it is proved that any such person would not have been governed by the Hindu law or by any custom or usage as part of that law in respect of any of the matters dealt with herein if this Act had not been passed". Plainly it means that there is a scope for application of Hindu law to any citizen of India, who is not a follower of above 4 institutionalized religions. The next instance of exception can be found in Section-2(3), that says, "The expression 'Hindus' in any portion of this Act shall be construed as if it included a person who, though not a Hindu by religion is, nevertheless, a person whom this Act applies by virtue of the provisions contained in this section". In a similar fashion, the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956 in Section 2(2) declares that the Act will not apply to the Scheduled Tribes as defined in the Constitution, but then proposes two qualifying provisions under the Section-2 itself, by virtue of which a person of Scheduled Tribe can be considered a Hindu under certain special circumstances for the purposes of this Act. The third and fourth laws in the series, namely Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956 replicate the said kind of provisions almost word by word. Thus we find that all the four Hindu laws, which have nearly identical, provision under Section-2 are both exclusive and inclusive of Schedule Tribe under its purview. It all depends upon the specific circumstances that shall determine whether the matters related to Personal Law in respect of an ST person shall be disposed of as per the Hindu Law or any other Law or as per the Custom or Usage of his/her community as already referred to under Section 13 (3) of the Constitution.

At the level of higher judiciary (High Court and Supreme Court), the Scheduled Tribes are treated as non-Hindus, but at the level of lower courts,



there is a tendency among the lawyers to treat the ST persons as Hindus; otherwise it would entail arduous labour and forensic skill on their part to define the custom and usage of the particular tribe, and to articulate most of the arguments from common sense and facts of the case without relying on any codified law or court precedents. Treating an ST person under the Hindu law offers both advantages and disadvantages for the person concerned; For instance, a tribal woman would be entitled to a share in the property of her father or husband, if her complaint is treated under Hindu Succession Act, while on the basis of their existing tribal custom or usage, she may not get that kind of benefit. From another angle, say for instance, on a case around her plea to get a divorce from her husband, it would be much easier on her part to get it allowed by the Court on the basis of the custom or usage of her tribe than under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

It is worth noting that the Census reports of India do not treat the tribal communities as born Hindus. Appendix 'C' to the census report of 1991 gives details of Sects/Beliefs/ Religions clubbed with another religion". According to this annexure, no tribal community has been clubbed with the followers of the Hindu religion in the report. The main part of the report shows the population, in various States and Union Territories, under eight different heads – (i) Hindus, (ii) Muslims, (iii) Christians, (iv) Sikhs, (v) Buddhists, (vi) Jains, (vii) "Other Religions and Persuasions" and (viii) "Religion not stated". The head of "Other Religions and Persuasions" is detailed in appendix 'A' to the report. In this appendix about 60 tribal religions are separately specified. In addition to these specified "Religions and Persuasions" of the various tribal communities, this appendix also includes a residuary head of "Tribal Religion" and, then, an additional head of "Unclassified" religions and persuasions, which also must be inclusive of many smaller tribes.

### **Supreme Court on Personal Law of Scheduled Tribes:**

The confusion with which the Constitution and other legal instruments of the Union have treated the Personal Laws of the Scheduled Tribes have found their reflection in the directions and judgments that the apex court has issued from time to time. As a matter of fact, only a very few cases came up before the apex court seeking for its adjudication and direction on issues bearing on personal laws of the STs. Of these, the one that stands out in terms of comprehensiveness and in-depth treatment of the subject is the famous case of *MADHU KISHWAR & ORS versus STATE OF BIHAR* that engaged the apex court for a decade from 1986 to 1996.

Ms. Madhu Kishwar, Editor of 'Manushi', a women's magazine at New Delhi and two women petitioners, one belonging to Ho and the other to Oraon Scheduled Tribes residing in Singhbhum district of Bihar made a writ petition against the State of Bihar before the Supreme Court challenging the Sections- 7 and 8 of the Chhota Nagpur Tenancy Act of 1908 as discriminatory against

women, since the said provisions confined succession to property to descendants in the male line of the Scheduled Tribes. They pleaded that the said provisions were *ultra vires* to the equality clause in the Indian Constitution.

The Court at an earlier stage while hearing one of the writ petitions gave time to the respondent State of Bihar to consider the feasibility of carrying out an amendment in the offending sections so as to clearly provide that succession was not confined in the male line. In pursuance thereof, a Committee was set up by the State which came to the conclusion that a custom prevailed among the Scheduled Tribes that a female heir be excluded from succession, and that if there was any change, and the property be allowed to go into the hands of female heirs there would be agitation and unrest among the ST people who have a custom based style of living. After hearing the report of the Committee the Supreme Court held that the Scheduled Tribe people are as much citizens as others and they are entitled to the benefit of guarantees of the Constitution. It may be that the law can provide reasonable regulation in the matter of succession to property with a view to maintaining cohesiveness in regard to Scheduled Tribes and their properties. But exclusion from inheritance would not be appropriate. Since this aspect of the matter was not examined by the State, the Court ordered it to be re-examined by the feasibility of permitting inheritance and simultaneously regulating such inheritance for the purpose of ensuring that the property does not go out of the family by way of transfer or otherwise.

On 17 April 1996 a three member bench, led by Chief Justice K. Ramaswamy did the final hearing of the case. They dealt with all problematic aspects of the issue of not allowing female inheritance of the paternal, ancestral or in-laws property and brought a judgment based upon the facts and circumstances within their knowledge.

The judgment starts with the recognition that the petitions raised a common question of law, whether female tribal is entitled to parity with male tribal in intestate succession? Specifically speaking, the petitioners sought declaration to the effect that Sections 7, 8 and 76 of the Chhota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908 are *ultra vires* to Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of India. They contended that the customary law operating in the Bihar State and other parts of the country excluding tribal women from inheritance of land or property belonging to father, husband, mother and conferment of right to inheritance to the male heirs or lineal descendants being founded solely on sex is discriminatory. The tribal women toil, share with men equally the daily sweat, troubles and tribulations in agricultural operations and family management. The discrimination against them based on the customary law of inheritance is unconstitutional and unjust, unfair and illegal. Even usufructuary rights conferred on a widow or an unmarried daughter become illusory due to diverse pressures brought on her at the behest of lineal descendants. Further the married or unmarried daughters are excluded from inheritance, if they are subjected to

adultery by non-tribals; they are denied of the right to enjoy the property of father or deceased husband for life. The widow on remarriage is denied of inheritance of property of her former husband. The petitioners had thus elaborated by narrating several incidents in which the women either were forced to give up their claims or became target of violent attacks or murdered.

All over the country, the respective State laws prohibit sale of all lands in tribal areas to non-tribals, restoration thereof to the tribals in case of violation of law and permission of the competent authority for alienation is a must and mandatory and non-compliance renders the sale void. The Acts in force in Bihar State expressly prohibits the sale of the lands by the tribals to the non-tribals and also direct restoration or re- compensation by equivalent lands to the tribals in case of violation. Therefore, if the female heirs intend to alienate their lands to non-tribals, the Acts would operate as a deterrent. In the event of any need for alienation, by a tribal woman, it would be only subject to the operation of these laws and the first offer should be given to the brothers or agnates. In the event of their refusal or unwillingness, the land would be sold to other tribals. In the event of a disagreement, on consideration the civil court of original jurisdiction should determine the same which would be binding. In the event of their unwillingness to purchase the same, with the permission of the competent officer, tribal women may sell the land to tribals or non-tribals. Therefore, the apprehension expressed by the State-level Committee is unfounded.

Chief Justice Ramaswamy held the view, "I would hold that the provisions of Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and the Indian Succession Act, 1925 though in terms, would not apply to the Scheduled Tribes, the general principles contained therein being consistent with justice, equity, fairness, justness and good conscience would apply to them. Accordingly I hold that the Scheduled Tribe women succeed to the estate of their parent, brother, husband, as heirs by intestate succession and inherit the property with equal share with male heir with absolute rights as per the general principles of Hindu Succession Act, 1956, as amended and interpreted by this Court and equally of the Indian Succession Act to tribal Christian. However, the right of alienation will be subject to the relevant provisions of the Acts like, the Bihar Scheduled Areas Regulation 1969, Santhals (Amendment) Act 1958, Santhal Parganas Tenancy (Supplementary Provisions) Act 1949 as amended from time to time etc. They would be applicable to them and subject to the conditions mentioned therein. In case the tribal woman intends to alienate the land, subject to obtaining appropriate permission from the competent authority under the appropriate Act, she should first offer the land for sale to the brother or in his absence to any male lineal descendant of the family and the sale will be in terms of mutually agreed consideration and other terms etc. In case of any disagreement on consideration, it shall be determined on an application filed by either party before the competent civil court of original jurisdiction over the area in which the land is located and the decision of the civil court after adduction of evidence and

consideration thereof shall be final and binding on the parties. In case the brother or lineal descendant is not willing to purchase either by mutual agreement or as per the price fixed by the civil court, the tribal woman shall be entitled to alienate the land to the non-tribal but subject to the provisions of the appropriate Act.

