



Cover Page



SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF THE KUTIA KONDHA IN ODISHA

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Abstract

The Kutia Kondh tribe is a Particularly Vulnerable tribal groups mainly found in Phulbani and Kalahandi district of Odisha. The primitive section of the kondha community is a kutia kondha. They are a sub-group of kondha tribe. The kondha tribe is divided into mainly three; they are kutia kondha, Dongria kondha and Desai kondha. The kutia generally called 'Kungia' means 'above or top of hill' and the they speak is Kui, a Dravidian language. The kondha has been sunk in the dept. of ignorance, lack of control over resources and assets, their lack of education and skill, their malnutrition, their vulnerability to shocks, violence and crime, their lack of political freedom and voice, the tribe continue to be disadvantage. They prefer to live as a row of houses facing each other, each with a single roof. The village street is quite wide, neat and clean and at middle village deity is installed. In face and figure, they show a distinct to what is known as the Dravidian type. They have tattooed their faces and as such they disfigure it with ornament. Regarding the origin of the tribe driven from the richer plains of eastern India during the Aryan advance.

Keywords: Kutia Kondh, Dravidian language, Malnutrition, Vulnerability, Deity

Introduction

The Kutia Kondh people are an indigenous tribe particularly live in the state of Odisha in eastern India. They found in the district of Kalahandi and kandhamal. They belong to the Dravidian linguistic family. It has borrowed words from Sanskrit, especially in domain like religion, rituals and philosophy. The primitive section of the kondha community is a kutia kondha. They are a sub-group of kondha tribe. On the basis of physical features, the kondha can be divided into three distinct zones:

- Live in hill top and valleys are known as kutia kondha
- Live in high land and near the streams are called Dongria kondha
- Live in plain area are known as Desia kondha

They are mostly depending on shifting cultivation, cultivation of minor agriculture products and collection of NTFP. In Kalahandi district the kutia Kondha are mostly concentrated in Langigarh, Th. Rampur, M. Rampur and Bhawani Patna block. Their population in these areas account for more than eight thousand six hundred thirty-six only.

The primary objective of this research paper is to conduct an ethnographic study of the kutia Kondh community, exploring their rich cultural heritage, rituals, traditions, and customs. Specifically, this study aims:

1. To investigate the cultural practices and traditions of the kutia Kondh community.
2. To examine the role of rituals and customs in shaping their identity.

Schedule Tribe in Kalahandi district

Kalahandi district is the 7th largest district in Odisha, covering 8,364.89 square kilometers. It is primarily predominated with rich minerals and forest wealth. Kalahandi is basically a tribal district as majority of the population is tribal in nature. Thuamul Rampur block of Kalahandi has the largest tribal population. Nearly about seven big tribes spread all over Kalahandi. The tribal population in Kalahandi district nearly about 28.50%.



Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

The central government has recognized 75 tribal communities as particularly Vulnerable Tribal groups (PVTGs) based on the recommendations of the Dhebar commission (1960-1961). The Dhebar commission stated that even within scheduled tribes, there existed an inequality in the rate of development (Ota et al.,2005). These communities considered being at a low level and special category of development due to their significant inequality compared to other tribal groups. The Dhebar commission that named the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category among the tribes that are lesser developed among all the tribal groups. The PTGs was again renamed as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in 2006. Birhor, Bonda, Didayi, Dongria-Kondh, Juang, Hill-Kharia, Kutia-kondh, Lanjia-saora, Lodha, Mankidia, Pudibund, Saora and Chuktia Bhunjia as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Odisha. During Fifth Five-year plan, Government of India declared kutia-kondh as one of the Primitive tribes of our country, a native community of the Kalahandi district of Odisha state.

