

Socio Cultural Uniqueness of odishan Didayi Tribe



SOCIAL SCIENCE

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SUBHASHREE NAYAK

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCHER

ABSTRACT

Mostly the Odisha tribes are high land habitats with opulent ethnic trait, cultures and customs dominated by varying languages. The culture conscious tribes are able to preserve their social customs and dignified values. The most primitive tribes are Didayi, Bondas, Gadabas, Koyas, Kondhas and Sauras etc. The tribes are generally found to live in jungles and hilly regions, mostly inaccessible to other people and in the zones of less interaction. Their socio cultural and religious life is quite different to so called advance cultural groups of society. They practice self contained, self sufficient and outonomous subsistence economy but are lagging behind in external trade, visualizing in different participation and interest in political activities and surrounding events. They are having some special silent features which make them unique.

Odisha is one of the most fascinating states of India. There are as many as 62 different tribal inhabiting the state. Starting from the primitive hunting and food gathering and shifting cultivators to the advanced agriculturalist and industrial workers, the tribal show a great variety of interesting features in their social structures, cultural patterns, economic pursuits, belief systems, art and dance forms and magic, religious practices. Some of them are found in accessible away from contact with outsiders where as many others are in areas having good road communications and inhabited by many progressive non-tribal communities.

In defining the term "primitive" Surjit C. Sinha and B.D. Sharma have distinguished the prior stage of economic development from the lower level in the economic structure. Those groups which fall in the former category have been categorized under primitive tribal while those in the latter category are termed as the more backward tribals. In this context agricultural economy has been taken as the watered for identifying primitive tribal communities. Following this the pre agricultural economic groups have been included in the primitive communities. These tribals are Birhor, Bonda, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dongaria Kandha, Juang, Kharia, Kutia Kandha, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankidia, Paudibhuiyan, Saora.

The Didayi are noted for their simplicity, frankness and hospitality and naiveness. They are the masters of the soil, free, laborious maintain peasantry with simply but not undignified manners open faithful and ingrate in their conduct serious and sincere in their superstition, well informed of their rights and resolute to defend them. Didayi social life is very simple. They stay in the forest are. In this forest they use forest product for their daily life and they protect to the jungles, they don't destroy it. In village people are stay together and share any food products each other. Didayi society family peoples are helping each other in every work. Even the childrens are help to the parents. Between the tribes the Didayare different individual and strong groups.

The Didayi families are unclear type. Family is the smallest social unit among the Kutia Didayis. Parents and unmarried children constitute a unclear family. Father is the authority and all decisions are taken by him. The sons get married and bring their wives, it becomes difficult to accommodate them in the same house. Therefore they build their own houses and live with their wives separately the Didayifamily is patriarchal.

The family is the smallest but primary and dominating social unit among the Kutia Didayi. Many other tribal communities their major economic, social, religious and re-productive activities revolve their family. Husband, wife and their unmarried children live together under the same roof and share common kitchen. The moment the son gets married the 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 residential separation does not break the relationship which exists between the parents and the sons. As soon as the daughter is married she leaves the house of her parents in law. In some cases the boys goes to live in the house of his would be father-in-law and when time comes he marries his daughter and says as a Gharjamai with the parents of his wife. There are incidences of divorce and remarriage. In several villages one can come across single member family, double member family, extended family etc. 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. 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.

The Didayi culture has attracted many scholars and anthropologists for decades. Some studies of the Santhali culture were done by the Christian missionaries. The most famous of them was the Norwegian-born Reverend Paul Olaf Bodding. Unlike many other tribal groups of the Indian subcontinent, the Didayis have preserved their native language despite waves of migrations and invasions such as Aryans, Hun, Mughals, Europeans, and others.

Didayi culture is depicted in the paintings and artworks in the walls of their houses.

Marriage among the Didayi is regarded as a sacred institution. Preliminary arrangements for marriage are made by the parents. Normally initiative starts from the boys side. Marriage by arrangement is the usual age old practice. 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 Didayi community. Either the husband or the wife can divorce only when both of them are totally unable to adjust. There are generally four types of marriages in Didayi society such as-

- Marriage by negotiation
- Marriage by capture
- Marriage by elopement
- Marriage by service

According to the Didayithe 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.

The economic life of the Didayidirectly and indirectly revolves

round the forest. The forest provides them food, fuel and materials for construction of houses. The Didayis collect different varieties of mushrooms, green leaves, tubers, roots, stems, flowers, fruits, seeds, mango, kernels etc from the forest in their respective growing seasons. During the period many of them depend on the 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 Didayi.

The Didayi consider religion as the most sacred and centres round the number of gods and goddesses, deities, spirits and various natural objects. Many performances are associated with magic and sacrifice or both. The Didayi are great admirer of aesthetic romanticism. Their personal adornment is unique with each male and female member using hair clips, ear rings neck rings, hand rings made up of brass, iron prepared by themselves as well as purchased from local markets. Body tattooing is practiced by both sexes. The Didayi have syncretic beliefs combining animism. Their pantheon has both the common Hindu gods and their own. The gods and goddesses are always attributed to various natural phenomena, objects, trees, animals, etc. They have a god or deity for everything and anything.

Living in a different surrounding the economic life of the Didayi became different from the people of plane areas. They generally followed the nomadic system of cultivation, cutting and burning the forest in the dry season, and dibbling in the seeds when the rains broke out. For a considerable time of the year, they had to live chiefly upon the forest produce.

The Didayis are typically cultivators, hunters and not aware of trade or proper business system. Living in the isolation of the hilly and forest-covered tracts, the Didayis have been preserved the primitive features of their society. Most of their villages situated on hill-tops, close to the field of cultivation. The main amusements of Desia Kandhas are keen sports men and show remarkable skill in the use of primitive weapons. The Didayis having great respect and honour for their traditional social customs. Birth, marriage and death are three major incidents of their community life.

Traditionally, the Didayis had developed their own political structure. Basically it was patriarchal and semi patriarchal in nature. For countries the Didayis remain independent in respect of their age-old indigenous institutions. They had no code of written laws and statutes.

The Didayi male is usually strong and stout and the female is healthy, tidy and beautiful to look at. The Didayi male wears cloth that usually entwines the waist and one side of the cloth hangs on his back side. The female is fond of ornaments in general and the Didayi females of the balliguda- subdivision in particular are very fond of ornaments. They tattoo their faces beautifully and wear several aluminium, brass or bell-metal rings on their ear lobes by puncturing them. Didayicultural life are very famous for in Odisha. The Didayi peoples are able to song, music and dance. In the festivals and marriage ceremony they sing a song and dance. The songs were composed from transmitted to generation to generation.

In the Didayi society, breach of any religious conduct by any member of the society invites the wrath of spirits in the form of lack of rain fall, soaking of streams, destruction of forest produce, and other natural calamities. Hence, the customary law, norms, taboos, and values are greatly adhered and enforced with high to heavy punishments, depending up on the seriousness of the crimes committed. As with any culture, the ethical practices

of the Desia Didayi reinforce the economic practices that define the people. Thus, the sacredness of the mountains perpetuates tribal socio-economics, whereas outside cultures that neglect the sacredness of the land find no problem in committing deforestation, strip-mining etc.

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