In conclusion, the judgment however says that the writ petitions were allowed conditionally. In layman's parlance, it meant that the new principles and interpretations pronounced in the judgment may be given intellectual weight but may not be acted upon right now by the concerned authorities in view of an absence of a clear-cut provision in law favouring the plea of the petitioners.

Despite the fact that the above judgment didn't exercise any instant impact on any of the authorities of the country, legislative, judicial or executive, all of whom were fervently exhorted to heed its new message, it has nevertheless remained to this day a landmark judgment and shall ever remain so until the day when every woman, be she tribal or not is given full and equal right along with male descendants in the succession to ancestral and intestate property. Landmark for double reasons; firstly it exhaustively exposes the glaring ambivalence and contradictions in the existing Constitutional and Statutory provisions for woman's right to equal share in the property of the household; and secondly, it serves and shall continue to serve as a formidable advocacy tool for equal property rights for women as a key to women's emancipation.

## **6. ABOUT KOYA COMMUNITY OF MALKANGIRI, ORISSA**

Koyas are one of the 62 Scheduled Tribes of Orissa living mostly in Malkangiri. They are also spread in South Bastar of Chhattisgarh and East Godavari and Khamam districts of Andhra Pradesh. In Malkangiri Koyas constitute the largest among the tribes; they numbered 58,730 in 1971 but increased to around 140,000 in 1991 and their present population has registered a decline to 1,22,535 as per 2001 Census.

They live in low thatched houses and cultivate tobacco leaf, Mandia, maize and paddy. Mahula and Salapa are their ideal drinks. They use very little milk. They rear pigs, goats, cows and hens. They resort to magic and local herbs to treat their illnesses. The main festival of Koyas is "Bijapandu" celebrated in the month of Chaitra.

The head of the Koya village is called "Peda" and the post is hereditary. Koyas are an ancient tribe credited with a unique way of community life and a common cultural heritage which have been documented by the scholars from a variety of sources like mythologies and legends coupled with the accounts by the British administrators. Koyas were once a warrior tribe. The last Queen of Malkangiri, Bangaru Devi who ruled over Malkangiri from 1855 A.D. to 1872 A.D had defeated King Ramachandra Deva III of Jeypore by her powerful and extra-ordinarily large Koya Army. During the colonial period they played a

political role too by way of offering resistance off and on to the British rulers. The most famous is the episode of the Koya Revolution that took place in 1880 led by a Koya youth, Tama Dora. (Source: Website of Malkangiri District).

The Koya community in Malkangiri has however undergone a process of change from 1970 onwards, affecting thereby their ancient and traditional socio-cultural matrix to a visible degree. Such changes can be attributed to the influence of the refugees from Bangladesh rehabilitated under Dandakaranya Development Project, Oriya refugees from Burma and Ceylonese Tamil refugees on transit basis. Moreover, their habitat, economy and society at large have been subjected to tremors of large scale displacements of their families due to Duduma, Balimela, Upper Kolab, Indravati Hydro-Electric Projects, bauxite mining project, Hindustan Aeronautic project and the influx of people from various walks of life to their habitat. At present the Koyas are struggling to survive vis-a-vis the resettled populations, who are far superior to them in terms of economic and political intelligence. (Source: Tribals and Their Culture : Koya Tribe in Transition, by Kornel, Das, 2006)

## 7. WHAT IS THE KOYA NOTION OF PROPERTY ?

The most valuable property of Koyas is their land which is held by men along with the ownership of the house and cattle. The women own the gold. There are some sorts of property that is owned by men and certain properties exclusively possessed by women. It may be noted here that while land has been classified as the most valuable property for Koyas, its economic significance as a goods of transaction is still not embedded. In course of the study, the men whenever justifying as to why women could not hold land, gave its non cultivation by absentee married women as the principal reason. Land as a commodity which could be sold by the woman for economic security was not an acceptable explanation. Land existed for cultivation and to provide food. But when it came to men owning land, they felt that it could provide them economic security in distress.

### Meaning & Classification of property for Koya men (Group Discussion)

To know the concept of property among the Koyas, a group discussion with Koya men was organised in Akherpali village.

### Classification of property according to ascending order

The participants placed pictures, which depicted the asset they valued most:

Name of the property	Position
Land	1 <sup>st</sup>
Bullocks	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Home	3 <sup>rd</sup>
NTPP	4 <sup>th</sup>

Salap and Khajuri	5 <sup>th</sup>
Goat	6 <sup>th</sup>
Pig	7 <sup>th</sup>
Hen	8 <sup>th</sup>
Jewelry	9 <sup>th</sup>

The concept of property and its importance was discussed in the presence of 25 men. After their rating of property as per their value and relevance, we strived to know the reason behind such ranking.

1. *According to the Koya men, land was the most valuable property, which provides food throughout life.* They said that they could also get money by mortgaging it, or build a house on it when required. However, a few men wanted to place *mahula* collection in the top position arguing that a person can easily collect and sell *mahula* that provides an easy way of earning money. On the other hand, land cultivation was arduous. When posed with a question whether they would exchange their land for *mahula* trees, the men started discussing the issue. After a while, Peda argued that land is more valuable than any property because it cannot be destroyed whereas the longevity of a tree is much less.
2. *Bullocks were given the second place,* as without bullocks land does not seem to be of much use. Bullocks were used for ploughing and were also considered to be an asset to be given to daughters at the time of marriage
3. *Houses were ranked third* as they did not invest a huge amount of money to build homes and buy household goods.
4. *Mahula collected was given the fourth place.* It ranked higher than other liquor producing fruit trees due to higher consumption of *mahulla*, greater demand and easily accessibility. Besides, *mahulla* collection is done during the summer when Koyas have no other income. They just collect the *mahulla*, prepare and sell the liquor.
5. *Salap and Khajuri was positioned at number five* among all other property assets since the demand for these is less as compared to other drinks. Moreover, it is available through out the year.
6. *Goats were placed in the sixth position,* followed by *pigs in the seventh place.* Goats were a step higher compared to pigs because they are usually more in demand for food during festive occasion. Fowl was also classified under pigs as they never sold or purchased fowl.
7. The group gave *jewelry the lowest position* without any hesitation. According to them, very rarely do they sell jewelry for the sake of money.

Moreover, most of their ornaments are made up of aluminum, possessing little value. One of the men stated that jewelry belonged to women only.

### Meaning & Classification of property by Koya women:

To know the meaning of property from women, the research team selected Purunagada village. Few women turned up at the given time of 7 am, as they were getting ready to go for work in their land. Though only four to five women showed interest for the discussion in the beginning, later about 15 participants joined and expressed their views. They also placed the picture card in descending order.

When asked about the meaning of property, the women did not answer. But when they were handed over the picture cards and the researchers asked them to recognize them, they started giving their opinion. Then the women started keenly discussing about property among them. The discussion was democratic and was not dominated by any single woman. They ranked the assets in terms of values and relevance in the following order.

Position	Name of the property	Position	Name of the property
1	Home	6	Pig
2	Cattle	7	Goat
3	Land	8	Hen
4	Forest products	9	Jewelry
5	Money		

The views of *Koya* women about property and their ranking revealed some interesting insights and perceptions. *Home acquired the first position for women* because it is very near to *koiie*. It is women, who clean the home, sweep the courtyard, polish the walls, beautify the rooms, purchase household goods and do other household chores. Therefore their attachment to their houses is much more than men and they consider their homes a secure place.

1. They gave the *second place to cattle*, as women clean the cattle sheds, feed them and believe that without bullocks cultivation is impossible. Another reason for giving them importance is that, cows/bullock are given as presents by their parents during marriage.
2. Interestingly, women ranked *land in the third place*, as Koya women are involved in all land related work – from ploughing to production. Besides, they get food from land for the year.
3. Koya women gave *forest products the fifth place* since a Koya woman can easily collect every type of forest product like *mahula*, *kendu* leaves, tamarind etc and sell according to her wish.

4. *Money was placed at the sixth position*, which is hardly surprising because among the Koya one cannot sell paddy, livestock or ornaments for money. One can purchase few items by exchanging *mahula* drink, pig or poultry. Also, a Koya woman cannot spend money independently and has to seek permission before she does so.
5. *Pig and goat got sixth and seventh position respectively.* These assets were considered to be useful in times of festival. But Koya women cannot sell these assets independently and are expected to take care of them only.
6. *Eights place was secured by hen* as these animals could not be sold by anyone, but can be exchanged in times of need. *Salap tree got the ninth place* because it's demanded less as compared to *mohula*.
7. *Jewelry got the last position* from the Koya women as well due to the same reason put forward by men. Women said that since the ornaments were made of aluminum, it had little value. Moreover, ornaments could not be sold or mortgaged to anyone in their community. Very rarely do Koya women use gold jewellery.