Ethnographic Profile of the kutia -kondha Tribe

Kutia-kondh tribe is a branch of kondha tribe, which comes under the Dravidian family. It is situated in the hill tops and valley region. There villages are typically clustered together with 10-20 houses in each village. Their houses are made of mud, stone and wood with thatched roofs. Mainly settle in the hilly tops valley and forested areas including Niyamgiri hills. In Langigarh block has a significant kutia -kondha population, with villages like semilivate, Bandhaguda and kurli. In Thuamul Rampur block is also significant population with villages like Thuamul Rampur, Kerpai and Dandapat.

Physical Features

People of kutia -Kondh resemble the Dravidian family with long head and board noses. They have curly or wavy black hair. The kutia are not strongly built that they are physically demanding life style. Their black skin color from dark brown to black. The kutia women are known for their intricate tattoos and men often have scars on their bodies, which are a result of their traditional practices and rituals. Both men and women wear many traditional ornaments such as beads, bangles and earrings.

Social Sub-Groups

The tradition as well as philosophical and cultural evidences have shown that Kondh were divided in their social life into three groups long ago and were called kutia Kondh, Dongria kondha, Desia kondha which was once under a kondha tribe. Traditionally kondha people are farmers and practice shifting cultivation. They are one of the largest tribes in Odisha. The kondha tribe faces many challenges such as; land alienation and displacement, deforestation and loss of access to forest resources, poverty, malnutrition, Cultural erosion etc. They have a rich cultural heritage with a strong emphasis on music, dance, storytelling. The festivals like 'chaitra parba' and 'Dasara' are celebrate the kondha tribe. They also have a unique tradition of wall painting and tattoos. Their major religion are Hinduism and Christianity. They are designated as a scheduled tribe in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal

Dress Pattern of kutia-kondha

Table-1

	Name of Object
Men Dress	Dhoti
	Angavastra
	Headgear
Women's Dress	Saree
	Headgear
	Bundaria



Ornaments

The use of ornaments is not common with the males. The kutia kondh female wear Karapatan and Bana (Necklace) around her neck. The other jewelry also wears such as kolusu is an Ankle bells made of metal or beads, Tikka is a forehead ornament made of metal, beads or shells, jhalar is a traditional nose ring made of metal or beads.

Particulars of Ornaments used by kutia kondha

Table-2

Name of Object	English Name
Karapatan	Necklace
Kundala	Earrings
Anguthi	Finger rings
Mudi	Finger rings
Bana	Necklace
Dhagala	Earrings
Kolusu	Ankle bells
Jhalar	Nose ring

Tattooing

Tattooing among kutia Kondh is a culture and is practice by both males and females. It is a around the age 12-16, girls get tattooing. The Tattooing is considered most of the reasons such as; rite of passage for both males and females, marking important life event like birth, marriage and death, spiritual significance and also artist expression. There are many tattooing techniques are used such as; hand tapped method and natural Ink etc. These tattoos serve as a visual identifier of a person tribe, clan and social status. It is status symbol with more in intricate design indicating higher social standing and it passed down from generation to generation.

Family

Family is a primary social institution, universally plays a significant role in their social organization. The concept of family has been found to exist since the immemorial and at all the levels of culture. In kutia kondha society father is the head of the family. Descent is patrilineal or agnatic descent. The mother plays an important role in household management, childcare and also agricultural work. Mainly three types of family structure are found in kutia kondha tribe. In this tribe families are typically extended, with multiple generations living together. They also follow a joint family system, where all these families live together in single household.



Cover Page



Monogamy is a rule but polygamy is not of marriages within the same clan are also practice, particularly in cases where the couple is from the same village. Marriage rituals process begins with a series of pre marriage rituals including the exchange of gifts and the performance of sacred the ceremonies. Social bonding, economic cooperation and cultural continuity are the main significance of marriage.

The father or eldest male member enjoys the all authority. Full authority vests in the hands of male. Women role only have childcare and household work, no decision- making power. But she is consulted by men while taking important decisions. Elderly family members are respected for their wisdom and expression and often play a key role in decision-making process.

Kinship

The kutia Kondh kinship terminology is mostly classificatory, through a few of their kinship terms are descriptive. Kinship plays a vital role in the social organization of the kutia kondha. Here are some key aspects of kinship in kutia kondha society.

