

**RITUAL, ECONOMY AND POLITICS IN
KANDHAMAL OF ODISHA: AN
ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF KANDHA
SOCIETY**

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IN

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BY

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Parts of the thesis have been:

A. Published in the following publications:

1. Ancestral rite and Kandha identity of Kandhamal, Utkal Historical Research Journal, Vol. XXXI, 154-170, ISSN 0976-2132, 2018.
2. “‘We’, witnessed the Change: Understanding Kandha socio-cultural-politico life”, Culture Through the Ages: A study of India, New Delhi: Kunal Books. ISBN 13 : 9789386714961, 2019.

B. Presented in the following conferences:

1. Presented a paper titled, “Kandha tribe and State: An anthropological relation in the Past and the Present”, at international seminar on Tribe, State and Development: Exploring Anthropological Knowledge organized by Dept. of Anthropology, Vidyasagar University in collaboration with Anthropological Survey of India, Ministry of culture, Govt. of India, 2019.
2. Presented a paper titled, "'We', witnessed the Change: Understanding Kandha socio-cultural-politico life"" has been accepted for the presentation in the two days National Seminar (Culture: through the ages) which will be held on 26th and 27th February, 2019, Organized by Department of History, Berhampur University and sponsored by World Bank [OHEPEE], 2019.
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Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of coursework requirements for PhD/ was exempted from doing coursework (recommended by Doctoral Committee) on the basis of the following courses passed during his M.Phil. Program and the M.Phil. Degree was awarded.

Si.No.	Course Code	Name of the Course	Credits	Pass/ Fail
1.	AN701	Advanced Anthropological Theories	4.00	Pass
2.	AN702	Advanced Research Methods	4.00	Pass
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INTRODUCTION

All sociological or social anthropological studies of Indian rural society point out very clearly the convergence of three sectors: economy (land), politics (power and authority) and religion (village rituals). These sectors met and interacted at local (micro) and regional (macro) level according to interests of various social groups. Historically, over the years after the entry of the British and establishment of colonial power the weight of the forces emanating from outside the local communities gradually increased though with the independence such forces diminished to a large extent. However, in some cases, the outside forces continued to exert pressure on the local populations even now, and such forces are the root causes for local conflicts and unrest presently. An understanding of rural society will be incomplete without considering these aspects.

The present study is about the Kui Kandha tribe inhabiting Kandhamal in Odisha where situation has become complicated due to the incursion of castes into the tribal area. Though the issue appears to be communal riot between the Kandha and the Pano, a scheduled caste, who have been claiming to be Christian since 1998 yet it has deeper roots running through the history. The religious sentiments in fact are the manifestations of the underneath economic and political discontentment related to the land which is fraudulently grabbed by non-tribe immigrants by coming closer to the tribe with religious sentiment taking advantage of under development of the tribe compared to Pano as several scholars have argued. Thus, the theoretical question at issue is the interconnections among the ritual, land, economy and politics with which the study is concerned.

The Background: The Balliguda region in which Kandhamal is located, at that time remained in its relative social, political and economic isolation from the rest of the world; the Kandha lived mostly in bands and as food collectors but gradually transformed themselves into shifting cultivators and food producers. The colonial administrators were second visitors in 1836, and by then the Pano and Patra were already there. Princely

states that surrounded the Kandhamal such as Boud, Kalahandi and Ghumusar never directly controlled it. It was towards the end of eighteenth century the rulers were able to integrate the tribal region in the process of state building. As a result, caste groups moved towards the Kandhamal. Patras that the kings of princely states appointed maintained direct contact with the Kandha tribal leaders: Kandhamal was divided into fifty *muthas* and each *mutha* was under the control of a *mutha mallick*. Territorially each *mutha* is divided into local residential units – villages with a headman called *mutha* that functioned under the *mutha mallick* as an overhead and in-charge of the *mutha*. A few villages a *mutha* lived in close proximity covering land under the jurisdiction of the *mutha*.

Each Patra controlled few of these Kandha *muthas* and collected taxes for the princely states and later for the colonial rulers. The *mutha* head assisted by a ritual head organized the *meriah* ritual of human sacrifice that aimed to satisfy the earth goddess for fertilizing the land until the British suppressed and allowed a buffalo to replace the human. It was the obligation of Pano, village servant, that lived in the Kandha village to supply the human being for the *meriah*. As the organizing of the ritual was periodically shifted from one village to another village of the *mutha*, it united all the Kandha of a *mutha* and the land under the leadership of *Mutha Mallick* and *mutha* headman. The Patra never interfered in the *meriah* rather they did adopt the goddesses of the Kandha and equated them with Durga, the Hindu goddess whose shrines were built where Kandha also worshipped in course of time. Patra thus introduced Hindu religion to Kandha besides settled agriculture. The Pano on the other hand, mediated between the Kandha and other non-Kandha either in the market or any other context as they were bilingual speaking both Odia and Kui, which is the language of the Kandha.

By the passage of time, Sundi, Teli and others moved towards Kandhamal and showed great interest in Kandha's agricultural production and providing other services. The colonial entry to the area with 'new economy'¹ brought tremendous change in the tribal and non-tribal relations. In the hills, turmeric was the most important export item and it was the single source of wealth for the residents as it acquired market value in exchange

¹ Bailey mentions about colonial government bringing the alcoholic drinking trade, merchants-shop keeping and trading in hide under this category. According to him, the work of the lowest rung in ladder of middlemen was to handle turmeric and liquor.

of turmeric with cash. The non-Kandha had played a crucial role in this regard who became economically powerful as they became part of the village political structure. The traditional political structure of the villages of Balliguda region came under the control of the other caste groups initially in the colonial period and more after the independence. The caste groups built bazaars and introduced modern economy to the tribe; the cash and marketing system replaced the barter system and subsistence traditional economy. As lands became saleable and market commodity and the Kandha adopted the non-Kandha lifestyle, borrowed money from the non-Kandha and when they failed to return the loans, either they sold away or the non-Kandha controlled the lands while the Kandha owner cultivated them but gave away most of the produce to the money lender. Thus, slowly, the lands got passed over to the non-Kandha who became rich owners of the Kandhamal lands much to the great displeasure of the Kandha. The land problem became more acute in recent times than before as Bailey has observed in Bisipara village in 1960s. He says about Bisipara village:

“I cannot state for certain that land was not sold before British imported into the Kandhamal the institution of freehold right, especially as the evidence given by Macpherson for Kandha villages conflicts with this. But taking into accounts the traditional system of land tenure in the Hindu state of Odisha, and the fact that the economic conditions, which in fact caused Kandha in Bisipara to be sold, only come into existence after the administration had arrived, I think it unlikely that the sale of land was usual before 1855.” (Bailey1960; 42-43)

Not only in Bisipara, the transfer of land from Kandha to non-Kandha is a story of every Kandha village in Kandhamal. Now they are fighting one against the other putting all conflicts together, not the history.

The non-Kandha merchants and traders showed more interest on turmeric which helped to get profits and accumulation of wealth. With these changes Pano also entered the business of buying and selling of cattle to the Kandha and also purchased the minor forest produce of the Kandha and sold in the market etc. Being Scheduled Caste and few claiming to be Scheduled Tribe, were able to secure government jobs and thus improved their social and economic position which enabled them to distance themselves from the Kandha. The Pano on the other hand having been fallen out of Kandha became independent and stopped participating in the rituals of Kandha, refused contributions and

thus disassociated with Kandha culture while few Kandha converts to Christianity did contribute to the Kandha rituals for showing their identity with the community. Not only did the Patra built several temples for Hindu deities and officiating as priests encouraged several others to join them besides the Kandha. The Patra further being money lenders and businessmen attracted the Kandha. With the loss of land to the non-Kandha and the Pano raising their position, the Kandha started venting their ill feelings against the Pano day by day. As the Kandha entered into the mainstream state politics, it became all the more important for the Patra to maintain good relations with the Kandha for political and economic gains. Under this scenario maintaining their tribal identity with traditional ritual practices has become necessary. Also, there is a need to hold land which is their main source of living in addition to having various cultural meanings, which is being surreptitiously changing hands. Thus, they see themselves in troubled waters.

Statement of the Problem

In the above context, it is pertinent to find out why and how ritual is associated with economy and politics of Kandha in the past and also in the present? It is also necessary to explore how the contemporary communal problem has historical connections and how the ritual is related to it. Further, there is a need to understand how the immigrant caste groups that grabbed the land of Kandha have affected the traditional life style of Kandha to the point of rising communal hatred between the Kandha and Pano, the traditional friendly communities? What is contribution of rituals in the economic and political life of the Kandha society in the changed environment of the present?

Significance of the study: The present research has attempted to study the contemporary issue of Kandha and their strained relations with the non-tribes in the context of land, economy, politics and rituals in historical background. It also has tried to address larger theoretical questions with regard to ritual and its transformation along with its ideology, performance and roles over a period of time. Attempt has also been made to understand the extent to which the dynamism of political and economic power has deterministic role on religion and its change. Further, it tried to find out an answer whether the religious ideology or religion is an autonomous entity as anyone would tend to think? Finally, the

study makes efforts to comprehend the social tensions and conflicts in the light of historical changes in the spheres of environment, politics, economy and religion in a holistic perspective.

Given the above context an attempt has been made to review the general anthropological literature and relevant other material with regard to religion, politics, economy and also to the ones pertaining to India, besides the material available on the Kandha tribe on the present issue.

Review of Literature

A number of fields like anthropologists, sociologists, religious historians, socio-biologists, philosophers, and intellectual historians, have been focusing on ritual as an important subject for new methods of studying culture in the recent past. They turned to the ritual as a window to look at cultural process by which people earn and live their lives and later transform it. The result is fairly large and an interdisciplinary subject called “ritual studies” has emerged². In the late nineteenth century the notion of ritual that remained as a principal research in religion and society continued to be an important phenomenon for interpretation of the basic questions on culture, society and religion. Indeed, ritual has evolved into an object, a method, and, more recently, a trend for comprehending any given society’s contemporary landscape.

To begin with retrospectively, the discourse on religion and ritual in anthropology, Jack Goody (1961) first discussed the state of ritual theory in a seminal thesis and demonstrated in a dramatic way of the formal ritual category. Given this problematic, it is said that there was no ongoing study on the term assessing its role in our thought about religion, society and culture. Nor has there been a concomitant assessment of the underlying problems of the term ‘ritual’, and the structure imposed by this category on the theoretical discourse (see Lewis, 1980; Doty, 1986; and Morris, 1987).

The notion of ritual first appeared in the nineteenth century as a term for systematic study of religion but no attempt was made to define it what was considered to be a common category of human experience. Since then several other ritual concepts have been

² <https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/ritual-studies>

established that are related to a broad range of scholarly endeavors to understand and interpret the ritual. Many myth-and-ritual theorists sought ritual to describe the abstract concept 'religion' in terms of concrete reality. In comparison, later social functionalists examined collective behavior and beliefs to examine 'society' and the essence of the social phenomenon. More recently, symbolic anthropologists considered ritual as a central theme to understand the 'community' dynamics. From Robertson Smith to Clifford Greetz, the idea of ritual has been important because it performed a straightforward analytical instrument. Rather, the joint construction of both an object and method of analysis appears to be central to it.

Rituals were used in discussion on the relationship of humans with divinities and these are closely related to myths (or beliefs), and rituals were to elucidate the social life and impact of religious ideas on human thought. The theories of Max Muller, Edward Tylor, Herbert Spencer, James Frazer, Rudolf Otto, William James and E. O. James, among others, stressed the primacy of religious ideas as the basis of religion, born out of pseudoscientific explanations or emotional experiences. The ritual does play a significant role in social life but it does not guide an exemplary conduct and it is only a secondary expression of the mental orientation (Comstock, 1971:5-9). Ritual, magic, taboo and many more are all identified as religious behavior types derived from different intellectual orientations. The interpretation of ritual has so far followed a primary emphasis on faith that has to do with the sacred, that is, still seen in the works of today's religious anthropologists and phenomenologists (Leertouwer, van Baaren and Drijvers 1973: 79-80; Baird, 1971: 82—91; Doty, 1986: 35-36; Mack, Girard, Burkert, Smith, Hamerton-Kelly 1988: 1-70).

Robertson Smith examined other aspects of ritual as a category of human experience which claimed to be more important than convictions and central to religion; doctrine being the centrality of ritual (see Segal 2004). This viewpoint received its fullest formulation in Emile Durkheim's (1865) *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, where religion is interpreted as both beliefs and rites: the beliefs depend on creeds and doctrine which take intellectual primacy, while ritual plays a complex and necessary role in social integration and unification under the guise of "cultus". Based on this Henri Hubert and

Marcel Mauss (1898) had demonstrated sacralization of ritual objects and emergence of social activities from ritual. Through this process ritual was reinforced as both, a core sociological term and a basic social life category. Among anthropologists, Radcliffe-Brown (1922/1948) stands apart in emphasizing the social solidarity and unity in the ritual activity.

When compared to society and religion, ritual has been given a critical position in the study of culture. Throughout the cross-disciplinary field of ritual studies, the importance of ritual in the works of Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, Edmund Leach and Marshall Sahlins among the social and cultural anthropologists. Recently, there has also been some debate on the importance of ritual in cultural theories. For example, George Marcus and Michael Fisher (1986) note that ritual explanations and analysis are a common instrument for organizing ethnographic texts. This is due, they think, to the public nature of the ritual, whereby rituals are “analogous to texts created in a cultural way”, which can be interpreted systematically to endow “meaning on experience”.

The above understanding seems to have encouraged the study of ritual in a variety of fields in recent years, particularly in historical studies, communication theory, theatre studies, and social psychology-disciplines whose practitioners see or begin to see them as primarily ‘interpretive’ endeavors. A recent consensus emerged in this regard is that ritual should be examined in itself and for itself apart from its role in illuminating religion, society or community (Weight, 1981). In a similar way, ritual studies seem concerned with integrating liberal religious values into symbolic anthropology. For example, Grimes (1982) notes that one major goal of ritual studies is “to mediate between normative and descriptive, as well as textual and descriptive, methods”. Other goals are “to lay the groundwork for a coherent taxonomy and theory that can account for the full range of symbolic acts running from ritualization behavior in animals through interaction ritual to highly differentiated religious liturgies and civil ceremonies”; and “to cultivate the study of ritual in a manner that does not automatically assume it to be a dependent variable” (1982: 16-20).

However, anthropologists continue to study ritual despite the difficulties of defining ritual and religion from a variety of theoretical perspectives following the sociological

approach that Durkheim opened up what would be called a functionalist ritual reading developed later by British sociologists and anthropologists, especially Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955). Like Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown stressed the important role that ritual plays in establishing social ties. In other words, it is the ritual action that determines a social community's shared belief but not the other way round. Several scholars have followed this approach. Other significant contribution in this direction comes from Gluckman (1965). Here, ritual is viewed as a medium or a source of certain types of social practices and beliefs that established a connection between the significance of ritual symbols and the organized social relations and institutions in a community. Victor Turner (1967) has further elaborated the ritual symbol having a social force leading to social action; symbol being a typifying and representing a thought developed on the basis of similarities. But a clear, detailed description of the basic patterns of ritual symbols and how certain historical, economic and cultural factors contributed to the development of these patterns has not been of any concern. The functionalist tradition of Malinowski (1935/1966) who focused on fulfilling the psychological need through religious phenomenon has also been a significant contribution in this regard. In contrast to the early structural-functionalists or functionalists, reading of ritual and ritual symbols or symbolic structures and related myths in rites and ceremonies are viewed as different coding systems as found in the linguistic structures and exchange practices of marriage and kinship; popularly known as structuralism that decodes the mental structures (Levi-Strauss 1955). To structuralists, the essence of ritual is rooted in a conceptual system of meaning which is a self-reference practice. In terms of ritual as a word or kinsman, its social role can be understood only by referring to its place in relation to other words and kinsmen. The structuralism sought to construct an independent sense network of ritual symbols that could have fixed relationships with specific social functions. Since the 1950s ritual studies have slowly developed into an independent discipline along with the emergence of symbolic structuralism. However, as with functionalism, the performative nature of the practice is compromised by structuralism. In other words, in structuralist accounts the specific nature of the ritual was reduced to a secondary role while practice and performance gained significance. Geertz (1973: 168) conceptualized ritual unlike Turner as a dramatic expression of social experiences and interpretation of it beyond the

meanings given by the actors and also culture as being symbolic. A contemporary theorist Catherine Bell supports a heuristic account of ritual as a sort of performative act (1992:4). Bell's poststructuralist ritual conception is quite appealing. But it is also open to criticism as it decontextualizes from their historical milieu the changing traditions of rites. After all, if ritual can only be interpreted as a specific type of performative acts, how would it be possible to research traditional rituals if their performativity has eventually been lost over time? The treating of ritual in Marxist tradition can be noted in Godelier's work (1975) Comaroff (1985), and Bloch (1986). Here one can notice the intervention of state, politics and economy in the ritual organization of Madagascar and in South Africa. In this regard it will be in order to briefly review some works that focus on politics and economy though not they have adopted the typical Marxist classical approach in regard to ritual.

Bourdieu's theory of practice directly contradicts the structuralism of Levi-Strauss and finds the cultural phenomenon producing and reproducing the categories and concepts in its ethnographic reality while allowing changes to take place in the given contexts and circumstances. Ortner (1978) studies Buddhist rituals among the Sherpas of Nepal from the practice theory perspective. She (1984) argues that practice theory is the major development of anthropological theory after 1960s.

Keeping these theoretical frameworks in anthropology with regard to ritual, an attempt is made to review briefly the inter-relationships between politics and economy in the context of ritual.

Politics: Oberg (1955:484) describes chiefdoms as multi-village tribal units controlled by a chief hierarchy which also become the part of the ritual organization. By doing so he followed Steward (1948) who distinguished between societies with and without stratification while not using the term. Sahlin's (1963) work on the Polynesian chiefdoms has become synonymous with chiefdoms at the same time. A redistributive economy is central to Sahlin's concept of chiefdoms, and he sees it as the power base for these societies. By concentrating on the position of redistribution as essential to chiefdom he means that chiefdoms came to be characterized mainly through their economic role, with political and social positions taking secondary status. Fried (1967) explores power and

authority in which coveted roles more limited than the number of people eligible to fill those positions. Other researchers (Renfrew 1976; Griffin 1952) reiterate the important role that chiefdoms play in a redistributive economy. In Hawaii, Earle (1987) revisits this topic and finds no support for redistributive economies. Alternatively, he notices that redistribution required vast mobilization of products at annual collections managed by a hierarchy of elites and it takes place in three bases of main power: political, economic, and ideological.

Ritual and Economy: Redistribution and exchange of gifts and goods and the role of economy in ritual context can be found in the works of Firth (1959), Sahlins (1972), Godelier (1996) and Iteanu (2004). Although Mauss limited himself to recognizing the principle of reciprocity in gift exchange, scholars later found out that the text explicitly connects two separate activities: men's sacrifice to the forest spirit and men's exchange of material valuables. Although Western people attribute these relationships to two separate realms, the spiritual or religious, on the one hand, and the material and cultural, on the other, according to Sahlins, the Maori emphasize unity: "it[hau] was a category that made no distinction, belonging to itself neither to the realm we call 'spiritual' nor to that of 'material', but applicable to either" (1972: 168). "The ultimate effect", Graeber writes, "was a kind of ideal division of spheres of human activity that endures to this day: on the one hand the market, on the other, religion" (2011: 249).

The work of Weber (1934) is an outstanding work that finds the connection between religion and economy. The Protestant Ethics hints at the possible development of the economic domain out of a particular religious' field with reference to western capitalism. Ingold (2009: 40-46) argues that the ontological distinction between a human world and a world of material things is a typical western construct that does not apply to many hunter-gatherers for whom humans, non-humans and inanimate objects form an integrated environment. In other societies, economic and religious domains are clearly distinguished as more or less autonomous spheres of thought and activity. To anthropologists, of course, this raises the question how exactly these domains are defined.

The studies in South America about the relationships between economy and religion provide interesting phenomenon about the impact of capitalist mode of production. Nash

(1979) provides an account of ritual, class consciousness and trade unionism among the tin mine workers in Bolivia, South America in the capitalist mode of production (1972). Similarly, Tausig's (1980; 2010) work on commodification of agriculture particularly the sugar cane cultivation with the capitalists' intervention in Columbia, South America, unravels the capitalist mode of relations and production and change in concept of money as devil. In contrast to South America, the case of Caribbean islands is different. Mintz (1985) argues that cultural norms resulting in human capacity to the entire material world with symbolic meaning are not as easy as we look at sugar, its use, and disuse. Further, in Caribbean context, Marxist and historical materialist approach is necessary.

Ecology and Ritual: Roy Rappaport's (1968; 2000, 1979) contribution to the anthropology of religion has been immense from ecological perspective. He explains how the various cultural forms play important roles to maintain the pre-existing relationship between men and environment.

Indian Studies on Ritual

There are several anthropological studies of religion of Indian society that includes rituals as well. Well known studies in this regard *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India* of M.N. Srinivas (1952/2003) stands out as an outstanding contribution; it follows the structural and functionalist tradition of Radcliffe-Brown. Dumont's (1959) study of Aiyamar's ritual of Tamil villages introduces the structuralist perspective to Hindu religious rituals. Following the same perspective Moffatt (1979, 2015) studies the rituals of Harijans in a Tamil village. However, Singer's (1972) study of ritual in Madras, and McKim Marriott's (1972) study of rituals in Kishan Garhi village adopt the civilizational approach. Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976) in their historical study of ritual in the Tamil temples bring to light the significance of hierarchy and authority. Raheja's (1988) analysis of ritual in Pahansu village in North India demonstrates centrality of political power and economic control expressed in the giving of gifts to the Brahmin and lower castes. Similarly, Dirks (1989, 1994) argues again the importance of power in the Hindu ritual in Tamil village. Following the practice theory, he examines ritual as a cultural construction of social reality where hierarchy and power relations are produced and reproduced. Rao and Ravikumar (2017) examine the power and politics in

the worship of non-Sanskritic deities in Telugu speaking villages and Hyderabad city. While most of the studies in Indian society largely focus on village and caste society there are not many studies of tribal religion with any theoretical perspective the exception being Vidyarthi's (1963) work on Maler that employ's civilizational framework of Robert Redfield. With the same approach he also studied the sacred complexes of Hindu Gaya (1961).

Politics and Economy: There have been very few studies either in the area of political anthropology in India or politics in relation to religion in India. The first and foremost study in this regard is Hocart's (1950) study in India, Fiji, Persia, Egypt, Sri Lanka where he argues the kingship and ritual basis of origin of caste; feudalism and ritual – sacrificial organization is the at the root of caste not only in India but outside also. However, the most important contribution comes from Srinivas (1959) about the dominant caste and political leadership in the village that plays significant role in the village rituals. Mayer (1958, 1966) studied the village politics in Madhya Pradesh and also quasi-groups engaged in politics in an urban set up as well, while Miller (1965) focused on the factions in India village politics, but these are not related to ritual structure in anyway. Carter (1971/2007) studied the rural politics in Maharashtra but excluded the religious connections. Dube (1959:417-21), Singh (1974:224) and Gangrade (1974), Vidyarthi (1967) studied leadership and classified the leaders in different ways but the studies do not shed much light on the role of leaders in the rituals. Sinha, A. K. Lal, and S. N. Tiwary (1976) studied the Harijan elites of Bihar. Except some works on the tribal movements during the colonial times, there has not been any study in-depth about the tribal leadership or politics either in the political-economy domain or relating to religion. Despite the fact that the leadership in North East India is entirely in the hands of tribal leaders, a recent study claims that political reservations granted to tribes have not helped much in protecting tribal rights in India (Xaxa 2018).

Though there are several studies on the tribal economy and livelihood practices including the impact of tribal development initiatives, big dams and industrial establishments in tribal areas, there are no studies that inform the interrelationship between the tribal religion and economy. However, it is important to note that Agrawal (1980) based on his

study in the Dhar district in Madhya Pradesh argues that there are no separate categories of “religion” and “economy” in Hindu universe; he uses the category “religio-economic”. The *jati* relations are both economic as well as religious and these operate at different levels of network.

India has a long history and the contemporary society, either caste or tribe, cannot be studied without taking history into account. Chandra (1987) has explored interplay of history, commerce, and politics and claims that the Indian Ocean became an integral part of Indian politics since a long time historically due to the trade networks developed or undeveloped by the European countries with the Asian countries. It is true that the natural resources played significant role in Indian history particularly the trade of spices. The work of Gadgil and Guha (1992) make an assertion that the historical interactions of a human being and ecology have determining role in shaping the contemporary Indian society with reference to hardware (technological infrastructure and the system of poverty- open access, family, communal, corporate, or state- governing resource users) and software (religion, tradition, of science) of natural resource use in different periods. Those interactions enable the human beings to exercise their control over the resources, engage in social conflicts over time between groups and changing pattern of resource, as well as social conflicts, on the status of the availing resources.

The above discussion has focused on the literature which is relevant for the research work undertaken with reference to interrelations among ritual, politics and economy of the Kandha tribe of Odisha. The following is the literature reviewed on the basis of material available about the Kandha tribe.

Literature on Kandha tribe

The literature about the Kandha can be conveniently divided into the material that belonged to the colonial period: of colonial soldiers, administrators and ethnographers, and to those writings after the independence. The first mention of Kandha is found in the revenue records when Russell, a member of the Revenue Board sent a brief note to the Board of The East India Company i.e., Madras government in August 1836. The

Company as we are aware maintained army, collectors of revenue, Tahasildars and other sub-ordinate staff at the ground level.

Kandha's Practice of Human Sacrifice and Female Infanticide

Perspective of Administrators: Russell (1916)'s note was about the regular rituals of human sacrifice besides female infanticide among the Kandha and he recommended for stopping these evil practices forthwith, and to create market networks where the British has control over the areas such that the East India Company would have new avenues for revenue and also generate employment to the locals. In the following year, in response to this note, the Company tried to ascertain this inhuman practice by seeking information on as many as 391 questions from their subordinates such as Kandhamal's Tahasildar James Taylor (1837), and Father Rev. Schaff.

The colonial government not only engaged the administrators and church authorities to inquire into the matter, but also engaged soldiers such as Lieutenant Samuel C. MacPherson and Colonel John Campbell who elicited information through someone else for they themselves did not know any of the local languages. The soldiers submitted detailed reports on this issue during 1842, 1846, and 1852 and the latter in 1864. In this regard the reports of MacPherson (1852, 1863) are quite informative about the culture of the Kandha, particularly their custom of human sacrifice. Another important soldier - a major general of the Bengal lancers, administrator and anthropologist of the Company, E.T. Dalton who explains the practice of female infanticide and *meriah* among the Kandha. Most importantly, he finds that the Kandha are divided into different sub-groups and not all of them practiced the human sacrifice or female infanticide especially people living in the districts of Sarangad, Chandraghari, and Degi of Kosadah (1872:291). Thus, the issue has become controversial about its existence and if at all it ever existed the exact magnitude of the problem is not known.

However, Hunter (1872) a statistician, a compiler and a civil servant of the British India and known for the Imperial Gazetteer of India writes that the Kandha's ceremony united the "whole Kandha race" and it included other races (non-Kandha), by contradicting many others in this regard. Further, more interesting information that he unravels is about

the Kandha's aversion to money and all kinds of trade. Also he confirms the fact that Kandha were not subjugated by any Odia ruler on one hand and on the other they drove away the Muslim invaders from their territory over and over again.

Perspective of Anthropologists on the Human Sacrifice and Culture: By late nineteenth century, the infamous practice of human sacrifice of Kandha reached far and wide including intellectuals besides the administrators, missionaries and others. Frazer (1890), the early anthropologist does not miss to mention the Kandha in his famous work *The Golden Bough*. Here he mentions the sacrifice is considered to please the earth goddess. The fact that the victim's flesh, is buried in the earth, on the other hand, suggests to him that the Kandha ascribes other fertile forces to the victim's bodily parts: it gives turmeric its color and brings rain to develop crop. With Frazer's recognition of Kandha's practice the academically inclined British administrators appeared in the scene and started inquiring into the Kandha culture armed with the research orientation. These include H. H. Risley, Thurston, and Russell and Hiralal, and O'Malley, another British administrator, known as the author of Bengal District Gazetteers and initial accounts of colonial anthropology on caste, Hinduism etc. The attention of S.C. Roy, the father of Indian ethnography and anthropology, was also drawn to the issue of Kandha and the treatment meted to them by the colonial government.

Risley was the first ethnographer to write about Kandha's culture with little space for administrative reports ("the first attempt to apply to Indian ethnography the methods of systematic research sanctioned by the authority of European anthropologists" (1891: I Preface). He highlighted extensively on regular inter-clan wars to seize wives, female infanticide and human sacrifice. Fortunately, he admitted that he had serious difficulty in ascertaining the precise form of exogamy practiced by them. O'Malley (1908) neither challenged the existence of errors in the colonial accounts of the history of a region nor of the socio-political structure rather offered colonial construct of practices such as the killing of female infants and the heinous crime of human sacrifice.

Thurston (1909) found some distinction thereon the human sacrifice and female infanticide. He believed that each of these was practiced by the tribe to allow human sacrifice to be resumed as "an emergency measure due to drought and scarcity" (1909:

380). Whereas he added that female infanticide and sacrifice were also observed among Hindus to avoid warfare mostly.

Russell and Hiralal (1916) have expressed an interest in the Kandha pantheon, which included the supreme God as well as a plethora of other gods. There is also a belief that every person is endowed with four souls, one of which is destined to suffer punishment for sins and complete the round of transmigration and one of those will join the almighty. They do make a mention about the magical power of *meriah* flesh and ashes. Focusing on the marriage practices and bride-wealth, they have mentioned about the practice of marriage by service. The study is not only limited among Kandha they even tried to see how neighboring Odia and Odia ruler from Kandha with their cleverness tried to capture the chiefs of the hill by marrying the chief's daughter.

Roy (1922), to continue the legacy of colonial administrator with his knowledge of ethnography, tried to analyze the fact produced by others and notorious practice of Kandha for a better understanding of socio-politico as well as religious institutions of Kandha. He relied mostly on the old records of Kandha and stories. After that, there was a sequence of study carried out in and outside of the tribe's peripheral region. Some of the reserchers did visit the tribe in the remote hill and few others did not. But they brought out a series of publications regarding language and grammar of Kui (Kandha language), and translated it to English and were not concerned about the problems that the tribe was facing under the colonial rule.

Linguists and Christian Missionary works on Kandha Society and Culture: Apart from the above scholars, scholars in their own right have also paid their attention to the language and religion of Kandha. A linguist, Friend Pereira, and two Christian missionaries Rev. W.W. Winfield, and Pearce Carey who wrote about the Kandha. In the following paragraphs, some significant findings of these scholars are discussed very briefly to give an idea about the Kandha during the colonial period.

Friend Pereira (1903; 1905) apart from a book on the grammar of Kui language wrote on the Kandha ritual sacrifice where he also mentioned about the marriage custom and socio-religious life. W.W.Winfield was a Christian missionary who was deeply interested

in the language of the tribal people, Kui besides writing about the grammar (1928) and vocabulary of Kui language (1929). The seminal work of his on the language of Kui, places the Kandha firmly on the Dravidian population map of India. Pearce Carey (1937) is another missionary traveller who talked about the Kandha language in his writing.

Kandha in Post-Independence

Old issue of Human, Buffalo sacrifice and Infanticide: The old issue comes alive in the work of Boal (1963; 1973; 1979; 1982; 1997; 1999) who engaged in a series of publications. She started her work from a church and focused on the ritual beliefs of the tribe in Kandhamal and then she encountered animism. Gradually she proceeded towards the human and buffalo sacrifice. She tried to understand the beliefs, concepts and ritual practices of Kandha. Boal compared and contrasted past and current human and buffalo sacrifices to see what changes have occurred since the British intervened. She looked into the cycles of various buffalo sacrifices and discovered that villages are related by mutual cooperation in the form of 3-year ritual cycles. She was unlike the British colonialists, whose feelings and sense of righteousness were hurt by practices like human sacrifice and female infanticide. However, Nayak questions the conclusions that Boal has drawn.

Relying on the census data and British administrative account and without much in-depth investigation on the ritual and marriage, Patnaik and Das (1982: 70) express their doubts on the prevalence of female infanticide in some area.

Kandha's former practice of Human sacrifice and contemporary buffalo sacrifice continue to draw the attention of scholars. Nayak (1989) describes some of their festivals including the buffalo sacrifice (Kodru parbu), in a sketchy and ideal-typical manner. Mahapatra (1992) provides the songs of *meriah*, and Padel (1995) focuses on the *meriah* (human) sacrifice primarily in order to objectively examine the intentions of Europeans, i.e., colonialists, missionaries, and anthropologists. While Campbell despises not only the Kandha religion but probably any form of theology, MacPherson on the contrary shows an immense interest in Kandha religious beliefs and practices perhaps partly because he intended to obtain influence over the priests, as Barbara Boal suggests. In a recent publication Jena et. al., (2002: 213-6) discuss the Kodru parbu of Dongria Kandha in an

eclectic and ideal-typical manner as all the other authors. A brief description of *meriah* ritual is found in the publication of Satpathy (2005). He also mentions some details of Kandha priests, rituals like *gurba penu puja*, *turky penu puja*, *soru penu puja*, *pitabali puja (mangala)*, *dharani penu puja*, *khambeswari-cum-maheswari (sankhudikhai mangala and nisankhudikhai mangala) puja*.

Kedu festival and Buffalo sacrifice: Hardenberg's (2017) writings are path breaking on the old issue of buffalo sacrifice. He provides socio-economic-politico analysis of ritual sacrifice which is a new stand to think of the ritual sacrifice. His analysis of the ritual sacrifice takes the social context of marital relations, relatives and friends that is quite interesting and very challenging. Though his study is limited to Koraput, it has a special status in Kandha literature. Gangte (2017) presents a historical analysis of the human sacrifice and intervention of British and the Christian missionaries without any fresh insights into it.