**Whether the rules of Koya society are in a codified form? Do the Pedas (the village secular chief) have any knowledge about it? Do they discuss about it from time to time?**

The Pedas are held in high esteem in Koya society. He looks after the well being of the village and the villagers. Koya laws are not codified and are traditionally passed from generation to generation orally. Thus much depends on the interpretation of the tradition. The non codification can also be used to the advantage of women, by influencing the men and the Pedas to more equitably codify laws which will not be against women and put them in a subservient position. This would be the first step towards asserting the rights of women. If they interpret the traditional law allowing a share for their daughters, the Koya community would stick to it. The Government cannot make any specific law for tribals. It is only the Pedas who can make rules and apply them in practice. The PESA empowers them to do so.

**Do the Pedas think that the old tradition should be changed and the daughters and widows should be given share of property?**

Since there are no recorded laws, the existing practice can be changed according to the principles of equity and justice. If one Peda succeeds in convincing their community to provide the right of inheritance to woman, then the practice would be followed everywhere. Others will gradually adopt the practice and it will become a tradition in course of time whereby the women would lead a dignified life. The young leaders should persuade the Pedas to



change their views and help women inherit property. The boys who give land to their sisters will also get land through their wives.

Muka, a village leader said that the Pedas should establish these new traditions. Since there are no written laws, there is no difficulty in allowing women to inherit the land. There should be collective decision to give women their share of property.

When a Peda dies and his son or a male heir inherits his position, then how does he know about his roles and responsibilities? For example a Sarpanch can be acquainted about his powers and functions from books and written rules. But as there are no written records, how does a new Peda know about his responsibilities? Pedas clarified here that when he is a child is 10 to 12 years he starts sitting in the meeting of Pedas. He observes the discussions and decisions taken by Pedas and gradually gets acquainted with this.

**If at all there are no written laws, then how are the property rights settled?**

The village Pedas call a meeting of villagers to decide the division of land after the death of a person. Not only is land distributed but also livestock, tree and crops divided among family members. If a daughter is married inside the village she is given some land for cultivation but since she has no customary landholding rights it is taken away by her brothers or the children of her brothers. For example- Ungi's mother of Phulguda village had inherited some land from her father and the Peda had also consented, and the land *patta* was also in her name. But the children of her brother forcibly took the land away. The property is usually equally divided among the brothers.

**Are the Pedas aware of PESA and the enormous powers that it gives them?**

No, the Pedas have never heard of PESA or its provisions.

**Is it not right that as Pedas they should facilitate women to inherit property?**

- The Pedas said that if a girl gets married within the village she can till the land and harvest crops. But if she is married in a distant village of Andhra Pradesh or Madhya Pradesh the land will lie fallow and be of no use.
- Singa Padiami of Dharmapalli held that if a girl is married within the village it may be possible to give her some land and it has happened in certain cases. Parents may give land to their daughters when they feel that the need of it.

Bima Madakami is a 62-year-old widow of Akherpali village. Her son and daughter, are married. Her daughter is married in the same village. When asked what had she given to her daughter at the time of marriage, Bima said that she was waiting for the *Karsa* (the customary cash payment made by the bridegroom's side to bride's side at the time of marriage) and once it is paid, she would think of presenting something to her daughter.

Upon being asked how she had given her daughter (against the usual Koya practice) a piece of land after marriage, she clarified that the land was never given by her. Rather, it was forcefully taken by her son-in-law, she alleged. The son-in-law had earlier given Bima a bullock for which he charged Rs 500, but it was too hefty a sum for Bima to pay. As a result, her land was forcefully taken from her, she said. *Stating that daughters should not demand any right on ancestral land, Bima said that she would get the piece of land from her daughter and son-in-law at any cost.*

- Unga Madkami of Sikhpalli said that though land is given to the daughter, the RoR is not transferred in her name. The brothers forcibly take it away and even if they do not take it, their children will do the same. Sometimes the girls also refuse to take the lands of their father. He further said that the daughter will look after her parents only if the son-in-law is a good natured person. Otherwise it is not possible on her part to look after her parents during their old age. Generally there is a tradition of giving hens, goat, cow etc. as gifts to a daughter at the time of marriage but land is not given.
- A youth leader Maka said that there is no tradition in Koya society to give land to a woman or transfer RoR in her name.

The case of 24-year-old Aita Kunjami was taken to assess his views on property rights within the family. Aita got married to Irme Kunjami six months ago. When asked about the presents, which his wife had brought from her paternal home at the time of marriage, Aita said, “she had got a few sarees and some utensils those were purchased with the money that she had saved.”

To the question whether his wife can purchase or sell any item without taking his permission, he replied in the negative saying, “she has to first inform me before deciding to sell or purchase any household item.” Aita was unaware about the joint *patta* system, but when asked whether he would convert his *patta* by including his wife’s name, his statement was ambiguous saying that she will have access to my land on my death, why does she need a *patta*.

- Ungi of village Phulguda said that her uncle gave some land to his daughter. His brothers did not protest. She used to cultivate the land but she had no legal rights (*patta*). But the sons of her brother forcibly took away the lands. Since she had no RoR, she couldn’t claim her landholding rights. There are many examples of land being enjoyed by women but as they have no ownership rights they cannot claim it if somebody forcibly takes it away.
- Maka, a young Peda says that a widow can remarry in a Koya society. Besides there is no compulsion that a woman would stay with one man during her entire lifetime. She is at liberty to marry more than once. So they

don't give land to the women. Maka said that whatever may be the case son is preferable over a daughter; a daughter cannot be treated at par with a son. But the older Pedas said that both the son and daughter are equal for us. The father will look after both the son and daughter. Maka said that once a daughter is married her responsibility shifts to her husband. The father should have no concern for her. But Kasa Madkami of Palkonda said that the father will look after both the son and the daughter. We should give property right to the son. But it does not mean that we would be silent when the daughter is in trouble. We should also give some share of property to a daughter. Otherwise how will the girl manage by herself?

Debe Padiami, a 41-years-old woman stays at Akherpali village with her husband Padia Padiami. They have two unmarried daughters. Initially, Debe was hesitant to talk about matters related to property, but gradually agreed to do so. However, when asked what constituted property, she said that she didn't know much about it and her husband would be better suited to answer it. Upon being queried about the heirs to their property Debe said promptly, "It would be my two brothers-in-law (husband's brothers) who would be getting the property after us." Without the slightest hesitation she explained that all the property would definitely go to the families of her in-laws.

According to Debe, **girls in their community do not possess any right to claim land as their own property. Also, the property, mostly land, cannot be transferred to the girl after their marriage.** "I had not got anything from my paternal home at the time of marriage and so at the time of my daughters' marriage I will not give anything. Only cows and goats can be gifted to the daughters," she explained.

#### **Group Discussion in the Village of Phulguda in Malkangiri, Orissa.**

The Hindu Succession Act confers equal share of property for both son and daughter. According to the provisions under the Act, a woman will get her share of paternal property if she claims it in a court of law. There are also similar laws among other groups. What are the rules in Koya society governing inheritance of property of women? It has been observed that the women contribute more in terms of labour. Then why should a woman be deprived of any share of property? The women of Phulguda village present there said that they should get some share of property. But the men argued that if a daughter is married away, her share of land will be left uncultivated. The decision of Peda is always held high by the community. But at times the father takes decision overriding the decision of Peda and gives some land to the daughter. But the point here is that this depends solely on the whims and fancies of the father and the brothers and there is nothing sacrosanct about it.

“Who will cook if there is only a son? Who will clean clothes and who will take care when the parents suffer from illness? The men of Phulguda said that the daughter-in-law will take over all these responsibilities. “If the daughter-in-law and daughter perform the entire domestic chores, serve the parents and even do agricultural activities then what is the role of male members? It is the women who really toil hard, whether she is a daughter or a daughter-in-law. Then why is the woman deprived of any rights over property. Why the land RoR shouldn’t bear her name. If there would be provision of joint RoR in the name of both the son and the daughter-in-law then the daughter-in-law would look after the in laws in case her husband absconds or dies.

Ira Padiami was of the opinion that a son will inherit the property of his father and a woman will inherit the property of her father-in-law through her husband. Who holds the title of the property is not really important. On being asked what happened to the woman when her husband died and she had no male children, he said that it was her fate.

