

A STUDY ON SOCIO CULTURAL LIFE OF PRIMITIVE KANDHA TRIBE OF KALAHANDI DISTRICT OF ODISHA



SOCIAL SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Normally the primitive tribes express the cultural identity through their unique customs, traditions, festivals, dress and ornaments within their communities. Numerically, the second most important primitive tribe of Kalahandi is the Khond, Kond or Kandha. They have their culture of own which is linked to their ambiance and language. Literarily the definition of their culture is so broad that we appreciate and accept every aspect of their life style which is associated with culture. The Kandhas are generally simple in nature, innocent, truthful and credulous. Their tradition and culture is broad and uncommon. And the cultural history of tribes of undivided Kalahandi district has special importance all over India. All the tribal communities have their own amazing culture and traditions. Similarly primitive Kandhas have their own rich customs and traditions. This research paper examined the socio cultural life of primitive Kandha of Kalahandi district of contemporary Odisha.

KEYWORDS:

KANDHA, KALAHANDI, TRIBE, CULTURE, TRADITION

The culture of any community is closely associated and assimilated with its history since time immemorial. Further the existence of culture is the base of history. Therefore, the craze to know the way of life of any community requires study and analysis of cultural history of that tribe deeply. To know about the cultural history of primitive tribes one must turn towards South Odisha, the hub of tribals. So, this Kalahandi region, the domain of tribals has become centre of study and research. The anthropologist's study gives an account that there are 62 types of tribes in Odisha.

The primitive Kandhas are found everywhere in the district and have three main divisions, viz., Kutia, Dangaria and Desia. The Kutia Kandha lives in a house, the floor of which is below the level of the ground around the house. The Dangaria Kandhas are known as Malia Kandhas. They live in high land hills. The Desia Kandhas live in the plain area with other non-tribals. Kui is the mother tongue of the Kandhas but they know Odia and speak with others in this language. The Kandhas are generally dark in complexion, though, among them, some fair skinned persons are also found. They are slim but muscular. The Kandhas form numerically the largest group among the 62 tribes of Odisha. Racially the Kandhas relate more closely to the proto-Australoid stock with considerable Mongoloid admixture. The Kandhas have their loyalty to their erstwhile feudatory chiefs in Odisha and elsewhere. They are treated as valiant warriors and discharged their services very faithfully to their rulers. They offered their valuable services at the time of freedom movement. Their behaviour is pleasant and they are extremely hospitable to guests, giving protection to enemies if they take refuge. They are generally kind and cheerful and are lovers of recreation. Primitive Kandha tribe has a certain place of origin and its spreading they have their own oral and written language for interaction of each other. By and large the Kandhas believe in the natural law of health and happiness, their way of life has made them conditioned to the local natural climate which indirectly help them to maintain their traditional group (Patra, 2009).

The matrimonial alliance of a tribe is arranged in its own community as they oppose inter community marriage. Each tribe has its own social bond, administration, tradition and judicial system. All these play a key role in maintaining law, youth dormitory, worship and enchanting, economic policy, collection of food, hunting, shifting agriculture, and handicraft and so on for their lively subsistence. They generally produce Mandia (Eleusine corocana), Maka (Maize), Kangu (Penicum Miliare), Kandula (Canjanus Cajan), Kolatha (Dolichos Biflorus), Ginger, Turmeric, Mustard, Niger, Arrowroot etc. (Dash, 2006).

In addition to agriculture, the tribes hunt and fish, engage in animal husbandry, produce handicrafts, and gather produce from the forest. The non-agricultural part of their economy is largely based on gathering (Chaudhury and Patnaik, 2008).

The people are largely dependent on forest economy and this gives

plenty of space for the middlemen to loot and plunder forest produces (Gaur, 2008). Another type of exploitation is selling those ornaments, agricultural implements, cloths at high rate by non-tribal mostly in high price (Ray, 2009).

Salient features of Kandhas Socio-Cultural Life:

1. They live in relative isolation usually in hills and forests in interior area.
2. Their social identity is defined and redefined from time to time.
3. They constitute simple societies which are socio-culturally homogeneous.
4. They have their written and oral language or dialect for communication.
5. A particular tribal community is endogamous and is divided into a number of exogamous divisions.
6. They have low access to education and health care services.
7. They possess their own socio-cultural history which may be shallow and un-written.
8. They have their rich cultural tradition and heritage although their social organization is simple.