Tribe and Caste Interaction and Economic Transactions: The scene of ethnography about the tribes of Odisha witnessed dramatic change with the entry of F.G. Bailey with his writing in 1957, 1960, and 1970 based on the most reliable and authentic information collected during his anthropological fieldwork. These writings question many of the then generation to review their own respective studies, and he has extended his views on the basis of his micro to macro analysis of the ground realities. The shift of theory and interest came down to Asia and India in specific, extended case study method, sanity, on the issues of clan, conflict of interest, tone of conflict exhibited in his study among Kandha and neighbour warrior as well as Pano caste. He emphasizes on village level politics, exchange of political system with new form of economic system and extensively talks about changed social system. Land in market, political complexity, affluence of others, political caste, transect the village boundaries, village council and multiplex role are his gifts to the world of anthropology. He holds a fine understanding of the relationship between caste and tribe, and the comparison he draws with huge statistical data provides immense value for the research.

In this context, the writings of R. K. Nayak³ (1990) is significant. Being a resident of Kandhamal produced much influential literature about the tribe and caste Pano with special concentration on the impact of Christianity. He has demonstrated social and economic development in Kandhamal as an example of the Indian government's concerted efforts for addressing the tribal issues. He has produced many other writings, and conducted action researches through his institution NISWASS (1986) that benefited the tribes in Kandhamal.

Shifting cultivation has been an important economic activity among the tribes of Kandhamal. Tribal markets organized in the different locations have been playing significant role not only in exchange of goods and agricultural products but also facilitating communication across the individuals and communities. Behera (2008) provides information on the weekly markets in Kandhamal district.

Some scholars have focused their attention to the general social change and development of Kandha (Rath 2011). Poverty, hunger, migrations are some of the problems of Kandha and other tribes, and in this respect Kalahandi district often appears in news being the most backward region. As Mahapatra (2012) discusses the hunger and coping strategies among the Kandha of Kalahandi, Samal and Patra (2015) argue from their study that the tribes of Kandhamal live in low income and poor standards; their monthly incomes are mostly in the range between Rs. 4 to 6,000 (20.3 percent), Rs.6 to 8,000 (32.7) percent) and Rs.8 to 10,000 (27.3 percent) in their sample of 300 households.

Kandha Society and Identity: According to Patnaik and Das (1982) the Hindu kings of the hill areas or any state never subjugated the Kandha despite their presence before the colonialists. The interactions between the castes and tribes have resulted in the identity crisis among the tribes. But it is also true that tribes are not free from the internal conflicts and feuds; Dongria Kandha often engaged in feuds across the clans (Nayak, 1989). There is always a concept of citizenship within ethnic communities according to Mitra (2017). As citizens they closely interacted with the king or ruler of the area. They attached value for the importance of their ethnic territory, the indigenously carved out

³ An IAS officer as well as a member of upper house of Indian Parliament.

socio-political units at the local level and the state or the kingdom at the regional level as well as they attached equal importance to their societal functioning. The tribes always derived their identity from the kingdom. After the independence due to the intervention of electoral politics, the traditional or precolonial practices are affected and the territories are fragmented. The present government has failed to address the tribal issues so they are detached from the state to find themselves at the cross-road. Chaudhury (1989) gives some details about the social organization of Kandha covering the aspects of segmentation of the society, social structure – clans, marriage, family and kinship, political organization, religious beliefs and practices, resources and economy, *meriah* cult, female infanticide and dormitories.

It is generally believed that tribal societies are near egalitarian. Pfeffer's (2000, 2001, 2014) ethnographic studies of a number of tribal groups in Middle India deal with tribal hierarchy often proclaimed in terms of seniority or with reference to an opposition of sacred and secular leadership. He makes the important argument that Hindu 'caste society' varies significantly from the 'tribal society' of middle India in terms of values and social interaction. Later this social relation has been discussed by one of his students Berger (2002) in an essay describing the Gadaba and non-tribe desia of the Koraput plateau. He finds that their internal divisions "usually have a tripartite structure and are patterned hierarchically" along the opposition of "senior" and "junior" (Berger 2002: 87). The social relations between these categories such as inter-marriage and inter-dining are prohibited just like the caste system prevails in the plain (Berger 2002: 71).

Mythology is an important component of culture which provides identity to the community. Tripathy (2005, 2006) narrates the creation myth of Kandha as a mixed bag and another myth of migration of Kandha from the territories of Boudh and Phulbani to district of Balangir. Greet (2010) narrates Kandha's myth of creation of the universe wherein Bura God creates everything but Tari Penu tries to spoil everything out of jealousy for he did not pay the wifely attention due to her, and in another myth of Bhima, incarnate of God Indra's nephew marries Jani's two daughters, and one of the daughter's out of jealousy gets thrown out on the way to heaven and becomes a fig tree on the earth. Scholars have found mythological connection of tribal Goddesses with Lord Jagannatha

and in this regard an important one is Stambeswari (Swain, 2009). Rath (2010) provides information on the divisions among the Kandha and describes various domestic rituals such as marriage, naming and death rituals besides some religious festivals also.

Religious Conversion and Conflicts: Soumya Uma's (2010) study is about the conflict between Hindu and Christian communities in Kandhamal district. Her argument emphasises on the implications of ground level realities and state's responsibility based on the reports (communal attack in August 2008), court orders and judgments, press reports and interviews conducted by MARG (Multiple Action Research Group). The study is very critical about the state's legal and political system. The intention of the report is to use it for advocacy towards achieving justice and accountability of the state in containing the communal violence in Kandhamal. It is also aimed at as a resource for the present and future law-reform initiatives and processes for justice. Moreover, it is suggested to the government for its accountableness related to mass crimes in general and communal violence in particular.

Parker (2011) focuses on the Hindutva organization like Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) after attending a Tribal Leadership Conference in North India. This book examines the reasons and history of the whole drama of violence in Kandhamal and problems of the tribe. According to Parker socio-political condition of the region are the main causes of violence. The tribal people have been left far behind compared to some of India's non-tribal citizens who criminally manipulate the system. In this way tribal lands are encroached and rights were denied or violated by non-tribals. The unrest in tribal areas has to be viewed in terms of India's tribes attempting to regain lost ground.

Bauman (2013) says that the Hindu-Christian conflicts that include the violence against the Christians in Kandhamal have been so far explained as communal, ideological or anti-minority or Hindu nationalist fervor etc. He argues that the analysis has to go beyond these and consider these as the effect of globalization.

Pradhan (2015) examines the issue of Hindu conversion to Christianity and back to Hindu in Kandhamal, and argues that people who converted to Christianity for education and medical benefits that the Christian missions provided during the pre-Independence,

converted back when they were losing the benefits of reservations as scheduled castes when in the Hindu fold with the active support of Hindu organizations. At the same time, they have not been happy with the Hindu society either for they are being treated low. Finally, he argues that the conversion is the phenomenon of availing benefits.

There are many unpublished thesis and locally published writings on Kandha which are very interesting too. Digal (2012), Sahu (2013), Kuanr (1996) and with other books of him, Rath has highlighted cultural as well as ritual aspects of changing Kandha society.

The above review of literature finds that ritual has been one of the important concerns of anthropologists and other academic disciplines in studying the human society and culture. It still remains an unresolved issue about the origin of ritual and the ways it is connected to various domains of social life. The literature on Kandha, the present study focuses, makes it clear that though there has been a wide discussion on the rituals and in particular the *meriah* and Kedu its inter-connections with other domains such as politics, economy and social conflicts remain unexplored.

Research Questions

The present study raises the following questions in the above context.

1. Why are the Kandha who were once land holders suffer from pecuniary anxieties?
2. What are the factors that drove Kandha from ritual custodianship to subservient ritual keeper? How did the privileged Kandha rituals have become marginalized inferior?
3. How did the caste groups try to bring the Kandha tribal culture into an ideal Hindu culture?
4. By what economic and political means, did the non-Kandha become part of the Kandha social system?
5. How has the turmeric cultivation become the main source of living for Kandha?
6. How do the non-Kandha regulate turmeric production of Kandha?

7. How did turmeric production and its market value become central figure around which social life has been organized in Kandhamal among the Kandha and non-Kandha?

Objectives

After a careful examination of literature available on the subject and the issues on the ground, present research has set the following objectives:

- To study the Kandha ritual called Kedu festival, a transformed *meriah* of the past.
- To study the role of economy, politics and religion in the transformation of Kandha culture.
- To understand the market with special reference to the interrelationship between caste-tribe.
- To understand the changing social relations within Kandha society in relations with non-Kandha.
- To study the tensions and conflicts between the Kandha and non-Kandha.

Methodology

The present study does not take into the consideration of the recent trend of ritual studies i.e., to study ritual in itself and for itself as discussed above. Rooted in the holistic tradition of anthropology where the whole is greater than its parts, the study considers religion as a part of the social system along with other parts and all parts are interconnected; a part gets influenced by the other parts as much as it influences the other. Therefore, religion is not independent entity and it cannot be comprehensively studied in isolation. Instead of looking at religion from an evolutionary or structural or functional perspective, the study tries to focus on the dynamic nature of religion; it is not static and it changes as the other correlates change. One finds the changes in religion as effects caused due to changes in other parts, and at the same time religion also impacts on the other parts. Further, the social system as a whole respond to external factor either physical or social or both the environments and changes therein. The effects of change also reflect back and impact the total system. While this is the perspective adopted in this

study, there are some study reports or opinions on the recent communal conflicts between the Kandha and Pano in Kandhamal of Odisha. One report attributes the cause of conflict being religion, accusing Christians for aggressively pursuing the process of proselytization of the Kandha tribe and the other opinion accuses the state for neglecting the development of tribe and so on. Instead of considering these causal factors as hypotheses to be tested in a piece meal manner using some kind of quantitative means, it is considered logical and rational to examine the issue of communal conflicts in a holistic perspective using qualitative traditional anthropological approach. Though the issue appears to be relating to a contemporary problem or at the most the seeds sown in the colonial period, in reality the Kandha's social history dates back to precolonial period. It is therefore, necessary to take into account the historical experiences of the Kandha for understanding the present crisis situation. Thus, the study depends on the ethnohistory.

Theoretical Framework: To study the dynamic nature of religion and society, the present study tries to adapt political economy framework in a holistic perspective without adhering to any particular anthropological theory pertaining to religion. In fact, anthropologists did apply the political economy framework like Jean Comaroff (1985) and Maurice Bloch (1986).

The approach of political economists emphasizes on wider aspects of regional political/economic systems (Hart, 1982). They have tried to integrate their insight with conventional fieldwork in specific communities or micro regions for studying the effects of capitalist penetration upon those communities (Schneider and Schneider, 1976). Political theory is a result of external forces, and evolving changes found in the societies. However, the anthropological tradition is rooted in close observation of events in the background a particular village while the analysis judiciously considers the region.

History in this context has very significant contribution to make. Bayly (1988) mentions in Indian context that in the tradition of historical writing there are detailed speculations about the relations between state, traders, and society. According to him the area of change is determined by political groups. In the present case, the pre-colonial state with the new economic groups or the middle class group interfered with the Kandha society in

such a way that irreversible changes have taken places which are clearly evidenced now. In this perspective attempt is made to examine the Kandha society as it evolved through the interactions between politics and economy of different periods. The 19th century traders and middlemen that migrated to Kandha areas during the colonial period have played important role in changing socio-economic and political life in Kandhamal especially in Balliguda as mentioned above.

Sidney Mintz in his work 'sweetness and power' argues,

“Since sugar seems to satisfy a particular desire (is also seems, in so doing, to awaken that desire yet anew), one need to understand just what makes demand work; how and why it increases under what conditions. One cannot simply assume that everyone has an infinite desire for sweetness, any more than one can assume the same about a desire for comfort or wealth or power.” (1985: pg. xxv).

Further, he writes about studying history and anthropology,

“Because anthropology is concerned with how people stubbornly maintain past practices, even when under strong negative pressure, but repudiate other behaviors quite readily in order to act differently, these materials throw light upon the historical circumstances from a perspective rather different from the historian's” (*ibid* pg. xxvi).

Same goes with the Kandha regarding the turmeric; an attempt has been made to know why, how and what made to continue the production of turmeric tuber by sieving through the colonial records and other records available. The British period had witnessed major agricultural activity in every Kandha family growing with the steady enhancement of turmeric export, and in this period the entry of merchant groups became possible for purchase of the tuber and Kandha economy moved towards a new direction. The Kandha continued their traditions of the ritual and production to turmeric despite the negative pressures coming from the Forest Department and non-Kandha practices.

Taussig in his study of market economy in Columbia in South America demonstrates the effect of capitalist culture and market organization on human affairs. Human beings and their products are used as commodities which are bought and sold in the market (Taussig, 2010: 4). Further, the entry of capitalist economy and consequences of it on the small

scale societies can be found with regard to time as it loses its significance. In this regard, E. E. Evans Pritchard (1940) gives us an account of category of time and people which does not relate to clock time, but we could call it as human time; time is social relations for him. He stated,

“events are followed a logical order, but they are not controlled by an abstract system there being no autonomous points of reference to which activities have to conform with person (1940:pg103)”.

Time for Nuer is not a separate entity; it is different form of life which is embedded in them. This helps understand the events and organization of *meriah* ritual as embedded in Kandha life structured by events, and the. Karl Marx's drives his concept of “commodity fetishism with the analysis of commodity as both a thing and a social relation”. According to him, man and society are market driven and Taussig (1980) argues that the capitalist markets change the concept of money as ‘devil’ besides changing the social relations as those possess money are devil's agents. But in Kandhamal there is commodification of things wherein the things which did not have any value have acquired market value and social relation which came by force that changed the earlier values of relations. Kandha who discovered turmeric wants to sell it in market, but they got trapped by the local merchants (non-Kandha). The latter approached the Kandha moving from door to door, making friendship, playing on their emotions for buying turmeric. The Kandha took the buyers as their well-wishers, superior to them, and as such the moral obligation to give when asked for. When the relations were established firmly in favor of the non-Kandha, the Kandha started running after money. When the land became a commodity after the Colonial period, it became very valuable which it was not earlier, it brought significant change in the lives of Kandha when the non-Kandha settled in Kandhamal. The Kandha and Pano friendly relations became sour and conflictual.

Finally, the analysis of triangular relations among land, deity and society forms the basis of this dissertation. For the Kandha who are in transition from hunting and gathering into shifting cultivation and then to settled agriculturists, the relations with the land are changing; when the land became their sustaining source it became Dharni Goddess, it

also became communal property to be shared among the clansmen, *mutha* members, then it became individual property that could be sold out. As a result of these changes, rituals came into picture, the clansmen who were hunting partners became the coparceners of land firmly stabling solidarity and often be set with conflicts. At the end, the individual landowners are acquiring the status, prestige and privileges; the clan's headman becomes political agent and in due course of time, individual became independent political agent attempting to acquire followers from the clan and community besides others as well by developing networks of religion, economy through market and political participation. The historical events that took place beyond the control of the Kandha both the native princely states as well as the colonial governments had played significant role in shaping the destiny of the Kandha. Not only did the Hinduism brought in by the kings as well as the non-Kandha immigration affect the traditional religion of Kandha but also conversion to Christianity by few of them and from the Pano resulted total change in the profile of the region. Further, Kandha drew the attention of the wider Hindu nationalist ideologues and also national spirit besides the state's political leaders; they are thus no longer isolated while some live up in the hills, few others practice shifting cultivation and some others are settled cultivators. National and international market economy and capitalism that operate at different levels do attract the Kandha providing them cosmetics, luxury goods, food stuff while they sell their forest products, turmeric and agricultural produce through mediators.

Field work and Data collection

Sources of Secondary data: Unlike in case of several tribal societies, a number of written documents, news and periodical reports besides historical records that deal with various issues of Kandha are available. Hence, it required a careful gleaning through of these material for finding out the relevant data. Information on *meriah* sacrifice and political economy during the colonial period has been collected from the libraries and archives: Nabakrushna Chaudhury Development Studies (NCDS) Library, Utkal University library, State Archives, and Scheduled Caste and Schedule Tribe Research Training Institution (SCSTRTI) library located in Bhubaneswar. Further, the home

library of Raghunath Rath, local Library at Daringibadi and Phulbani were also visited and required information on the Kandha tribe published in Odia was collected.

Field work: A pilot study for a brief period of a month during 2016 has helped in preparing interview guides and the questionnaires and identify sources of information – individuals, offices, places and so on. While the Nuagaon Tehsil/Block of Balliguda Sub-Division in Kandhamal district were selected as the field area Rajaghara village and Nuagoan town where more focus and attention has been paid. As I lived in the village Rajaghara, frequently visited the surrounding villages particularly Kanjamendi which is the Grama Panchayat where the Panchayat office is located. Thus, the primary data through field work were collected during December 2017 and December 2018.

Most of the information was collected from the field through in-depth interviews, both formal and informal with Kandha, non-Kandha, officials and so on. And through group discussions, observations and participant observations of various activities, market interactions, practices of shifting cultivation, permanent cultivation, ceremonies, rituals etc., basically to know personally, verify the statements made by the respondents, and what I heard as a native person and seen etc. Information on the political and economic activities of the Kandha has been collected from the villages also besides paying more attention to the village Rajaghara village where I lived. When we are trying to understand the ritual based activities of the people and other supportive activities of these areas, we need to have a closer look at the ritual structure of the Kandha.

Situation in the field: When I met Professor P.K. Nayak, at the Department of Anthropology, Utkal University in 2017, in fact, I should say it was a great privilege to meet him, I received a lot of inspiration from him. He suggested me where the field work can be organized. Actually, he himself did his fieldwork among the Dongria Kandha in three phases and in each of these he changed his strategies and collected the required data for him. I started following his footstep of exploration and hypothesis testing etc. When I reached Kanjamendi village for the first time the area appeared to me strange though it was my native district perhaps it is due to the anxiety related to the fieldwork as my mind was filled with various questions about my accommodation, and where to begin the work

etc. At that time the area was extremely sensitive because of Panchayat elections and I could not select a place to stay. The village I thought of staying located in an area of conflicts due to the presence and interference of Maoists in the election process. So, I shifted my place of stay and came to Bhubaneswar and spent time in NCDS, State Archive and other institutions. It was quite a different situation in reading in the library. The office attendants in SCSTRTI and NCDS were from Kandhamal, and finding myself from the same Kandhamal they were overwhelmed and started helping me in this regard whatever they could do. Later, after elections when I drove back to the place they (both local administrator and villagers) denied permission to stay at the village, Midiakia in Balliguda Block. Then, I was wondering where to stay but it was an absolute need to select a village where Kedu festival is going to be organized in that year so that I may be able to participate and observe the proceedings of the ritual. Then I have got an invitation from one of my sisters (a teacher in that village) to visit Nuagaon, which is close Rajaghara village where I decided to carry out my fieldwork, and the Kedu festival too was taking place in a nearby village.

I felt more comfortable in the village Rajaghara, I could follow the planning and organizing of the Kedu later in the year in the same village as well. Even in this village it was not easy to find a roof to stay being an outsider who does not know the Kui language. Again, I took a short break to attend a seminar and a conference at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and Institution for studies in Industrial Development in Delhi. I happened to meet Professor S. M. Pattnaik, Delhi University, and he shared his experience of fieldwork. He said, it is not always true to find a comfortable place for the fieldwork; one even cannot do it because of present anxiety condition among the tribes. So he suggested, we need to sharpen our technique of observation by turning to them every day. And we should mark important activities which later can be investigated. His talking boosted my morale and stronger desire to meet the challenges ahead.

When I returned back to the field area from Delhi, I became more an observer than an investigator. In this phase I contacted many organisations (government, non-government) and discovered their knowledge about the ritual, economy and politics of Kandha. And later I met Ragnath Rath who became a friend and mentor, who actually is 85 years, yet

I found him young and energetic and filled with thirst for knowledge. He narrated me his journey of life, read my proposal and suggested me to work on it. I felt he is a true lover of tribal culture and passionate reader, and writer. At this level I was more inspired and spending time with him, reading his texts, and others in Odia language very rewarding. I tried to collect data on general ritual, economy and politics from different people throughout Balliguda, Nuagoan, Daringbadi and Raikia Blocks. I found there are two types of people who thought my work is more on conflict and others who thought it is more of ritual and history of Kandha. Since I was interested in conflicts, I ended up asking questions about the conflict and related problems regarding economy and politics. Some related issues appeared during the Panchayat election and parliament elections. As regards to history I collected sufficient information from the libraries and I did not expect much in the villages because the old informants may not be available to shed light on the past events down the line in their memories.

The villagers where I stayed fortunately quite well understood my purpose of being with them for some time and showed eagerness to share certain information, but not everything primarily, because I was recording their cultural practices which they cherished most to preserve them for the future and contemporary relevance also in the back ground of the conflicts that they are facing now. As the NGOs and government sector officials thought that I being an outsider having good amount of money they wanted payments for my questions. The staff of Electricity Department who lived close to my rented house finally helped me during my visit to different villages. Many of the villagers thought initially that I was an electrician because of my friendship with the electricians. Anyway, slowly they helped me collecting information on the ritual and inner politics about it. Finally, the teachers from different schools, the Jana Seva NGOs and other local writers who have been there for several years helped me in clarifying certain doubts that I had and ended up correcting me also. It was quite difficult for me to understand the relationship between Kandha, Pano and Patra whereas no one was interested to talk about their social positions. Sometimes, they stopped me from taking photographs and recording the things that we were discussing. In such cases, the interviews are noted but in a very informal way. Only those who could understand the nature of my work allowed me to take some pictures. So, some of the data remained in

the memory before recording at my residence. The language became a very crucial part of my fieldwork as many of them were not ready or feeling comfortable in talking in Odia though they know it, so I had to accompany my Kui friends though I understand it.

I completely stopped taking photographs or videos in my second phase of fieldwork, which I frequently used in the first phase. This was partially due to the current conditions for my fieldwork. By that time, I relocated myself in another house in the same village, and the neighbours became good friends of mine. Then they were annoyed by the uninvited use of a camera. I discovered that their denial to be photographed had both religious and aesthetic purposes. They assume that when the camera and other digitalization of events occur, supernatural forces cannot be impressed by them. In an everyday situation, when they are engaged in some work or in dirty or ripped clothes, they do not like to be photographed.

For the ethnographic facts, individual informants were interviewed in very impersonal and informal way. Many times I met them near the toddy shops at the Nuagaon and Rajaghara where they were found more relaxed. Data were also collected by attending the meetings of the village council after getting permission, and their formal or non-formal gatherings at the village fair, shrine, and gossip groups gathered under the *salap* tree. Moreover, opportunities were availed when invited for attending the non-formal meetings of the villagers with the district level leaders. Apart from these, the local public servants like school teacher, Sarapancha, Ward member etc., were also interviewed in formal ways to obtain relevant information. They were less reluctant to share their personal experiences, and interpretations when discussed on routine or regular practices, but when asked about the things related to the rituals or politics they referred to some specific people or experts in these matters. There were real problems eliciting information on Kedu as some refused to talk about it for they had no right to do so, lest taking risk of inviting the wrath of gods. Further the information regarding *mutha* organization and other information related to politics was forbidden to discuss in public. Kandha never talked about the negative sides of their masters while the Pano were never hesitant to discuss when asked on anything. There were few Kandha local leaders and elite who showed interest in the things I wanted information on, but I did not like to irritate them

with my frequent visits to them. So, I had to go to them fully prepared to get specific information for it is not that easy to obtain information of this kind from the other Kandha. Thus, collecting information was not an easy task, it required a lot of patience and planning. I became wiser after several failures and pitfalls in the beginning.

I found the kind of relationship that exists between the caste and tribe through ritual structure is very difficult given the prevailing present situation of Kandhamal. So for this purpose of the exact caste-tribe relations I had to heavily depend on the historical reconstruction. Further, indeed, I was intrigued why certain things in history were neglected by some of the ethnographers. Nevertheless, I tried to see the relationship through the ritual performance and function. So the more historical data were to be delved into and examined or compared through the empirical facts. The present study tried to deconstruct the social facts underlying in the history and the political economic relations. To cover all the objectives of the study it took almost two years with some intervals. It was in deed quite difficult task for me to accomplish what I intended to as explained above.

Limitations of the Study

The important limitation of the study relates to the language. Very few Kandha are well conversant with the Odia though most of them speak some Odia. Several of them cannot understand Odia well but generally a common Kandha does not like to speak Odia, and women are more shy than men to talk to a stranger. Though the researcher was born and brought up in Kandhamal district he could not understand the Kui of Kandha, so, often he needed interpreter despite he could get what the Kandha were trying to say. If this is situation at the present, one can easily understand what it would have been in the situation middle of nineteenth century when the British soldiers and officials interacted with the Kandha and wrote about the Kandha. Thus, it raises the questions on the reliability and validity of the data on which they had relied upon and produced documents on which scholars have to depend to dig the past about the Kandha. Similarly, foreign scholars of the present must have encountered several problems while collecting data from the Kandha.

Chapterization

The thesis is divided into six chapters excluding introduction and conclusion as the first and last chapters respectively.

Introduction essentially foregrounds the present work presented in the rest of the thesis. The focus of this research is on ritual, economy, and politics that together responsible for the present tense situation and conflicts the Kandha society is facing today. Raising certain questions regarding this predicament the introduction provides a comprehensive review about the ritual studies, anthropological theories studying the ritual and the works on economy and politics in general and literature about these aspects in Indian context. Also a review of important works on the Kandha tribe has also been undertaken. Based on this review and in the light of the questions raised, this chapter outlines the objectives of the present research followed by the theoretical framework, a holistic approach to religion particularly the *meriah*/Kedu festival in the backdrop of political economy and historical connection. Next, it details the data collection process, experience and difficulties faced in this regard.

Going forward, the thesis is organized as follows: first chapter provides the introduction of the tribe with general information about the Kandha tribe under study. It deals with the origin and confusion with regard to the nomenclature, language and the cultural identity of the tribe. Further, it discusses the general features of all Kandha not restricted to any particular state or social sub-division such as physical features, food habits, settlement pattern, social organization, social control, economy, music and dance, religion and social dynamic of the society including the state's development initiatives. It also introduces other social groups such as Pano and Patra whose interactions have been playing very significant role in the life of Kandha. This interaction pattern brought them in contact with the outside Kandha world particularly during the pre-colonial period but latter it led to several conflicting situations.

Chapter two provides general historical background and formation of Kandhamal district with which Kandha identify themselves as the land of their own where the fieldwork has been carried out for the present research. It also sheds light on the Bulliguda and

Nuagaon Blocks in which area the fieldwork is concentrated and the people whose stories are told in the thesis. Though the data are collected from different villages in these Blocks, as the researcher spent most of his time and closely observed the life of Kandha in Rajaghara village, this chapter provides the details of Rajaghara village such as settlement pattern, the demographic, education, economic and health information and life cycle ceremonies in this village. In a way it represents an average Kandha village found in the foothills, though the Kandha village in the interior or on hill top may be slightly different in terms of size and ethnic composition of the population.

The third chapter of the thesis gives more details about the Kandha world view for better understanding before describing and analyzing the *meriah* and Kedu festivals. It is about man-nature-spirit complex of the Kandha which forms the basis of Kandha cultural identity. It brings to light the conceptualization of the spiritual world emanating from their relationship with the environment on which their life has been dependent. The entire natural world, be it earth, sky, rain, hill, stream or river, forest, grove, and so on, each one is considered as a divine being. For exploiting any of these resources they require to appease and take permission from the deity concerned which involves in the ritual organization. The spiritual world is mediated through the priest, Jani/Tolmba. The land is the major source of living and it is identified with Dharni, the earth goddess, and the Kandha being the children of the deity. The senior most of the clan takes the control of the land and distributes among the members though it belongs to all. All the rituals are organized with reference to the fertility of land, rain, agriculture etc., that are viewed as deified spirits, ancestors and deities that are invisible

Next chapter gives the detailed description about the *meriah*, the most infamous human sacrifice with which the Kandha tribe is identified with. First, the description available in the colonial correspondence in their attempt to suppress the practice has been discussed. Second is the description of the same wherein however human being is replaced by a buffalo as researcher has observed in a couple of villages. Then it proceeds to provide an analysis and interpretation of the festival. It is argued that there is still an element of doubt in terms of the practice of *meriah* to the extent of such a great need to oppress it. Basically it is a fertility festival like any other but the colonial administration exaggerated

it and connected it to the turmeric. No doubt with the increase of market value for turmeric due to increased export the Kandha attempted to bring more forest land into cultivation, but there is no direct link between the *meriah* and the turmeric production. The chapter tries to demonstrate a link among the ritual, land, ritual, leadership and economy. The ritual continues to give a cultural identity to the Kandha tribe.

After this, the fifth chapter discusses the Kandha's livelihood practices that changed over a period of time from simple food gathering stage to settled or permanent cultivation. Further, they moved from barter – an exchange of goods, to cash economy of market system. It begins with a recapitulation of the agriculture in Rajaghara village where it is closely observed. Then, it briefly discusses food gathering, collection of non-timber minor forest produce and the general practice of shifting cultivation which is largely followed now and settled agriculture noted in the Blocks of Balliguda and Nuagaon. This chapter provides the details of Kandha's socio-economic transformation, economy during colonial period, contribution of turmeric crop, and emergence of weekly market and marketing practices with regard to turmeric. The new economy and market led to more dependency on land and ritual for increased productivity. Further, the new economic transactions with the opening of door for other Odia communities during the colonial period and after independence resulted in complex ritual, social, political and economic situation. In order to boost the economy of the tribal society, the government took up several development initiatives. Thus, this chapter brings to light the interconnections among the ritual, economy and non-tribal society.

The final chapter deals with the problems that the Kandha society is facing today which are rooted in the historical happenings. These got escalated with the immigration of several non-Kandha communities that interfered in the domains of religion, land and economy. This chapter begins with the leadership among the Kandha and their politics before and after the colonial rule. The Patra while not only becoming closer to the British and Kandha were able to successfully separate the Pano from the Kandha. As the Pano were attracted to the Christian Missionaries, the Patra encouraged several Hindu organizations to establish their institutions in Kandhamal that tried to bring the Kandha into their fold. As the Kandha entered into the mainstream state politics, it became all the

more important for the Patra to maintain good relations with the Kandha for political and economic gains. Under this scenario maintaining their tribal identity with traditional ritual practices has become necessary. Also, there is need to hold land which is their main source of living which is being surreptitiously changing hands. Thus, they see themselves in troubled waters.

The conclusion of the thesis sums up the arguments presented in the preceding chapters. It highlights the findings of this research about the ritual, politics and economy of the Kandha as an integrated domain of the Kandha society and culture inhabiting Kandhamal district. As several reports point out the religious conflicts in Kandhamal, this study delves deeper into the political and economic issues having historical antecedents that have culminated into the communal conflicts. The research contributes to the anthropological understanding of religion from the perspective of political economy. It is one of the very few studies undertaken taking ethnohistorical framework for the study of tribal societies in India.

THE KANDHA OF ODISHA

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the general background of the Kandha tribe who are mostly found in Odisha state though they are spread over other states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in small numbers. An important issue that the chapter deals with relates to the terms Kond or Khond and Kandha nomenclature which has led to conflicts; the term Kond or Khond is that the British coined the term referring to all Kui speaking populations. The complications arose due to reference given to the Kui people and Kui language, as this language is spoken by Kandha as well as Pano, the latter being ethnically different from the Kandha. The chapter also discusses the general features of all Kandha not restricted to any particular state or social sub-division such as physical features, food habits, settlement pattern, social organization, social control, economy, music and dance, religion and social dynamism of the society. This background provides the ethnic and cultural identity or distinctive characters of the tribe vis-à-vis other ethnic groups in the Kandha habitations and also other populations inhabiting Odisha and other states.

The state of Odisha has an area of 155.7 thousand square kilometers with a total population of 46,796,656 according to 2019 estimation. There are 62 tribes whose population constitutes 22.8% of the total population of the state i.e., about 9,590,756 according to 2011 Census. More than one third of its area, nearly, 59,963 square kilometers is under the cover of hills with dense forests where the aboriginals have taken shelter. Of these tribes, Kandha is the largest in numerical strength inhabiting mainly the district of Kandhamal and adjoining districts namely Rayagada, Koraput, Bolangir and Boudh.

The name Kandhamal in Odisha which is known for times immemorial perhaps speaks of being the place inhabited by a large number of Kandha can be considered as the home land of Kandha, as *mal* (plateau) denotes hill i.e., it is the hill of Kandha. While the tribal population constitutes 22.8 per cent of the total population of Odisha, the Kandhamal

district alone has a tribal concentration (all tribes) of 3, 92, 820 which is 4.10 per cent to the total population of the State and 53.6 per cent to the total population of the district. That is to say, Kandhamal is the tribal district of Odisha.

The Kandha Tribe

The tribe is well diversified into various communities and they identify themselves with different names such as Desia Kandha, Dongria Kandha, Kutia Kandha, Sitha Kandha, Buda Kandha, Pengo Kandha, Malua Kandha, Languli Kandha, Raj Kandha, Jharania and so on. Since each of the group is endogamous they may be called sub-tribes or sub-ethnic groups within the generic Kandha society. In view of the extant low social and economic conditions the Government of India has placed the Kutia Kandha and Dongria Kandha as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). However, the Kandha are broadly classified as Kutia Kandha, Dongria Kandha and Desia Kandha (Chaudhury, 1989 and Rath, 2011). But there are hardly any cultural distinctive features among them except their geographical distribution and livelihood practices. While a majority of Kutia Kandha and Dongria inhabit the hill ranges, the majority Desia Kandha live in foot-hills and plain areas who are in greater contact with the caste and urban populations. They are more Hinduized than others and improved their economic and living conditions relatively compared to others. The present focus of the study is on the Desia Kandha living in Kandhamal district and the details of which are provided in the following chapter.

Origin: The Kandha neither maintain any recorded history or oral literature of their history or origin, ancestry or migrations etc., nor do they have any idea about their past. However, several historians have traced the original abode of Kandha as Himalayan ranges and their migration towards south from Bihar. (According to Census of India, District Hand Book, 2011)

“Being Dravidians, they were in this hilly tract of the country before the advent of the Aryans. They have been classified under the ancient Gondid race of the Proto Australoid group, which according to scholars like Risley, preceded the Aryans by many thousands of years” (1891:4). Referring to Boal, Chaudhury (1989:31-32) states that the Aryan

invasions drove the Kandha to Eastern Ghats which contradicts the claims of original inhabitants as contended by Captain Macpherson (cf. Boal 1982:1). Thus, there is no clear idea about the origin of the tribe; there is not even a common myth though there are certain myths devoid of any consistency¹.