A widow of Podagada was issueless. She had an Indira Awas house, 10 acres of land and 20 palm trees. But the RoR was not in her name. So her husband’s brothers tried to snatch her property. At last they managed to prove that she was insane. They made her sign a blank paper and threw her out of her home. They cut down all the palm trees and snatched away all her land. Now the woman is homeless. She sleeps in verandahs and lives on begging. Sometimes she has to sleep in an empty stomach. If she had legal rights over her property she would not have seen such bad days.

Similarly Ungi Madakami’s husband Padia Madkami died 12 years ago. She has five daughters out of which two were already married when her husband was alive. Ungi was initially hesitant to speak about property matters saying that she had none and had already lost whatever she had. However, later she revealed that she had several plots of land when her husband was alive. But after his death she was left with only a single forest land (Podu land) that is lying unused as none of her daughters or she are able to work in it, since Podu cultivation requires contributions from both men and women. The bullocks that she possessed earlier went to her brother-in-law’s family after her husband’s death. At present, one of their acquaintances in the village cultivates their land and gives them a small amount of paddy in return. Ungi’s daughters also work as farm labourers for others to earn extra paddy. “My brother-in-law took all the portions of land during his son’s marriage. He sold the land and with the money got his son married,” she laments. She also expressed sorrow that community members of her village did not show any interest in the matter.

During the time of marriage the father gives goat, hen, cow and clothes as gift to the daughter. "Is the value of a hen, goat, and cow comparable to the value of land? A girl stays for nearly 14 to 18 years in her paternal home. She renders different kinds of physical labour for the family. Can we fix the value of her labour for a few hens, goat or cow? One of the Pedas said that this tradition has been established in Koya community since very ancient times that the women cannot inherit property.

The laws of the country establish that women should have right to inheritance of property. But the Koya society doesn't recognize this ? Who has established the norm to deprive the women of their right to property? Singa Madkami said that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had said that women shouldn't have right to property in a Koya society. But the group rejected this claim on the ground that Ambedkar has nowhere spoken about tribal women to be deprived of inheritance of property. It was discussed that according to the provisions of PESA Act, the decision of villagers is final and no body can over rule the decision of the villagers arrived through common agreement.

Dule Madakami is a 61-years-old lady with two daughters. Dule's daughters, Gangi Padiami and Ungii Padiami, are both married. While elder daughter Gangi has no children, the younger daughter Ungii, has two sons staying in the same village. Jaga Madkami, husband of Dule was not present during the interview, as he had gone to the fields to work. The elder daughter stays with Dule. When asked whether her elder son-in-law was helping them in the agricultural work, Dule said that rather than the son-in-law who only occasionally visited them, her brother-in-law helped in the fields. Jaga has six paddy fields and a patch of forest land. He sold his forest land to a villager, getting a cow and a goat in exchange.

When questioned if she has given any property to her younger daughter who lives in the same village, Dule said that **no such rule exists to give any property to girls, who usually live in other villages after their marriage**. On the inheritance of property after her death, she said that the property would instead go to the family of her brothers-in-law. However, she had agreed after fair amount of resistance from others to give a piece of land to her elder son-in-law. Talking about her own youth, she said that land had been divided among her brothers after they got married. The Pedas and village community did the division. When posed with the question what if her husband preferred to transfer the land between their two daughters, Dule said "such a situation would never arise as the community would strongly resist."

## 8. CUSTOMARY PRACTICES RELATING TO INHERITANCE OF PROPERTY AMONG KOYA WOMEN

### a. Land Distribution:

There seems to be enough evidence of land being distributed only among sons in the past by individuals among the Koya community. An elderly lady of Purunagada village for example, while speaking about her childhood days, revealed that her father had distributed land among her brothers, she never had a share. Another lady Peda of Akherpali village said that earlier her ancestors lived in Madhya Pradesh (MP). Due to shortage of farmland they had migrated to this part of Orissa.

Initially, they divided the land among the households and obtained *patta* (official land rights papers) for that land. During that time, either of these groups alone enjoyed more land than the others. However gradually, the community took a strong decision to do away with the stratification and there was no division among the Koyas. Those days, men irrespective of their caste/group affiliations enjoyed an almost equal amount of land, which shows that the *community is not caste influenced as far as distribution of land is concerned*. Yet, there seem to be *some amount of discrimination in favour of traditional village functionaries* like the Peda and Pujari who possess more land than others because they perform various rituals and also make decisions.

The Koya community not only divides their land, but also livestock, utensils and other household articles equally among the male members. Father or the grandfather, if alive, divides the land equally among all the brothers. No such thing as land gradation in terms of bad and good quality land exist in their community. Rather, the land area is simply demarcated and bequeathed to the heirs. However, the brother who takes the responsibility of the father is given more land compared to others. The community intervenes in case of any property partition disputes arising within a family.

The land is usually distributed after the brothers start getting married. In several cases, when the older brother marries and wishes to set up his own house, the father decides to share his assets between both the married and unmarried brothers. Generally, the parents stay with the unmarried son. Though the land is divided, the labor put in it is not. All the brothers work together, even keep their production in their ancestral home and any member can use the stored food grain. In few cases, where dispute arises among brothers, and between parents and son, the son usually sets up his new home in the village adjoining his ancestral home. He also acquires his share from all other assets and lives separately by doing his own cultivation.

### *Land distribution among widows:*

Most of the times, a widow stays in her husband's home and work pursues his household works and economic activities as before. If her son(s) is an

adult, he inherits the property of his father. If the land has not been distributed before the death of her husband, then it becomes the responsibility of the community members and the father-in-law to accomplish the task. No property is allocated separately to the widows.

Muye's husband passed away eight years ago, after which the property was divided between her two sons. However, the land *patta* is still in the name of their grandfather. Muye's elder son has married twice – his first wife died after giving birth to a girl child following which he married another woman who had a three-year-old son. Unfortunately, Muye's elder son died three years ago after which her younger son encroached on the property and drove the family of his elder brother along with Muye from their ancestral home.

At present, Muye is residing in a house besides her husband's home. "My younger son cultivates all the land and we do only labor work. In return, he gives us a small amount of paddy, which is not sufficient for four members of the family," she rued. Muye and her grand daughter, Koshi are also engaged in labor work in other people's land to earn money, something which they had not done when her husband was alive

Eighteen-year-old Koshi is of marriageable age now and when asked about her marriage, she replied that her uncle (father's brother) will take all responsibility as neither she nor her grandmother are capable. Muye said that the property of her late son would go to her grandson (her elder son's second wife's child) as he is the only heir of this property. She was not in favour of giving any land to her granddaughter.

#### ***Land allotted by parents who have no children***

In case of parents who are issueless, the ancestral land goes to the son adopted from their agnatic kin group. In case a son adopted from other kin groups, he can not inherit the property.

Forty-six-year-old Bima Sodi and wife Muke Sodi do not have any children. Bima has six plots of paddy lands; two patches of forest (podu) land where he cultivates oil seeds. The couple had two children earlier, who died following severe illness. They do not wish to adopt any children at present. Bima has cordial and warm relations with his brothers who stay in another village. They often come to Bima's house and also support him at the time of need. When asked who would be the next heir of his property, Bima said, "The property would automatically go to my brother's sons. I cannot bequeath my property to other people of my village whom I like because the ancestral property has to be passed to the agnatic kins only."

### *Land distribution in case of multiple wives*

Among the Koya community, land is distributed only among the sons. Hence, a man with multiple wives divides his land equally among the sons from all his wives. It was also revealed during the study by a man with two wives that no enmity exists between his wives and sons regarding partition of property. He also defended the tradition of equigeniture among all his sons. In other words, the land is not divided according to the whims and fancies of the father, but distributed equally to his sons. There is no question of favoring one son over another in this regard.

Forty-two-year-old Ganga Madakami has two wives living in the same village. Ganga seemed to be comparatively more educated and had some amount of exposure to the outside world as well. Besides being a member of the Village Education Committee (VEC), he can also speak Oriya quite well. Ganga revealed that he has two wives – Lake and Ungii. He married for a second time after three year of his first marriage, as his first wife used to drink regularly, neglect her household chores and it resulted in conflicts at home. “Neither did she help in the fields, nor was she able to take care of the children,” he alleged. He said that he did not know of Lake’s alcoholism before their marriage. This was the reason why Ganga decided to marry again. When he got his second wife, Ungii, there was no resistance from his first wife or from the community. His family easily accepted the new bride. While Ganga’s first wife has a son and a daughter, Ungii has two daughters. All family members are now staying together under one roof and no apparent rivalry exists between the co-wives. According to Ganga, Ungii manages the house quite efficiently. Upon meeting Lake, she expressed that she had no objection to her husband’s second marriage. **Since it was her husband’s wish, there was no question to prevent him, she reasoned, adding that she has accepted Ungii as a family member and maintained a healthy relationship with her.** Lake said that she did not feel degraded after Ungii’s arrival. All the children enjoyed the same treatment, she added.