Traditional Village Council

The village council is considered to be the cultural centre of tribal village. It comprises various posts and their duties to perform. The head of the village council is the head of the village. The head of a village is normally selected as per seniority and talent. His commitment, love and affection towards villagers are also taken into consideration for selection as head. Almost all the tribe calls the head as "Naiko". Assistance is chosen to help the head is called as "Challan". The duty of convening a meeting is rested on the shoulder of "Barik". The priest of the village is regarded as "Dehury". These are the aspects which are the main source of cultural wave of tribes that provide a lot of account regarding their culture.

Youth Dormitories

The youth dormitories (Dhangda, Dhangdi Basa) play a major role for keeping the tribal culture and tradition afloat. And most of the tribe has such institution for unmarried youths. The boys and the girls spend nights there in separate room in the dormitories. An open space is there opposite to the dormitory which is meant for practicing dance. It would not be wrong to say it as school for improvement of dance. This dormitory has another importance particularly choosing of life partner by the youth. It is indeed a democratic institution for promotion and carrying culture of tribes and we have to recognize the role of dormitory in this regard is uncommon.

Ceremony of Kandhas

Ceremonies are inseparable part of the way of life of primitive Kandhas. There are two types of ceremony so far as the observation at family level and community level is concerned. The family level ceremonies mainly include Newly Born Babies, Marriage and Death.

These ceremonies have specific custom and convention, for instance the Naming Ceremony of the newly born baby which is taken place on 21st day after birth. There is also provision of prayer and worship to the forefather for blessings. Similarly during the time of death rites there is also the rule of drawing tantric design and offering of non steam rice, wine, cocks etc. for pleasing the spirits of the dead. These ceremonies are conducted in the presence and guidance of Kandha priest.

Culture associated with religion:

Kandhas are the worshipper of nature as they felt the presence of divinity in nature. Indeed, this is important from religious ground. They give more emphasis on three elements of nature. They worship the soil as mother earth, sun as religious god and water as the life giver. But the head decides the observation of different festivals on considering the religious culture. So it is noticed that there is some uniformity and diversity of observing festivals. The aim and objective of religious objects are as follow: (a) prayer for blessing (b) system of improved bread earning (c) worshipping and remembering of forefathers (d) welfare of world (e) recreation (f) environment protection and (g) integration among communities. The religious practices go on in tribal culture all over the year, e.g. construction of home, shifting cultivation, sowing of seeds, setting of wooden pole in the ground, hunting and worshipping. These practices are the main perspectives that keep alive the religious culture till now. 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 (Franco and Narasimhan, 2012).

Song, dance and festivals:

Other aspects that associate with Kandha culture are tribal song and dance, fairs and festivals which cannot be ignored or side-tracked. Although these are source of pomp and gaiety, still these are collectively reflecting tribal culture. The contents of the Kandha songs are love, marriage, other traditional ceremony, harvesting and nature related etc. both the men and women sing and dance unitedly by joining hands and making a circular, and they move slowly to the front and back and move slowly round the circle (Pasayat, 2013). They prefer to perform song and dance in group rather than pairs or single. Usually their song and dance are organized at the time of fair and festivals. The main festivals include Chaiti Parab, Pus Parab and marriage ceremony. They put on their traditional dresses and ornaments well on these occasions so as to sing and dance in groups.

Art and Crafts

The artistic skill of the Kandhas is not only manifested in their dance and music, but also in their dress and ornaments, wall paintings, wood carving and toy making etc. But through art and craft their self image and aesthetic sensibility are visualized. The Kandha women though are considered to be very primitive, look majestic when they wear head bands of grass, necklace of colored beads and girdles made of brass on their bodies. All these are expressions of their artistic quality and aesthetic sense.

CONCLUSION

Time has changed and modernisation has made its influence visible on the society. People are getting civilized day by day and their life-style is changing with time and so are the tribals of Kalahandi. Drastic changes are being perceived and the rich cultural heritage that once was the identity of the tribes is no longer being followed. The tribals used to worship the nature, like trees and mother earth and they protected them, but today there are very few persons left who follow these practices. Though the practice of sacrifice which was once practiced by tribals, and which is no longer being practiced today, is a positive change in itself. It is good to know that now primitive Kandhas are aware of education and its value but it is sad that their own new generation who are highly educated youths are not that much aware of their own tribal religious culture and practices.

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