Kandha Identity: In terms of cultural identity and social organization, these local Kandha groups vary slightly from one another among themselves. But socially or politically they are completely different from any other tribal societies. However, there are certain features that are common among the Kandha although not completely similar with all the communities across Odisha. Such exclusive features circumscribe: (i) the village structure, which is usually in the form of two rows of houses; (ii) the existence of localized, exogamous clans; (iii) the distinction between secular² (Majhi or Bismajhi) and sacred (Jani) leaders; (iv) the worship of the earth goddess represented by stones³; and (v) the earlier performance of human sacrifices, and the present performance of buffalo sacrifices. The Kandha are far from homogenous in the linguistic context.

The Nomenclature – Kond or Kui/Kuvi or Kandha?

Confusion prevails over the language usage of the local populations inhabiting the tribal areas due to the fact that these languages are very similar to one another, and actually they identify themselves as different ethnic groups who may broadly be categorized as Kandha and non-Kandha or Odia. The linguists make a distinction between the Kui language used by Kandhamal inhabitants (see Winfield 1928, 1929) and the Kuvi (or Kuwi) language of Kond (see Israel 1979) in different neighbouring states including Odisha and Jatapu tribe also.⁴ The Kond are now called Kandha. Both Kui and Kuvi

¹ See Tripathy (2005).

² They are named differently in different areas, but the work of the position and people remains same.

³ As the name varies, it also found from its variant areas that stone and wood are the medium of representation.

⁴ According to Israel, Kui and Kuwi are different languages and not simply dialects of the same language (Israel 1979: xv). Although I am not a language specialist, being a native of Kandhamal I doubt about this. In my view, Kui and Kuwi are closely related one another and these are two Kond dialects. When learning the language of the Dongria, I found that the vocabulary and grammar showed similarities in both “languages”. In my experience, dialects exhibit difference in every twenty kilometers in this mountainous area. The differences between Kui and Kuwi do exist to the relatively great distance between the areas occupied by the Kui and Kuwi speakers studied by these two authors (Hardenberg 2017: 496)

languages come under the Dravidian linguistic family.⁵ Thus, broadly speaking, this is a Dravidian population – one ethnic group i.e., Kandha or Kond speaking Kuvi language and other groups speaking Kui.

While this is the ground reality, the vested interest of the non-Kandha groups and outsiders that include scholars - anthropologists, historians, academics and various religious leaders belonging to Hinduism and Christianity have interpreted the Kandha (Kui-Lowku) from their own perspectives. Whatever be the historical evidences and literature available or produced about them till date, these are the perspectives of outsiders only. According to Kandha's age old oral history and tradition, these perspectives have created confusion and unresolvable controversies. Some of these are discussed here in some details.

The British found the term “Kond/Konds” most appealing to their reasoning and thus designated all those who have been living in the hills and mountains of Kandhamal area as Kond without making any ethnic distinction. The British government classification was adapted since 1842 onwards very much against the native Kandha's point of view. According to the latter, the term Kond which referred to Kuinga of Kui-Deena (land of Kui-Lowku or Kui-people of Kui-Samaj or Kui-Jati) has obliterated their distinct identity.

The term “Kond” is a generic term to mean different people groups inhabiting the uplands of Orissa. In implementing this there has been many inclusions and exclusions in the process. Till date, this is a great problem to the Kui-Samaj. The term “Kond/Konds” was an imposition on Kui-Lowku of Kui-Deena in the Kui-Samaj or Kui-Jati which W. Taylor identified as early as 1837 when he mentioned the term Kui-Jati but his succeeding writers vastly neglected it and his predecessors wrongly made use of the notion and interpreted it (Taylor 1837: 17-47).

The Kui-People of Kui-Samaj and Kui-Jati were subjects of political and economic invasion and forceful annexation of their geography that resulted in gross decentering and dispersal all over as the analysis presented later on would reveal; it has already been

⁵ Trautman discusses Kond kinship terminology in his seminal work on Dravidian Kinship (Trautmann 1995 [1981]: 140-3).

indicated above that the Aryans had driven them to hills. They were shoved to such an extent that they had to take shelter in the interior hills and forests along with wild animals. Their area was renamed from Kui-Deena to Kondhamala, Kondhland, Kondhistan and Kond-country. But it is also true that the derivation of Odia name Kandha, Kondha, Kandho, Khondo, Khandh or Khondha is again quite uncertain. Yet one can guess, the meaning of the Odia word if pronounced as Khondo means a measure of land or a part of land or area of land or division of the land and if pronounced as Khonda means a sword i.e., a weapon being considered a distinguishing mark of the people or a group.

In Odia language *kandha* means a kind of a root or tuber. Some people assumed that people who eat the roots as their main food are called Kandha without giving importance to their geo-political context. So called “Konds” whose main food was on roots and fruits; they are ultimately called as Konds or Kandha. Similarly, their area is called Kondamal or Kandhamal (area having more fruits and roots) where *mala* in Odia means hills and forest, the dwelling place of birds and animals. So “Konds” living in *mala* are equated almost with animals and they were usually not considered with human dignity and identity. But the inhabitants of that area never call themselves as Konds rather Kuinga (people of Upper Land) which has a different meaning altogether and their area as Kui-Deena (upper Land) not the Kondmal at all.

Till now, none is certain either about the derivation of the term or meaning of Kandha, the Odia name of the tribe. In this connection some have connected the Odia word with the Telugu word *konda* which means ‘hill’ for the Telugu speakers have been living in close proximity with the Kandha for a long time. Again it is not certain. In fact, the term Kond has become popular in recent times only, and otherwise, Kond is a term of the Europeans or Europeanized local term and even the term Kandhamal is coined by the colonial administrators only. Either Kond or Odia name Kondho is an alien term for the tribe itself as they call themselves as Kui-Lowku of Kui-Deena. Odias have insidiously invaded Kui-Lowku from three sides through commerce, civil administration and as colonies settling down in many parts of Kui-Deena. Odia, an Aryan language, is an alien language to Kui but it comes to them as the primary linguistic medium in schools and in

higher education and in the tribal and non-tribal interactions on social and religious contexts. Kui-Lowku, therefore inevitably borrowed words from Odia.

The Odia influence upon Kui-Lowku and Kui-Kata is mostly found in Boudh and Dasapalla areas where many Kui-Lowku have almost lost their mother tongue Kui-Kata but speak Odia only. Today Kandha means people and Kui means their language. In other words, Kandha or Kond are the people who speak Kui language; Kond is an inclusive term. But this way of defining them is totally against liking of Kandha, the natives. In this perspective the former President of India Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam tried to correct it and set right the things through a gazette notification issued in 2002.⁶ Instead of ‘healing’ the Kui folks, it caused further damage due to intervention of some selfish individuals of one particular political party. This definition excludes many Kui-Lowku. For this reason, atrocities have been committed against Pano Christians in 2007 and 2008 and even afterwards in Kui-Deena.

John Dayal one of the social activists and a member of All India Christian Leaders has given an impressive report on the problem between the Kandha and Christians in Kandhamal on the occasion of completion of the 4th anniversary of atrocities committed against Christians in Kandhamal. He states that by looking at the history of the tribe which is age old one can easily infer that the native inhabitants or Kandha of this area never called themselves as “Konds” rather Kui-Lowku which has a different meaning altogether and their area Kui-Deena not the Kandhamal, their language Kui-Kata as well as their civilization as Kui-Samaj *or* Kui-Jati. In this sense, all other non-Kandha inhabitants of Kandhamal speaking Kui language who claim themselves Konds are not of Kandha tribe; they do not belong to Kui-Samaj nor do they have any link with the Kandha tribes.

Kandha in the Colonial Records and Writings: Our knowledge about the Kandha has origin in the writings of the British administrators and ethnologists. The Kandha came to

⁶ The President of India, A.P.J.Abdulah Kalam, approved the recommendation of Orissa government in the year 1982 for adding Kui as tribe under the Article 342 of the Indian Constitution. It took about two decades for the gazette notification issued in the year 2002. The Nikhila Utkala Kui Samaj has made it an issue in the last communal riots for deletion of Kui from the tribe list of Presidential declaration in the year 2002 which has created confusion that Kui is not the Tribe rather the Language which has to be investigated properly and thoroughly further (Digal, 2012).

light of the day with the Ghumusar Rebellion of 1836 and subsequently the establishment of Meriah Agent or the Hill Agent under the Act, XXI of 1845 passed to create a representative to the Governor-General of India whose basic goal was to suppress the rite of *meriah* and also female infanticide. The reports of British around this time drew attention of Dalton (1872), Hunter (1872), James Frazer (1890/1983: 571–75), Risley (1891), Maddox (1901), O'Malley (1908), Thurston (1909/1975: 510), Russell and Hiralal (1916), Roy (1922) and many others. The Kandha were largely seen as “uncivilized” people and “barbarians” variously called as “raw people,” “hill people,” “forest people,” “wild people,” “stream people” etc. Russell wrote to the government of Madras,

“From all I have seen of them, I feel convinced that no system of coercion can succeed. Our aim should be to improve to the utmost our intercourse with the tribe nearest to us, to civilize and enlighten them, and so reclaim them from the savage practice, using moral influence rather than our power. The position we hold now in Ghumusar is favourable to the purpose, and it probably is so in some places beyond the frontier.” (Russell 1916: 60)

General Features of Kandha

Physical appearance: In general, a Kandha has an outstanding physique. They aren't very dark and even some are fair skinned; the male are slim, healthy and medium in height and the female are strong and sturdy while they are short. The Kandha are by definition very simple, frank, naive and credulous according to common belief of other than Kandha. Their amiable conduct is highly appreciated. Before the fierce wild animals, they are found to be very brave and exceptionally sober before an unarmed stranger (District Gazetteer, Kandhamal, 1984: 90).

Kui Language: The Kandha speak the Kui language, which is closely related to the Dravidian group of languages and shares significant grammar similarities with Telugu, Kanarese, and Tamil. It is generally not found any commonality between Kui and Odia. Because the later is of Indo-Aryan origin and spoken by the Odias, the neighbours of the Kandha. Kui still remains a good example of a Dravidian language almost unaffected by non-Dravidian elements. Nevertheless, several Odia words are found in Kui language

because of close interaction between the two language speakers. Because of difficulties in communication and as their habitations located in inaccessible mountainous terrains till recently, the Kandha suffered from an unusual degree of isolation from the dwellers of the plains. At present, the Government of Odisha is taking considerable interest to preserve and popularize the Kui language. In fact, the State Council of Educational Training (SCERT), Odisha, has succeeded in publishing primers in Kui language using Odia script, with the assumption that, this would facilitate the comprehension of the subject matter taught to Kandha children at the primary level of schooling.

Dress and ornaments: The Kandha tribe wear very simple pattern of attire. The attire of the women consists of two pieces of clothes (*sinda*), one piece covering the waist up to the knees and another for the upper part of the body. However, now they choose to put *saree* on their body which is very common in the local market. They use various kinds of ornaments like coloured bead necklace (*sursuria mali*), silver bangle (*bala*), neckband (*gogla*), nose flower (*naka putuki*), hairpin (*pujupaka*), ear ring (*kichedka*) etc. conventionally, Kandha women like to paint tattoo (*tikanguhpa*) designs on the face. These days, women of present generation detest tattooing. The male of the Kandha community wear *dhoti* or loin cloth and *ganji* (banyan). On important days they sport with a headgear. The bride grooms on the day of marriage ceremony adorn him with the colorful turban.

Food and Drinks: Although rice is the staple food of the Kandha they also eat wheat. The community eats rice and wheat also eats *ragi* millet, *mandia*, *kandul* (pulses), maize, mushrooms and different types of roots, tubers and green leaves and vegetables. They also eat fish and meat whenever they find. Each and every house of the community very often tore mango kernel, tamarind and jackfruit seeds for consumption when the regular food is not available. Though metal pot and pans are own by few Kandha people they basically use *siali* leaf cups as utensils. Liquor place an important role in both social and religious life of the community and the society declares that guests and visitors should be offered liquor.

The Kandha prefer three meal a day: the first meal before going to the fields in the morning, the second on returning from the field and the third meal in the evenings which are called *bendaeju*, *tilabela*, and *nadangeju* respectively. The staple food is rice which is cooked by women. As the rice is cooked with more water, the extra water is not thrown away but gruel is made out of it by mixing *ragi* millet powder. Turmeric, chili and oil and mustard are usually added to the chopped vegetables after boiling for preparing curry.

Drinking Liquor among the Kandha: The Kandha are said to have been addicted to drinking *mahua* liquor (*irip kalu*), and *sogo* palm juice (*mada kalu*). It is said often that without drinking these intoxicant beverages Kandha cannot do anything, so the saying goes, “drinking means Kandha and Kandha means drinking.” Drinking alcohol is the most important aspect of Kandha life; any occasion was used to begin with the country liquor but now, foreign liquor has replaced it, the Kandha youth are attracted more to it. This in fact is draining off their money heavily. However, it is not seen as an addiction nor antisocial behavior and the attitude is, ‘you can have a drink with your kin’. All members of the family may have it together and may brew it at home without any fuss about it. The Kandha used the *mahua* trees in the past for personal use, but now they use for commercial purpose in other parts of Odisha like Ganjam, Ghumusar etc. Kandha are said to have lost majority of their lands along with the *mahua* trees to the non-Kandha for the money borrowed to drink. The weakness of Kandha for drinking alcohol helped the outsider to make money by selling liquor of all sorts.

Settlement Pattern and Housing

The Kandha villages are usually located and surrounded by hills (*soru*). The settlement pattern shows few dispersed houses from one end to the other of the area with large patches of land (*keta*) adjacent to each house. There are several footpaths cutting across one another in the village. A village usually consists of a number of smaller units known locally as *sahi* or *pada*. The *pada* goes from east to west, and is called *raha*, the path between houses. The Kandha move the settlement from one location to another if people fall sick and illness continues to bother the residents for a long duration. And before taking the decision of moving to a new location the advice of Tolmba priest, is sought to find out a suitable place with an initial worship for the first time. Land demarcation

comes with a sacrifice of a buffalo; it is believed that the sacrificial buffalo travels the boundary of a designated village and therefore, the village is fixed in this area only. However, they do shift from one location to another in the same area or move to a new area and repeat the whole process of site selection. If an old Kandha is asked if they have been living in the same location, he would be showing some trees or stone pillar where the old habitation existed in case they had shifted and would also narrate a story about the shifting to the new location. It would be for the reasons of sickness or death of the inhabitants or animals.

In the patches of land, they cultivate vegetables, tubers of turmeric (*singa*), trees of jackfruit (*ponosi*), date palm (*tadi*), and sago-palm (*mada*). The mango (*maha*) groves and the *mahua* (*irpi*) trees are located at the edges of the village.

Co-residence of Kandha and Pano

Another section of the population found in most of the Kandha villages is known as the Pano who are low ranked Hindus that live at one end of the village. Though Kandha are not part of the caste system they do maintain a social distance from inferior castes or groups by an observance called *bias*. The social interaction in regard to cooking, eating and marriage is maintained among the Kandha only. In some villages, priests and shrine keepers keep themselves away from the Pano and the Ghasi (sweepers) by maintaining the physical distance from them. However, they perform a vital role in the life and living style of the Kandha. With the course of time some of them have adopted the life style and cultural practices of the Kandha and a majority of them can speak Kui as well as Odia. Whenever they need to interact with non-Kandha for the purpose of trade and business they use Odia. They often act as middlemen between the Kandha and the Odia on trading and at time they also act as priests of the Kandha. In the death ritual in a Kandha family, the Pano slaughter the sacrificial animal to maintain cordial relation which is a taboo for the Kandha to undertake. Until sixties the Pano managed the whole commerce of the hills.

The Kandha and Patra

Kandhamal's Kshatriyas claim that they belong to the warrior class. Dandasena, Patra, Dehury, Bisoi, Dalei, Singh, Singh Deo, Samanta, Bhanja, and Beruk are among the surnames they use. Those who bear the title Patra claim to be the descendants of the Nala dynasty mentioned in the epic Mahabharata. During the British rule, they used to hold the rank of *mutha* head. They are a small group in numerical terms. Khamankhol, Balliguda, Sudra, Mahasing, K.Nuagaon, Budaguda, Gadapur, Katingia, Tumudibandha, Kotagada, Phulabni, Sarangada, and Panaspadar are the areas where they live. Goddess Durga is their goddess of guardianship. Kandha consider them as their pre-colonial masters and even now they are given a higher place than themselves in the areas of Balliguda and Nuagaon.

In the past, the Patra lived separately from others and they had well-built structures. They constructed shrines and temples for the goddess Durga and they themselves officiated as priests. They were authorized to collect taxes, adjudicate disputes and dispense justice to the Kandha and local residents. They also participated in the rituals of Meriah and Kedu on invitation of Kandha. They exercised moral and spiritual authority over the Kandha and maintained friendly relations with the latter providing them advice when asked for.

Today, the Patra are visibly rich having acquired sufficient fertile lands and accumulated wealth and prosperity which are exhibited in their living style, bungalows, vehicles, education and employment etc. They are into agricultural production as well as business and trade. Their social networks are extended beyond the tribal areas to state and nation; actively engaged in politics and religious affairs mobilizing the Kandha for their support.

Dormitory/ conversation house⁷ of Boys and Girls: *Dhangada ghara* (youth dormitory) is one of the places for Kandha youth (boys) where merry making goes for hours together, and for girls it is called *dhangedi ghara/ dinda ghara*. Now it is termed as 'youth house,' and the government is constructing one 'youth house' in every village to

⁷ The name conversation house is mentioned by Boal (1999), she also called it as the dormitory for unmarried girls with similar dormitory for unmarried boys.

preserve the culture of Kandha, where especially boys stays at night though in some part of Kandhamal still the traditional house does exist. It has political implication; after a heavy work for the entire day, all youth come down here to have fun. In fact, not only the youth but also others do congregate at this site, they become more active during the Kedu period. This also enables them to live peacefully within the community. The song and dance mostly relates to the nature because they always go to the forest searching out their food, they love to live in the foot hill. The dances imitate tiger, peacock, elephant and other animals which they see around them. There are songs where a boy teases a girl, one such song is as follows;

*Hey friend,
See the bird is crying
But I feel it singing
Singing a song of love
And love for me.
She sees me
And can't avoid her eyes on me. (Rath 2017: 77)*

Since the dormitory is for youth they try joke with other, make fun, laugh and cry together and convince one either. But predominately they all dance when it comes to their festivals with their traditional attire. All are welcome to participate without any age and gender difference and sense of inequality, if you are there, you are one amongst them. But to stay in the night you must attain 15years of age and should not be married one. The most convincing and heart touching song, which speaks the morality of life, is as follows:

*Hey friends come,
We will dance
We will sing
Before the sun set.
Hey friend
We are alike,
The rice is in fire / being cooked?
Or The rice on fire?
The age will go / evaporate / disappear
So come we dance and sing
So come, let us dance and sing?
Before it gets late. (Rath 2017: 79)*

The song says how dance and song means to them, what message lies in Kandha dance and song is very important. They want to lead a happy life, honestly desire maintaining peace and joy by dancing and singing. It is a self-taught lesson for them; the educated outside society that lead an unhealthy life cannot learn it. Kandha dormitory whether it is of boys or girls had a special role in ancient time, where they used to get education informally. It is where all senior and youth at the evening can come together with obviously having a head, a skillful one, who can regulate other youth or we could share their expert knowledge in work, hunting etc. If it is of girls, one must be fit for household as well as outside work. This institution is most important where they can reveal and discuss the experiences in jungle, when they met tiger, snake or any other. Boys discuss hunting, climbing of hills or trees etc. Most importantly they do plan for the next expeditions and adventures. And above all it is a house without restriction where you can have your sex partner to sleep with, singing and dancing. It is quite a good place to share one's experiences of work in forest with the help of own clan brothers or sometime with others. Often the youth also visit dormitories of other villages where sometimes they get surprised with different information and experiences. So, a dormitory is more of an informal training center, an informal educational institution and a house of fun. Dormitory is now rarely found in the Kandha areas but they continue in the more remote areas. It is a taboo for young Kandha man and woman of the same clan or village to enjoy dormitory life together. But young men visit only from unrelated villages or different clan to have relationships between sexes, they are governed by strict socially prescribed rules.

Social Organization

Social Divisions and Descent: The tribe is divided into *klambu* probably each of them has a name. Each of the *klambu* is divided into *gochi* or *gossis* which cannot trace to any living ancestor. Each *gochi* or *gossis* is divided into lineages that trace to a living ancestor. This *gochi* or *gossis* are known by their first ancestor, they usually stay in one or more than one hamlet.

The territorial organization is as follows: A piece of territory is shared either members of one *gochi* or more than one *gochi*. In the territory where single *gochi* is present some

villages are inhabited by a single *klambu* while some villages are inhabited by more than one *klambu* though one *klambu* members dominate the other. The social organization is complex where a territory is shared by more than one *gochi* in any of the following manner: (A) village more than one lineage members of a *gochi* of a *Klambu* live together; (B) some villages are shared by *klambu* members of a lineage under the dominant *gochi* but also other another lineage under the same *klambu* and same *gochi*; (C) in some villages the *gochi* members of the dominant *klambu* live along with few members of different or same *gochi*; (D) in some villages the lineage members of a *klambu* of the dominant *gochi* live along with the *klambu* members of a different *gochi*. The local leadership i.e., village headman, *mutha* head and *gochi* head etc. need to be understood. According to the combination as suggested above the social relations depends on the social relations in terms of solidarity among the brothers, and solidarity of the affinal relatives. Accordingly, the land disputes, marital disputes etc., depend.

Lineage, which includes a number of remembered blood-related relatives, is the next larger unit who trace their descent to a living ancestor. Lineage members live together in separate village hamlets or in a group of villages. During birth, marriage and death ceremonies etc., the members of the partilineage support their head of kin. The Kandha lineage is exogamous and marriage is strictly prohibited within the lineage community. They trace their dignity from ordinary ancestors and inhabit a separate territory belonging to their *mutha*.

While parallel marriage is prohibited, cross-cousin marriage by negotiation is common. The Kandha live in basic or nuclear families as a rule. The nuclear family is widespread and there is rarely a joint family. In the Kandha culture, a traditional family consisting of old parents and their married sons is very unusual. It is the Kandha tradition that he builds a house of his own and lives separately from his parents as soon as a boy gets married. The reason behind it is that the house is very small and there is no room for more than one pair. In financial terms, building a large house to accommodate a large family is not sound. Moreover, given a hilly landscape and on a sloppy topography, and also ecological limitations, it is difficult to create a large home.

Family: In the Kandha society both a small family and nuclear family is present. The father plays the role of the head in the family and has the authority to take important decision of the family. This, exercising of authority by the head of the family, is passed which passed father to son after his demise. As Kandhas trace descent through male line, the family is patrilineal. The Women have not property right in the Kandha community. The daughters also have no right to claim any property. It is the father who has the right to property. The father distributes the property in equal proportion among these all sons except the youngest. The youngest inherits a considerable amount of the property because he takes the responsibility of the old parents till the death. The women are very hard-working, extending full support to male members contributing the physical labour. The parents who do not have a child can adopt a son from others when the son of their own brother is not available. Although Monogamous families are found exceptionally, the polygyny also seen among Kandha,

Marriage by service, remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees are socially permitted. Girls are typically picked up from a separate village for marriage. While no territorial endogamy is encouraged however, and village exogamy is strictly followed. After the bride price is fixed, marriage is arranged. In general, cash, ornaments, buffaloes, cows, goats, utensils and other things are paid as bride price. They do not normally look for a pretty woman as a bride, but priority is for a hard-working woman who can take care of household matters. In marriage ties, clan organization plays a major role. The boys and girls of the village are not even permitted to dance together on social occasions, except very few occasions that the elders permit.

In negotiated marriage, the parents of the boy identify a suitable girl with the help of relatives or boy himself finds someone of his interest, and send either the Disari or Dom to the girl's parents to find out their interest in the proposed marriage. After receiving the positive response, the parents look for certain auspicious signs for supernatural

confirmation and finally take a decision in the matter.⁸ First the family of the bridegroom visits the girls house with a basket of rice and the latter accept the gift if interested in the marriage. In the second visit father of the boy along with some male members visits the girls house with agreement liquor (*gati kalu*) to finalize the date for marriage. Next day the family of the bridegroom presents the traditional bride price (*suhupa*) ruppes 101 in cash two cows or buffalos, a brass vessel and an axe to the girl's father who fixes the matrimony.

After the date of marriage is set, the girl uses *dingane* (to visit various relatives to bid farewell) and she returns with a number of presents. Often the bride requests any item of her need from close relatives for her use. The relatives also happily accept such requests and wish that she should not be abused by the family of groom. Another important conventional marriage is that the friends and relatives also attend their help and support by offering gifts which leads to a successful conclusion of the ceremony. She even accuses her family in her cries for sending her away. A marriage is not just marriage of one family or one village, so all feel sad for her departure to conjugal family. She is advised to be polite and promise to extend support at the time of any trouble and she can go to others seeking help if she is targeted by some extra power. Eventually peace prevails, and they believe that population of the society develops only through marriage, by giving a girl, one should respect and love the other.

The wedding ceremony is arranged in the bride groom's house. Now two types of wedding ceremonies can be found: traditional and Hinduized. In the traditional one Jani priest solemnizes it. It takes place at the Dharni wooden pole near the village where a temporary *pendal* is erected by the groom's party with wooden poles, straw and green leaves etc. Now people are preferring hiring a *pendal* from the tent house. The mother's brother's (Mamu) role is very important who comes to the village one day before with *dol* and *mahuri*, bringing goat for the feast, and the groom's party welcomes him and his family in a grand manner. After his arrival, he is asked how they should organize the wedding ceremony and the feast at the end etc. They will have to take care of three

⁸ See Rath (2010) .

different kinds of quarrel and if they fail in this regard Mamu will be blamed. All guests of the groom are to be given sufficient liquor, food and similarly all members of the bride's family and their party treated properly with due respect till their departure. If there is there any ill treatment either they react then there itself or go back to their village silently and give the same or more ill treatment to the bridegroom's party when the latter visits the bride's place after the wedding. Wedding is normally full of fun, but quarrel do occur at any time when they are all intoxicated and if anything goes wrong and it may become a serious problem.

A day before the bride groom's party goes to the bride's village with music and dance to bring her for the wedding, and they are treated well with feast and liquor by the bride's father. As the party returns to groom's, the relatives of the bride also accompany her and there will be mock fight between the two parties when the bride's party pretends to take her back and so on. When they reach the groom's village they are welcomed and treated well by the groom's father and his kinsmen.⁹

In the traditional wedding after Jani obtains permission from Dharni by offering some liquor the marriage proceedings begin. As the groom and bride arrive and taken to wooden pole of the deity the wedding ceremony begins. Mamu and father sit on either side of the groom and the bride sits opposite to the groom. With the utterances of *matra* by Jani and finally the tying of *sursuria mali* (sacred threat with some gold or without gold) by the groom in the neck of the bride and the ceremony comes to an end.

In a Hinduized wedding, three days before, all the clan's sisters-in-law gather together at place of *mandap* in front of the grooms house. After Jani obtains permission from Dharni by offering some liquor, they carry soil from outside the village for setting up fire. Now the Brahmin priest takes over the wedding proceedings from the bathing of the groom to the end of the due to Hinduization. The Jani, on the other hand, takes care of worshipping the ancestors, goddesses, etc.

In the Kandha culture the Hinduization has gained momentum though the traditional practice has not completely disappeared. Whether it is traditional or Hinduized the

⁹ See Rath (2010:78)

Kandha or Pano do not forget to chant the name of the traditional god and the name of the goddess after the Hindu gods and goddesses. The priest asks to name the deity of the village, name of the earth goddess in particular to avoid inauspicious at the time of wedding. Few items such as *mangalsutra* have now played a vital role in the wedding although earlier the *sursuria mali* was used in Kandha marriage.

One of the most important event in Kandha marriage is *diba* (the bride cries bitterly when she leaves her parental house) which gives goose bumps to everyone where they utter the importance of a girl to the Kandha society and her pains of being a daughter to be given away. The following song reflects the pain of the daughter in marriage:

*Hey brother, sister and my relatives
my mother and father (biological)
my mother and father (those taught me how to live life)
this is why you gave me birth
to sell me, to send me somewhere.
How much you are paying them
Or If it is not sufficient
I have to go through a hard time
You will be in shame!
I will be shameful. (Rath 2017: 62-65)*

On the marriage day the groom's relatives present gifts to bridegroom such as rice (*pranga*), goat (*aada*), and utensil etc., which are required and used for wedding feast. During the marriage ceremony the bridegroom applies a vermilion mark on the bride's forehead, a symbol of marital status which she keeps till she remains wedded. With the feast arranged for all the guests by the groom's father all the relatives of both the sides return to their respective villages while the bride remains in the bridegroom's house along with two or three of her relatives or friends. After two or three days the bridegroom and bride visit the bride's house, and both of them return to the bridegroom's house later on with her belonging to permanently stay with him and his family. After marriage, the couple set up new residence at the habitation of the parents of the groom.

Marriage by Service (*gharjoin sachenja*) among the Kandha is not uncommon. The cost of bride prices and marriage expenses is very high in usual arranged marriages.¹⁰ If a boy is found in the village without permission of the village headman and trying to meet a girl without meeting either the girl's family's demands or without mutual understanding between him and the girl, he will be taken to the jungle and given heavy workload. If a Kandha does not have a male child, they can opt for a boy to come and stay with them and get married to their daughter. The boy may live permanently with in-laws in their village after the marriage or returns to his own home with his wife and settle down in his own village. In contrast to formal marriage by agreement or negotiations, this type of marriage is considered less prestigious. In such a situation, the boy goes to the chosen girl's house with his parents and village headman and Jani and expresses their inability before her parents to pay the bride price and *dal mamuli*, however, proposes that the boy would remain in the girl's house as son-in-law (*gharjoin sachenja*) for at least two to three years and assist in all household and agricultural activities. They promise to pay the bride price as soon as possible and arrange feast (*dal mamuli*) for the community. Then the marriage is completed and the boy stays in the girl's house from that day onwards, while his parents and villagers return to their own village. But the boy is not permitted to lead his conjugal life with the girl during his stay in the girl's house until his father arranges the communal feast to the girl's villagers.

Another type marriage is by capture (*dripa sedi*) in which the boy's friends help him to capture the girl of his choice, after getting an offer of liquor and food. When the girl is found alone or in the company of people who do not resist the man's demand to take her with him to marry. However, such incidents occur across the marriageable groups only. On receiving the information about the girl's capture through the friends of the boy or parents of the boy, her father visits the boy's house with the villagers. That matter is decided in the boy's village. The village council levies a fine of Rs. 300/- in cash and a buffalo on the boy's party which shall be given to the girl's family. Then the captured girl is brought back to her father's house and later she is taken back to the boy's village for

¹⁰ Rath refers to Senapati (1980:97) stating that if the boy's parents are poor the boy serves for the father-in-law till accumulates the money required for paying the bride price before the marriage date is fixed (Rath 2010:78)

usual marriage ceremony. It is said, Kandha believe ‘if you choose your own partner you are brave man.’

Divorce (*sadri*): It occurs on the ground of misunderstandings between the couple, barrenness etc., and such cases are finalized by their traditional village council (*panchayats*). If it is initiated by the bride or the fault lies with her, the bride’s side has to return the dowry. But it is a rare occurrence among the Kandha as they know how to survive with it. However, it is said that these days the number of cases of divorce is increasing though statistics are not available otherwise the traditional thinking about it, divorce is a sin. All the elders of the community give an opportunity and ask the couple to rethink about the decision twice. It remains as a big question in the minds of elders why such incidents are increasing since they have no issue of wealth or demand. Some of them feel it is because of the modernity, immaturity of the couple, and impatience but we could say still that the Kandha do very well managing with a troubled marriage.

Gender in Kandha Society:

Women have a significant role to play both in the Kandha economy, ritual and in social realms. As regards to ritual and religion there is no any gender disparity though women are excluded from priesthood. Both the genders are seen in equal terms. A song in this regard says:

*I got the axe hand
You got a basket. (Rath 2017: 68)*

When a boy goes to a Kandha girl for negotiating marriage it has various meanings. Both parents exchange pleasantries and say that our son-in-law is going to work like an axe that stands for every occasion and that daughter-in-law is like a basket that holds all joy in it. And together both axe and basket can preserve happiness. Kandha woman is tough for she can face a stranger and can handle any amount of domestic and social pressure with community support. It is sometimes claimed that the Kandha are committing female infanticide but as the ground realities reveal there is no grain of truth in it. One raises questions, how can they think of a girl to put to death when she is not a burden rather considered as an asset and who worship mother goddess who is in their principal deity?

And they are well aware of the contribution of woman in their society and without female in the society or community their population can't grow; they are productive in all respects.

Political Institutions - Social Control

In the past, British administered the area through (1) *muthadar* who was from a non-Kandha, (2) the village headman and the position was hereditary. The responsibility of the *muthadar* was to maintain law and order in his territory. He was presiding over the meetings of the village council and receiving the state guests at the time of visit to the village for inspection and discharging their duties. He used to negotiate with the headmen of other villages when such occasion arises. (3) Patnaik, the revenue collector, was responsible for collection of revenues from different *muthas* and (4) the *chowkidar* was working as the protector of the village in case of criminal violence. (5) The *chhatia* was appointed as village messenger from Domb or Pano community. He was an assistant of the Patnaik. Cases like family dispute, conflict, adultery, theft etc., were settled in the village council sitting at the seat of Dharni Penu. But at present the Ward Member of Grama Panchayat or Sarpancha of the Grama Panchayat who is elected for the office of the Grama Pachayat by the villagers is acting as the headman of the village instead of the traditional headman Mutha.

The Panchayati Raj system has been extended to the Kandha areas after the independence. So functioning of their traditional political system, which is described below, is gradually declining. The office bearers of the statutory Panchayati Raj institutions are being elected through adult franchise for positions such as Ward Members, Sarpanch, Chairman of Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad etc. They look after the planned development programmes undertaken in their villages.