When it was asked to Ganga whether he would give more land to his second wife as she did more work at home, he said it would never happen since all the property would be equally distributed among the male children. *Opining his views on property distribution, he said, “Girls do not have any right to claim ancestral property. The prevailing custom is to give land only to the male heirs.”*

### *Property and unmarried Koya women*

It was quite interesting to explore the relationship between an unmarried girl and property in the Koya tribe. The birth of a girl child is not considered to



be a cause for worry among the Koyas. She also has access to every kind of property, starting from household goods to land. But, she has little freedom to purchase any goods, not even her own ornaments and toiletries. She saves a little money by collecting *mohula*, which she spends at her will and pleasure. She usually does all household chores like – cooking, fetching drinking water, cleaning the house, cleaning the cowshed – besides helping in agricultural work. A Koya girl never makes big expenditure decisions at the time of marriage, purchase of livestock, selling of household assets etc. *Throughout her life, she seems to be controlled by her father and brother and husband.*

At the time of marriage, as per the Koya custom the bride's parents accept bride price in shape of cash and other assets (pig, goat, hen etc) from the groom's side. But, no valuable parental asset that is transferred to her at the time of her marriage. After marriage, if the married woman needs any help from her parental home, her brothers are usually not very keen to assist her. They usually visit their sister's home and gift things like goat, hen at the time of need.

#### ***Land and orphaned Koya boys***

A family was found in Akherpali village, which consisted of two small boys, aged nine and three, whose parents were no more. It was the eldest son Inga, a nine-year- old boy who shouldered all the responsibility in the house. He said that their father passed away first, followed by their mother. "We also have an elder sister who is married and stays in Madhya Pradesh. But she hardly comes to our village and stays with us for only a couple of days" said Inga. The children do not have any close relatives staying at the village who can claim their property by adopting them. No one from the village has also ever tried to encroach upon their ancestral property.

Both Inga and Adma have never been to school as they remain busy earning their livelihood at this tender age. They till the land, collect firewood and *mahula* from forest. But being so young, both the boys find it difficult to cultivate. Hence, they try to do other odd jobs in the fields of others like grass cutting and making small boundaries on land, for which they get an amount of paddy. Their own lands are mostly cultivated by other villagers, who give them only a small share of paddy. This happens because there is no fixed measurement system of exchange among the Koya community.

With regard to support from the community, Inga said, "The villagers do not intervene in our family affairs. No one has come forward to take care of us and we do not expect anything from the community either." However, till now nobody has tried to usurp the land from these orphaned children.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

It is said that the tribal folks are tradition-bound and custom-oriented. The members of the community, who through socialization get themselves

acquainted with and adhere to the social customs, usages, conventions, folk-ways, mores, norms, ethos, values and ideologies play their roles as actors in the social system not only in defining the social identity of the society to which they belong but also in transmitting them to future generations. In the process of transmission the customs undergo modification, reinterpretation and adaptation with the changing situation although some customs persist for a longer period. Factors, both endogenous and exogenous, are responsible for effecting such change and in course of time several old customs become obsolete and new ones emerge. Customary sanctions, therefore, are not rigid but exist in a fluid state and change in adaptation with changing time and circumstances.

Since, no society is static and change is inevitable, the Koya society being a simple tribal society is no exception to it. During the post-independence period various protective and welfare measures are taken in tribal areas to bring about rapid socio-economic development of the tribal people through adoption of various protective legislations and area-specific, community-specific as well as family oriented schemes and programmes. Due to inroads of modernization, planned development intervention, implementation of multi-sectoral development programmes including infrastructural development, economic upliftment, educational advancement, influence of mass-media, development of consciousness and awareness etc. the Koya like other tribal people are experiencing change in their socio-cultural life. The modern instruments like education, awareness, development interventions, PESA, provision of joint ownership by both the spouses of land under ST & Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, etc. if used effectively may go a long way in effecting the change in the age old customs and traditions relating to male oriented property rights in the patriarchal and patrilineal Koya society.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRIBAL WOMEN FARMERS**

**(SOURCE: CWLR)**

- The collective rights of tribal women to land, water and forests should be recognized and mentioned separately in government plans and policy documents.
- Tribal women particularly those living within the forest area, as well as women in forest dependent communities should be guaranteed their individual ancestral ownership and inheritance rights as per customary law or laws of the state which ever are recognized as more gender just.
- Where access to privately owned land is not available, rights and concessions for livelihoods and subsistence use should be rationally provided for communities on public land such as Reserve and Protected Forests like Sanctuaries. In such areas the livelihoods and subsistence needs for fuel, fodder, water and plant resources must be ensured in policies and regulations that restrict women's access to it.

- Tribal and women living in forest villages should be given land rights so that they can have access to maternal and child care services and other developmental facilities in their villages.
- Sustainable use of village common assets should be ensured by providing sufficient land, as support areas for subsistence needs, particularly for women of forest dependent and tribal communities.
- The scale of extractive use of forests and common property resources (water bodies, forests, grazing lands etc.) should be limited by reforming laws to maintain primacy of subsistence use and local markets, rather than commodification for global markets.
- A section on the Forest and Land Rights of Tribal women should be included in the new Forest and Tribal bills.
- Tribal women should be supported and trained to assume leadership roles in formal public institutions through time bound programmes.
- Prohibition of forced eviction. Instead the government should propose a gender sensitive rehabilitation policy that makes provision for the restoration of tribal women's livelihood and income generation. Women should also get legal rights to homestead land allocated as part of the resettlement package.
- Tribal women farmer's traditional wisdom and experience related to bio diversity conservation and enhancement, seed selection and storage, water harvesting, risk minimizing agricultural practices, and sustainable use of natural resources should be acknowledged, preserved and used for natural resource management, research, planning and decision making at all levels. This will also prevent them from becoming dependent upon expensive seeds, fertilizers and pesticides.
- Tribal women's right to collection of minor forest produce should be guaranteed by the Government as it constitutes a major source of their income and they are almost exclusively involved in collection, storage, processing and marketing of this produce. Market outlets need to be reserved for women groups.
- Tribal women farmers should be provided training in marketing their produce and support in setting up cooperatives. Primacy should be accorded to local use and for local markets of forest and tribal areas over and above the penetration of large and distant markets and the subsequent commodification of resource flows.

- The Lease forestry/Van Panchayat model of Uttaranchal should be replicated in other states. 1 acre of arable land needs the support of 5 acres of common and forestland as support area for agriculture. This should be ensured for tribal women farmers along with consolidated rather than scattered land holdings in order to provide sustainable agriculture for them.
- The State Governments should promote and sponsor research and documentation of-
  - gender disaggregated data
  - gender just customary practices and
  - the divergence between customary laws and basic human rights

**Acknowledgements:** I would like to thank the ActionAid India Bhubaneswar Regional Office and my colleague Sharanya Nayak who immensely helped in my field work as well in the group discussions and field level analysis, with her deep understanding of tribal life in Orissa. I thank Shri Chitta Behera who helped me with the secondary level data analysis and collection, and whose learning has always guided my study, and researchers Sitakant, Ashok and Pratima who helped me with the interviews in Koraput and Malkangiri. I thank Shri Gupt Panigrahi, a lawyer from Koraput for giving his legal opinion, Sabita and Shri Durga Tripathy, who have spent hours working with the Koyas and helped me with the language and develop rapport with the people. I thank my mother for her support always.

### *References*

- |                   |      |  |
|-------------------|------|--|
| Kornel, Das.      | 2006 | Tribals and Their Culture : Koya Tribe in Transition                                       |
| Gluckman, Max.    | 1968 | <i>Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society</i> , Basil, Blackwell, Oxford.              |
| Pospisil, Leopold | 1971 | <i>Anthropology of Law, A Comparative Theory</i> , Yule University, Haper & Row, New York. |

Website of Malkangiri District

# KULI \*

*B. B. Mohanty*<sup>1</sup>

The name Kuli, as mentioned in the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes list (Modification) Order, 1956, refers to a tribe commonly known as Kuli and found mostly in western Orissa. At the 1971 census this community was enumerated as a Scheduled Tribe numbering 1893 and a Scheduled Caste numbering 3554. This dual nomenclature and listing has caused some controversy over their caste status. In order to determine this, a study was undertaken in 1962 by the Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute (THRTI), Government of Orissa. On the basis of the findings of the study, it was recommended that the Kuli should be treated as a Scheduled Caste and be descheduled after a period of five years, by which time they would have achieved a status equivalent to the Other Backward Classes. However, they still enjoy the status of a Scheduled Tribe. The name 'Kuli' might be derived from the word 'Kula', the dumb-bell of the cow used in carding. Like the Koli the Kuli are weavers by occupation though in the past it was claimed by many that their main occupation was the carding of cotton.