Table-3

English term	Kutia kondha term
Father	Aya
Mother	Ibu
Grand father	Bapa
Grand mother	Bodi
Elder brother	Kaka

Kutia Kondh observe avoidance relation towards daughter-in-law, Mother-in-law, Father-in-law, younger brother’s wife etc. And clear-cut distance in is maintained between younger sister-in-law and elder brother -in-law and younger sister-in-law.

The kutia Kondh kinship system also places a strong emphasis on the role of the clan. The clan is a group of families that share a common ancestry. This tribe also recognized the importance of gotra. The gotra is a sub-division within the clan and it is considered families that share a common ancestor. In this tribe rituals and ceremony is the most important kinship system. For example, the tribe has a number of rituals and ceremonies that are associated with birth, marriage and death.

Religion

The kutia Kondh are highly religious and primarily practices a form of animism, which is a belief in the spiritual essence of non-human entities, such as animal, plants and natural features. These people worship nature and believe that every aspect of nature has a spiritual essence. They also worship their ancestors. These tribe believe in various spiritual beings such as gods, goddesses and spirits. They also perform various ceremonies and rituals to appears the spiritual beings. The deities and spirits of kutia-kondha are Dharma devata, Nissani, kali and Bura etc. The Dharma devata implies the supreme deity, the Nissani implies goddess of fertility and agriculture, the kali implies the destruction and protection and lastly Bura implies



Cover Page



the spirit of the forest. They also practice shamanism means; anybody who contact a spirit world while in an altered state of consciousness. Ronald Hutton to study details for first time. This is a one type of traditional doctor who to some power to heal you. The Jani is a magico-religious specialist in this village. In earlier human sacrifice was practiced, but now-a-days substituted with buffalo and sheep sacrifices. There are many cultural practices are observed with the use of musical instruments like Dhap and Salap Baja.

Economic Organization

“Economic organization a type of social action involves the combination of various kinds of human services with one other and with goods in such a way that serve the given ends” (Ronald Firth,1952). It can say that the concept and meaning of economic system with special reference to the tribal may be defined that the structure of production and its relations and the process of distribution.

The mode of subsistence in kutia Kondh of an absence of technological aids. They practice shifting cultivation, where they clear forests, cultivate crops and then move to new areas. They also grow crops like paddy, millet, maize and vegetables. There is an absence of technological aid, they use traditional tools like the “Kodai” and the “Kuthali” for farming. The economic relationship among the kutia kondha are mostly based on exchange. Money is a medium of exchange are not widely. Barter system mostly prevails in this tribal societies. The institutions like banking and credit only use non-tribal people. They tale loans from non-tribal and banks in order to raise their crops.

The notion of property is closely related to expenditure of wealth rather than to its accumulation. In this tribe traditionally held land communally, with the entire tribe having access to the forest and its resources. The structure of the kutia kondha economy is generally based on top hills and forest. The simple technology and absence of technological aid is other feature of kutia kondha economy.

Conclusion

The present research is an ethnographical study of the kutia Kondh of Kalahandi district of Odisha. Kutia Kondh tribe is a part of kondha tribe and speaks Kui language. According to the Anthropological survey, this tribal group belong to Dravidian family. The tribe has three-sub tribes known as kutia kondha, Dongria kondha, and desia kondha. They are physically short to medium in height, having a brown or dark skin. Generally, most of these kutia kondha have an extended family. The religion of the kutia kondha is various spiritual being not confined to ancestral worship. Their important gods are Dharma devata, Nissani, Kali and Burma. The main source of livelihood of kutia kondha tribe is hunting, gathering and agriculture. Marriage is monogamous in nature. One person cannot marry a member outside the tribe. This research paper is a brief ethnographic profile about the kutia Kondh tribal people. It depicts their culture, customs and highlights their causes behind their practice. The study will help ultimately help in understand the nature and culture of their society.

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