Besides the external form of administration, Kandha practiced their own traditional system where the administrative units were based on the concept of clan or *mutha* which are exogamous social groups. The head of the *mutha* enjoyed a place of dignity on every public or ritual occasion. Along with the headman, a priest and the heads all families in

the village constitute the village council. More details about the traditional leadership are presented in Chapter six. At the local or village level, the council has retained its useful function over the years. It decided petty cases of family disputes or social conflicts and misunderstandings, encroachment problems and accusation of witchcraft etc. It too decided earlier on accepting Christianity in the late 50s and 60s. Women as well as men in Kandha society have the right to be present and voice opinions in the council, though the heads of households made the ultimate decision.

Economic Life

The most honorable occupation according to Kandha is agriculture and Kandha families live by their sweat of their brow, raising whatever crop is possible on the hill slopes. They have a close bond with their lands and mountains. The Kandha are well-known for their turmeric harvest, which they used to sell to plains people. They also grow horse-gram, hill-gram, black-gram, *ragi*, red-gram, *jowar*, sweet potato etc. In village, the space between the foot hills, fruit bearing trees like jackfruit, mango, papaya, *mahua*, tamarind etc., are planted.

Agricultural scientists argue that shifting cultivation, or *podu chas*, is a wasteful method of cultivation that causes severe soil erosion, depletion of soil nutrients, and loss of valuable forest wealth in the area, all of which have an impact on environmental conditions. Hill tribes are continually encouraged to settle down and cultivate their land. However, because of their deeply ingrained traditions, it is difficult to break this habit. The Kandha had a simple non-monetized barter economy that served as the yardstick for their conventional economy. Though the cash economy has now engulfed the entire Kandha hill region, the goods exchange system continues to function for internal transactions within villages and/or between villages. The poorest use the paltry cash they earn by way of wages to buy rice for everyday living. In the hills some do engage in hunting occasionally, and collect seasonal forest non-timber produce that is sold either at the depots of Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation of Odisha Ltd (TDCCOL) or in local market.

In the Kandha hills, the government has developed several cottage industries and training centers. Kandha are encouraged to make sleeping mats out of reeds and sweeping brooms, which the people of the plains enjoy and buy. They also make leaf plates and deep bowls out of large *siali/sal* leaves, which they sell to plains dwellers. They collect and sell teak tree leaves. These are used in the production of cigarettes.

Religion of Kandha

The Kandha are very religious and their belief system centers around nature worshipping and giving reverence to mountains, streams, rains and so on besides worshipping a number of gods, goddesses, spirits (*pideri*). The earth goddess (Dharni Penu) is their supreme deity. Other deities include: Soru 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 goddess), 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. To appease gods and spirits, various rites and ceremonies are organized with 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 of worship. Each spot has its own supernatural significance because it provides shelter to spirits and deities of certain special power. These are worshipped on different occasions and festivals. Every village has its own religious specialists who are known by different terms such as Jani, Jhankar, Tolmba, Dehuri, Bahaka, Mati Guru who worship their deities. Mati guru (priest) worships only the earth goddess Dharni Penu. In his absence, Jhankar worships the Dharni Penu. In these worship practices, there are some taboos for women; they are not allowed to touch the sacrificial food and pregnant women are proscribed to eat that food. The worship follows dance, music and drinking. These occasions give an opportunity to enhance 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. The Kandha's cultural identity remains particularly with the observance of Meriah which has been known as Kedu which is described in Chapter 3.

The tribe celebrates three principal festivals in a year, namely, the *semi jatra*, the *mahua jatra* and the *chawal dhua jatra*. On the occasions they eat new crop of beans, roasted *mahua* preparations, and new rice respectively. The notorious practice of *meriah* - human sacrifice, formerly in vogue among the Kandha as Meriah festival, is completely abandoned now but substituted by a buffalo sacrifice.¹¹ In its place there is Kedu festival which is celebrated in a rotation among the inhabitants of a *mutha*. Another barbaric practice known as infanticide, which arose from Kandha's socio-religious superstitions during the 19th century (Sahu,1989), has now been abolished. These days, the Kandha celebrates a number of Hindu festivals.

Influence of other religious: Christian missionaries began assisting and affecting the Kandha in different ways in the mid-1950s. The missionaries' compassion for the sick, their humanitarian attitudes toward the needy, destitute, and downtrodden, and their soft-spoken demeanor won the hearts of the tribal and non-tribal communities in this region. The Panos were among the first to accept Christianity. Later on, some Kandha converted to Christianity, abandoning their traditional religious beliefs. At present, there are several Kandha Christians found in Kandhamal district. Churches are found in good number. Yet, Kandha do not show any change in their basic philosophy concerning the manipulation of mystical power and the importance of their collective identity as Kandha.

The Hindu festivals observed by Kandha: Kandha are not strictly Hindu. As mentioned earlier they believe in ancestral spirits and others spirits and the powers of nature and accordingly have been worshiping various spirits and nature – mountains, rivers etc., which anthropologists call animism, animatism etc. But to understand the religious behavior of Kandha we must know about their practice which led the tribals to be dualist in their religious identities, both being non-Hindu tribe and Hindu tribe or non-Christian tribe and Christian tribe. Furthermore, now they are confused to identify themselves with

¹¹ Boal (1982) in her in-depth and extensive study of the Kandha noted the condemnable incidences of human sacrifice. Human sacrifices were offered to the Earth-Goddess for propitiating her so that crops and animals would be free from diseases, accidents and ultimately deaths and good harvest and happiness are ensured in the village. British officers made a sincere, committed and dedicated effort to put down the human sacrifices and finally succeeded in their mission.

either of this religion or the other. It is difficult to say Kandha society is sanskritized¹². It may be said that they are in the process of change either in case of religion or lifestyle. In other words, they are modernizing their traditions and that does not mean they are being sanskritized.

The Kandha got first exposure to Hindu practices through the Patra. Though in the initial period the Patra remained as invited respectable guests in the village rituals of Kandha they gradually acquired prominent position in the ritual sphere also and became religious mentors. The Kandha accepted the Patra as their well-wishing overlords and spiritual gurus considering the latter's practices much superior to theirs. And after the post-independence the Kandha got exposed to the Hindu society more intensely than earlier particularly with the arrival of Adivasi Kalyan Ashramam etc.

Lord Shiv and Shiv Ratri has had a very close relation with the tribe Kandha's gods and goddesses. Some believe that the Kandha and Lord Shiv are of same origin tracing their abode to Himalayas. Unquestionably Kandha who do believe as the son of soil and they link their origins to the Lord Shiva due to their forest habitant. Furthermore, the arguments do raise and points towards Lord Shiva who wears the leopard skin as a jacket must be having no issue with the sacrifice and therefore, they believe that there is no sin on killing animals and eating them or wearing the animal skins. And for obvious reason the market is open for dry fish sellers not only because it is the time for the dry fish vendor to have market opportunities, but also because this is the time when people would have collected their agricultural harvest and could exchange the same with the dry fish. Further, the dry fish can be preserved for a long time without any special care and this can be a wholesome food in the summer when eating *pakhala* i.e., water rice and *mandia/ragi* millet is preferred. Shiv Ratri is mostly observed in the late February or in early March which is significantly called Magh in Odia calendar, just before the Kedu. Dharni Penu, mother Goddess is equated with the consort of Lord Shiv, Parvathi.

The most popular festivals observed by the Kandha who are not Christian are *yagnya* (fire sacrifice), Prabachan/ Satasanga (sacred talk/ good friends), Mahashiva Ratri (A

¹² Referring to Srinivas' "sanskritization" (1972:1-94), I say Kandha are not sanskritized, I mean Kandha have come into Hindu fold and changed their religious practices according to Hindu traditions.

night of God Shiv), and Danda Yatra. The Christian Kandha do celebrate Christmas. These Hindu festival are briefly discussed here under.

Yagnya: *Yagnya* means sacrifice or rite of sacrifice.¹³ It is derived from the root word *yaj* which means sacrificing, worshiping, honoring, venerating, and offering to gods as oblation. The tradition of worshiping gods by offering food is not unique to Hinduism; even the Zoroastrians adopt a similar tradition that is called *yasna*. Kandha has a similar practice as that of Hindu fire sacrifices which is undeniably an important feature of the Kandha culture. But conceptually the Hindu fire sacrifice and Kandha's ritual fire are different as detailed below.

Kandha believe in burning wood from time immemorial as a fire sacrifice in each ritual or we may term it as the rite of fire before proceeding to organize any ritual. They light the areas which bring them some kind of joy, often they worship fire in the dense forest at night. In addition, at the time of Kedu, the wood is put on fire every night in the middle of the village to celebrate the light. Kandha believe that by burning dry wood they burn away the evil spirits from the society and the light it produces banishes darkness and gloom from the human minds. We can now see nearly every village in Kandhamal people celebrating *yagnya*.

When Yagna is performed in the towns, the Kandha also observe the same in their respective villages by setting up the ritual fire, imitating the Hindu Yagna. Now, the Kandha's observing the *yagnya* rite has taken more of Hindu interpretation than their traditional meaning attached to burning of wood as a rite of fire. The *yagnya* is not just about bringing peace among the people, but it is actually replacing the central belief about the burning of wood and what it means to the Kandha and how Hindu ideology is

¹³ According to the Vedic belief offerings made in the fire are approved first by the god of fire, Agni, who in turn distributes the offerings among other gods according to their prefixed share. All gods participate in a sacrifice whether they are invoked particularly or not. Vedic sacrifices aim at welfare of the earth. According to the Hindu beliefs human beings get blessed and all their wishes get fulfilled by gods through *yagnya*. The Gods also rely on *yagnya*, however, because this is the only means they receive food and nourishment. Usually a senior priest, Brahman, remains silent throughout the length of the sacrifice and simply keeps an eye on the other priest to note and rectify any errors made in the performance of the sacrificial ceremony. The Upanishads state that if the Brahman priest breaks his silence during the ceremony, he would injure the ceremony and can cause grievous harm. At the end of the ceremony, the Brahman priest also performs expiatory functions to rectify the faults that are cropped up inadvertently during the sacrifice.

affecting the Kandha's traditional belief. The Kandha strongly believe the mother goddess i.e., Dharni Penu that can only bring peace; *mantra* precede giving first offering to the Grama Devi (village goddess), followed by the local goddesses whereas finally it ends up worshipping the earth goddess praying for a happy, disease free life and also life without conflicts. Thus, Kandha firmly believe in the earth goddess. But the Kandha tribal people are really at the cross-road to understand what religion means to them. They observe *yagnya* and also organize the traditional Kedu which is again not blocked from their mind.

In these areas of Nuagaon, Vana Vasi Kalyani Ashram and Brahmins take major roles performing *yagnya* which follows a vegetarian *prasad* of rice and *dalma* and the neighbouring Kandha villagers too come and participate in chanting “*Hare Rama hare Rama Rama Rama hare, hare Krishna hare Krishna Krishna krishna Hare hare*” which is a hymn and at the same it is a *mantra* of life.

Danda Yatra: It's celebrated widely in every part of the Kandhamal in the month of Chaitra i.e., in the first week of April for 21 or 13 days. It is believed that Mother Kali visits people to live with them for thirteen days leaving her temple located in the human habitations. Initially Patra used to worship the goddess Kali and the Mohapatra claim themselves as Brahmins but it has not acknowledged by the original Brahmin castes. *Danda* means punishment and *yatra* means marching; the penitents or who participate in the *yatra* follow certain restrictions like taking food only one-time, walking barefoot, sleeping on the floor under the trees etc., leaving all modern comforts and the family; it is the self-inflicted punishment. They form a troop called *danduas* leader head is called *patta dandua*. They performance dance in three phases - *pani danda* (remain in the water for a long time), *dhuli danda* (rolling on the streets) and *agni danda* (hanging upside down over a pit where there is a fire). The troop visits surrounding villages also performing the dances and when it returns to the Kali temple on the final day, the *patta dandua* comes out of the temple to perform the *agni danda* in which blood drops ooze out from his nose and falls on the fire. There is also sacrificing of a goat on the fifteenth day of the *danda* celebration. It said that Mother Kali could be cooled down of her rage only with blood. During these days, people like Kandha, Pano and others come to celebrate as

one troop keeping aside their social differences. Whereas the *hadi* (drummer) plays an important role in any drum-playing event, the *patta dhulia* (main drummer) would fast like others. On one side they all come out of the house as devotees, but on the other sit in separate groups while eating practicing the norms of the caste but in celebration they are again one group only. *Dandua* enacts various plays by communities in Kandhamal such as Kandha, Gauda, Sabar (King of the Sabar), Chadeiya (bird hunter) etc., and entertain the audience. They also play mix-up general modern themes like jungle security laws besides showcasing and taking dig at sanskrit lifestyles, Kandha lifestyles, etc. They do play divine dramas of Kali and Shiv who remain at the center stage. Most importantly no community differences are exhibited, all collectively participate as one community. Not only does it speak about ecological equilibrium by transmitting message about what it would be if we were to lose our jungle, but it also promotes Hindu forms of worship in different segments and magic in the end. It is believed that the people get cured of their disease when one fasts for thirteen long days by drinking only *nabat* (made from jagery) and *lia* (fried dry rice) once a day.

Akshaya Tritiya: Every year, Hindus and Jains celebrate this famous festival, which is considered one of the most important days for the Hindu community because it commemorates the birth of Lord Parsurama. This day is considered a lucky day by the Hindu community, who believe that any venture, such as a company or the construction of a house, that begins on this day will bring abundance and prosperity. In late April or early May, Akshaya Tritiya is a one-day festival.¹⁴

Kandha have brought the Akshaya Tritiya into their social system along with the religious thoughts and practices of non-Kandha. They wait for April-May to celebrate Akshaya Tritiya when the non-Kandha wait for the crops to get ready for harvest. The

¹⁴ The most popular story regarding the celebration of Akshaya Tritiya is related to the friendship of Lord Krishna and Sudama who were childhood friends. Sudama was very poor, so he went to Krishna to request him some financial help but he did not have anything to offer to Lord Krishna as a token of his love towards him except a pouch of *poha*. He was quite unhappy to give such an offer to his friend Lord Krishna who is like a king to him. When he visited Lord Krishna and gave the pouch of *poha*, the poor friend was so overwhelmed by the hospitality shown by Lord Krishna that he could not ask his friend for financial support which led him to go home empty-handed. When he arrived at his home he saw his run-down hut got transformed into a palace and his family was wearing royal attire. Sudama knew that this was the blessing of his friend Krishna who blessed him with more wealth than he needed or could ever imagine. This is why Akshaya Tritiya is associated with material gains.

Kandha join the non-Kandha, they had no such practice before they were cultivating land and when they were essentially hunter gatherers they never had any idea Akshaya Tritiya or the practice. So now it became a question to the Kandha people of the area to decide whether to celebrate Akshaya Tritiya or not, and when to start their annual calendar or just to follow their tradition of starting the calendar from the Kandul parbu (pigeon pea festival). It also can be noticed in Nuagaon region that most of the Kandha now engage themselves in the rice cultivation while giving less importance to turmeric, the commercial crop which cannot be done on a regular basis. Some Kandha say that since now all being Odia or part of Odisha they should start the routine agricultural work from the car festival in the name of Lord Jagannath. Where to believe? what to believe? have become serious questions to be answered for some of the Kandha. To some, it appears to be a complete unrealized trap of religion based civil society predominantly of the Hindu religious ideology which is trying to replace the traditional Kandha religious practices.

Raja Sankranti: According to popular belief the Mother Earth menstruates which is a sign of fertility as in case of women, both of them are fertile beings.¹⁵ Hindu Odias observe three days of Raja Sankranti in the month of Ashadh as the menstruating period of the Mother Earth. This has now also been found being observed in some Kandha villages. Though they do not organize festival absolutely like Hindus, the village girls put *alta* on their feet, good clothing, and *bindi* on the forehead. The teenage girls arrange a *dolis* on nearby mango trees and boys make fun of their singing and merry-making.

This is another example of contradiction between Kandha and non-Kandha religious beliefs and a point of break to think about the Kandha beliefs. The tribe is known to have

¹⁵ During the festival all agricultural operations remain suspended. As in Hindu homes menstruating women remain secluded because of the taboo being impure due to the bleeding and do not even touch anything and are given full rest, so also the Mother Earth is given full rest for three days for which all agricultural operations are suspended. Significantly, it is a festival of the unmarried girls, the potential mothers. They all observe the restrictions prescribed for a menstruating woman. The very first day, they wake up before the dawn, brush their hair, anoint their bodies with turmeric paste and oil and then take the purificatory bath in a river or pond. Peculiarly, the bathing for the rest two days is prohibited. They don't walk bare-foot, do not scratch the earth, do not grind, do not tear anything apart, do not cut any vegetable or anything and do not cook. During all the three consecutive days they are seen in the best of dresses and decorations, eat cakes and rich food at the houses of friends and relatives, spend long cheerful hours swinging up and down on improvised swings, and rend the village sky with their merry-making songs.

practiced female infanticide according to the literature available¹⁶. But there is a contradiction here. The Kandha believe in the mother goddess as their supreme deity whereas the fertility is one of the main concerns. Here after arrival of Hindu as it is said the number of female infanticides got stopped. But some other say the British and Christian Missionaries eradicated this practice.

But now it is to be seriously questioned about the Kandha's practice of female infanticide. The Kandha celebrate the girlhood from the beginning of her birth to the marriage where puberty means a lot for them. It gives other clan member a chance to kidnap, take away and marry to maintain societal norms alive. Moreover, at the time of Kedu it has been seen that the adolescent boys and girls go out of the village to have mutual consent of their partnership. So given the freedom that they enjoyed, how is that the Kandha engaged in the female infanticide?

Kandha do not give freedom for girls just for a day to enjoy but allow them to get access freely to the dormitory, and follow boys to the forest after worship in the Kedu. While the Sankranti offers the Hindu girls a chance to beautify their bodies with temporary tattoos the tradition of Kandha allows their girls to beautify their faces permanently with conventional tattoos after puberty. It only allows them to be free from the labour relating to cultivation and dealing with the earth for a certain period of time, while the norm of Kandha's changing cultivation is the counter to this festival for many periods.

Ramacharitamanas¹⁷ and Hanuman Jayanti: Hanuman Jayanti celebrated to mark the birth of the god Hanuman. Hanuman, who is popularly known as Bajrangbali to his

¹⁶ While Kandha were the **exogamous** group, there were clan feuds (Nayak 1989), clan warfare (MacPherson, 1842), capture of wife (Pathy, 1976). But contrary to this term Bailey (1960) says there was a rule that in clan feuds women were never to be attacked. Dalton (1972) and Thurston (1909) confused themselves as one says the Kandha kill their daughters and purchase women from other part of the country, while the other say they did not permit to marry outside of the tribe. Many deaths of female children for various natural causes may have created a confusion as like human sacrifice in the minds of colonial ethnographers. Kandha valorize fertility and compare boys and girls as axe and basket (see chapter-2) to work together subscribing to the complementary roles. As sons of Earth Goddess they celebrate the girlhood and puberty it is hard to believe that the Kandha had ever practiced female infanticide.

¹⁷ Tulsidas wrote the Ramcharitamans in Ayodhya in Vikram Samvat 1631 (1574 CE). India was under the reign of Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605 CE) during this period. This also makes Tulsidas a contemporary of William Shakespeare. The exact date of composing the poem is said to be the ninth day of

devotees, is believed to have brought all kind of miseries and the problems of his devotees to an end. Lord Hanuman is also known by other names such as Sankatmochan, Dukhbhanjan, Maruti Nandan, Pawanputra. The Hindu mythology claims that Lord Hanuman, son of Wind-God Pawan, has superhuman-like qualities. He is capable of flying and lifting an entire mountain. He is the devotee of Lord Rama, who fought a battle with Ravana in Lanka. On the auspicious day of Hanuman Jayanti, devotees chant the Hanuman Chalisa, which has 40 verses. Reciting the name of 'Rama' believed to take the devotees closer to Lord Hanuman. On this day, temples of Lord Hanuman are seen to be replete with devotees who gather in front of the temple to offer special prayers and chant mantras and Sundar Kaand paath. Most of the devotees observe a day long fast in order to show their devotion to the Lord on Hanuman Jayanti.

In a very dramatic way when non-Kandha celebrates, the Ramacharitamanas and Hanuman Jayanti several Kandhas do participate in it. Some say that the Kandha tribe has ancestral genealogical connections to the Monkey god. There are folk songs and literature too available in this regard. So having this connection the celebration cannot be avoided. Hanuman is also one of the totemic gods of Kandha, and some who are classified under the Mankdia Kandha category live in forest and always survive within the forest. This also connects them with the history behind Lord Sri Rama the hero of Ramayan and how

Navami of the month of Chaitra, which is the birthday of Sri Rama in Ayodhya. The Ramcharitamanas is written in vernacular Awadhi language, some consider the core of the work to be a poetic retelling of the events of Valmiki's Sanskrit epic Ramayana. The Valmiki Ramayana is centered on the narrative of Sri Rama, the scion of the family tree of King Raghu of the Sun Dynasty, the crown prince of Ayodhya and is considered in Hindu tradition as the seventh Avatar of Vishnu. However, the Ramacharitmanas is by no means a word-to-word copy of the Valmiki Ramayana nor an abridged re-telling of the latter. Ramcharitamanas has elements from many other Ramayanas written earlier in Sanskrit and other Indian dialects as well as stories from Puranas. Tulsidas himself never mentions Ramcharitamanas as being a retelling of Valmiki Ramayana. He calls the epic Ramcharitamanas as the story of Sri Rama, that was stored in the mind (manasa) of Shiva before he narrated the same to his wife Parvati, and he claims to have received the story through his guru, Narharidas. Tulsidas was a naïve (acheta) child and the story was stored in his mind (manasa) for long before he wrote it down as Ramcharitamanas. Some understand this passage of the Ramcharitamanas to mean that Tulsidas at first could not grasp the story fully as he was a naïve young boy. His guru graciously repeated it again and again so that he could understand and remember it. Then he narrated the story and named it Ramcharitmanas as Shiva himself called it. The epic poem is, therefore, also referred to as Tulsikrit Ramayana (literally, The Ramayana composed by Tulsidas).

The Ramcharitamanas is a masterpiece of vernacular literature. Some believe it to represent a challenge to the dominance of high-class Brahmanical Sanskrit, echoing the revolt of Buddha against Brahmanical elitism. However, this interpretation appears faulty as Tulsidas himself was a Brahmin and often talks very highly of the Brahmins in Ramcharitamanas and other books written by him. It was the attempt of Tulsidas to reconcile the different stories of Sri Rama and to bring the story within the reach of the common man.

the Hanuman helped him to rescue his wife Sita. Therefore, Kandha are believed to be the tribal people who helped the Lord Sri Rama, *banara jati* (community of monkeys) which is slowly transferred into *vana jati* (community of forest) later referred to as a tribe. So in every year with the help of Kandha, especially the non-Kandha of Nuagaon town arrange the Ramacharitamahas from Rama Navami to Hanuman Jayanti celebrations which are organized in a grand manner. On these occasions some Brahmin Pandits who are well versed in Sanskrit *slokas* render eloquently the story of Lord Sri Rama and Hanuman and interpret the same for the understanding of common man.

From the above discussion it is clear that celebrations of some non-Kandha Hindu festivals coincide with traditional tribals festivals and identification with the deities. While the non-Kandha celebrate these festivals they draw the attention of the tribes such that the tribes participate and revise or reinterpret their traditional deities and festivals also. Therefore, the Kandhas are coming closer to Hinduism resulting in gradual distancing from the animist traditions. However, conversion to Christianity is altogether a different matter in comparison to Hinduization. The main agenda or intentions behind are very indirect and surreptitious; the Kandha who would be having no interest initially in Sanskrit *slokas* due to their inability to understand the language in course of time do show some interest when exposed repeatedly and once impressed of its elegance and they seek the help of Brahmin accepting his superiority. With this the power relations contained in the caste system will get established and the Kandha come under the control of the higher caste people, as we had seen the instances with reference to sanskritisation. These Hindu traditions are being the center of attraction have been effectively modifying the traditional practices and the age old culture of the tribe. Not only these have given them alternative but also “civilized life” to live and are convinced that the changed life is more rational than the former life. There are some common ideas or common practices though the non-Kandhas dominate the Kandha religion or Kandha get attracted to the dominant group through religion. Whereas beliefs in nature have been overtaken by the belief in dramatic Hindu tales. Sat Sangha and other major Hindu organizations such as Vanavasi Kalyani Parishad maintain a parallel space dividing people from the bottom of Indian caste hierarchy. They do not dispute, on the one hand Kandha are differentiated but on the other hand, they integrate the tribal into Hindu fold according them significant

position in religious activities. For example, in this regard the Danda Yatra which highlights the relationship between the nature and the people in an abstract sense Kandha get a cognizable place. The latter participate and enact dramas to entertain the Kandhamal people in the scorching summer, but in the process its original significance is lost. Now it is turning out to be a purely Hindu festival where we can even see a non-vegetarian offering on the final day, i.e., in Kali Puja. In a dramatic and filmy way Hindu God and Goddesses play an important role in society, portraying Kandha as lower in social order and how they can achieve higher social status by not practicing buffalo sacrifice in Kedu festival. Above all the Hindu festivals systematically covers a maximum number of days in a year leaving no time and space for the Kandha to observe their own rituals. Hence contradiction arises in terms of its practice and the participation of the whole tribe as one community.

Maa Pattakhanda and other tribal goddesses

Literally, the term Pattakhanda means front sword or key or main sword. Worship of Maa Pattakhanda suggests an adoration of weapons. Since the remote past the prevalent belief in Odia Hindu society is that weapons are considered to be the goddess Durga. The deity of Pattakhanda installed at Balliguda, Mahasingi, and elsewhere a piece of crude stone, having no shape of any living being represents her. In the present case at Balliguda a sword has been placed as the deity of Pattakhanda. It can be presumed that the local chief presented the sword many years ago. Further, it also indicates that the deity was regarded as deity of war in the remote past and gradually people considered her as the guardian deity of the village Balliguda as well as the region. A man of non-Brahmin (Patra), mostly from Kshatriya caste is employed to provide regular worship to the deity of Pattakhanda and others as well in the premises. Except Balliguda, in other places a curved pole named as Chhatkhamba is fixed in the ground to which the sacrificial animal is tethered. It reminds us of the worship of Khambeswari by the tribal Kandhas in the bygone days. It seems *khamba* or *stamba* (pillar) was worshipped as Shakti or Durga in tribal areas known as Stambhesvari or Khambheswari. In some places stone pillar was also worshipped (see Swain 2009:42).

In Odisha, the festival of Bali *jatra* of Sonepur is celebrated annually in the month of Aswina (September-October). In this festival animals are sacrificed to worship Samaleswari, Sureswari, and Khambeswari deities. Bali means the sacrifice of animal (Barik, 2009:160–162).

According to the belief, the original seat of Pattakhanda is located Jarasinga in Bolangir district from Raja of Mahasingi brought the deity first to his capital, and this could happen due to the close proximity between Mahasingi and Balliguda. In the past Balliguda was not having a prominent status. So British authorities built a bridge on the river near Mahasingi and a rest-shed to camp there. The bridge still exists. The British government set up the Forest Range Office, Taluk Office and Police Office in the last quarter of 19th century at Balliguda. This enabled the outsiders to migrate to Balliguda and settle there permanently. These non-tribal immigrants who are mostly from the plains started worshipping the tribal goddess Pattakhanda, and then the tribes also started following the non-tribes. The goddess is being offered *prasad* two times a day and *arati* (light offering) in the evening, which was introduced by higher caste of Hindus but other tribal systems are still prevalent there.

Even the non-Brahmin priests are not changed till now. A beautiful temple has been built for the deity, golden and silver ornaments are used to decorate her. Nuakhai, Kandul parbu and Dasahara festival are being observed at the Pattakhanda *Pitha*, Balliguda. Dasahara is observed with much pump and gaiety. A mud figure of Mahisa Mardini Durga is made on this occasion in the premises of the Pattakhanda temple and Brahmin priests worship the deity following the Hindu traditions for four days i.e., from the 7th to 10th day of bright fortnight in the month of Aswin every year. Kandul parbu is observed for a day in the month of Phalguna as decided by the temple committee. Till the observation of Kandul parbu people of this region strictly do not eat *kandul* (*arhar dal*).

In Madulipada a sword known as Pattakhanda kept in the cavity located at the base of a banyan tree is brought down and worshipped by Deheri, the priest and a goat is sacrificed as an offering. Then the blood of the sacrificed animal is mixed with the seeds and distributed among all to be sown next year. But we cannot find any link between the

Pattakhanda of Mudulipada and Balliguda. In case of latter, there exists a legendary link between Pattakhanda of Jarasinga of Bolangir district and also Mahasingi.

In this Pattakhanda tribal festival as discussed above Sanskrit elements are found. The festival is observed on the full moon day in the Hindu month of Chaitra (February-March) by both caste-Hindus as well as tribal people. It can be placed closer to the ideal tribal tradition. The incorporation of tribal deity into the Hindu fold may be viewed as sanskritization through the process of universalization. Out of those festivals mentioned above, Thakurani *yatra* is widely prevalent among the tribal groups. Now this *yatra* can be considered as part of the Kandhamal folk tradition, owing to the fact that it is less sanskritized and it bears greater proximity to the ideal tribal tradition. It is our endeavor to show here that the transformation of a cultural element of the tribal society is taking place by being absorbed into the regional Hindu society.

Now in most of the cases, those cultural items transformed are placed with a distinct position, in the existing cultural hierarchy of the culture area. Such transformation has occurred without any structural change with reference to the tribal social status within the existing social structure of the region as a whole. The relations between the caste-Hindus and tribals is remaining unchanged despite the fact that caste Hindus are celebrating the tribal festivals and vice-versa.

Hinduism in its codified form is different from the tribal religion in many respects. First, they adopted tribal deities and then they started sanskritizing the deity and rituals by constructing temples for them. The temple of Maa Pattakhanda is a striking example of such development whereby she was enshrined as Pattakhanda Devi in that temple. In sum, various tribal and non-tribal elements consisting the Kandha culture frequently mixed up with each other. These have formed a kind of religio-cultural phenomenon brought about, to a certain extent, an emotional unity that integrity of diverse people. Here in Balliguda and Nuagoan the festival has united the Kandha and Patra of this region to act as protector of the cultural value from alien religion.

Gradually Pattakhanda, the presiding deity of Balliguda, gained extraordinary fame and rose to the status of the state deity of Ghumusar Kingdom just like Jagannath of Ganga

kingdom in the coastal Orissa. The worship of tribal deity was adapted by various kings in Kandhamal area perhaps as a political strategy to win over the local subjects in their respective areas. In other words, the basic aim of the feudal patronage of tribal cults was to maintain political supremacy and to retain peace plan and stability of the kingdom. This was a well thought about plan of the Kings of Ghumusar. Thus Baraladevi, Thakurani, Maa Barali are worshipped in Kandhamal and Boud kingdoms respectively. In Kalahandi kingdom under Bhanjas, the deity of tribal origin is still worshipped as Manikeshwari. The Hindu colonialization of the tribal socio-cultural life has not only subjugated them both in terms of economics and political but also took away their dominant cults with an assurance of giving national statuses to their deities. They built temples for these deities and introduced Hindu way of worship by appointing priests and so on. This was certainly a new dimension added to the tribal religious tradition since there was no known temple in honor of these mother Goddesses. Sanskrit *slokas* were chanted (these are still chanted) while offering *punji* to them. All these made them very popular among the caste-Hindus and also added to a great extent to the success of their long reign. This religious merit of mother Goddess has created a lasting symbol of their glory.

After the coming in of the Patra, the rulers were able to broaden and enforce their customary laws taking upon themselves the role of representatives of these mother goddesses. By doing so, they used to say to the people that they who had no control over the problems after coming to the area, they could take care of themselves. Precisely it is the state of affairs as regards to Maa Pattakhanda; she would solve all the problems if she is satisfied. For this reason, probably there has been no objection for the animal sacrifice in the temple premises otherwise such sacrifices are not allowed anywhere in the Hindu temples of Odisha. The ideology prescribes that people are the servants of the deity. In the name of goddesses of the tribes the Bhanja kings ruled over the local subjects¹⁸. The main occupation of these tribes was to collect fruits, roots from the forest. Now after instituting the worship mother goddess who represents the society at large all people of various ethnic backgrounds living there became one so far as the deity is concerned. She

¹⁸ See Panigrahi (1981) and Panda (1987:39)

became the source of unity mainly between the tribes and caste-Hindus in Kandhamal. This way the tribal deities are Hinduized as a form of Durga, the consort of Lord Shiv which may be termed as universalization.

It is a tribal festival found mainly in Kandhamal culture area which may have an origin in some place and developed into a regional festival in course of time throughout the Kandhamal region irrespective of caste and creed. In other words, it has been absorbed into regional Hindu tradition and can easily be placed closer to the ideal Hindu tradition. It has been sanskritized to a great extent with linking it to Durga of Hindu pantheon and thus the tribal festival got sanskritized to a limited extent.

Dance and Music: Happiness

We can't imagine Kandha without dance and song in their everyday life. They can survive without food but not without dance and music; songs are part and parcel of their living and there is no occasion either birth or death, and invariably no festival or religious occasion as well as social life will pass away without a song. And they have numerous songs of their own composition in their repertoire of entertainment without borrowing from any source as now-a-days it is not uncommon to find film songs on the occasions of non-tribes in Odisha. These are neither written nor documented but still survive in every Kandha's mouth.

Music and sounds of Message: The non-verbal communication mostly that takes place in music and sound is one of the most important aspect of Kandha culture. Only a Kandha or people surrounding it can understand what exactly is happening in the village whether it is a marriage, birth, death or any other religious ceremony by listening to the sound of the drum and music. On each occasion different musical sounds are produced which indicate the kind of activity that is going on. In Kedu festival when the buffalo is taken to the neighbouring village, brought back and taken to the sacrificial site etc., would have different music.¹⁹

Honesty and integrity among Kandha

¹⁹ Please see the details in Chapter 4.