The population of the tribe in the 1991 census was 6526 and during the period 1981-1991 their growth rate shows an increase of 335.64 per cent. The population of the community in three different census years was as follows:

1961	-	1609
1971	-	1893
1981	-	1498
1991	-	6526

The tribe is distributed in varying numbers in eleven out of thirteen districts of the State. Their concentration is greatest in Sambalpur, followed by

---

\* Published in *Tribes of Orissa* (revised edition), SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2004, pp.213-216

<sup>1</sup> Deputy Director, SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar

Bolangir. The population of the Kuli in these two districts taken together constitutes more than 85 per cent of their total population. Their main concentrated pockets are Patnagarh and Saintala in the district of Bolangir, and Padampur in the district of Sambalpur. Of the total population men and women are 49.72 and 50.28 per cent respectively. The sex ratio is 1011 females per 1000 males as against 1002 for the total tribal population in 1991. Rural dwellers constitute 89 per cent. Of all the tribal groups the Kuli record the highest percentage of literacy, which is 46.7. During the past three decades their percentage of literacy has gone up from 15.8 in 1961 to 32.5 in 1971, 36.3 in 1981 and 46.79 in 1991. They have no specific language of their own. They speak Oriya as their mother tongue.

The Kuli live in heterogeneous villages along with caste Hindus such as the Ganda, Suda, Kansari, Teli, Dhoba and Jyotsih castes. They are regarded as a sub-caste of the Mehras, a Scheduled Caste community. But in the caste hierarchy they rank slightly higher than them as they do not suffer from the stigma of untouchability. The Brahmans serve them at their marriage and death rituals.

They follow the traditional local pattern in constructing their houses. Construction of a new house begins with the installation of a wooden post decorated with mango leaves and vermilion at the center of the homestead land. A *puja* is performed before the pillar, then construction of the house starts. The house is mostly rectangular in shape, mud walled and low roofed with three to four rooms. On all sides of the house lies a continuous narrow verandah. Of all the rooms, a room slightly bigger in size is kept exclusively for the loom and weaving activities. Depending on the availability of space either in front or at the back of the house, they maintain kitchen gardens where seasonal vegetables, tobacco, mustard and many other crops are grown. Those with cattle build a cattle shed at a distance from the house. Unlike the other tribal groups, their living conditions look sanitary, as they take the greatest care in maintaining their houses. The house is cleaned often and the walls, and courtyard are regularly dabbled with cow-dung water.

There is hardly anything distinctive or peculiar about the dress or ornaments of the Kuli. A coarse cotton *dhoti* and a mill-made or a handloom sari constitutes their dress. The women use various types of ornaments made of silver or gold in their ears, nose, neck and ankles. In some areas of Phulbani district the women tattoo their limbs like the Kutia Kondhs, although this practice is no more popular now.

There are certain taboos associated with a woman during her pregnancy. She is not given too much of either sweet or sour items of food. She is also not allowed to visit a religious place or cross a stream or river. Otherwise the expectant woman does her usual work until the day of the delivery. As soon as the pain starts the woman is confined in a room and an elderly and experienced

woman of the village is called to attend her. Soon after the delivery the umbilical cord is cut by means of a sharp knife by the attending midwife and buried in a pit dug in one corner of the back yard by some male members of the household. In order to deal with post-delivery pain a paste prepared from a powder of *nim* leaves, garlic and dried ginger, and *pipali* is administered to the woman. She is given hot rice and boiled vegetables for six days, during which she is kept segregated along with the newborn baby. The first phase of pollution ends on the sixth day. The mother and child are given a bath on that day and the former wears a new cloth. A small feast is arranged in which indigenous porridge and cakes are prepared and served to the *kutumba* (lineage) members. The second phase of pollution continues till the 21<sup>st</sup> day, at the end of which the house is cleaned and the old earthenware pots are thrown away and replaced by new ones. The mother of the newborn baby takes a bath and enters the kitchen to resume her routine work. The child is given a name on that day by a Brahman, the household priest.

On attaining puberty a girl is kept segregated for seven days in a room and the fact is kept secret. After the stipulated period she takes a bath and wears a new cloth. With subsequent menstruation there is no such restriction imposed on the girl, who can even cook after a bath on the same day.

The tribe is divided into a number of exogamous clans called *gotras*. Marriage is prohibited within the same *gotra*. Among the Kuli both adult and child marriages are practiced, although nowadays the former type of marriage is more common than the latter. In child marriages, generally a girl is given in marriage between the age of 5 and 12 years, and on the fourth day of the marriage she is sent back to her parent's house. After she attains puberty, the parents of the girl take her to her father-in-law's house and leave her with some gifts. The occasion is celebrated with a feast after the priest performs all the necessary rituals. In adult marriages, after the negotiation is over and the bride price has been fixed, betrothal takes place. The amount of bride price, which consists of some gold ornaments and cash, generally varies from person to person depending upon their paying capacity. On a fixed day the wedding takes place at the bride's house after the arrival of groom and his party. A Brahman priest is summoned and he performs the accompanying rituals of the home, the union of the palms, etc. Soon after this the feast follows. The day following the wedding the bridegroom and his party return to their village along with the bride. The remarriage of widows and divorcees is permitted. Both the husband and wife can divorce each other on reasonable grounds. Cross-cousin marriage is also prevalent.

The dead are either buried or cremated. The bodies of those dying of cholera, smallpox or any other infectious diseases are thrown away in the open. The Kuli have their own cremation ground located in some isolated place at a distance from the village. Dead bodies are carried to the cremation ground in a

stringed cot borne on the shoulders of affine and consanguine. The corpse is accompanied by a burning lamp, an earthenware pitcher and a winnowing fan. If the dead body is to be buried, then on reaching the outskirts of the village it is lowered and the eldest son touches fire on to its face and returns home. But in cases of disposal by cremation, the eldest son accompanies the funeral procession up to the cremation ground. At the cremation ground the body of deceased is placed on the pyre in a north-south direction with its head pointing towards the north. In the case of a male the face points towards the sky and in the case of a female towards the ground. The eldest son of the deceased sets fire to the pyre first followed by others. After the cremation is over the pallbearers return to their respective homes after a purificatory bath in a nearby pond or stream. Death pollution is observed for twelve days. *Dassah* is performed on the tenth day when the male members shave their beards and cut their hair near a pond. On this day the house of the deceased is cleaned and the walls and floor are washed with cow dung water. The old earthenware pots are thrown away and replaced by new ones. On the eleventh day a *home* is performed by the priest, and a feast is arranged in the later part of the day at which non-vegetarian food is served. On the twelfth day the final purificatory rites are performed, which follows another feast of vegetarian food.

The main occupation of the Kuli is weaving, which is supplemented by agriculture. Almost all households have looms of their own and both men and women take part. Coarse cotton *dhotis* and saris which they produce are sold in the market for money. Weaving consists of a number of phases in which both sexes participate. There are certain works allocated exclusively to men, certain others to women, and some to both. A couple can normally weave twenty to twenty-five pieces of cloth per month. After the introduction of mill-made cloths the demand for these coarse cloths has declined, and as such they are facing difficulties in marketing their products. The income they derive from the sale of these clothes does not support them in maintaining their family throughout the year. Moreover, due to the lack of an improved loom, working capital or raw materials they are not in a position to increase their production. Under these circumstances, they are forced to live a wretched life. Although they feel that this trade is not profitable to them nowadays, for various reasons they are not in a position to switch to other occupations. Also, because of their easy-going habits they find it extremely difficult to withstand the hardships involved in wage-earning and cultivation.

The principal diet of the Kuli is rice. They also consume *ragi* along with pulses and all varieties of vegetables. Fish and meat are also eaten when available. Drinking liquor is not very popular, but chewing tobacco and *betel* and smoking *bidis* are quite common.

They mostly observe Hindu festivals and worship Hindu gods and goddesses. Their chief deity is Biswakarma and their main festivals are Diwali



and Dasahara. It is necessary to discuss their relationship with other caste groups, in order to throw light on their social status and justify their position in the caste hierarchy. Brahmans do not accept water from the Kuli and do not touch them ordinarily. But untouchability is not strictly observed. They accept water from the metal utensils of the Kuli if provided by other people. The Brahmans serve them at the marriage ceremony, mortuary rites and other functions. The washer man washes the clothes of the Kuli, which include those worn by women at menstruation. The barber serves them by cutting their hair and shaving their beards. The Gouda (milkman) accepts water from the Kuli and mixes with them freely without observing any untouchability. The Kultas, a cultivating caste equivalent in status to the Khandayats, accept water from the Kuli. They do not observe any untouchability and also mix with them freely and visit their houses. The Ganda, another weaving community belonging to the Scheduled Castes, accept water from the Kuli, but the Kuli do not accept water from them. The Kuli treat them as an inferior caste and do not touch them. It is quite evident that the Kuli have become fully integrated into the hierarchy of Hindu society with a very few tribal traits. Although there is a very little stigma of untouchability attached to them, they justify having a position above the Scheduled Castes.