The non-Kandha society perceives that Kandha are very loyal in character to the family, fellow member and who that trust them; it shows how they display their concern for the community and the whole of society. It is attributed to their collective life as hunter gatherers once-upon-a-time and developing the sense of oneness by sharing everything among themselves and humanness. For them the ritual is meant to prevent or overcome disease, natural calamity and bringing in prosperity, good health, richness, good crop and happiness. It means that the Kandha tribe never wanted to be a cause of any unhappiness in their vicinity. They want a peaceful and healthy population, and ultimately the world should be happy for them.

Change and development

The impact of modernization, planned development interventions of the government and the non-government agencies have brought development in the areas of health and sanitization, education, agriculture, communication and infrastructure. Through the Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) and the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), the government has implemented various welfare initiatives to bring about socio-economic development in Kandha over the last six decades. These institutions have implemented various socio-economic development programmes and as a result the Kandhas are adopting the modern agricultural practices, by using High Yielding Varieties of seeds, better irrigation facilities; they also use chemical fertilizers. Some of them have adopted horticulture, poultry and fishery schemes for their livelihoods thus improved their economy. Since education is the most important input for the socio-economic development, the Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled (SC) Development Department has been running a number of educational institutions like Ekalavya Model Residential School (EMRS), 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 brought noticeable changes in their life style, dress pattern and beliefs. Kandha community used to have a high infant mortality rate because they believed strongly in their ancient healing

practices. However, as a result of increased awareness and the establishment of hospitals, the infant mortality rate has been steadily decreasing.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) and the Odisha State ST and SC Development Department are hosting a live demonstration of arts and crafts from various tribes, including the Kandha tribe. They (Kandha) are demonstrating their traditional skills in wood carving, painting, and basketry by participating in these activities. SCSTRTI and the ST and SC Development Department have also assisted them in exhibiting their traditional dances and songs and promoting their cultural identity through the National Tribal Dance Festival and the State Level Annual Adivasi Mela.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, has developed a Museum of Tribal Arts and Artifacts in the premises of SCSTRTI, CRPF Square, Bhubaneswar, for the preservation of material culture of various tribes under the auspices of the ST and SC Development Department. In the Tribal Museum, personal adornments and belongings, portraits, tools, weapons of offense and protection, agriculture and household items, dance and musical instruments, and dhokra objects of the Kandha tribe have been displayed in various show cases that represent their colorful way of life.

Conclusion

This is the general background of the Kandha tribe in which the present study is located. This chapter has provided the details about the Kandha tribe and its sub-divisions, problems with regard to their ethnic identity, social organization, political and economic life besides the religious practices and so on. The following chapter provides the details of Kandhamal district, Balliguda region and Rajaghara, the village where intense anthropological fieldwork was carried out.

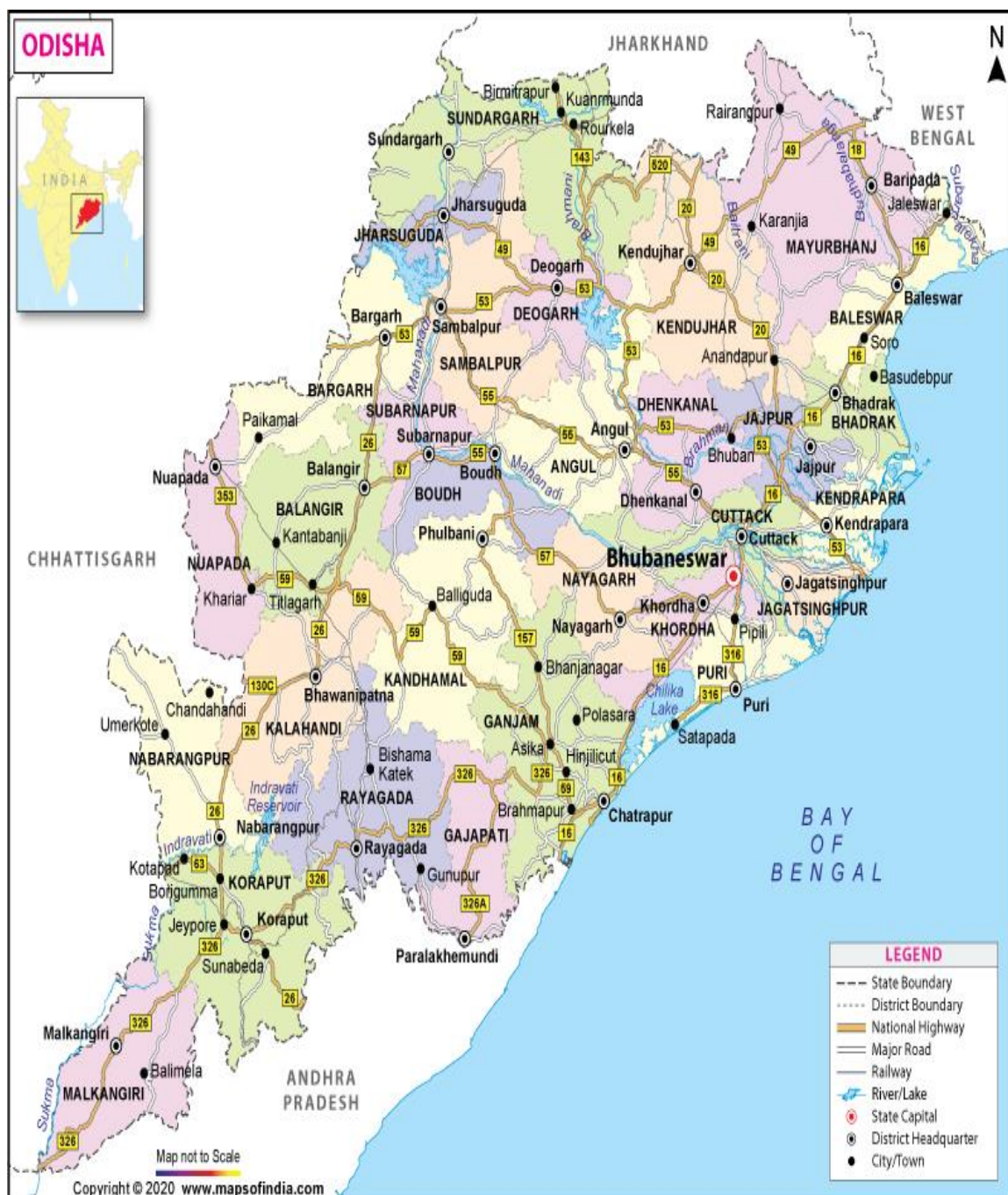
**THE LOCAL SETTING: A PROFILE OF KANDHAMAL DISTRICT AND
RAJAGHARA VILLAGE**

Introduction

As stated in the Introduction, the present study starts from micro-level observations and moves to the regional level analysis of the interconnections among the ritual, politics and economy of the Kandha tribal society. Accordingly, it focuses a Kandha village called Rajaghara in K. Nuagaon Tahasil/Block of Balliguda Sub-Division in Kandhamal district. This village is a ward or hamlet of the revenue village called Kanjamendi which is located at a distance of three kilometers. As the former is a Kandha village while the latter is a multi-ethnic village. Before discussing the village profile, this chapter provides a brief description of the geographical area, that is, Kandhamal district followed by Balliguda Sub-Division and the Balliguda and K. Nuagaon Tahasils and Blocks there in. The details of Rajaghara village include settlement pattern, the demographic, education, economic and health information collected through household census. The village represents a typical Desia Kandha at foothills that practice both settled as well as shifting cultivation. They also have close contact with urban dwellers of Desia Kandha and non-Kandha as well in Kanjamendi village and Nuagaon town.

In general, the Kandha tribal communities of Odisha have been inhabiting inhospitable areas as said before for the times immemorial and remained more or less isolated from the rest of the world. Facing constant challenge of cultural invasion, political and economic domination the communities continued to exist through precarious socio-economic-political conditions over the years. It has a long history and the present situation cannot be comprehended without considering the past. Fortunately, some accounts of Kandha that the colonial administration recorded from the early 19th century help us going back into the past of Kandha, however, biased these accounts could be. With this in mind, the present chapter begins with a brief history of the Kandhamal

Map 1: STATE OF ODISHA



©<https://www.google.com/search?q=odisha+map>

district which came into existence very recently; it also speaks of the political sensitivity of Kandha in contemporary politico-economic context.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AREA – KANDHAMAL DISTRICT

At the time of independence, Odisha had 13 districts and the Kandha inhabited four of them: Phulbani, Ganjam, Koraput and Kalahandi. However, a majority of Kandha lived in Phulbani district. After the reorganization of the districts, the state of Odisha has 30 districts and most of the Kandha tribal population is found in Kandhamal district (originally Phulbani district) (see Map 1). As per 2011 census, the total population of Kandhamal district in rural areas is 660,831 which constitute 90.14 % population of the district. The males and females are 323,523 and 337,308 respectively, and the sex ratio of this population is 1037 females per 1000 males.¹ The Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes constitute 53.58 % (3,92,820) and 15.76 % (1,15,544) of the total district population (Govt. of Odisha 2011).

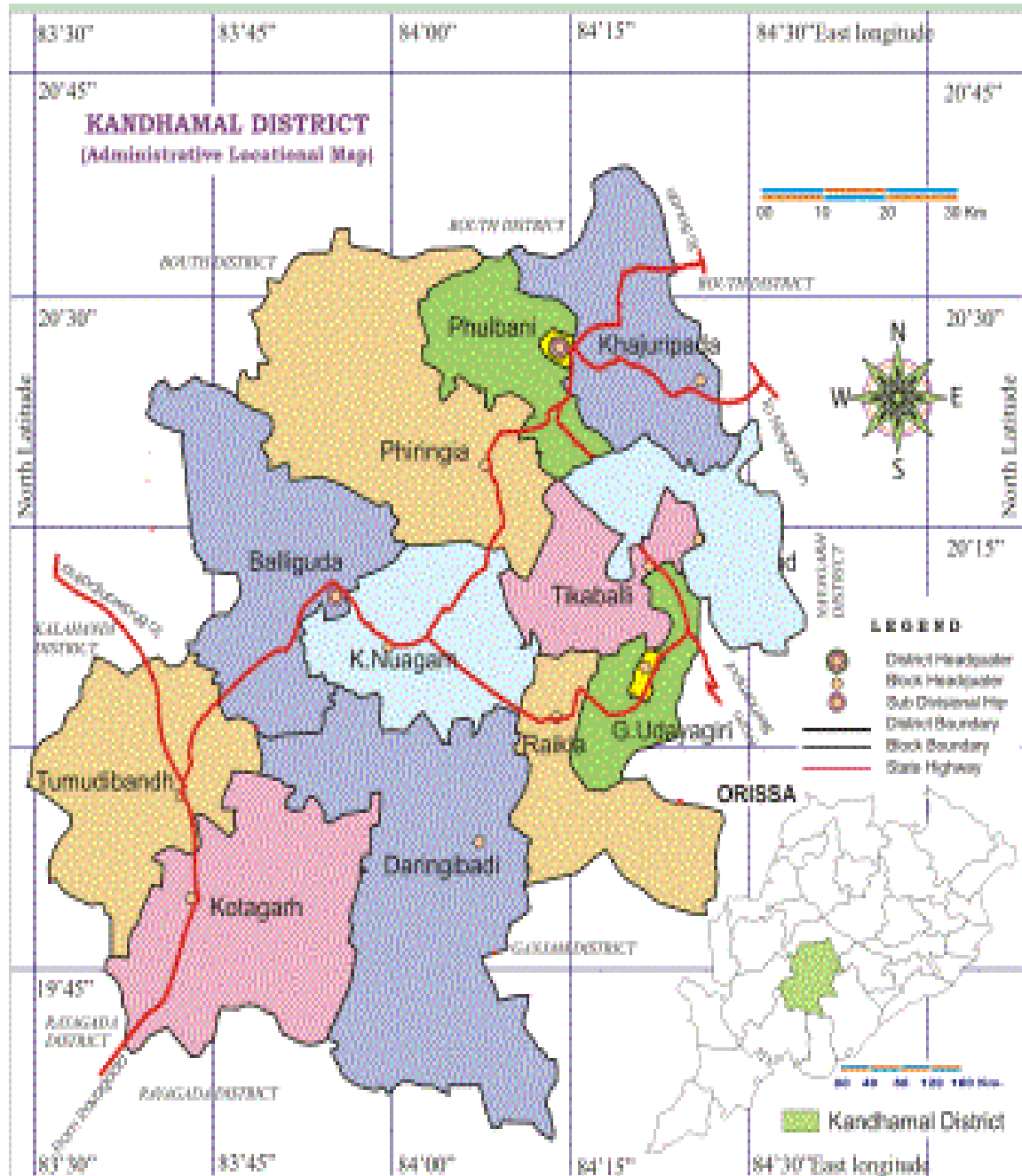
Kandhamal district is located in Western Orissa and the districts that surround it include: Nayagarh in the North-East, Ganjam in the East, Gajapati in the South-East, Rayagada in the South, and Kalahandi, Bolangir and Boudh in the West, North-West and North respectively (see Map No. 1). This district has two sub-divisions namely Balliguda and Phulbani with the district headquarters at Phulbani. These sub-divisions cover the larger part of the hill ranges and plateau markedly separated by steep mountains and high range of hills standing crisscrossed with narrow valleys, deep gullies that host seasonal hill streams and small rivers.

The Colonial Period: The British, having annexed Ghumusar on November 3, 1835 from the Ghumusar King, took over Balliguda (Uttar Khemundi) region in phases during 1835 and 1880 by subjugating local hill chiefs. The Kandhamal was constituted in 1841

¹ According to 2011 Census India's sex ratio is 940 females per 1000 males, and it is 979 for the state of Orissa.

as a sub-division of the then Angul district and continued as such till 1.4.1936 but subsequently it became a scheduled area under the Scheduled District Act, 1874. In the

Map 2: KANDHAMAL DISTRICT



©<https://www.google.com/search?q=kandhamal+map>

year 1936, after formation of Orissa Province, Kandhamal sub-division was separated from Angul and attached to Balliguda Division under Ganjam District. Later in 1949 together with Balliguda Agency and Boudhh, it became the Boudh-Kandhamal district with Phulbani as its administrative headquarters. After taking over Uttar Ghumusar (G. Udayagiri area) and Uttar Khemundi (Balliguda area), these were placed under the administrative control of the Collector of Ganjam district which was under the Madras Presidency. This area was administered as an Agency Area which remained under the administration of the British until India attained independence in 1947.

Since Independence: After independence, in January 1948, Kandhamal was amalgamated and merged with the erstwhile princely state of Boudh to form the district of Phulbani. However, on 1st January 1994, the present Kandhamal District was carved out by dividing parent District Phulbani into two sub-divisions viz., Phulbani and Balliguda. “But the Kandha-Pano ethnic conflict started on 19 February 1994 soon after the district’s reconstitution. The Kandhas claiming their unique ethnic identity requested that the name of the district should be changed from Phulbani to Kandhamal. Realizing the severity of the situation and the feelings of the Kandhas, Biju Pattanaik, Odisha’s then Chief Minister, came forward to agree to their demands. As a result, the district was rechristened as Kandhamal vide the Notification of Government of Odisha No DRC/136194, 44250/R dated the 13th October 1994”² (District Gazette 1999: iii-vii). If history is taken into consideration, the present Kandhamal district is constituted of some segments of three erstwhile principalities of Boudh, Ghumusar and Kalahandi.

Kandhamal district (see Map 2) is located at the geographic coordinates of 20.47°N by 84.23°E. Its headquarters Phulbani and its subdivisions - Phulbani and Balliguda are well connected with cities like Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and Berhampur etc., and other major towns with road links. However, interior villages in the district are not properly connected with the motorable and all-weather roads. Both government and private bus

² Nayak (2004:75-78)

owners run buses daily to some of the small towns in the district but most of the interior villages on hills can be reached on foot only.

Climate and Rainfall: The climate of this area is warm, humid and sub-tropical. According to the information collected from rainfall station at Balliguda, the average rainfall in this area is estimated at 1360 mm in a year. The minimum temperature is around two degrees Celsius in winter and it goes up to 35° Celsius in summer. The summer season starts towards the end of March and concludes by May. During this time the mercury level reaches up to 36° C and given the high degree of humidity, the heat turns out to be unbearable. The monsoon, in the region is allied with continuous rainfall and it starts from June and goes till September. This season turns to be a boom for the farmers as they are mostly dependent on the rain water for agriculture. The autumn season records a moderate climate across the region. It starts from September and continues till November. The winter begins from the end of November and ends by February. The lowest temperature recorded is around 6° C to 11° C and sometimes it falls to 2° C associated with intense cold. During the months of July-August, the villages records yearly flood due to the incessant rainfall of around 250 cm. The wind speed in the area varies from 4-7 km/h. Such fluctuations in climate affect the soils and crops. During summer the soil turns dry and it checks the process of cultivation. However, with the coming of monsoon, it soon revives its wetness. Again during the floods, erosion is a major concern across the villages. The soil seemed fertile looking at the production of paddy.

Flora and Fauna: In the Balliguda Forest Range of the Kandhamal district, there are a large number and varieties of plant species and trees. The most common ones are: *sal*, bamboo, mango, *mahua*, and tamarind which also have commercial and economic value. The forest provides everything to the Kandha: the wood for household, agricultural and hunting implements; fiber, and leaves, herbs and roots for indigenous medicines; mushroom, fruits, seeds and tubers for food. The forest also houses a number of animal species consisting tiger, bear, rabbit, pig and deer, and birds such as peacock, parrot and hen according to the people.

The surroundings of a hamlet remain mostly under the cover of paddy fields and forest on all sides. A few bamboo grooves can be noticed in the entrance of the village and huge trees mostly occupy the sides of the village road. Most of the settlement area seemed barren without any tall trees; however, a few households are found dependent on the trees available in their vicinity for wood. Each household has a small kitchen garden in its back yard consisting of a variety of leafy vegetables like spinach, chilies, coriander, cauliflower, etc. The villagers are not accustomed to cultivating vegetables in abundance due to the animal menace. No flowering plants can be noticed in the villages and the trees available are mainly to serve their need of fire wood rather than fruits and berries.

Population in the area: Kandha constitute the important tribal population of the region. The Desia Kandha are found in and around Kandhamal district, whereas the Kutia Kandhas are mostly seen in Balliguda subdivision of Kandhamal district. The Dongria Kandha inhabit Koraput district of Odisha. The Kutia Kandha still continue the traditional life and retain their primitive tribal customs while others have made changes to some extent. Although they have acquired a tincture of Hinduism over the years, due to their close proximity with the Hindu caste populations of the plains.

While Kandha being the dominant population in the region, there is a sizable non-tribal Odia population besides a marginal section of non-Odia population as well who are basically immigrated for business purpose or in connection with their service to their employees. These are largely concentrated in the towns while the interior parts of the district are predominantly inhabited by Kandha only. Balliguda and Nuagaon the two important towns of Kandhamal district have mixed populations of Kandha tribe, Gauda, Bidhani, and Sundi who are classified as castes under the Backward Class category besides the Teli, Brahmin, and Karan which are under general category. There are Pano, Keuta and Dom also who are under the scheduled caste category.

The Languages: The populations of Kandhamal district speak different languages. For example, those closer to Boudh district speak Baudia, a dialect of Odia; those closer to

Daspalla in Nayagarh district speak Daspallia and those closer to Ganjam speak Ganjamia, another variant of Odia. The Kandha who inhabit these areas speak respective Odia dialect besides their own language called Kui. The Kandha of Balliguda Block speak the Kui-language besides the Odia. Therefore, Kandha anywhere are bilingual, speaking their mother tongue Kui and the local dialect of Odia.

Balliguda Sub-Division: Within Kandhamal district, the study focuses on Balliguda sub-division. At heights ranging from 300 meters to 1100 meters above the mean sea level, the Balliguda sub-division lies on the plateau. The eastern side of the sub-division consists of large valleys that are well cultivated. This subdivision's hills are a part of the Eastern Ghats. Currently, 336.18 km of forest roads are maintained by the forest division of Phulbani and Balliguda, which serve as an arterial road for reaching the forest, used mainly for the collection of minor forest produce and for increasing communication between small populations³. A network of hills and forests interspersed with small hamlets of the Kandha tribe is the whole of this sub-division. This hilly tract is intersected by streams and rivers in all directions, which run dry after rainfall has ended. The Balliguda Sub-Division has nine administrative units called Tahasils which correspond with nine Blocks namely (1) Balliguda, (2) Kotagarh, (3) Tumudibandh, (4) Daringbadi, (5) K.Nuagaon, (6) Raikia, (7) G.Udayagiri, (8) Tikabali and (9) Chakapad. There is one Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) in this sub-division. Further, Balliguda Sub-Division has three Sub-Treasuries and one is at Balliguda that covers (1) Balliguda and (2) Nuagaon Tahasils/Blocks. A brief account of these towns is presented here under as the Kandha of the present study are concerned with.

Balliguda and Nuagaon Tahasils/Blocks

Balliguda Tahasil/Block: It has an area of 432.28 square kilometers. There are 14 Gram Panchayats with 256 villages in the Block. The total population of the Block is 74,505 according to 2011 Census. While 36,664 is male population, the females are 37,841. It has a sex ratio of 1,038 and a literacy rate of 50.7%. Balliguda Block is well connected

³ See the New District Gazette for 2014-15 data.

by bus with the state headquarters Bhubaneswar and other parts of the state. Balliguda, a small town, which is also the Block headquarter connects the two Blocks by road on either side - Tumudibandh and K. Nuagaon. Tumudibadh is a junction from where one road goes to Bhawanipatna, Kalahandi and another to Muniguda, Rayagada. On the other way from Balliguda towards K. Nuagaon from a junction before two kilometers one road goes to Daringbadi and one to the district headquarter, Phulbani.

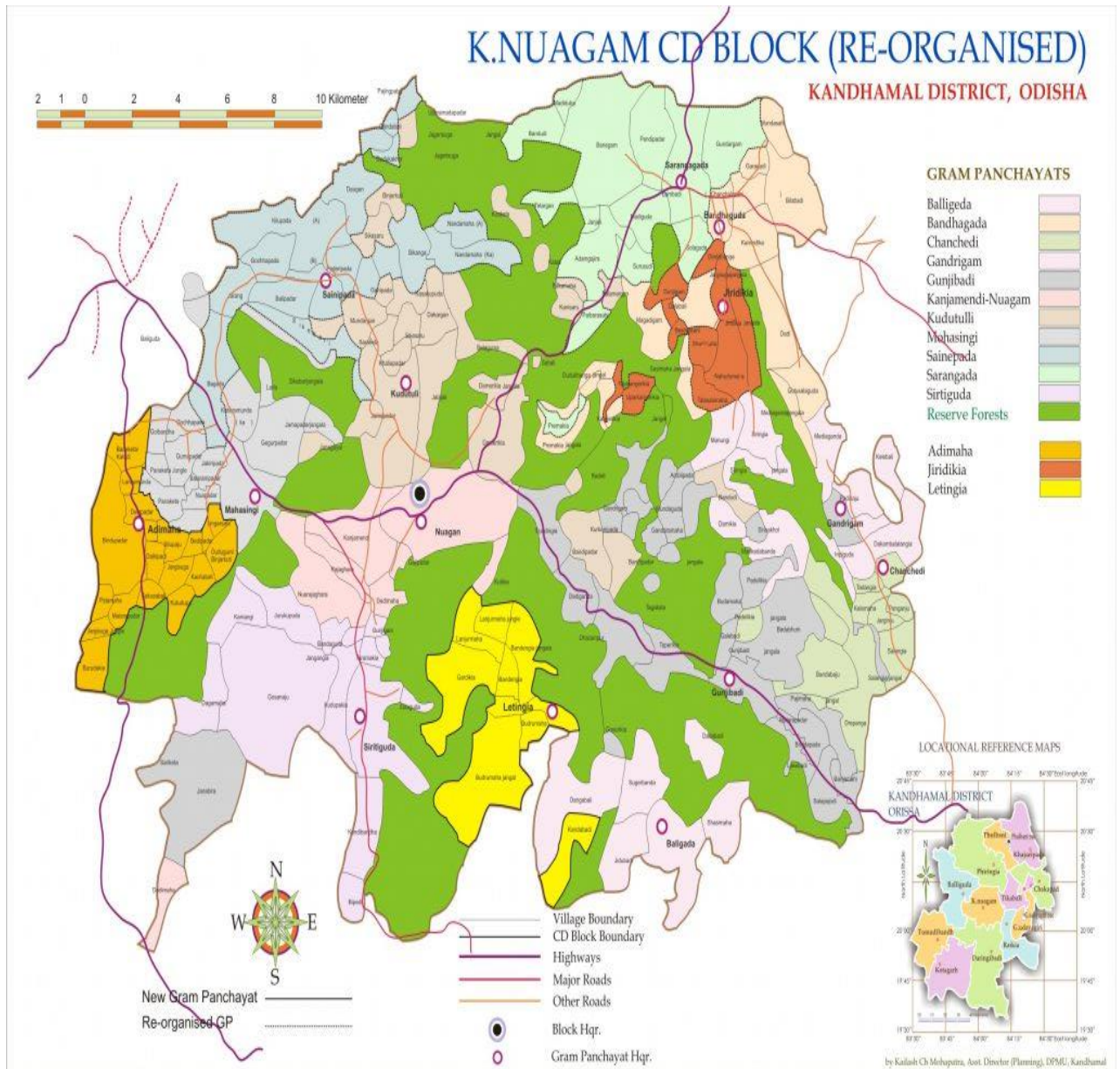
Table 2.1.: Population of Balliguda sub-division and Nuagaon Block

(Percentage in parenthesis)

		Balliguda (Sub-division)	Nuagaon (Block)
Total Population	Persons	591091 (100)	53113 (100)
	Males	289185 (48.9)	25787 (48.5)
	Females	302169 (51.1)	27326 (51.4)
Scheduled Caste Population	Persons	69863 (11.8)	4689 (8.8)
	Males	34373 (5.8)	2318 (4.3)
	Females	35490 (6.0)	2371 (4.4)
Scheduled Tribe Population	Persons	293638 (49.6)	27528 (51.8)
	Males	141859 (23.9)	13159 (24.7)
	Females	151779 (25.6)	14369 (27.0)

Table 2.1 shows the Total population and schedule caste and tribe population of the Balliguda sub-division. It also indicates the population of the Nuagaon Block and scheduled tribe and caste population of the Block where the numbers are high in case of tribe as compared to the schedule caste which is almost half of the total population.

Map 3: K.NUAGAON BLOCK



©<https://www.google.com/search?q=kandhamal+block+ma>

Table 2.2.: Population of Balliguda Sub-division and Nuagaon by Religion

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Religions	Balliguda (sub-division)	Nuagaon (Block)
Hindu	310264 (72.2)	16447 (84.9)
Muslim	1026(0.23)	44 (0.22)
Christian	117155 (27.2)	2730 (14.0)
Sikh	39 (0.009)	1 (0.006)
Buddhist	239 (0.05)	2 (0.01)
Jain	37 (0.008)	2 (0.01)
Other Religions	21 (0.004)	0
Religion not stated	766 (0.17)	138 (0.71)
Total	429547 (100)	19364 (100)

The Table 2.2 on the religion of the populations in Balliguda sub-division Nuagaon Block. shows highest percent of Hindus (72.2) in the sub-division, while it is 84.9 percent in Nuagaon Block. Christians 27.2 and 14.0 percent respectively.

K. Nuagaon Tahasil/Block: Nuagaon Block (see Map 3) is spread over 403.11 square kilometers with 11 Gram Panchayats and 213 villages that have a population of 53,113 according to 2011 Census. Nuagaon town, the Block headquarters, is at 12 kilometers away from the Balliguda town. The number of male is 25,787 as against 27,326 females and the sex ratio stands at 1, 066. As per 2011 Census there are 13,171 households in total inhabiting the Nuagaon Block.

Balliguda town and the Services Available: Balliguda town is the sub-divisional headquarters located at a distance of 75 kilometers from Phulbani, the district headquarters of Kandhamal. The town has been recently declared as Notified Area

Council (NAC).⁴ It is 258 kilometers away from the headquarters of the state. The nearest railway station for Balliguda is Muniguda, which is 95 kilometers away, and Berhmapur is at distance of 169 kilometers.

There is a sound infrastructure under the state government services such as Forest Range office, a Revenue Bungalow, Community health center and primary health center, a police station, Government and Non-governmental organizations, both at Balliguda and K. Nuagaon Block and Tahasil. Balliguda has a court, college, public school, Carmel (private) school, a masjid, multiple banks, multiple churches, a sub-collector's office and ITDA as a sub-division in addition to the one at K. Nuagaon.

Services at Nuagaon: These include some government offices, Block office and the Mee Seva Centre, Police Station, and Forest Range office etc. Ashram Girls' School, Government, High School for Boys and Girls, Public School, Center for Teacher education are located in Nuagaon to meet the educational needs. There is also a Primary Health Centre of the state government. The town also has a Hindu temple, many Churches and schools which are run by them and NGOs, *kirana* shops, tailor's shops, a wine shop, xerox and internet center, travel agency for booking buses, and a couple of chicken shops. For other services people go to Balliguda to avail the bus facilities for traveling to Berhmapur, Bhubaneswar, Phulbani, Tikabali, Daringbadi etc. Balliguda is at a distance of 12 kilometers from Nuagaon and 13 kilometers from Rajaghara, where a large part of the fieldwork for the study has been carried out, and one has to take a bus to reach the town from Nuagaon, since there is no direct service from Kanjamendi/Rajaghara.

⁴ It is also called Nagar Panchayat; it is an urban centre with a population more than 11,000 and less than 25,000 inhabitants.

**Map 4: KANJAMENDI PANCHAYAT AND NEIGHBORING VILLAGES OF
RAJAGHARA VILLAGE**



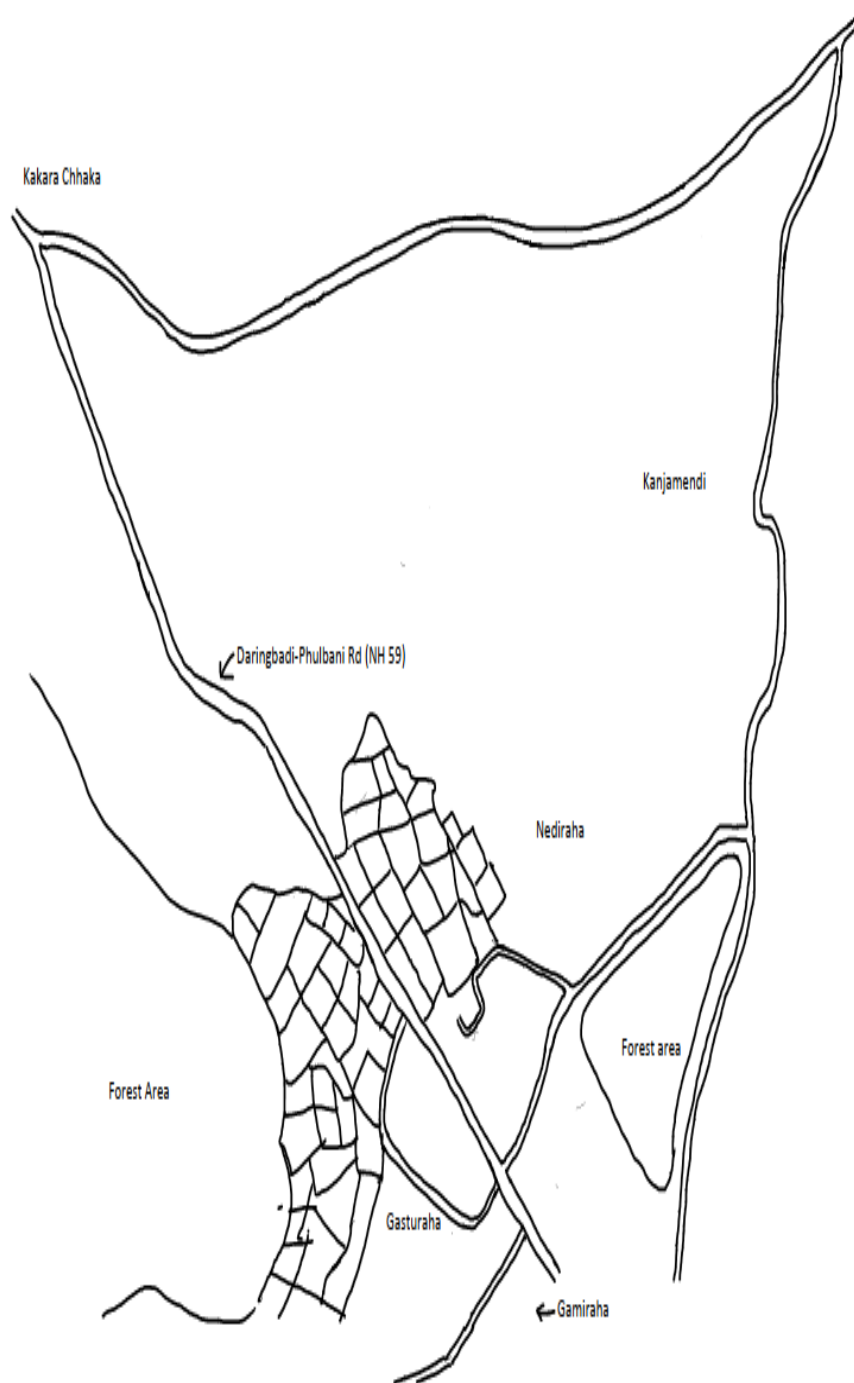
KANJAMENDI GRAM PANCHAYAT

Situated two kilometer away from the Nuagoan town, the Kanjamendi Grama Panchayat is one of the 14 Grama Panchayat of the Block. It is 90 kilometer away from Phulbani district headquarters. It is spread in 605 hectares having a population of 1,762 according to 2011 census. The number of households are approximately 469.

For the Kandhas of Rajaghara village, most of their daily needs are met at Kanjamendi and Nuagaon town, an important center where services which are not available at Kanjamendi are available. In Kanjamendi, there is a small market place and most of the shops are owned by non-Kandha who purchase the consumable goods of daily needs at Balliguda town in the larger market and then over Kanjamendi to sell them in retail. The buyers are mostly Kandhas who come from Rajaghara, Gadrikia, Lanjumaha, Gahangia, and other nearby villages. These shops are not more than a dozen that provide food provisions, condiments, chicken, snacks etc., catering to the needs of the local villagers. This village also has two churches both Catholic and Baptist denominations.