## KULI \*

*P. S. Das Pattanaik*<sup>1</sup>

The total population of the Kulis in Orissa in 1961 is 1,609. The distribution of the tribe all over the State is as follows:-

Sl. No	Name of the District	Total population (1961)	Male	Female
1.	Bolangir	716	362	354
2.	Phulbani	264	123	141
3.	Sambalpur	629	234	395
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,609</b>	<b>719</b>	<b>890</b>

The low huddle of straw-thatched huts of Kulis with mud walls, primitive in workmanship and straggling in arrangements are to be found in Saintala, Loisingha and Agalpur areas of Bolangir district and in some areas of Sambalpur district. Each group of hut may be termed a village since it is regarded by the natives as a distinct entity separated from its neighbors, however close they may be, by recognized boundaries and bearing a name of its own. The Kulis are believed to be a sub-caste of Mehras who are classified as Scheduled Caste but probably a little more advanced in social hierarchy. They do not suffer from the stigma of untouchability and their social mobility is less than the Mehers (Bhulias or weavers) a class of other Backward Classes people.

The weaver castes of Sambalpur and Bolangir are divided into seven groups, such as, Bhulia, Krushta, Dhera, Patra, Rangani, Kuli and Ganda.

The Kulis are endogamous and the rules of community endogamy are strictly observed by them. They are known by their title as Meher.

The sole occupation of the Kulis is weaving. Agriculture is a subsidiary occupation for a very small fraction of people. Less than 1 percent of the Kulis of

---

\* Published in ADIBASI, Vol. V, No.3, (Spl. Issue), TRB, Bhubaneswar 1963-64, pp.41-42

<sup>1</sup> Research Assistant, Tribal Research Bureau (TRB), Bhubaneswar

these districts own some lands and in no case the holding is more than 2 acres. Weaving constitutes a number of phases. Both the sexes participate in this. A normal couple by working to their utmost ability can weave twenty pieces of standard sized cloth per month. This may be valued between 80 and 90 rupees. A couple can weave twenty pieces of clothes ably under ideal conditions but as they have to face a number of difficulties such as lack of capital and market, the limit does not exceed 12 pieces when there is heavy demand. The demand is ordinarily very low throughout the year. Therefore, the output of the weavers is between 1 to 3 pieces of standard clothing per month.

So far as the caste interrelationship is concerned, the Brahman does not accept water from the Kulis. But such untouchability is not strictly observed as the Brahmans enter their houses and take water from their metal utensils if brought by other people. The Brahmans serve in their marriage, mortuary rites and other functions. The washer-man washes their clothes. The barber cuts the hair of the Kulis and also shaves them. The Gours (cow herders) and Kultas (cultivators) do not accept water from them but mix freely with them. The Gandas- a scheduled caste, accepts water from them but not the vice versa. The Kulis regard the Gandas as a very low caste and treat them as untouchables.

The Kulis women are very hardy and careless about themselves. After the birth of a child, they do not indulge in the luxury of a cot, but, according to their usual custom, continue to lie on the ground, bathe in cold water and eat their regular food. After the child is born, it is placed on a cot and there after the mother resumes her ordinary work of fetching water, wood, leaves, etc., cooking food for the family and so on. On the seventh day the child is washed well and all the neighbours and near relatives assemble together to name the child.

Girls are married generally between the age of 5 and 12 years, and if a girl is unmarried when she attains puberty, she is married to a bow or an arrow tied to a post made of Mohua wood. The ordinary marriage ceremony presents some curious features. The bride walks seven times round the bridegroom and at the end of each round, presses two cakes against groom's cheeks, after which each cake is thrown away. After rice has been put on both of their foreheads, they mount on the hips of two persons attending the marriage. Divorce is allowed in case of incompatibility or if the wife is unfaithful or barren.

The deads are generally cremated. The body is placed on its back with the head to the north but the bones may be taken out of the grave to be thrown into the Ganges. The man who takes the bones is temporarily out casted, but on his return, he gives a feast and is then readmitted into the caste.

The religion of the Kulis presents no special features. They worship all the Hindu gods and especially revere Mahalakshmi, because it is said, they care more for money than for moral virtues. For practical purposes they are most interested in averting the evil eye and exercising evil spirits.

Among the Kulis, the boys and girls go out to the jungle on the evening of the eleventh day of Bhadrab and cut a branch of a Karma or Sal tree. They set it up in the village, where it is worshipped with the villagers drinking and dancing round it all over night. They make offerings of rice and sweet meats. A fowl is also killed and offered to the Karma branch. In the morning the branch is taken away in procession and thrown into the village tank. A special feature of the festival is a long song praying for rain. Except that, they observe festivals namely Akshya Tritiya, Rakhi Purnima, Nuakhia, Dasahara, etc.

Dances (Nach) are their favorite amusement. One may frequently witness at night a 'Nach', the Ram Lila or Krishna Lila Nach, being a great favorite. The orchestra does not include the Gaontia (village chief), who organizes the whole event. They are a few Kulis who are professional pipers and drummers and are regularly employed as musicians at Hindu marriages.

Their houses are marked by the paucity of furniture and well planned arrangements for living within a very narrow space. Bright looking brass utensils are very conspicuous in their houses. Their houses are also decorated with various icon figures in different colours and paintings of Gods hanged in frames.

The Kulis women wear ornaments and sarees used by the higher castes. A tendency to wear handloom sarees has developed among women. The women generally put on ear and nose rings made of silver. The well-to-do Kulis put on gold ornaments. They do not have any musical instruments except the drums. Sometimes they borrow musical instruments from their Ganda neighbors.

Apart from their poverty, the Kulis may be treated as economically distressed. During the past fifteen years, they have gradually lost their market for handloom cloths which have gradually been replaced by mill-made cloths. In spite of its superior artistic quality the handloom cloth has not been able to stand the competition from the latter. The Kulis have been more hard hit because they specialize in coarse and inferior type of cloth generally used by the poor people.

The Kulis are fully integrated into the caste hierarchy of the Hindu society. They accept the superiority of the Brahman, have functional relationship with other castes and have a rigid fixed caste occupation. They do not take such food and indulge in such practices which are prohibited by Hindus. On the other hand, they behave like a high caste in this respect.

On the basis of the above findings, the conclusion can be drawn that, there is no reason to justify the Kulis being treated as a tribe. The Kulis have the status of a Scheduled Caste but in that capacity they occupy a position superior to other Scheduled Castes. A slight stigma of untouchability is attached to them but they are likely to be cleared up of this in near future.

# STATUS OF THE KULI CASTE IN THE DISTRICT OF BOLANGIR AND SAMBALPUR<sup>1</sup>

## *Research Report of the Tribal Research Bureau, Orissa*

*(This report was prepared by Shri K. Mohapatra in the year 1962. On the basis of field work in the districts of Bolangir and Sambaipur, Shri Mohapatra has since obtained his Ph. D. degree and is working as Assistant Director, Tribal Research Bureau at present)*

The enquiry about the status of the 'Kuli' caste of Bolangir and Sambalpur was occasioned by a reference from the District Welfare Officer, Bolangir in his letter No. 14227 (Dev.) dt. 8.12.1961 on the subject. An idea about the anomalous character of the caste status of the Kuli, pointed out in the said letter, may be obtained from the following extracts from it :-

*"As per notification of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India dated 29-10-1956, publishing the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (modification) order 1956, the Kulis are classified as Scheduled Tribes and only in respect of Sambalpur district are treated as Scheduled Castes. Some Kulis are found in Bolangir district in Saintala, Loisingha and Agalpur area and they present some interesting features. These Kulis are in a way differentiated from either the Kulis of Sambalpur or the Kulis which pass in as Scheduled Tribes. They are believed to be a sub caste of Meharas which are classified as Scheduled Caste but probably a little more advanced in social hierarchy than them. They do not suffer from the stigma of untouchability and their social mobility is less than the Mehers (Bhulias or Weavers) a class of O. B. C. people.*

*Certain old documents and judgments relating to the year 1921 of (a) the Maharaja of Sonapur formerly the head of all caste guilds and associations in this region, (b). The Mufidar president of Bargarh and (c) the Rajguru of Patana State are to be found here wherein it has been laid down that the Kulis are not untouchables and are to be served by Brahmans in all their social and religious ceremonies and occasions. This in itself is rather conspicuous and therefore raised question on the status of Kulis in Bolangir district. The question of de-scheduling or otherwise also is linked up with it. Another peculiarity is that though the Kuli caste is not categorized as aborigine in section 196 of the Patna State Tenancy Act, 1944, in the settlement Khatian they are recorded as Adim Rayats and therefore practically treated as aborigines for purposes of the Tenancy Act. One*

---

<sup>1</sup>Published in ADIBASI, Vol. XIV, No.1, TRB, Bhubaneswar 1972-73, pp.27-30

*consequences of this has been that a Scheduled Tribe can transfer immovable property to Kulis without permission of the Sub divisional Officer without attracting the provision of section 105 and 106 of the Patna State Tenancy Act read with section 7(ii) (b) of the Orissa merged states (Laws) Act 1950. The position appears to be anomalous in this respect.*

*Therefore it is probably desirable that the status of Kulis in Bolangir district has to be determined precisely in relation to Scheduled Tribes and Castes and I would therefore urge on you to please take necessary action at your end through your organization."*

A field study on the caste status of the Kulis was made during my tour of Bolangir district from 12.2.1962 to 6.3.1962 in connection with the preparation of handbook on Gonds. Data was collected from the Loisinga area of Bolangir district and Bargarh area of Sambalpur district. The findings are presented as follows:-

### **The Weaver Castes and the Kulis**

The Weaver castes of Sambalpur and Bolangir are divided into seven groups. These seven groups, in spite of their common caste occupation, function as seven distinct castes. These castes are-

- (1) Bhulia
- (2) Krushna
- (3) Dhera
- (4) Patra
- (5) Rangini
- (6) Kuli
- (7) Ganda

The first four castes weave superior type of clothes. Kuli and Ganda weave inferior and coarse type of clothes. The Ganda are equivalent to the Pano caste and are regarded as one of the lowest among the Scheduled Castes. They also have matrimonial relationship with the Pano caste. Patra and Rangini specialize in the - weaving of "Pata" or silk clothing. Krushna are specialized in the weaving of "Matha" clothing which is a type of handspun silk different from that of "Pata". All the seven groups, except the Ganda, are endogamous. Only the Ganda, as has been observed earlier, have matrimonial relationship with the Pano. The rules of endogamy are very strictly observed by all the other six groups. Other caste rules are also observed very strictly. This is characteristic of castes who have specialized caste occupations. The following is a list of the surnames of these castes.

<b>Caste</b>	<b>Surname</b>
Bhulia	Meher
Krushna	Meher
Dhera	Dhera
Rangini	Meher
Kuli	Meher
Ganda	Numerous surnames

The above list shows that four castes namely the Bhulia, Krushna, Rangini and Kuli have the same surnames. It is indicative of a past relationship which has been severed in course of time. Though all the castes have adopted weaving as their caste occupation they specialize in different type of cloths. This specialization might have been one of the reasons of caste differentiation among them.

It may therefore be maintained that the Kuli form a part and parcel of the weaver caste which has been divided into a number of sub-castes and each of these sub-castes have attained the status of full-fledged castes in course of time.

### **Relationship of the Kulis with Other Castes**

The relationship of a caste with other castes, especially the Brahmans and other service castes like barber and washer man is a determinant of the status of that caste. For the Kulis this kind of inter-caste relationship is as follows.

*Brahman-* Brahmans neither accept water from the Kuli nor ordinarily touch the Kuli but untouchability is not strictly observed. The Brahmans enter their houses and take water from their metal utensils if brought by other castes. Brahman priests also serve in the marriage, mortuary rites and other functions of the Kulis.

*Washer man-* The washer man washes the clothes of the Kulis. They even wash the clothes of the women worn during menstruation, which is regarded as polluted clothing.

*Barber-* The Barber cuts the hair of the Kulis and also shaves them.

*Gour-* The Gours (cowherds) do not accept water from the Kulis but they mix freely with them and no untouchability is observed by them.

*Kulata-* The Kulatas are a cultivating caste whose status is equivalent to that of the Chasa of the coastal areas. They do not accept water from the Kuli but freely mix with them and no untouchability is observed.

*Ganda-* The Ganda accept water from the Kuli but not the vice versa. The latter regard the Ganda as a very inferior caste and treat them as untouchables.

### **Occupation**

The sole occupation of the Kuli is weaving. They have absolutely no other economic pursuit. Agriculture is a subsidiary occupation for a very few of them. Less than 1% of them own some land and in no case it is more than 2 acres.

Weaving constitutes a number of phases. Both the sexes participate in this. Some types of work are specially allotted to men some to women and some to both. A normal couple by working to their utmost ability under ideal conditions can weave twenty pieces of standard size cloths per month. (The standard size of clothes in the area is very small). This may be valued between 80 and 90 rupees. For weaving twenty cloths they have to face a number of difficulties such as lack of capital and market. Hence, the limit does not exceed 12 pieces at the time of heavy

demand. Since the demand is ordinarily very low throughout the year the output is between 1 - 3 pieces of standard clothes per month. Thus the income of an average family is very low not exceeding thirty rupees per month. Apart from their poverty, they economically distressed. During the past fifteen years they have gradually lost their market of hand-woven cloth to mill made cloth. In spite of its superior artistic quality the hand woven cloth has not been able to stand the competition with the latter. The Kulis have been more hard hit because they specialize in coarse and inferior type of cloth which is generally used by the poorer section of the people. These people now find the price of the clothes, produced by the Kulis, rather prohibitive. The pursuit of weaving as an occupation has made the Kulis an easy-going people. They are used to sitting under the shade and doing work leisurely. This has made them extremely immobile as far as occupation is concerned because they cannot stand the hardships of other occupations like labour and cultivation.

### **Education**

The percentage of literacy among the Kulis is not more than 20 per cent. Compared to their caste and economic status this may seem to be a very high proportion but actually it is not so because most of the people who declared themselves as literate knew nothing except signing their names. In the whole area there were only 5 persons who had read upto the Middle English School standard and there were only two who had passed High School Certificate Examination- the highest educational achievement found among the Kuli.

### **The Kuli As a Tribe**

The Kuli are fully integrated with the caste hierarchy of the Hindu society. They accept the superiority of the Brahman, have functional relationship with other castes and have a rigidly fixed caste occupation. They worship the gods of the Hindus and have no separate gods or goddesses of their own. They do not take such food and indulge in such practices which are prohibited for Hindus. Rather they behave like high castes in this respect.

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of the above findings the following conclusions may be drawn

- (1) There is no reason to justify the Kuli being treated as a tribe.
- (2) The Kuli now have the status of a Scheduled Caste but in that capacity they occupy a position superior to other Scheduled Castes. A slight stigma of untouchability is now attached to them but they are likely to be cleared up of this in the near future.

### **Recommendation**

It is therefore recommended that the Kulis should be treated as a Scheduled Caste in both Sambalpur and Bolangir districts. They may be de-scheduled after a period of five years by which time they would have achieved a status equivalent to Other Backward Classes.





# Encyclopedia of Tribes in Odisha

(Five Volumes contain Literature on 62 Tribes including PVTGs)

## **VOLUME-I**

BAGATA | BAIGA | BANJARA | BATHUDI | BHOTTADA | BHUYAN  
BHUMIA | BHUMIJ | DESUA BHUMIJ | BHUNJIA | BINJHAL  
BINJHIA | BIRHOR | MANKIDI | MANKIRDIA | BONDHO

## **VOLUME-II**

CHENCHU | DAL | DHARUA | DIDAYI | GADABA | GANDIA | GHARA  
GOND | HO | KOL | KOLHA | HOLVA | JATAPU | JUANG

## **VOLUME-III**

KANDHA GAUDA | KAWAR | KHARIA | KHARWAR | KANDHA  
DONGRIA KANDHA | KUTIA KANDHA | KISAN | KOL LOHARAS  
KOLI, MALHAR | KONDA DORA | KORA | KORUA | KOTIA  
KOYA | KULIS

## **VOLUME-IV**

LODHA | MADIA | MAHALI | MATYA, MATIA | MIRDHAS | MUNDA  
MUNDARI | OMANATYA | ORAON | PARENGA | PAROJA  
PENTIA | RAJUAR

## **VOLUME-V**

SANTAL | SAORA | SHABAR, LODHA | SOUNTI | THARUA

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

CRPF Square, Bhubaneswar-751003

Website: [scstrti.in](http://scstrti.in), E-mail: [scstrti@yahoo.co.in](mailto:scstrti@yahoo.co.in)

Telephone: 0674-2563649/251635



ISBN : 978-93-80705-84-2