Kanjamendi, formerly of Kandha, Pano and Patra was a traditional village. But when the colonial government set up local administrative establishments, market came in this village and it became a multi-ethnic village as several non-Kandha immigrated. In Kanjamendi, there were few Patras who used to buy turmeric from Kandha, but now they have migrated to Nuagaon in search of better prospects and to build greater business and other networks. There was unused land between Puruna Nuagaon and Kanjamendi where the government office including Block office, school, medical establishment have come up after the independence and gradually it became a town with a majority of Patra and non-Kandha population. Although this area of Kanjamendi is close to the main road, there are numerous clusters of different caste populations, including Kandha, Pano, many of them are Christian who attend four churches that gradually emerged. Janavikas and Divya Jyoti are two NGOs operating in the village. There is also one primary English medium school. Gahangia is a neighbouring village in Kanjamendi Panchayat besides Rajaghara.

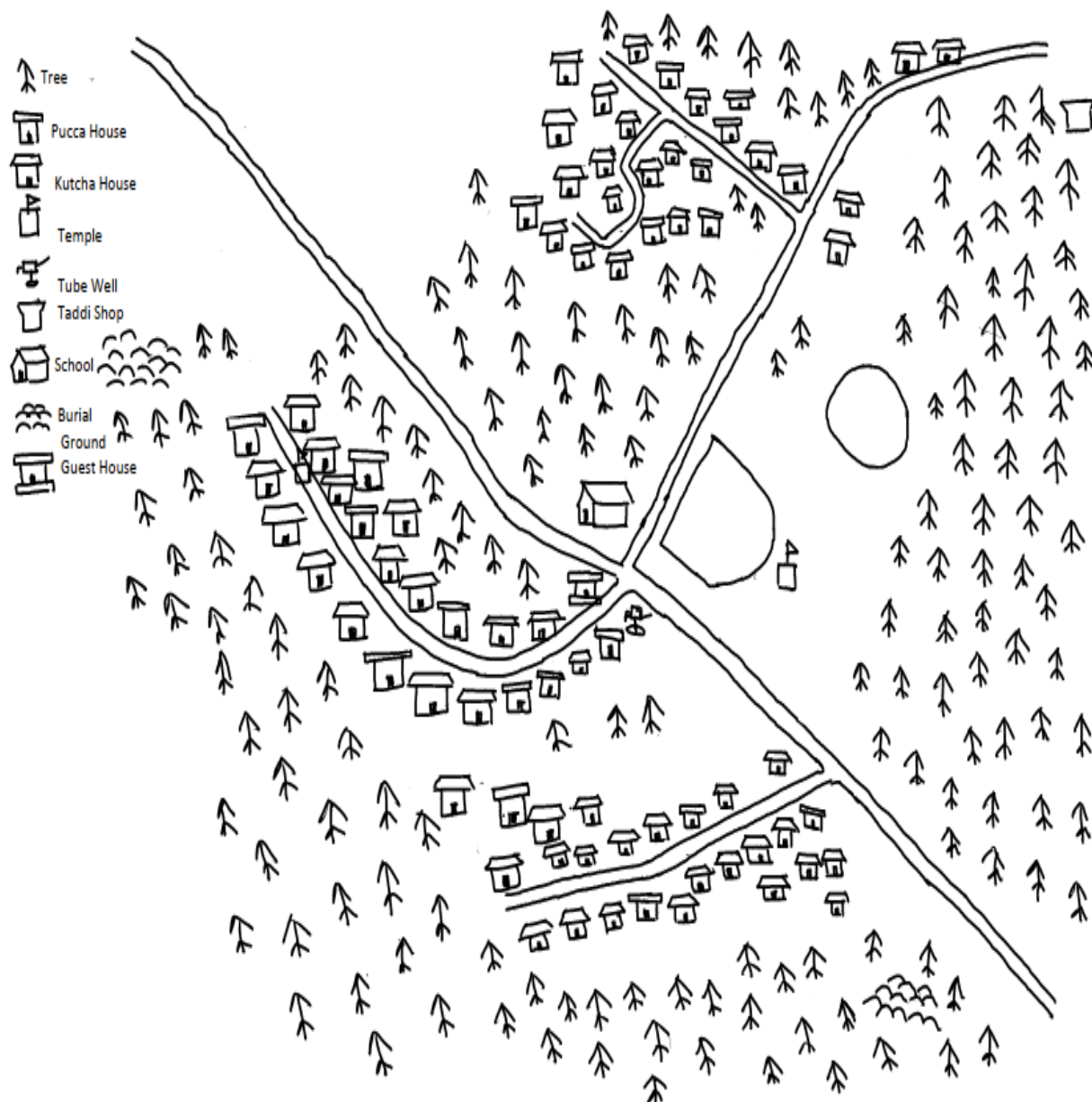
Map 5: RAJAGHARA VILLAGE VIEW



VillageMap-Rajaghara Page 1



Map 6: RAJAGHARA VILLAGE



New Section 2 Page 1



RAJAGHARA VILLAGE

Location: Rajaghara village is situated on the road (NH 59) between Balliguda town, and Simanbadi, another small town. The former is located along the national highway, Gopalpur – Raipur Road (NH-217), and the latter at a distance of 26 kilometers from Rajaghara. This village comes under the Nuagaon Block and it is nearly five kilometers away from the Nuagaon town. It is actually one of the wards of Kanjamendi, one of the Grama Panchayats of Nuagaon Block. The distance between Rajaghara and Kanjamendi is about 3 kilometers.

Reaching the village: One first has to go down to Nuagaon town if traveling by state run or private bus from Phulbani, the district headquarters, which is about 65 kilometers and 223 kilometers from the state capital, Bhubaneswar. From Nuagaon town there are two roads connecting Rajaghara village, one via Kanjamendi which is only a kilometer away from Nuagaon town and another one is via Daringbadi. To reach the village one has to take either a bus or auto-rickshaw from Kanjamendi. A private vehicle can take the kutchra road from Kanjamendi Chowk to Rajaghara, which is only three kilometers away. If one travels via Daringbadi, Rajaghara village is situated at five kilometers on Phulbani-Daringbadi road. As one approaches Rajaghara finds on both sides of the road mostly *sal*, *mahua*, date palm trees, some paddy fields and forest nearby, and barren lands side by side.

History of the Village: Rajaghara village has a very interesting nomenclature, king's place. It was originally very close to the jungle of Mahasingi without proper communication facilities and people had to go through Dhungei hill to meet the then local chieftain, a Patra. So, some of the Kandha moved away from the forest and cleared the jungle at the foothills and started living there such that they can have easy access to the then administration, and other facilities. The descendants of them are now living in Puruna Nuagaon. It was named as Rajaghara implying the place where the King lives after some corrections or with Odiaization of the term.

According to the villagers, the present Rajaghara or Nua-Rajaghara which is located close to the main road of Balliguda and Nuagaon, is a new location and they had physically moved from the original location from Rajaghara two or three years ago as they continuously felt unhappy over the incidents occurred in that location. But now the Kandha habitation cannot shift anymore because there is no sufficient land available but the houses can within the space available to them (see Map 5, 6).

There is a bus stop, a school and an Anganwadi opposite to it. One gets off the bus or car here at Rajaghara Chowk to walk into the village. There is a tube well near the bus stop and the main road of the village bifurcates into two behind the school: the left one, i.e., south-east is called Nediraha, and on the right side or front there is Gamiraha school and the area is called Gasturaha (the hamlet's Kui name). There are three hamlets or divisions in the village named as Tentulisahi, Majhisahi and Uparsahi (the hamlet's Odia names), these are also named called Guma / Jabad sahi, Minasahi and Gastusahi (for more information, please see clan divisions). The village is surrounded by forests and some uncultivated paddy fields as village boundaries. The paddy fields situated near the village and close to the hill are fields used for shifting cultivation, but the *mahua*, mango; tamarind trees surround the village more prominently than the fields. Most of the agricultural fields are found in the direction of Kanjamendi, and there is a toddy store too. The political as well as other religious meetings are held near a mango and tamarind tree close to the school, where a *mandap* is also constructed by the government now next to the *dharni* post.

The Outlay of Rajaghara: One finds the Kandha settlements typically at the base of a hill i.e., below the lower middle slope, and the lands around the village are used for shifting cultivation, and the village Rajaghara is not an exception. Gastusahi of Rajaghara is built on a slope in one end of the village at higher level than the other. After that there is a village boundary known as Sande in Kui as the Jani priest determined it when the first Kedu was organized after the Kandha settled down there. There the benevolent deities that protect them are set up. According to the villagers the old *dharni* post was at the village boundary in fact it is still there unused but the main road has divided the area into two sections as mentioned before. It said that after sometime, some families moved

to Nua-Rajaghara which is close to main road but some other moved temporarily on the other side of the hill but settled there for good harvest. But now due to shortage of land and restrictions imposed by the forest officials they are returning to their permanent settlement.

In general, the houses in Rajaghara face east and west because they can get sunlight into the house both morning and afternoon. They resemble a cluster rather than two rows for they could not expand because of lack of land, and another clusters of houses are coming up in south-north directions. For instance, if a son gets married and wants to build his own house, he could choose to build on either ends of the space available. However, the conventional settlement pattern is disrupted by this practice. In addition to that, two typical dormitory houses have been constructed one for boys at one end and another one for girls at the other end, but now the government has built one house near the playground where some boys sleep at night.

The Kandhas cremate their dead in the cremation ground (*tunenji*), designated in groves adjacent to the village. There are two cremation grounds in Rajaghara, one in the south and the other in the north; one is for the grownups and adults and the other for newborn children who cannot be burned but buried.

An altar for the earth goddess, Dharni Penu is located on one side in every village. But in Rajaghara there are three posts set up in the three hamlets in the center of each of the hamlets but there is also an old one on one side of the village as mentioned above.

The Pano community resides at the lower land close to the Nediraha. In the past they were being separated at one end of the village but now they are living close to the Kandha houses.

The area of shifting cultivation starts near the boundary of the village where there is a section of the village. Near the main settlement we can find some areas used for cultivation of rice. Not all lands close to forest are cultivated every year because the fertility of the land gets exhausted. Before the paddy field and after the hill slop there are some small ponds and *chuas* which are small pools of water.

Now, in the process of modernization we can see bore wells in the three hamlets and one near the school installed by the government. In summer, people have water shortage because the village is located on a hill as the ground water table is far below to reach. But the near the Nediraha there is a small pool which is close to Kanjamendi where the villagers bathe. The village has only a primary school, and near the school there is an Anganwadi also as mentioned above. Under the Biju Jyoti Yojana and Rajiv Gandhi Gramina Jyoti Yojana, the village is well electrified.

Demography

Only Desia Kandha live in the village besides Panos. All of them speak Kui including the non-tribal Pano. Due to the Odia influence the young generation of the village speaks and understands Odia, but it is difficult for older generation of the village to understand Odia.

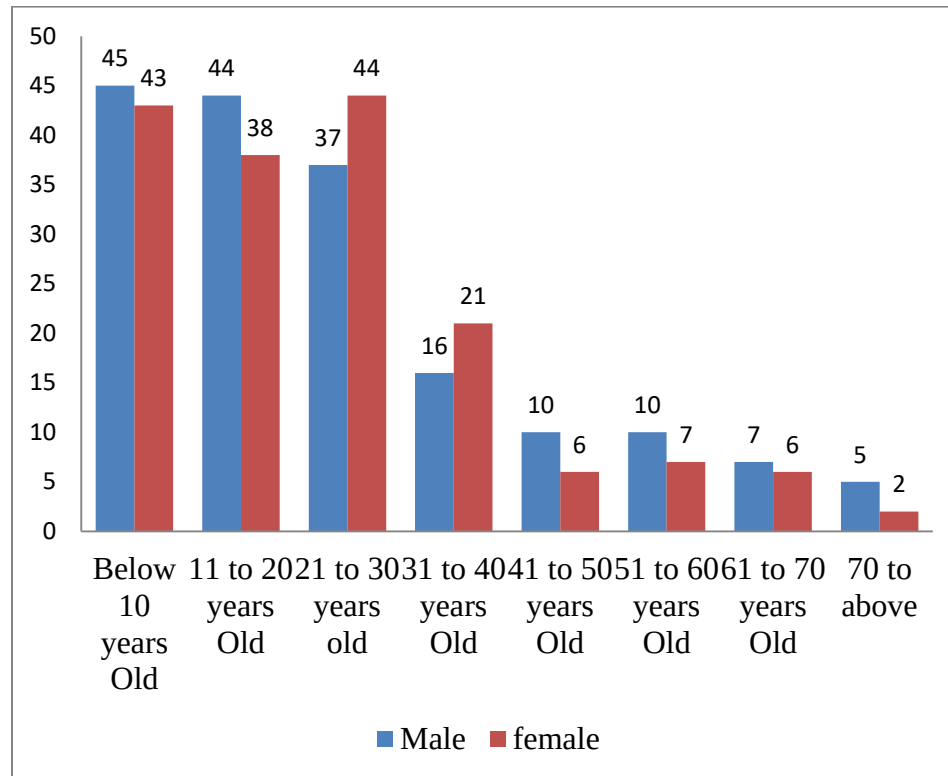
In total there are 87 households in Rajaghara distributed in three hamlets: Gastusahi, Nediraha, and Nua-Rajaghara. Of the 87, the households that belong to Kandha are 67 while the remaining 20 are of Pano. By religious affiliation while 73 have stated to be Hindu and 14 as Christian (Table 2.3.). In total there are 341 persons in Rajaghara, comprising 174 males and 167 females. From the Chart-1, it can be noted that the population in Rajaghara is relatively young, about three quarters of them being 40 years old and below. Also, the difference between both genders within each age group is minimal and it indicates the absence of any sex preference amongst the Kandhas in Rajaghara.

Table 2.3: Household in Rajaghara

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Sl. No.	Tribe/Caste	Hindu	Christian	Total
1.	Kandha	65 (89)	2 (14.2)	67 (77.01)
2.	Pano	8 (10.9)	12 (85.7)	20 (22.9)
3.	Total	73 (83.9) (100.0)	14 (16.09) (100.0)	87 (100.0) (100.0)

Chart 1: Age Groups by Gender in Rajaghara



The above figure speaks of the numerical dominance of male in the village. Ideally there should be more females as the normal demographic character, but here the situation is different. Whereas among the 10-70 years old, the same numbers of males and females are found. Although the Kandha of this village has a preference of male child, the women of the village have never been underestimated. In shifting cultivation with division of labour both male and female of the age group 11-40 participate. There are people above 50 years in the village, and few old people over 70 years who get help from others.

Kandha House

The Kandha live in houses made of wooden walls and split bamboos. The roof is thatched with forest grass and leaves of date palm. The houses are generally neat and tidy and the women folk take pride in keeping them clean. Though clean, they lack ventilation and often domestic animals, fowls etc., are all huddled together in two or three rooms. They are similar in terms of the design and construction materials used for the building. A new house (*edu*) is usually built in the month of February (Magh), March (Phalgun), April

(Baishakha) and May (Jeishta). The male elders of the household go to the proposed site at night (*nadangi*) with some rice (*pranga*), *mahua* liquor (*irpi kalu*) and a few cups made of *siali* (*paeri aaka*) leaves. They keep those leaf cups (*chaukuni*) which contain a few grains of rice at the site and pour the liquor on the rice in each cup, and offer to their ancestors (Pideri Penu). They themselves enjoy the left over liquor (*kalu*) when the ritual is over, and return home. The next morning (*beea diesi*) the site is visited to examine if the grains are in order and intact, or not. If not found intact it is concluded that some evil spirits (*doi pideri*) are present over there which is not a suitable site for living. Therefore, the location is considered inauspicious and inappropriate for building a home. When the grains are found to be intact, it is believed that their ancestors have identified the auspicious spot for their habitation. The above ritual is repeated until the suitable location is identified. At that identified location they sacrifice a hen (*kaju*) to the mother Goddess (Dharni Penu) and erect the house.

It is very easy to erect a traditional *kutch*a Kandha house. The walls are made of *sal*-tree planks (*jargi mrahanui*) lined with mud and trellis made of bamboo fragments, and its roof is filled with wild grass. In some of the houses, the walls (*kudu*) and verandahs are plastered with red soil and the floor is made of stones with smooth polishing. The house is very small in height and does not exceed 10 feet. And its entrance it is about four feet. However, these traditional houses are slowly disappearing from the scene in the foothills while they continue exist in the up-hills. Now, a large number of semi-*pucca* houses are found with stone and/or brick walls with a thatched roof or tiled roof and flooring with mixture of cement and mud. The *pucca* houses with concrete roof, cemented roof and brick and cemented walls are slowly increasing in numbers. Despite these changes, the plan of the house remains the same.

A typical house consists of one or two rooms. And, front and back of the building, there are small verandahs (*pinduli*). The front verandah is used as a meeting place of outsiders or strangers and also to carryout outdoor activities during the leisure hours, and it is kept clean. Paddy husking pedals (*dhinki*) are installed in there. At rear, a separate kitchen (*baja edu*). A cowshed (*goheli*), and or buffalo sheds are erected either in the backyard or on the right side of the main room. The firewood (*erpa beska*) and forest products are

stored in the back of the building. While the front door is made of wood with various carved designs, and the back door is made of bamboo (*mani pata*) only.

The front verandah leads to a relatively larger room which is used as living room (*dopa edu*) for the household. Within this also one or two mortar holes are located on the ground for husking grains. A large wooden shelf is set up on one side in this room for keeping household items. A huge basket, the grain bin (*duli*), is placed on a wooden platform (*dadi*). Within the house one room, smaller in size compared to the other, is used as kitchen, an alternative one and used if necessary, and to keep household utensils (*muta mand*). This room leads to a smaller room wherein small kitchen, an alternative one and used if necessary, is set up and also to keep household utensils (*muta mand*). It has the door at the rear side leading to the backyard and to the kitchen in the verandah.

The agricultural 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 outside the house in the front verandah, whereas their hunting weapons such as bow (*wilu*), arrow (*ambu*), axe (*tangi*) spear (*garka*), gum stick (*sindu nala*) etc. and fishing implements are kept inside the house i.e., larger room, and in some houses these are stuck inner side of thatched roof.

The Kandha also keep different *dhokra* (*linga/darba*) objects made from bamboo, wood and bronze to beautify in the house. Currently, under the impact of modernization and development, the Kandha houses are constructed with bricks, cement and concrete under the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), and Biju Pakka Ghara etc., though the basic plan remains as in case of a traditional house.

Kandha Mural: Kandha paint the front wall of the houses with the design called *boma*, and this drawing is also called as Manjigunda and Tikangakuda. And, the instrument used for drawing is called *gundi*. They draw not only on wall of the house but also on wood, on face as tattoo, on ornaments, idol and on musical instruments, and the murals not only serve the purpose of beautification of the house but also gives them a unique identity. The paintings represent nature – animals, flowers, and trees that they see in the forest. Many paintings represent totems of the Kandha clans.

House Types: The number of houses and the house type within each *sahi* of Rajaghara is presented in Table 2.4. In terms of house type, semi-*pucca* houses comprises about two thirds of the houses in Rajaghara.

Table 2.4: Houses and House Types in Rajaghara

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Sl. No	House Type	Nediraha/ Tentulisahi	Gastusahi/ Uparsahi	Gamiraha/ Majhisahi	Total
1.	<i>Pucca</i>	11 (34.3)	8 (27.5)	13 (50)	32 (36.7)
2.	<i>Semi-pucca</i>	14 (43.7)	13 (44.8)	11 (42.3)	38 (43.6)
3.	<i>Kutcha</i>	7 (21.8)	8 (27.5)	2 (7.6)	17 (19.5)
4.	Total	32 (36.7) (100)	29 (33.3) (100)	26(29.8) (100)	87 (100)

The Table 2.4 shows that the village has maximum number of semi-*pucca* houses. There are two explanations for this. First of all, due to their low economic status, not all villagers could build *pucca* houses though they would like to have one such house. Secondly, some of the Kandha have not completed their houses due to budgetary constraints when they have tried to utilize the government plans and programmes to build a *pucca* house. Some of the villagers have been staying in *kutcha* houses only as they feel the danger of being evicted any time with some kind of land settlement in future. Some of the residents are prioritizing their expenditure first securing a permanent government job which requires time, energy and money for going round the government officials, and second priority being the house. So, they are careful in spending their meager incomes for getting a job; once there is a job on hand they focus their attention on the house. Very few Christian families have changed their traditional house structure with all modern decorations and changing their surroundings while many others remain in the traditional set up.

Social Structure and Organization

Clan and Lineages: All the villagers of Rajaghara belong to *mati klambu* claiming identity with at least four *gochi* or *gossis*; (1) Dina Milang, (2) Gastu Milang, (3) Guma Milang and (4) Jabad Milang. The father of these ancestors were said to have been the first settler in this place and earned a very special name in the erstwhile princely state. According to the ranking which is based on seniority Dina was the senior but died at an early age so Gastu occupied the first position followed by Mina who was in the middle but was stronger so he occupied a different position who even married his elder Dina's wife. And other two Guma and Jabad were sons of one wife of the ancestor and these are considered lower in position and they reside at *Nediraha*. According to the internal divisions based on birth order and social position the residents of village Rajaghara are occupying different spaces in the same location.⁵

The villagers strictly follow exogamy and no marriage has taken place between the members of the village because all are conscious of their biological connections as brothers and sisters. When they go out they claim themselves as one but in the village they show differences. Subar Singh is the son of strong man Mina Milang who is one and only retired army officer in the village used to take majority of the decisions in the village in consultation with other clan's most senior members. One of them called as *mutha* by the Patra. They used to enjoy more land in terms of ownership in the past but now all of them share it equally. The modern political system seems to have broken the clan based organization. Although it is there it could not perform as in the past or effectively in taking decisions but in case of the ritual they are first to get approached or propose the plan of action.

Family: Nuclear family is the common type of family as the household survey shows. Of the 87 households, the nuclear family is found in 59 households (67.8 percent) (see Table 2.5). However, there are a number of joint families as well i.e., 17 (19.5 percent). And in case of a divorcee, normally they remarry. There are few separated families also whose husband or wife has not remarried. The Table 2.5 shows that they choose to live with

⁵ This information is very sensitive as the Kandha consider it as a personal matter which they do not like to share with outsiders. Hence it was difficult to collect the genealogical data.

their unmarried children. Some actually in the village are staying away from the married sons though they are part and parcel of the family but for having two ration cards and get the benefits under the Indira Abas Yojana and Biju Pakka Ghara they show as if they are divided.

Size of the nuclear family is normally around 6-7 and about 10 in the joint family, they do not follow small family norms and welcome any number of children. But now some of them are becoming aware of the small family and make it 3-4.

Table: 2.5: Types of family in Rajaghara

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Sl. No.	Family type	Households
1.	Nuclear	59 (67.8)
2.	Joint	17 (19.5)
3.	Broken-female cantered	6 (6.8)
4.	Broken-male centred	5 (5.7)
5.	Total	87 (100)

Marriage: Marriage (*rdanja*) is one of the important institutions either arranged by the parents and elders through negotiation or service or capture as described in Chapter 1. Kandha marry when they are adults or pre-adolescent: a man marries at 20 to 21 years and a woman at 15 to 18 years of age. Now due to the impact of other non-Kandha in the area cross-cousin marriages are prevalent among the Kandha but earlier they preferred non-relatives only. A man takes second wife in case the first wife is barren otherwise there is only serial monogamy.

So in the village Rajghara there are around 40 percent marriages by capture (*dripa sedi*) while earlier as per the information there were many festivals where the boys and girls were having chances to meet each other. In this connection the dormitory houses were also playing a vital role⁶.

⁶ My key informant Bata Pradhan and his two sons are married in this style at Rajaghara while explaining it he said he had a big fight to settle the marriage because the girl's family was not willing to have

Marital status: The marital status of the villagers in Rajaghara is presented in Table 2.6. The Table makes it clear that broadly the population can be divided into only two categories i.e., married and unmarried. A divorcee would soon or later find a partner and live married life. Similarly, widower and widow is not a permanent status as it is a transition period and death of the spouse does not prevent one to remarry.

Table 2.6: Marital status in Rajaghara

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Sl.No	Gender	Male	Female	Total
1	Married	70 (19.8)	69 (19.6)	139 (39.4)
2	Unmarried	104 (29.5)	98 (27.8)	202 (57.3)
3	widow/widower	0	0	0
4	Divorced	5 (1.4)	6 (1.7)	11 (3.1)
5	Total	179 (50.8)	173 (49.1)	352 (100)

The Table 2.6 and Chart.1 also inform that the Rajaghara population is mostly adult and productive.

Livelihoods and Economy

The livelihoods of Kandha include hunting and gathering, collection of non-timber minor forest produce, shifting cultivation, and settled dry and wet land cultivation. Of all these the households in Rajaghara largely depend on the last two livelihoods.

Hunting and gathering: Hunting and gathering, the main vocation of the Kandha in the past has become a tertiary economic activity, primary being the settled agriculture and shifting cultivation a secondary one followed by MFP collection. Several of them are engaged in raising cattle such as buffalo, cows and goats also for supplementing their incomes. Often do they collect edible roots, tubers and leaves from forest, hunt wild animals, fish in the hill streams and tanks and water logged paddy fields. 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 in this enterprise. A hunt starts in the morning during the summer months. But sometime, the hunting party spends

relationship with Bata and his family. In cases of his boys the matter was well settled as the girls' villagers had already good relations with them.

the night in the forest and start the operations in the early morning. The hunters gather at the house of the village's Mutha Mallick, headman of the clan, after breakfast. Each one is armed with a bow and arrows, an axe or the javelin and some carry long staffs also. Now they even use guns. The dogs that accompany the hunting party run ahead sniffing the ground for the trails of animals and the hunters follow them. If there is a tiger or a bear, the dogs bark and the hunters allow these pass but the chase is given to the smaller game only. When the hunters come close, the animal is killed by arrows, javelin or by axe. Usually after bagging one or two animals the hunters return home with the dead animals. If the catch is good, there is jubilation of singing and dancing during the homeward march.

They stop at the village deity and worship briefly to thank. The animal is skinned there and is apportioned a share for each house. Then the share is distributed to all the participants of hunt. If anything remains it is sold to the Pano and Patra neighbours. The wild boars are most popular hunt, and each one fetches 60-70 kilograms of meat and it is sold to outsider's for an amount of Rs. 200 per kilogram.

Snares are used for catching birds such as wild fowl, *gurandi*, snipes, pheasants etc. A big trap is used to entrap the *gurandi*; it is long and has a broad opening at an end and it is made of wattle woven together in the shape of a long funnel. After fixing the trap the hunter hoots out like the male bird and in response to the call the female birds collect, proceed into the trap and are caught. Now as hunting is being prohibited, they only go on hunting during rituals. Fishing is an occasional pursuit in the winter and summer, the youth of the Rajghara fish in the Khadga river near Sirtiguda and Nuagaon.

Collection of Minor Forest Products (MFP): *Kendu* leaf, *chara* seeds, *sal* leaf and *siali* leaves *mahua* flower and seeds, honey and wax, resin, tamarind, broomsticks, fruits, leaves and fibers are the main minor forest products available in the reserved and *khesra* forests that the villagers collect. *Mahua* flowers, used for food, liquor production and as feed for cattle, while seed oil extracted industrially is edible according to trade regulations. The Excise Department under the direct supervision of the district collector

carries out the collection of *sal* seeds are used in the manufacture of soaps, chocolate, industrial oil, etc. Kandha women are accustomed to collect such products for ages for their personal use and marketing also. Since the government agencies are buying the MFP in order to supplement the tribal economy children and sometimes men are also engaged in the collection. They sell the *sal* leaf cup and plate at Nuagaon to buyers sometimes not the government agencies and receive Rs. 10 per bundle, while the same costs Rs. 20 in a shop. According to the market value, the dry *mahua* flower begins at Rs. 15 per kilogram and goes up to Rs. 25-30, while the shop keepers sell the same for Rs. 60/80. As Rajaghara villagers have their own *mahua* trees, tamarind, mango, they earn a good amount of money seasonally selling these items. In the winter they collect broom stick sell in the market at Rs. 20-30 per piece. The Forest Department that collects *kendu* leaf and the villagers get Rs. 2000-4000 per season. In fact, these days many Kandha are not interested in gathering MFP for it is hard work and time consuming. They prefer to work for cash directly, but Rajaghara villagers depend on minor forest products for their livelihoods as they are small and marginal farmers or landless laborers.

Livestock: Agricultural economy in non-industrial counties depends partly on the livestock. In Rajaghara among the domesticated animals, buffalo stands at the most preferred animal and several families possess large herds, followed by poultry and oxen (Table 2.7). Though goats are present in most of the houses, the distribution is less. Pigs are widely raised for their meat. Dogs are found in most of the households.

Table 2.7: Distribution of Livestock in Rajaghara Village

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Sl. No.	Live stock	Rajaghara
1.	Cow	118 (23.9)
2.	Buffalo	147 (29.8)
3.	Goat	83 (16.8)
4.	Poultry	132 (26.8)
5.	Pigs	12 (2.4)
6.	Total	492 (100)

The people keep cattle, oxen and buffalo both for their milk and meat. Pigs are slaughtered for their meat and also are offered to god. Chickens and goats have financial benefits, consumption and sacrifice benefits. The forest products like teak hardwood (the most valuable tree in the forest) are cut, collected, and sold to the wholesalers.

Agriculture: The Kandhas of Rajaghara are primarily agriculturists and grow cash crops like turmeric, ginger, mustard, black gram, arrowroot etc. Paddy can be cultivated in both dry and wet lands near the foothills. People also produce maize and lentils as their important crops. The turmeric and mustard seed are used for oil, and legume pluses generate the cash for the people.

The economy of people in the villages in Kandhamal district centers on shifting and settled agriculture⁷. The total cultivable land available for the people in Rajaghara village is shown in the Table 2.8. The Kandha households of the villages possess some land except two, and their land holding position is quite significant when compared to the Pano.

Table: 2.8: Land-holding in Rajaghara

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

S.No	Land in acres	No. of Households		Total
		Kandha	Pano	
1	0-2.5	20 (29.8)	4 (20)	24 (27.5)
2	2.5-5.0	29 (43.2)	8 (40)	37 (42.5)
3	5.0-7.5	9 (13.4)	3 (15)	12 (13.7)
4	7.5-10.0	5 (7.4)	2 (10)	7 (8.0)
5	10 and above	2 (2.9)	-	2 (2.2)
6	Landless	2 (2.9)	3 (15)	5 (5.7)
7	Total	67 (77) (100)	20 (22.9) (100)	87 (100)

The above Table shows that majority of the households both among the Kandha and Pano possess between 2.5 and 5.0 acres which is hardly sufficient to meet both ends of the family. Less than 40 percent of the households possess land between 5 and 10 acres, and

⁷ The average land holding per household is 2.6 acres (District Statistical Office, Phulbani: 62 percentage of self-sufficiency of the cultivating household from the produce of their own land is very low.

two households among the Kandha and three households of Pano do not have any land at all. Obviously, the Pano are poorer compared to the Kandha.

The Kandhas in the villages in general and Rajaghara in particular stick to agriculture and occasional wage earning under compulsive economic conditions now-a-days. In spite of their deplorable economic situation, the Kandhas have an emotional attachment to their land whatever small it may be. But the Panos have embraced various other economic pursuits that they could lay hands on since they do not have ample land of their own nor do they have any definite traditional occupation.

Among the community of Kandha and Pano the heads of the households are responsible for rendering a hill-plot into a perfect cultivation field. They do work like cleaning the forest and pushing away the big rocks, and leveling of the wet paddy field. The responsibility of agriculture is mostly with the male person of the society: because it is taboo for a woman to touch a plowshare. Threshing the paddy is a duty basically performed by male but it is stopped for some time if the wife is menstruating. Some of the duties of the Women are also fixed in the society for example cooking, the plantation, cleaning the paddy fields and taking care of their children. Young and old generally prevent the birds and deer that feed on the rice seedlings. In the family all are encouraged to put their hands in work for the survival. Even the children are not left out from working. This should not be treated as child labour rather the survival policy of the Kandha people.

At Kanjamendi and Nuagaon there are several agencies like state Bank of India, Agriculture Extension office, Horticulture office, Large Size Agriculture Multipurpose Society (LAMPS) that provides the villagers short-term agriculture loans. Under the agricultural extension programme, paddy, mustard, vegetable seedlings, seeds, etc., are supplied. But several low land of the Kandha cannot make use of these provision as they do not have not any land. Then the question comes where they should grow these seeds.

The micro-project of the Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) has been creating some awareness about the sustainable development. This project aims at the overall development of the living standard of the Kandha of this area. It emphasizes the youth education in various spheres including horticulture, forestry, apiculture and agriculture etc. In the village Rajaghara in Uparsahi and Talasahi the Agency has facilitated the irrigation croplands, provided hand pumps and modern agricultural equipment to people. It has supported the development of their health, hygiene, education, occupation, agriculture and economy. But the Agency has not been very successful in educating the Kandha for their new vocation.

There is a fair price shop opened in Kanjamendi by the government under Tribal Development Cooperative Society (TDCS) from where Kandha may purchase many necessary goods. There is also Agency Marketing Co-operative Society (AMCS) and others like Kandhamal Apex Spices Association for Marketing (KASAM) but the Kandha often times fails to generate sufficient cash to repay the amounts borrowed from the agencies. The Kandha prefer to get small loans from the local traders without much official procedures to follow.

Income: The Table 2.9 provides an idea of annual income of the households in Rajaghara for it is difficult to assess the income due to lack of consistent earnings. They are not salaried people who get their monthly salaries. Also they do not keep track of their actual incomes through agriculture, and more over many households borrow money in advance and sell away the crops as the price decided by the lender of money etc. However, the Table 2.9 gives an estimate of annual income worked out with the help of some educated individuals in the village given the prevailing rates of various crops, wages and so on. It can be safely said that those Kandha living in the hills live in pecuniary and lower income compared to those in the plains such as Rajaghara and Kanjimendi villages or Nuagaon or Balliguda urban centers.

Table 2.9: Annual income Distribution in Rajaghara Village

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

S. No	Total Income (Rupees in thousands)	Number of Households
1	<10	33(37.9)
2	11-20	28(32.1)
3	21-30	14(16)
4	31-40	7(8)
5	41-50	5(5.7)
6	Total	87(100)

The extent of land that a household possesses does not reflect the economic status of it. In reality the village provides a different understanding of economic prosperity. It can be observed that even after a family having much land they are not economically strong, while another family with small plot of land can claim economic strength. The main idea behind this difference lies in the fact that, one who has a small piece of land can better cultivate it and can even guard it at night. However, if one has a large plot of land he requires more labor and individuals to guard the crop against wild animals. Due to the lack of both the requirements, land in the village lie vacant, thus affecting economic condition of the villagers. From the Table 2.9 we can observe that few villagers earn around Rs.41, 000 to Rs. 50,000 in a year. The households with these income usually include those persons who have more agricultural land than others and good at turmeric production and few family members are engaged in different jobs also. These households have multiple earners or those who have taken up additional source of income apart from agriculture such as hunting, food and root collection etc. The economic prosperity could be noticed in having a better house due to more income. This reflects a transition from a subsistence economy to a savings situation owing to the fact of more commercial economic outlook among the Kandha.

Market

As stated earlier Nuagaon is the nearest market centre for the residents of Rajaghara. The villagers go to this market to sell their agricultural products and purchase their domestic requirements. There are two liquor shops owned by non-Kandha in Nuagaon that earn thousands of rupees in a day. Another local market is also available at the Sirtiguda

which is about three kilometers from the village, people often visit this place also. The villagers also go to the major market centres like Balliguda occasionally. In these centers they come in contact with traders and customers of different places of this region who may be tribal or non-tribal. While Odia is the language normally spoken the Kandha speak either Kui or Odia depending upon the other persons' competence in the language for the commercial purpose. There two toddy shops one at Rajaghara and the other at Kanjamendi that appear to be very tiny but make a lot money by selling the toddy.

The above discussion reflects the broad socio-economic situation with the gradual change in livelihood practices and economic activities. However, there is growing deplorable situation also wherein money lenders and unscrupulous merchants have been continuously exploiting the Kandha in many ways. They do not get good prices for their goods, and as they are economically hard pressed, their standing crops in the field are always mortgaged in advance to money lenders and traders for nominal loans. The reasons for their indebtedness include costly social responsibilities, such as marriage and gifts besides consumption of liquor and other intoxicants locally available; regardless of age almost all males drink. Their perpetual poverty keeps breaking their backbone consistently.

Political Life in Rajaghara

Like all pre-colonial tribal societies, the village Rajaghara was an isolated community in the forest being fully autonomous in the political sphere. All villages of Kanjamendi, Sirtiguda, and Kututuli are from the same brotherly clans. Under the Kanjamendi territory, there are seventeen *muthas* whose head is Saroj Mallick. However, the village headman of the *mutha* of Rajghara village is Kansara Pradhan from the Gastu lineage belonging to Mati clan. Gatu Pradhan is Jani of this village who assists the village headman. The head *mutha* above them, a Patra by name Basuki Patra lives in Puruna Nuagaon. Every year, all the headmen of *muthas* gather at the Kanjameddi village near *dharni gudi* before Kedu festival to determine when to celebrate Kedu; each village is assigned a different date such that there would not be any clash. Other than this purpose also some Kandha and Pano of the nearby villages come to Kanjamendi to get their

disputes settled in front of the Patra. Sometimes even excommunication is awarded in the society as the Patra directs. The Mutha Mallick summons the heads of *muthas* to his house and settles the disputes in the presence of heads of *mutha* and imposes heavy fine, if it is a Kandha-Pano matter. If it is a matter between Kandhas of different clans, it gets settled without much hustle. Many a time the punishment is dealt with a feast for the community. But sometime it goes out of control; then they seek help of Police. Excommunication is the final awards of punishments which either results in leaving of the offender from the village or concede to the punishment and offer the feast for the community. The land and caste issue if not get settled in *mutha* they refer to go to the local police station or concerned office.

The discussion on organizing the annual ritual begins with the rite of offering liquor to the earth goddess Dharni and ancestors. In 2018, when the researcher attended a meeting at Kanjamendi, where Patra, Tholmba, Jani and other senior members of different villages were present. Since the meeting was of heads of *muthas* i.e. Patra, the head of the *muths* introduced one with another. It was found have well structured and well planned, if there were any problem with the dates of Kedu festival, the Kandha would have resolved it very easily for themselves. But now, when the political party interferes with the topics for elections, the conditions go in several other directions. It was found that in the meeting the leaders decided not only the Kedu but along with it they also discuss political matters including efforts to be made for the success of a political party that the Patra is interested. In the present meeting it was found that instead of discussing the Kedu in specific they discussed several issues. Since last election was held just before Kedu many political gains were at the centre of discussion in the meeting.

LIFE CYCLE EVENTS AND CEREMONIES

The following description of the ceremonies is based on the observations made in Rajaghara village.

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: not going to cremation ground (*tunenji*) and eating food

offered to the deities, not getting exposed to solar eclipse or lunar eclipse. It is because of the belief that the baby may suffer from ill effects of the eclipse and becomes *garna khandia* (*kanduna*), handicapped or deformed in face or suffer from permanent abnormality. An old and experienced woman attends to the pregnant woman who remains 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 he cuts with an arrow head or oyster (*samuka*) and in case of a female child he cuts with a small knife (*kude*). Then the infant is given a thorough wash in lukewarm water mixed with turmeric powder. On the sixth day, a ritual called *sana handi* is organized in which a chicken is sacrificed to the 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 to avert the evil spirits. For twenty days, both the child and mother remain confined to the back of the house (*edu*).

On the 21st day, the head of the blessed family conducts a ritual again with sacrifice of chicken to the ancestors which is known as *handi sara*. After washing clothes, the house is plastered with cow dung (*goberi*) and new earthen pots (*teki*) are used for cooking. The child is also named on this day following a rite; it is conducted in different places in different ways. The most senior citizen in the village is called to sacrifice a hen on behalf of the ancestors. Himself and the Jani priest together bring a pot with some turmeric water in it to find out which ancestor has blessing over this child. After uttering the names ancestors one generation after the other, they drop few grains of rice in the pot. If it is a male child, the names of male ancestors of previous two or three generations are uttered, and if it is a female child, names of mothers of various generations are recalled. It is determined which ancestors have blessings on the child if the rice float but do not sink when the name is uttered. Three consecutive chances will confirm the names that do not sink down and finally one of the names of those particular ancestor will be announced having blessing upon this child. The Kandha the name child with the same name of one of the ancestors or give a modified form of it and welcome the ancestors with milk and liquor, touching their feet. However, in this ritual, they view it as the rebirth of their ancestors.

Puberty: A Kandha girl is secluded in a room on the sight of first menstruation. In those days she is not allowed to talk to her kin members and eat food offered to deities. She is given a vegetarian diet for seven to eight days and not allowed to see any male member. During this period, she wears a piece of cloth known as *topah*. On the final day she applies oil and turmeric paste to her body and takes bath to get rid of the pollution when the period of seclusion is over. A *dhangdi* festival takes place on this final day, according to some of the villagers. This particular ritual is to enable other clan members to come and see the matured lady in the home. She is now ready for marriage. People from their own clan come to enjoy the party because their neighbouring clan has one more chance to be a partner with them. It is also shown that the old women of the village weep on this occasion to demonstrate that their daughter is no longer theirs; she can be stolen at any time. In order to make her fertile or bless her with children if she goes out of the home, the tribe worships the mother goddess Dharni.

Death: The Kandha believe that death is a natural phenomenon. When a person dies his family members start wailing bitterly before the deceased person remembering his/her day-to-day activities and what he/she had done in his/her life time. Dead body is kept in the north-south direction with the head towards north. Their lineage members gather around for carrying the dead body to the burial ground covering it with a new cloth. After reaching the burial ground a fire is set to it with huge amount of firewood. When cremation is over the relatives take bath in a pond or river and return home. The family of the deceased and the lineage members observe death pollution for 11 days which prohibits them visiting any place or house and attend to any functions anywhere and do not shave themselves also. On the 12th day they observe a mortuary ceremony, which is locally known as *mada*. On that day the house, clothes and all other materials used by them are cleaned or washed, they shave themselves of beard and clip nails. A feast is arranged on this occasion and the family members of the deceased and their relative's take part in the feast and the ritual comes to an end.

The family prepares food for the dead from the day of death for seven days and places it in his/her name on the side of the village habitation, hoping he/she will come and eat it. But he / she will be officially declared as being out of the group on the tenth day. They

enjoy the feast with others on the very last day, though few of them mostly seniors drink on the 11th day. In night they invite to carry the dead home (it is to bring the *pidra* home where he/she will be given a place) who visits in the form of an animal, bird etc. They worship him/her outside of the house with some liquor calling his / her soul not to disturb the family or village. And this ritual is carried out in case deceased person was married. But in case of the unmarried no ritual is performed and the soul is left free.

Sabadiba (wailing of a daughter when her father or mother dies) goes a little different way in case of youth. It also makes others cry if they understand Kui or Odia. It is said that if a daughter doesn't cry for her parent the soul does not get itself free which means the soul continues to trouble the surviving members⁸. Along with the father's clan she also has to observe the restrictions which will get over on the 10th day. So it is a practice which must be observed among the Kandha. The wailing goes this way:

*Hey father, hey mother
Where you have gone
I can't see you
Where have you reached
What did you eat
Why the wrong happens to you.
Hey my king, hey my master
Take me there
When can I see you back.
Hey Yamah
Take me away,
Take me where my parents live! (Rath 2017: 64)*

Among Kandha and Pano of Kandhamal, the participation of daughters in the ritual of death is an extremely important law. Without her presence, clan member can't cremate the dead. The whole environment will fill with sorrow when she arrives to offer the last offering in the form of cloth, drinks or sometime food, only after her arrival the dead body will get a turmeric bath, also called as the last bath. Kandha believe that family members, kin members are part of their emotional social life. She/he (dead) may come back in dream or in other form and ask one for that if one doesn't offer a proper farewell,

⁸ Peter Berger (2015) talking about the Gadaba removing the dead mentions that a such kind of psychological practices are performed to aim at removing the social person from society, to disconnect the previous established relations.

which is very scary. During the tenth day of ritual along with local line senior member and family of the deceased's daughter also offers liquor to the dead who is addressed and told that everything has been provided for her, and not to harm or otherwise interfere with the living. As it is said, only a daughter can spell out the good work of mother and father, so it is quite important. It also can be observed that son's -in-law have to take care of everything bringing liquor, addressing all other who are from other clans when their in-law(s) passes away to be a brother and well-wisher of the family. A son-in-law to his in-law and vice versa has a great part to deal with in such kind of ritual.

Religion in Rajaghara

As already discussed in the previous chapter, the Kandha's religion centers around belief in supernatural beings and giving reverence to mountains, streams, rains and so on besides worshipping a number of gods, goddesses, and ancestral spirits (*pideri*). To appease gods and spirits, various rites and ceremonies which include sacrifice of different animals are organized. In their settlements certain symbolic representations in the form of drawings on wooden poles, stones with vermilion markings (*baddi*), leaf plates, bamboo baskets (*boga*) etc., are found. Natural elements are included in the objects of worship. Each natural spot has its own supernatural significance because it provides shelter to spirits and deities of certain special power. The earth goddess (Dharni Penu) is their supreme deity and other deities those which are already mentioned in the previous chapter. There are three Dharni posts in the village as mentioned above which are indicative having celebrated Kedu festival at least three times in Rajaghara. The details of this festival are discussed in Chapter four. In the worship of deities, there are some taboos for women prevalent in Rajaghara; they are not allowed to touch the sacrificial food particularly the pregnant women because of the fear that if a pregnant woman eats a devil gets inside the womb and kills the fetus. The worship item include liquor/wine (*kalu*), rice (*arua*), egg (*tola*), jhuna (*tadali*), turmeric (*singa*), gourd (*loka*), etc., are used. The worship of god and goddesses is followed by dance, music and drinking.

Some Kandha of Rajaghara observe the Yagnya, Mahashiva Ratri, Akshaya Tirtha and Rajasankranti as in case of Hindu Odia and participate in Danda Yatra and Hanuman

Jayanti and Ramacharitamanas programme organized by the non-Kandha in Kanjamendi and Nuagaon. They do visit Maa Pattakhanda of Mahasingi for the Kandul parbu and worship the sword of the deity.

As already stated there 14 Christian families in Rajaghara i.e., two from Kandha and 12 among the Pano. They celebrate Christmas and attend the Churches at Kanjamendi. The rest of them are Hindu. Nevertheless, all of them live together peacefully and participate in all religious and other activities.

Education

The informal education in which every Kandha participates is through oral tradition because they did not develop any kind of script of their own except. But this did not stop them being creative; they are talented in composing songs, developing dance, and narrating stories that are preserved and transmitted orally. Through this informal education their traditions spread across; the stories invoking emotions that touch hearts of everyone would have long lasting impact. Every single person in the society acknowledges it. Informal education teaches how to hunt animals, cultivate crops by examining the weather and climate. They learn how to climb very tall trees, and developed the skills of cutting wood, carpentry other artisan-related work; they make various kinds of wooden frames, tools, baskets, ropes, etc. In this regard, the youth dormitory plays an important role. The Kandha have numerous folk songs that often explain the entire story of an act. For example, the senior would sing in the agriculture field how they have prepared this agriculture field and what they expect from it in a comparison to the society. By following the senior hunters, the juniors learn the skills of hunting various animals, observing their pugs, hideouts and using the pack of dogs etc. Through stories they learn which clan is a brother clan or which is not.

As mentioned earlier, there are a couple of formal educational institutions located in Nuagaon and Balliguda to meet the educational needs of the Kandha. At Kanjamendi there is an English Medium Primary school run by a Christian Missionary, General High school at Gahangia near Kanjamendi. One Tribal residential High school, one Government Primary school and Vivekananda School situated in Nuagaon town and new

Carmel English medium school under construction near the Nuagaon town are some of the formal educational institutions where ten boys and seven girls from the Rajaghara are staying in different tribal resident schools nearby Nuagaon and Balliguda town in a radius of 10 kilometers. Within Rajaghara itself, there is one state-run Anganwadi for pre-school children and a small primary school for children up to Class 5. According to Anganwadi Worker at Rajghara seven to eight students daily attend the Anganwadi while 15 are registered under five years of age. Table 2.10 shows the literacy achievements of the Kandha in Rajaghara. The rate of illiteracy shows 58 percent, and the females illiteracy rate is close to that of males.

Table 2.10: Literacy in Rajaghara Village

(Percentages in Parenthesis)

Sl. No	Educational Status	Male	Female	Total
1	Illiterate	98 (42)	135 (58)	233 (100)
2	$\geq 5^{\text{th}}$	22 (62.9)	13 (37.1)	35 (100)
3	$6^{\text{th}}-10^{\text{th}}$	25 (67.6)	12 (32.4)	37 (100)
4	Intermediate	13 (76.5)	4 (23.5)	17 (100)
5	Diploma	2 (100)	-	2 (100)
6	Degree	9 (81.8)	3 (27.2)	11 (100)
7	Post-graduation	-	-	-

From the Table 2.10, it may be noted that the number of degree students is low, but this is expected to change in the near future. Most of the boys in the village are interested to pursue postgraduate studies, but due to the financial problems of the family they are not keen on the pursuit of higher education. Those who are studying Intermediate now want to study up to degree at least before taking up a job. As of now, most of them attend the degree colleges in Balliguda Adivasi College and Sarangada College, Sarangada. According to many informants though many schools, and colleges are established in their names, the Kandha themselves are not interested in education but like to be at home rather than studying and seeking a white-collar job. They are happy to be at home and work in the fields for their families. It is also complained that youths are getting spoiled

for two things - *mahuli* and sex. Uneducated parents, freedom to choose work, availability of some land to cultivate, teen age marriages etc., are standing as obstacles for the Kandha in the village to be progressive in their outlook. The figures that show under degree in Table 2.10 are mostly non-tribal Pano whose children are keen to acquire formal education more than that of the Kandha in the village.

Health

The PHC in Nuagaon serves as the main institution for medical assistance for the nearby villages. Also, there is a homeopathic hospital in Nuagaon for those who prefer homeopathic treatment. In addition to these, there are Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) in the village that assist in minor medical issues and now they are engaged mostly in the pregnancy issues. With the aid of local ANM antenatal, prenatal and postnatal children, vaccinate on a monthly basis in the Anganwadi Center at Rajaghara. The Anganwadi worker and ASHA have direct contact with both the pregnant women and the newly born babies and their mothers. It seems that individuals prefer medical stores and small clinics run by RMP doctors at Nuagaon for regular fever, cough and other problems. And they go to Nuagaon and Balliguda healthcare facilities for other serious illnesses. But now, under NIRAMAYA Yojana of the central government as well as state government tribals are approaching doctors of government hospitals. In fact, free medicines are gradually motivating the people now days.

It appears the Kandha of Rajaghara suffer mostly from malaria, and other common ailments including typhoid and stomach ache. There were seven deaths in Rajaghara last year 2017-18. Most of the deaths are related to old age with the exception of a couple of deaths linked with high fever and snakebite. In Rajaghara steps are taken by the government authorities to prevent malaria by appointing a villager to spray antimalarial insecticide in the village and distributing mosquito nets by the Anganwadi workers. The attack by wild animals in the village is a common phenomenon which has led to the loss of livestock and property.

Conclusion

Kandha tribe constitutes nearly half of the population in the divisions of Balliguda and Nuagaon of Kandhamal district. Rajaghara village, a ward of Kanjamendi Gram Panchayat located in Nuagaon Block of Nuagaon Division has been focused for the intensive study of Kandha of Kandhamal. It is a small village inhabited by Kandha and Pano. They speak Kui language and possess distinct culture of their own. Patrilineal descent and clan organization are the main features of their social structure and village is the residential locality for the clan members. They are basically agriculturists farming *podu* lands and practicing settled agriculture. Turmeric is an important commercial crop, and by and large they survive on subsistence economy. Kandha's religion mostly concerns with the worship of nature yet their culture and religious traditions are never accepted in equal terms by the main stream Odia Hindu. But they are looked down as peculiar people with different life style and remain as a trade mark in the every academic and non-academic literature. In this chapter an attempt has been to give a brief understanding about Kandha by focusing on Rajaghara village.

Chapter- Three
WORLDVIEW OF KANDHA SOCIETY

“No hard line between the sacred and every day, between society and the individual or, for that matter, between culture and nature”.

Roy Rappaport

Introduction

Previous chapters have provided the required ethnographic profile of the Kandha and the regional background of Balliguda and Nuagaon divisions of the Kandhamal district where an intensive fieldwork was conducted for the study. While the next chapter mainly describes and interprets the ritual – *meriah*/Kedu, the present chapter provides a broader backdrop of this important ritual. As already alluded, the religion of Kandha is related to the worlds of nature, man and spirit, which anthropologists have been calling such relationship as the ‘worldview’. They tried to distinguish it from religion in a broad sense: worldview lacks the features of an organized religion. Religion is developed well with philosophy, religious specialists, rites etc. The ‘worldview’, of course, constitutes part and parcel of religion, but it is also used in non-religious sense; it was viewed initially in an evolutionary perspective¹ and later, it got transformed into other concepts such as ‘little tradition’ of folk or illiterate that remained in the oral form while religion being the ‘great tradition’ of literati. However, the concept is basically to do with the self of an individual and a group, the characteristic view of an individual or group about the world that is encountered every day. It is a mode of thought with distinct ideas that a group or an individual holds which may or may not take institutional form. It may determine certain behavioral norms and social relations or the social relations can also be independent of one’s worldview². The worldview differs from one society to the other. Self gets in dialogue within itself about the generalized other, close and far away people, human with non-human which includes God and nature, and develops an orientation towards crisis situation³. Anthropologists did study worldview as ‘man-nature-spirit

¹ Redfield (1941, 1953), Tax (1941)

² Tax (1941)

³ Redfield (1952 quoted by E.M. Mendelson)

relations' of Indian tribes and non-tribal societies and religion as well. Therefore, it is considered necessary to examine the 'worldview' of the Kandha before discussing the *meriah*/Kedu festival.

The Creation Myth

Biyotkesh Tripathy (2005) collected the following a creation myth as narrated to him by a Kandha. He calls it a 'mixed bag'.

«What was happening, sir, so to say, in ancient times, Basuki having trembled [the universe having collapsed because of the shaking of Basuki, the snake that held the earth up], there was no heaven above and Patala, down below, the earth that is, was all muddy. When it turned into mud, you see, gods and goddesses as well as rakhyasas [demons], all became dirty. When this happened, gods and goddesses as well as humans all were destroyed. When they were destroyed, there was no one left, in whichever direction one looked. So, what to do? Everything was destroyed except two, a brother and a sister. They alone were alive. How they lived was, in the sea there was a boat. They had hidden themselves in that boat. When they stayed, thus hidden, Adi Mata [Primal Mother], the goddess—Sarada on earth, Sarala in heaven, Basuki in Patala [the underworld]—somehow came to know of this. Having come to know of this, she thought, 'No one, now, worships me or makes any offering, how shall I create human beings?'

At this time, there was a banyan tree, in which there was a bird lying dead. With the whispering of gods and goddesses around it, it came back to life. When it came alive, it cried and its cry fell in the ears of god who said, 'Aha, there you are. Your cry fell in my ears. Now, can you do something for me?'

'What can I do, lord?'

'Without you I can't have my eminence. There's nothing on earth. If there were, I could have done something. But there is no earth. Can you find any humans for me?'

'I can't find them. But at midnight I hear the sound of a flute. I alone hear that sound.'

'Okay, can you bring that flute to me?'

'Yes, I can bring that.'

'You are a bird. You are afraid neither of water nor of air. You can fly out and bring it to me, can you not?'

'Yes, I shall.'

'Then go, my bird, and bring it.'

So, the bird went and brought the flute and gave it to Adi Mata [Primal Mother], goddess Sarala. The Mother blew into it.

The one whose flute it was, was surprised. This was not their tune. When your friend played a tune, you would recognize it, would you not? But this was different. Somebody else's tune. He looked around and did not find his flute. When the flute played in the night, they used to wake up. Since the flute was not

there, what was to be done? Who was playing on their flute? This flute was their daily companion. The two people inside the boat came out, and they saw goddess Adi Mata right before them. [They were scared].

They said, 'Lord, whether you are a ghost or ghoul, witch or demoness, tell us, do you want to eat us? If you want to save us, save us. We are almost dead. We two alone have survived being burnt to ashes. Do what you will.'

'No, no, I have not come to eat you or drink you. I have come to take care of you, to bring you up. Thinking this to be the right thing to do, I have sought you out.'

This is what goddess Ganga Debi said.

'If you say so.'

[Seeing that they were afraid of her, she said:] 'Don't be afraid. I may be a goddess or such, but I am a Naranarayan [human god].'

When she said this, their fear was assuaged. Otherwise, they were afraid.

Then she said to the girl, 'What would you like to make me, your grandma or your mama, or sister?' Like this, as they lived together, their fear was gone. Why be afraid any more? And the goddess took care of them.

As she continued to take care of them and they started growing up, she taught them this and that and the difference between a boy and girl.

One day she said, 'Since you have grown up as my boy and girl, you girl, you go this way, and I'll send the boy in the opposite direction [as you should not now stay together since you are brother and sister.]' So she sent them off in opposite directions. Many years passed this way with the boy and the girl wandering all over the world. Finally, they met again in Bhabani Patana. But they had grown up and become man and woman and could not recognize each other as brother and sister, such is the difficult mystery of the goddess. Even the one they had called grandma they could not recognize her. They now mated.

When the goddess saw this, she said, 'No, no. This is not right. The one you were calling mother one day, how can you call her mother-in-law? You were like my own children! But all right, you want to set up a family, so be it.'

Then the two cursed themselves realizing they had done wrong. They turned in to stone and still exist as stone. Others may say this is nonsense, but they exist. It is true. They have turned into stone. They are at Rainima toward Koraput. There is a mountain called Rainima and there is a village on top of it called Janjuti. There is a mountain pass there. Below that pass they are there. I don't see very well now, but there is a small river [are two small rivers] there. The water of this river never flows into that and the water of that river does not flow into this. It is [They are] called Sasu-Buari [Mother-in-law-Daughter-on-law] river. It is below Karanja village. Karanja village of Sinpur.

Then, slowly, that one mother's children multiplied. When their numbers grew, the earth started trembling. Things grew scarce. What could be done without things being made available? Even the gods and goddesses were perturbed. There was not anything on earth. What to do?

No, no. There was a tree. In their language they call it Chhenamara tree [Cheese making tree] and in our language we call it Sina tree. That Sina tree was there. And there were porcupines. It lives in hills. It has nails sticking out. It sawed through that tree and taking the trunk (and there is a thing called Mathel; that's

the story of the old creation), it carried it on its shoulder for 7 days and 7 nights; it became 14 days. As it carried it for 14 days, all the gods and goddesses that are there—Bhairab, Durga, Sarala, Chandi, 64 Joginis, 33 crore [330 million] gods and goddesses—everyone ran to Adi Mata [since the sun did not come out]. When will Agni [fire] be created [the sun will come out]? If Agni [fire] is not created [the sun does not shine] nothing can be done. How to create fire [make the sun shine]? But fire could not be made [the sun did not shine]. But, slowly, they started sowing all these things, these various kinds of seeds--Kandula, Harada, Chana, Mukuli etc.—they sowed one by one. Like this they sowed and from the tree they [the seeds] were falling. At this time Agni was created [the sun came out].

Before Agni was created [the sun came out], every one lived naked. They did not have clothes, nor was there any leaves. Even goddess Durga. But there was a long leaf. It is called Laj Patara [Shame Leaf]. It grows in the forest. It's like a person can wear it. At that time there were no clothes. Clothes have come now. At that time, they wore only those leaves.

As they went on living, all the gods came out. So, all the things that were lacking in this our earth started coming out. The Kandhas did not at that time have these three stones keeping which they do their puja and worship, buffalo sacrifice and festivals. Those were not there. So, what they were doing was, when these stones were not there, before the gods and goddesses, there was a thing called Lakatman. With that they made axes, knives and made their living in ancient times. [So the gods and goddesses said,] 'No, no, these humans have become too many. They don't understand me. So what to do?' So they decided on another thing.

This is the story of the beginning of creation. They brought a tree. Ganga Debi [Primal Mother,] she had made a tangle of a hair from her head and had given it to them, saying that where they would plant it, [a special kind of] trees would grow. She gave more of such tangled hair. Trees grew. [Then she said,] 'Take this tree and burn it. See what happens.' When they set fire to the tree [they had cut,] fire sprang up [bright and strong.]

Now, the people thought, [having obtained fire,] 'How shall we have incense and resins for the ritual offering?' There was tree called Swargi tree. (They call it Arjuna tree in Oriya) [Sal tree]. That tree grew there. That tree, you might have seen, sir, resin oozes out of that tree. Of you take that ooze and burn it you can do more and more work, and the gods and goddesses are also pleased. Many of them came down; even Sarada came. And she gave them a "sarp" [blessing/curse] that they would obey whatever you say. Like this, as things started happening, they also gathered three "jal pathar" [stones.] Having brought them, they placed them here and there [in a particular manner]. Having placed them, they decided to have their ritual worship there as in a temple. Now there are many people. But in ancient times, pregnant women used to make their bodies touch the stone so that they had safe deliveries.

[But for the rituals and festivals there was no musical instrument, no drum. But what to cover the drum with, so that good sound would be made? For that purpose, the goddess] decided to create the monitor [whose skin was tough.] So the monitor was created. At that time there were no equipment like axe, knife,

sword or hatchet. [They killed somehow. But its skin did not do.] One day they stretched it on stone, but it did not smooth out properly [for the drum]. Then they tried cloth on it. It did not do. They wondered what to do. At one place there was god Bhima. There, the people had made a drum of clay and they had arranged a calf [to use its skin.] [When asked, they said,] ‘How to do it sir? We tried it in many ways but it does not work. ‘No, no,’ [god said,] ‘There is a calf in such-and-such place. Kill it and bring its skin.’ So they brought that skin, stretched it lie a fan and then fitted it to the opening of the drum they had made. After fitting it, they stretched and tightened it. When, now, they struck it, it roared like a tiger. Even a tiger’s roar was less loud than its sound.

[So, now they thought about the gods they had installed.] They said, ‘Look here, these gold and silver stones we have installed are getting eroded. It’s getting reduced. It’s a little too much for us. This is also too much for the gods and goddesses. What should we do?’ [They thought about it and decided to do one thing.] They brought coal and melted the gold with it. The gold turned black.

‘Why did you do like this?’

‘No, no, [don’t be annoyed.] Gold and silver are not always useful. But with this iron you can make an axe, a spade, or a knife, which will be useful for you to make your living. So keeping more of this gold is of no use to you.’

‘Okay, then. But I cultivated the earth, I kept the stones, and showed where to worship, why did you do this with me?’

‘No, no, this had to be done with you.’

This is the story of the creation of the world that I have told you.

So, as the creation continued, [and people grew in number], no one cared for anyone or recognized anyone. Gods and goddesses also increased in number just like human beings. Going on like this nations and countries were created. [Then god thought,] ‘What else to do now? Nothing stayed in the mouth of the Patala [underworld]. When we killed Surasur and threw the skin, mountains were created: Bijuli Mountain, Himalaya Mountains and other mountains. Hills were also created.’ This is what they thought.

[Then they thought about other problems.] They said, ‘Our people are no longer known in terms of who is what. We also don’t know how to make puja and offerings.’ So, they called god. God said, ‘We must have a Kalpa Bata [worship tree/banyan] and do the rituals under it. Otherwise, things will not be right.’ [So they did that and] they decided on twelve rituals for the twelve months. And they decided to identify brothers, sisters, mothers [and fathers] so that their functions in these rituals will be specified. So they started doing these twelve ritual festivals. They also thought that the people must know how the world was created, what they must do and when to get right results [in cultivation etc.,] how they could obey the gods and how the gods could obey them. Thinking of this, they created a story. But first, they thought, they should have a system of distinguishing who is whose son or daughter, who is older and who is younger, [a system of family identity.] Lord Shiva and Parvati agreed with this. They thought about this and consulted Adi Mata. Parvati, of course, is Adi Mata, the same as old Ganga Debi and Basuki Mata. The young and the old should be distinguished; generations must be distinguished. They kept these people as the inhabitants of

the eastern regions. Then she said, 'you make groups according to their function. Make these Brahmins [keepers of ancient knowledge], these Karans [administrators], these Routs [cultivators], these Sundhis [wine merchants], these Malis [orchard keepers], these Dhobas [washer men], and these Keutas [fishermen.]' This is what she told them at a meeting. She arranged a feast. Shiva came for this but he could not provide food. People cursed Shiva and went away, saying, 'We work hard, suffer much and eat rice and dal. What's this he is giving!' Parbati, seeing this, called them and gave them proper food so that everyone was fed. Then she asked them to wait and said, 'There is another thing which will make things complete and right.' Before this time, liquor was not there. Parbati created this. When she made this, she brought Shiva and made him tend to it as it was brewing. When Shiva was tending the fire, the pot boiled over and fell on the ground. Then Parbati said to Shiva, 'You, Iswar [god Shiva], you go into the spill. Then you will become a tree, and what tree will you be? You will be a Mahula tree and, hiding inside it like a thief, you will come out as its berry-like fruit. When you are so born, people would take you, make you bloat and cook you. To your cooking pot they will attach a pipe. Then they will boil it until it reaches the pipe. When the liquid comes out through the pipe and the sound of falling liquid is heard, then you will become liquor. The people made it themselves and so learnt how to make it. 'Shall we deliver it to heaven?' they asked. 'No, there's no benefit in that. Let it stay on earth, so that drinking it, people will make a ruckus. On drinking this, unfairness and atrocities can be committed. Or, thus drunk, people can come together in goodwill as friends and relatives. And, on drinking this, they can also come together sexually.' With these intensions she created this liquor. Gradually, firm ground formed on the earth and it became complete, so that heaven was no longer visible nor was the underworld visible. Even god could see things below. At that time there were many Rakhyasas and Asuras [demons]. They used to eat and drink with the gods. Now, this way the earth's system was formed and many rituals and festivals came into existence. »

At a first glance the myth indeed appears to be a 'mixed bag' but a careful analysis unravels structure of the thought in Levi-Strauss' structuralism. However, without going into the detailed structuralist analysis of the myth one can note that it clearly speaks of the creation of the universe in structural terms. There are dualist categories – heaven/earth, swarga/narak, destruction (by Basuki)/creation of life (by Adi-Mata), snake/human form (Adi-Mata), life below the earth/life on the earth, mother-fertile being/infertile earth, gods/rakshasa, and gods and goddesses/humans etc. These are mediated through bird, porcupine, gods and so on in addition to transformations from one to another etc. The world of the human on the earth initially is devoid of anything except

a brother and sister: male and female, besides living and non-living things. There is asexual and sexual life; approved sexual relations and disapproved incest relation. The human society emerged out of the incest relations. In order to fulfill their needs, *Adi* – female power created sun (*Agni*). The naked men and women covered up their shame from the leaves of the trees, and the humans cultivated various kinds of plants and also produced food for their living. Ganga Devi brought rivers which obviously means she caused rains. The rivers helped for growing crops. Gods came down to earth and created everything required for the humans: axe, buffaloes etc. They also created different castes and occupations and taught them to worship as they had no idea that they need to worship the deities, so humans collected stones, built temples and started worshipping. Gods also taught them to worship trees. There were no festivals; the Gods helped in making the earthen drum covered with skin of a dead calf. Shiv and Parbathi taught them cooking, what to eat, and how to make liquor from the trees. The liquor caused the quarrels, fights and sexual activities which distanced themselves from the world of the Gods of above or below. Gods represent good but the humans signify bad and evil; similar to Gods and *rakshasas*.

Boal (1982) and Verellin Greet (2010) provide another myth. Here the latter's recorded myth of creation is reproduced. Unlike the myth mentioned above the following myth is simple and very clearly articulates the creation process of the universe.

« Long long ago, there was only Great Bura, the Supreme Being. »

The Jani of the little village Janagarpatlama started to tell the age-old story of how the world and the Kandha people were created. It was now the second day of the Ritual for Harmful Insects, and the Jani was telling and singing stories over and over again. For already one day and one night he was not eating, nor sleeping, only drinking the liquor distilled from the Mahua-flower. His audience was sometimes just listening, sometimes repeating every single word he was telling.

« First Bura God decided to create a consort for himself, Tari Penu, the Earth Goddess.

Afterwards Bura God created the earth.

Bura God found Tari wanting in wifely attention and affection compliance, so Bura God created man from the earth's substance, to give him really devoted service.

Bura God had intended first to create every variety of animal and vegetable life necessary for man's existence but Tari was so jealous that she tried to prevent him. However she only succeeded in changing the order of creation. So Bura took a first handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it, cast it aside, and it became the trees, herbs, flowers and vegetables of all kinds.

Bura took a second handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it, cast it into the water and it became fish and all water creatures.

Bura took a third handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it, cast it aside, and it became all the animals, wild and tame.

Bura took a fourth handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it and cast it up in the air, where it became all creatures that fly.

Bura looked behind him and saw.

Bura laid a firm hand on Tari's head to prevent further interference.

Bura took a fifth handful of earth and placed it on the ground behind, where it became the human race.

Tari said : « Let these exist, but create no more ! »

But Bura exuded sweat from his own body, collected it in his hand and threw it around: « To all that I have created! »

Hence arose love, sex, and the continuation of the species.

This created world was free from all evil:

Men and the Creator were in free communication,

Men enjoyed everything in common,

Men lived in harmony and peace,

Men went unclothed,

Men could move freely on earth and in air and in water,

And all the animals were harmless.

Tari's jealousy then led her to open rebellion against Bura.

Therefore she introduced every form of moral and physical evil.

Into Man she introduced moral evil, sowing seeds of sin into mankind as into a ploughed field. Into the material creation she introduced diseases, deadly poisons, every kind of disorder...

A few individuals rejected evil and remained sinless.

Bura made them tutelary gods: « Become gods and live forever, having power over man, who is no longer my immediate care ! »

The others all yielded and fell into a state of disobedience to the deity and fierce strife against each other. And Bura entirely withdrew his face and his guardianship from mankind. Also because through Tari's interference, everyone was now committing sin, they all became subject to death.

Moreover, throughout the natural world, some animals became savage, the seasons could no longer be counted on with absolute regularity and the earth became a wilderness of jungle, rocks and unstable mud.

At the same time, man lost his power of moving through air and water, he knew suffering and degradation, and he went clothed. »

This myth also elucidates the creation process; we can find the same thought in dualistic terms in terms of creation/destruction, creation/recreation, male/female, order/disorder, harmony/disharmony, good/evil etc. No attempt is made here either to compare these two myths or the connections of these with other creation myths prevalent outside Kandha. Attempt is only made to understand the relationship of these myths with the Kandha rites and the society. God (Bura) is self-created though he is male and himself created the female (Tari Penu). As the male God creates the female God tries to undo what the male God does or changes what it is supposed to be. The creators and destroyers together stand in opposition to the creation. While the male is benevolent, the female is malevolent. One is busy in the creation activity while the other finds lack of attention to her which is due to her being a wife and also feels jealous; two sexes in the relationship of wife and husband indulging in producing process and also in relation to the what is produced. The harmony and disharmony; further, good and evil find place in the creation or in the beginning itself. First the plant life is created and then followed water and fish, and then came animals and wild life into existence. In the fourth stance came the flying creatures, after that the Bura created the humans and following this there was love, sex, procreation and continuity of species. Tari brought in rebellion, disease, and evil for the humans, while Bura made the good people as tutelary Gods who did not follow Tari and the humans worshipped them also.

The two myths in some ways explain the human world of existence in relation to the nature i.e., physical and extra-terrestrial beings i.e., meta-physical world, and existential relations among the humans and humans with the physical world and the cognitive non-physical world. Rituals are necessary for maintaining good relations with the divine nature and be grateful; the gods and goddess gave them musical instruments and taught them how to worship also. On this ideological base the Kandha try to construct their worldview as in the following.

Nature⁴: The Kandha maintain very intense interactive relationship with their physical environment. For them, as basically agriculturists land is very important for their survival and it is believed to be sacred, and their identity lies with their land, which gives shelter and it is provider of everything - health and living and hence, land is revered. They live in physical and spiritual universe; there is very thin difference between supernatural and natural and accept the earth's potent and the liability between prey and predator. They try to satisfy and propitiate the spirits that surround them in the invisible world. Kandhas, observe Kandul/Kanga parbu, the annual festival of thanks giving by offering the first harvest to their Goddess. They firmly believe that the earth should be shown gratitude for granting fertility to the soil that is giving agricultural products, vegetables, minerals etc. The tribe sacrifices animals to appease the earth goddess besides songs and ritual speech. They constantly engage themselves in altering the quality of their soil/land and maintain the soil fertility with fire and water, and continue their cultural practices with brain and brawn. Although the deity accepts everything as a gift from them the Kandha, they selectively offer gifts by protecting the environment.

Kandha dwell in the forest and their entire life revolves around the forest. Forest is everything and the last thing that they look forward for their survival and the only resource and asset for their survival. They not only consider the forest as one of the essential parts of their life but also the whole environment *per se*.⁵ Kandha are poor compared to others as they reckon the forest as only source meeting their basic needs and demands; it is only keeping them free from hunger and moreover they also do not look forward for a great comfortable life either. The fundamental source of light and energy to them is sun and other than this, the only light that they know is the one generated from fire. Many of them are still unaware of electricity and its existence, and use of it is alien to them. They consider themselves part and parcel of their environment from trees to rivers and according to their understanding of life on the earth, and these are the only

⁴ Anthropologists have well recognized the relationship between the nature i.e., the physical environmental in which people live and their beliefs and ritual practices (Peck 1967; Johnson and Earle 1987; Rappaport 1968 and so on).

⁵ See Verma (1996), Saraswati (1991)

means of human survival.⁶ The quantum of importance given to the nature is not limited to the status of a God but they are endowed with power, authority, control, kindness, correction etc. Therefore, they worship trees, sun, rivers, air and land with this kind of understanding. They consider it is their bounded duty to protect the nature and environment as the lords of the human race.⁷

Spirits: The universe of Kandha includes the spiritual beings who are both benevolent and malevolent. Oftentimes they are indistinguishable. The benevolent spirits include ancestors also. As already mentioned in Chapter One, the spirits of Kandha include the following: Dharni Penu (earth goddess), Jakeri Penu (sister of earth goddess), Soru Penu (mountain god), Gosa Penu (forest god), Suga Penu (stream god), Piju Penu (rain god), Bela Penu (sun god), Jori Penu (river god), Burpi Penu (first fruit god), Pилanu Penu (hunting god), Ruju juga Penu (calamity god), Pideri Penu (ancestor god), Sande Penu (border god), Naju Penu (village deity), Budi Maa Thakurani (village goddess) and Baral Devi (village goddess) etc.

As can be noted from the list of above (not an exhaustive list) the earth, mountain, forest, river, stream, sun, rain, fruits, hunt etc., are animate spiritual powers endowed with controlling authority over the nature and humans who shall fear and show reverence through worship, organizing rites and festivals. Ancestors are also included in this category. The corrective measures of the divine non-human beings include bringing in calamities and destruction, misfortunes, diseases etc. The humans are under the protective cover of the spirits who guard the borders of a habitation and who watch the behavior of inhabitants in the village as village goddesses. Each of these spirits are individual identities but at the same they are related to one another in kinship bonds as the earth goddess Dharni Penu has a sister namely, Jakeri Penu.

⁶ See Pandey (2017)

⁷ Kandha sees themselves as children of Mother Earth, and what they see around them is mother's other creation. So protecting the mother and her creation is necessary for them.

According to the myths narrated above clearly reveal the conceptualization of gods and spirits who are more powerful and have control over the humans. God the creator is self-existent. While the gods represent good by and large, humans are expected to be obedient and dependent on gods. There is an element of evil associated with the gods which seems to explain the evil nature of man that is beyond the control of humans. The benevolence and dependence provides the structural relations between the nature – land, mountain, rains, animals etc., and human society. These relations are conceptualized in terms of exchanges and inter-dependencies. Gods depend or desire the worship of humans with which they get satisfied and it is expressed in terms of food that satisfies an individual. In turn, the gods shower their blessings and favour the humans with good rains, harvest, animals etc.

Benevolent Spirits: Dharni Penu is believed to be all encompassing, basic, essential, root or ‘mother’ of all *penus*/gods or goddesses. She resides both in the village, in the hills, in the forests and everywhere. Nothing happens without knowledge and benevolence. She is associated with other *penus* who stay and take care of entities like hill, village boundary, water, rain etc., so in every rite organized either in the forest or field or village of Kandha the first offering goes to the Dharni who created them and then subsequent offerings are made to all hill and forest deities. Otherwise the goddess would be enraged. Dharni Penu is the generic goddess; she is known with different names in a specific location and place. Similarly, the gods of mountains, forest, river, and boundary are conceptualized as generic as well as specific locational gods who are revered and worshipped in those locations.

The most benevolent and important spirits are Tana Penu and Soru Penu among a host of the *penus*; the former being the earth goddess and the latter god of hills. Soru Penu is worshipped and prayed for everything: to protect the people from fever and from the attacks of a wild animals as well as for obtaining a plentiful yield from the forest on which they depend mostly for survival. Tana Penu, the name is though familiar to Desia Kandha, they do not distinguish her from Tari Penu which is familiar among their counterparts in the South-West region with a different name for the same Goddess. She is

believed to be malevolent and vent her wrath on those who fail to worship her, afflicts them with various diseases, makes their land unproductive, causes drought or destroys their crops. However, Tana Penu or Tari Penu, whatever may be their name, they are associated with the gruesome human sacrifice. The other god-lings along with these principal God and Goddess with whom the divine powers are associated with include Gosa Penu (forest God) and Jori Penu (stream God).

All the Gods listed above are invited to attend, or bless or act as a living being with the Kandha when worship is organized. Under Bura and Tari, the most important gods are Piju Penu (the god of rain); Burbi Penu (the god of first fruits); Piteri Penu (the god of growth) whose job it was to send grain of every kind; Plmbu Penu (the god of hunting); Loha Penu (the god of war or god of hunting). In addition to these, the local deities or guardians are actively interested in the affairs of the villagers and they affect the residents of their locality, but are geographically confined to their own unique domain. Naju Penu, the village god, is chief among these latter groups; Soru Penu, the local hill god; Jori Penu, the river or stream god; Suga Penu, the spring god; Gosa penu, the jungle god; and Bora Penu, the wild new fruit god. In names, there is some misunderstanding due to the pronunciation of Kui and the understanding of outsiders. There are other inferior deities who should also be worshipped but only with the permission of Bura and Tari Penu. And worship of these are now possibly restricted because of the Hindu and Christian presence in the regions of Kandha.

The Kandha believe that their mother Goddess taught them all things - agriculture, hunting, art of war etc., as indicated in the myth. But above all, they had to believe that Bura and his entire creation were granted the same kind of status. But there is hierarchy among the deities in which Tari became the supreme for she is responsible for creation of the universe and replenishing all the resources for the survival of the humans, and it is appropriate to worship Bura in second place.

Malevolent Spirits: Tari Penu, *gram seni* (village demon)⁸ are the main non-human beings in this category besides other bad spirits who cause misfortunes for the Kandha. There are wicked demons that never work for the well-being of man in any circumstances but bent upon harming people in one form or the other. People in such attacks typically get vomiting continuously, show signs of dehydration, diarrhea, and often die also soon if the devil assaults. Cholera, tuberculosis, dysentery etc., are believed to be the work of demons. Thakurani is another evil spirit that inflicts disease such as smallpox or any other sickness. She is not original deity of the Kandha but now linked with the earth goddess somewhere, and an expert mostly Jani or Jhakar handles here in a very friendly manner and give a proper farewell. If an unusual happening is noticed for unknown reasons in a household that family approaches the priest Jani who consults the gods and finds out a solution immediately. It usually ends up with an offering or a sacrifice. The Kandha keep distance with these spiritual beings and do not try to provoke them. When these beings trouble the Kandha, they are offered whatever is demanded. If the entire village encounters a problem, the Jani takes up the issue by himself fasting, praying, offering sacrifices, and going in trance etc. When he finds the solutions he informs the *mutha* and then entire community is engaged in getting rid of the trouble.

Kandhas believe, humans are more valuable and precious compared to all the living beings and therefore offering the human blood is for the good of the people as it would be the most satisfying offering to the deities. Despite all, people suffer from several illnesses and problems. On one side still they worry about hunger and others, this is seen as the deity Tari's infliction upon them. On the other, it is also believed that people themselves were responsible for the well-being of the entire planet and if they do not properly preserve their natural resources they have to pay for it. The good can be turned into bad. They do not like their good and benevolent gods turn against them for their negligence. So the Kandha feel obligated to perform the rites regularly and more in numbers to the above-mentioned gods and goddesses for crop sown, harvest to be received, for individual and community welfare and to thwart the anger of these deities in case of disobedience and negligence.

⁸ See O' Malley (1908: 39) as nature of god-lings.

Now it is not that every individual Kandha has the same faith and belief in their deities. There are those who hold science and find a solution outside the domain of beliefs and religion. There are some people who agree with Kandha myths and at the same time have a very strong negative feeling towards human sacrifice, seeing it as a pure devastation with utmost abhorrence. And Kandha embraced the notion of protecting themselves from falling into sin by doing unnecessary wicked works which may also include believing certain ritual practices.

Ancestral Spirits: The deceased male person becomes ancestor through the rite of *pidra ana* as a part of mortuary rites described in Chapter Two. Kandha believe in the reality of dreams i.e., manifestation of happenings in the real life. Therefore, as the dead members are able to live and continue their existence even after the physical death they do visit the living persons. In every Kandha community, there are few men and women called *gunia* / *kalsi*, who are considered to be part of god's world and they are mediums or shamans who speak on behalf of the god or goddess. It usually happens when proper reverence or honour is not given through worship or offering on such occasions as harvest, for example, to Dharni she appears in dream to the *gunia* and informs her displeasure. When asked informants about the truth value of it, one said 'Our ancestors still have a close relationship with us. Wherever we go, our ancestor goes with us as a friend and helps us by preventing any untoward thing to happen to us. But if we do not organize rituals in their names they will try to destroy us by fever or other diseases'.

The living people give farewell to the dead person in *mada* or death ceremony and request not to disturb them. The most important thing in this regard is that whatever festival is celebrated after the death (it may be Diwali or worship of any *penu*) they offer the gift of tobacco or their favorite food. It is believed that the ancestors take a keen interest in the social and religious practices as well as the health of living relatives and reciprocate with the tangible tokens of gratitude by increasing their descendants and working toward their well-being. With regard to the hill- agricultural plots and fields in which the householder and his family work to produce food, this reciprocal relationship is

particularly important, since these are due to the ancestors who fashioned them and are simply kept in trust by the living, to be passed on to the family yet to come in good condition⁹.

There are three father founders of the village in Rajaghara, as mentioned previously, each consisting of one lineage belonging to one clan. Together with *sande* and Naju Penu, they worship Pideri Penu whenever needed, along with Bura and Tari Penu. As for the details, the worship takes place at the north-east corner of the house where the household worships the deities. This can be organized on any day of the year according to the convenience of the household members and as a felt need of it. First the priest recites Soru Penu *mantra* and then utters names of the ancestors and offers any of the following such as hen, buffalo, goat, pig, etc. But nowadays they offer mainly hens, and their number vary from time to time. Before sacrificing the victim, a feed i.e., *punji* is prepared from four items: fine red earth from a termite mole-hill (as the ancestor's residence or collect some soil in the name of Tari Penu), flour (millet or rice-powder), and turmeric mixed rice. The feed is put in leaf-cups which are placed on the ground in the name of different ancestor by the priest who takes the victim to feed or eat the items placed in the leaf-cups. After this the Jani cuts the head of the victim outside the house and brings his head inside and offers it to the ancestors. The entire village participates in this ritual. Each household prepares breakfast of *lia* in reverence to the ancestors and bring it to the place of worship where they eat collectively.

Earlier Kandha used to offer bullock also as a sacrifice to their ancestors¹⁰. The informants asserted that the bullock sacrifice has been completely stopped with the intervention of Hindus. When this practice existed Pano used to do this job inside the house of Kandha and this was only occasion that the Panos were allowed inside the house. Eventually when Kandha came into the Hindu fold, they were prevented from entering the house and doing it outside the house and finally the Kandha gave up this

⁹ See Boal (1999:164)

¹⁰ This practice is in vogue among the Kuttia Kandha according to Neggemeyer (1964: 143). Boal also mentions about it. He write, "Perhaps it was the incoming of paddy techniques, strange to ancestors, that led to their offering the 'new' animal along with its new association in an attempt to appease disgruntled ancestor spirits whose former ways were being pushed aside and introduced goat" (1999: 166).

practice. Now Pano have nothing to do with the ancestral worship of the Kandha being outsiders. However, they are agents for buying buffalo in a Kandha society or Kandha ritual; this also seems to change now because Kandha can go directly to the market or buy for themselves.

Gender of the spirits: Mostly all Kandha deities are attributed female sex, their most superior deity is mother Goddess, Dharni who is believed to be responsible for everything that they have as the myths make it abundantly clear. Kandha society in general used the idea of gender with reference to reproduction/production and protection, males are protectors while female are reproducers. Their gender construction goes on virility and physical strength endowed with men as hunters and women as prey to be hunted and to satisfy the hunter.

Men guard their habitations as they are fighters. It is believed that evil forces come from a westerly direction and for this reason the *yatra kudi* guards this entrance of the village. Gods and benevolent ancestors arrive from the east and leave the village from the west. Finally, the gender opposition appears to correspond with the distinction of east and west since the sun is considered to be a man when rising in the morning and a woman when setting in the evening. It fits into this structure that the “father” of the Kandha, the Koteiwali or Abba, always stands east of their “mother”, the Dharni. ‘The opposition between gods and humans is linked to an inversion in terms of gender. In the divine sphere, the earth goddess always remains in one place, while the sun god is ‘born’ in the east and ‘dies’ in the west. In the world of human beings, men may move around, but like the goddess ideally the woman remains in the same village throughout her life. In contrast, women, unlike the sun god, are born in one place and die in another.’¹¹

Now in Rajaghara with the influence of Hindu religion, there is a change in the symbolic identity of Dharni. She is identified with *suri* which derives from the Odia term *chhuri* or

¹¹ This interpretation of Hardenberg. (2017: 464) contradicts Boal’s (1997:142) observation. The later says, the male head or stone presents on the side of Dharni is to have sexual relationship, it rather looks like giving protection and these represent couple or marriage; where they not only represent reproduction but also protection to the creations like Bura and Tari does.

“knife”. In villages of the Kandha in this area it is said that both the axe and the knife, are of female gender and together represent the earth goddess, identified with the Hindu goddess Durga. Both the objects are taken out of their hiding place, be it a cave or a tree, because they want blood if kept open. Kandha used *tangi* to hack the human victim’s neck while knife was used to pierce his/her heart.

In fact, gender role is quite invisible if one examines Kandha women working in the field as a woman does everything or even more than men and she is not less than man in any sphere of life. But it seems little contrast with the performing of important secular and sacred functions in terms of the moral law of society (*niam*), such as forming alliances, regulating conflicts, worshipping the gods and rearing children. Even though female have been worshipped and in fact often the deities made demands of sacrifices, women neither ever did nor do they now undertake sacrificial killing of humans or animals; it has been man’s job only. They are life givers and nurturers of children who would grow and become productive.

Priests, Mediums, Sorcerers, and Magicians: As stated before the Kandha priests are known by different names viz., Jani, Jhankar, Tolmba, Dehuri, Bahaka, Mati Guru etc., in different villages and different areas also. However, there is no female priest though sex identity has no bar to become a priest. It is also believed that deities have appointed their own people to worship and to receive instructions from them as fulltime servants. Most often son of a priest is chosen to the priest, but it appears as if the priesthood is inherited. The priest has a special position in Kandha society who directs the community to comply with the divine order. He sometime makes humble inquiries for the cause of divine displeasure. People are scared of to be a priest as his service is required at any point of time. It is also believed that if a god finds the priest is incapable of keeping up the expected standard behavior by observing food and other restrictions, he will be killed. Gatu Pradhan’s father Rastu Pradhan in Rajaghara when failed not offer sacrifices to the satisfaction of the mother goddess Dharni the goddess killed him. It was very difficult for Gatu Pradhan to replace his father as a priest; he started worshipping with full devotion and finally one-day in a dream he saw the goddess appreciated his service which made him very happy. Only few have been closely associated with trance and divination. The

men can handle arrows and bows, winnowing trays, sickle or sacrificial knife but not women, and even in this case the sacrificial knife and axe cannot be kept in anybody's house except in priest's house.

One main reason for tension in the closed group of the priest, usually the kin group, is the fear of witchcraft, sorcery, evil eye, and tiger-transformation but they do not openly accuse anyone about these can only suspect. A powerful priest could be targeted by those jealous of his popularity or name or fame though the results of both witchcraft and sorcery are same their methods of practice could be different. The distinction between them is that the witchcraft is done through invisible operations whereas the sorcery is practiced through the manipulation of material objects or set of actions, probably accompanied by magical spell. The priest finds out through trance which of the two has caused problems in a Kandha family such as missing children or death of new born infants, abortions etc. Sometimes these are caused by the earth-goddess also; some make a pact with the goddess through promising gifts to the goddess who could cause such misfortunes. Thus people misuse the mystical power. The community castigates the accused in the strongest terms threatening death or expulsion from the community if ever they indulge or repeat their evil practice.

A typical case of sorcery narrated to the researcher is the death of a pregnant woman. There was one Tapan Majhi who lived in Rajaghara village died at the age of 85 used to practice the sorcery. A school teacher warned the researcher not even drink water or do anything in any house of Kandha in Rajaghara village where Tapan lived. The story is that a Pano lady teacher who rented a house near Tapan's house was pregnant, and when she was about to deliver it became very difficult as she was getting sick day by day. They went to Berhmapur hospital, despite of spending a lot of money she could not be saved after the delivery of a baby girl. Her brother came to know later that as this woman was a Pano, Tapan Majhi cast evil eye upon her. He called the elders of village council sought their help. They found a clay model at Tapan's place which proved the fact that he was indulging in sorcery. He was making the women get into troubles with the magical powers also; he wanted to destroy the clay model such that the women would die. With

this evidence, it was decided in the village council that Tapan Majhi should not indulge in anything of this sort in future. He was threatened that if he repeats he would be driven out of the village burnt down along with the literature of magic. Majhi left everything but he died the following year. The new born baby girl was taken to her home and now she is living happily with her father.

In every Kandha village there are some who know about some kind of practice to control the nature. Some of them are using it for the good and some for bad causes, and cases like above are surfacing very frequently. Many stand witness for such occurrences and those get sick are also cured by the priests or in hospitals and it is said that the basic problem is with immunized children. If children are crying frequently without taking milk, they are taken to the Kandha priest first or others to non-Kandha magicians or experts who cured them. Kandha claim that medical doctors and medicines in fact failed to help these children.

Transmigration: Kandha believe in transmigration or therianthropy¹². A tiger spotted in the forest is interpreted as a *palta bagha*.¹³ It is believed that the transmigrated deity or ancestor into tiger form punishes an evil doer and thus provides justice bringing back the moral balance in the community. The therianthropy does not appear to have been recorded in any Odia literature, but some early reports of British colonial officer did speak about it. McPherson one of the British officers and ethnographer who writes,

“‘Umbally Bylee’ — that is, Am(b)ali-Bāeli,¹⁴ mythical Great Ancestress of the Kandhas, and at one time, a human manifestation of the earth goddess initially choose to manifest herself to man in her tiger form; after she had assumed such form, she killed a large number of game animals (whose carcasses were eaten by the Kandhas with great delight) as well as of enemies

¹² Therianthropy is the mythological ability of human beings to metamorphose into other animals by means of shape shifting. It is possible that cave drawings found at Les Trois Frères, in France, depict ancient beliefs in the concept. The most well-known form of therianthropy is found in stories concerning werewolves.

¹³ A man who can convert him/her as a tiger.

¹⁴ The archaic Kui name Amali-Bāeli or Ambali-Bāeli literally means father's elder sister or ego's elder sister (Boal 1982:91).

of the Kandhas; finally, she taught the Kandhas both the art of —Mleepa¹⁵, i.e. how to make themselves into tigers or leopards like she had first done, and the art of public war, i.e. how to kill enemies in battle.” (MacPherson 1865: 160-64)

The Kandhas seem to have had strong links to both tiger-transformation beliefs and the human-sacrifice tradition. In former times, human sacrifice to the earth goddess was the principal form of ritual response to the tiger-attacks in the Kandha inhabited area; it was believed that either a man transformed and caused the killing or the deity herself transformed into a tiger and did this. Tiger attacks were diagnosed by priests as signs of the goddess profound dissatisfaction with a group — whether household, clan or village — which had failed to keep her well supplied with blood sacrifices. The immediate celebration of a human sacrifice (or, after its suppression, of a buffalo sacrifice) was deemed necessary to restore the relationship and thus put a stop to serial (were-) tiger attacks.

MacPherson’s account, however, does not make fully clear whether the two teachings were mutually interrelated, that is to say, first, whether the power of tiger-transformation was meant to be used by the Kandha for killing their enemies in battle or not. Second, as it is put forth in this mythic narrative, it is not clear whether the earth goddess asked the tribe to sacrifice human beings on a regular basis in return for her blessing. The Kandha priests do not recite this story now-a-days, however, it most importantly conveys the idea of differentiating and merging of man, nature and spirit. They are all seen as one entity but also manifest differently.

Honoring and Worshiping of the Spirits/Deities

Festivals and ceremonies are performed in order to honour and to seek blessing of the earth goddess and of other deities associated with the hills, forest, land, and village and so on. The best or the most valued offering made to any god would be a buffalo, but it is

¹⁵ The Kui transitive verb *mlīpa* or *mlīva* means ‘to be changed or transformed into’; when used as a verbal noun, it means ‘transformation’. Another meaning of this verb is ‘to change s.o. by cursing’ (Boal 1973: 147-49).

considered to be too costly, so less valuable ones such as a pig, a goat, a fowl etc., are offered at different times.

Kandha rituals¹⁶ and ceremonies: There used to be several rites performed in between the initiation of cultivation and harvest, but now the animals sacrifice is forbidden. As a result, the number of times organizing rituals is reduced to only once a year. Dharni Penu is usually worshipped in the village twice a year, one in January i.e., on *pous puni* and other in June/July one in the hill and other in the village (as we discussed before). The former one is on the eve of the new year of farming and the time latter one when the new crops are eaten. As the first one performed is in hills to ensure good harvest, and the second one is a thanks giving festival depending on the economic conditions of the individual village, the Kandha village would have performed at least once every two to three years. There can be an additional one also in the village if there is small-pox or measles etc., which are believed to have been caused due to the anger of the goddess for her displeasure with the community. This is also slowly coming down to onetime ritual.

During different stages of agricultural operations, before sowing, before and after harvesting, certain religious rites are performed to satisfy the Tana Penu who is considered to be concerned with agricultural production as stated earlier. Pitabali goddess is offered the first fruit by the village priest on behalf of the village. Moreover, all aspects of the physical environment are domains of numerous gods and goddesses though the most important one is Tana Penu and other associated gods like Soru Penu (the hill god). Further there are taboos connected to some places and the people's lack of knowledge these after may result into some afflictions. Also, the deities related to these spaces sometimes transforming into fearsome beings that cause disease, death and other misfortunes. For Kandha it is necessary to seek permission from the god concerned if any significant disturbance is taking place for the land or space. The life cycle of the Kandha has also been associated with supernatural powers; hence certain rites are performed by specialized priests for protection and blessings on individuals.

¹⁶ There is considerable debate and discussion among anthropologists about how ritual is to be identified and interpreted (see Firth 1951: 222; Notes and Queries 1951:175; Nadel 1954: 99, Wilson 1957: 9; Douglas 1966:65; Gluckman 1965: 251; Leach 1968: 526;Turner (1967);Kertzer 1988: 2–3).

The fact that certain tree species are considered to be the domains of the gods that render them sacred, and hence, these are to be protected from being felled; similarly, hill is thought to be the domains of deities hence it is avoided for cultivation. Growing any plant in the burial ground is a taboo due to the Kandha's belief that the area is inhabited by ancestral beings. Kandha remember their ancestors in every ritual offering liquor, tobacco and their special food.

As stated earlier; while some of rites are organized at the individual household level, some others are carried out at the village level. Pideri Penu is first worshipped in the house and then outside; for removing the evil eye among the children or people the worship is conducted in house only. But worship in house follows a feast outside the village because the devil gets out of the village to steal the offerings. Bicha Penu also called as Bija Penu is the seed god who is kept inside the house is first worshipped in the house before seeking permission of ancestors. According to the belief, the deity protects the seeds from germs and others insects, that destroy the seed.

When the crops have almost reached to maturity and the harvest is near, a rite called *dulu dakina*, is organized to honour the goddess of wealth, and to find if she is happy with the behavior of the people. And in case she is not happy they would pray that she may be kind enough pardoning them and to bless them with good harvest. Although it is a small rite, Jani worships with sacrifice of a fowl, it is an important point to note that a prayer for good harvest and showing gratitude to the goddess for the yield is necessary.

Kandha's Festivals and Rites of Annual Cycle

Table 3.1 shows different annual festivals that the Kandha and non-Kandha observe in Balliguda and Nuagaon Divisions of Kandhamal district.

Table 3.1: Annual Festival Kandha and Non-Kandha

Month (English)	Months (Odia)	Kandha	Purpose	Non-Kandha	Purpose
January	Margasira – Pous	1.Madaa laka festival (<i>solpo gacha puja</i>) – Worship of toddy tree 2. Bela Penu (worship of Sun God)	Toddy ritual To satisfy the tree i.e., source of liquor. Worshipping Sun God is for good sunlight to dry the wooden stuff in shifting cultivation site.	Makar Sankranti	This is also a significant festival in which people offer food to Sun God.
February	Pous-Magha	<i>Kanga/</i> Kandula parbu festivals (Worship of earth goddess)	First offering to the earth goddess and also the beginning of Kedu preparation.	Shiv Ratri	Tribes offer food to Maa Pattakhanda in almost every <i>Devi pitha</i> in the state.
March	Magha-Phalguna	Kedu/ <i>meriah/</i> Podha/Kadru parbu festivals (Worship of earth goddess)	For granting good harvest and overall development of the community.	Dola/ Holi	<i>Yagnya</i> is observed mainly in Kandha villages for peace and pray for good rain for agriculture.
April	Phalguna-Chaitra	Worship of Seni Penu (Processing of Paddy field or Turmeric field)	Praying for good harvest and seeking permission for cultivation.	1. <i>Danda yatra</i> , 2. Pana Sankranti (New year), 3. Ram Navami	<i>Danda yatra</i> , showcasing the tribal culture as Maa Kali is sol.
May	Chaitra-Baishakha	1. Danda festival 2. Worship of Daba/Soru Penu/Parbata debata –	Mountain worship bring good rain. Danda for approving good rain and for good	Raja Sankranti	This sankranti is related to of mensuration human fertility. The nature – hilly and tree are Feminine as they are productive.

		Hill deities	harvest too.		
June	Baishakha-Jeishtha	Ketta laka (Paddy field worship)	Praying for good harvest with the sacrifice of Pig or Hen in the field.	1. Ratha Yatra, 2. Akshya Tritiya	1. Popular and well-known as a car festival throughout Odisha. 2. Rice cultivation starts with sowing in the region.
July	Jeishtha-Asharha	Goheli laka/Shala laka (Cowshed worship), Loha Penu laka (worshiping for the Iron)	Praying for blessing them with good harvest and protecting the cattle from diseases.	1. Rakshya Bandhan, 2. Baladev Janma	1. Sibling bondage 2. Worshiping Cow and other agricultural equipment, as a symbol of Lord Baladev.
August	<i>asharha-arabana</i>	Worship of Poha Penu/Rosa Melani/Nuakhai festival	This is to eradicate the deadly disease.	Nuakhai	Agriculture festival to welcome the new rice season.
September	Srabana-Bhadra	Kova laka festival Worship of ripen crop.	When the Paddy ripe into the harvest. For good harvest.	Viswa Karma Puja	Worshiping Lord of engineering according to Hindu.
October	Bhadra-Ashwina	Punja/Sisa laka festival (before grinding the paddy)	Thanking the earth goddess for granting harvest and enabling them to the house for the first time.	Dussera	Worship of Maa Durga.
November	Ashwina-Kartika	Budeli/Tlambu/Plambu Penu laka Festivals	Worship the Hunting God before starting the hunting expeditions.	Diwali, Kartika Purnima	In Diwali the Hindu also offers food to their ancestors.
December	Kartika-Margasira	Loeri laka Festival.	Thanks giving before eating the new crops.	Mana Osa	The non-Kandha Hindu but now Kandha also celebrate worshiping Goddess Lakshmi. It is observed after processing the new crop of rice.

A cursory examination of the Table 3.1 reveals that they worship the earth goddess more prominently. It also makes clear about they worship of mountains, the deity of hunting and fruits. Several of the festivals related to crops and food unlike the non-Kandha whose worship relates to not only nature, crops and fertility but also the deities of prosperity. There is overlapping of several ideas that get reflected in the forms of worship in these festivals among the Kandha and non-Kandha. The relationship between the religious universe of Kandha and the social structure is so intimate that without the other, one cannot wholly comprehend, and this needs to be explored. In specific, we need to know the relationships among the environment, religious universe and social structure when describing Kandha rituals.¹⁷ These are dealt with in the following chapters. The annual cycle begins with *meriah*/Kedu in March and ends with the same in February.

Before proceeding to describe these collective and individual religious activities or activities of religious significance, there is a need to clarify that the Kandha understand and call all these as *laka* which means a festival, a joyous occasion of worship, taking a break or rest from the regular routine activities and merry making. These *lakas* or festivals are identified either with a deity or the main activity. In each of the *lakas* there is one main rite besides others as indicated above. Here under, only the main rite is described though it is often said as festival of such and such as the Kandha refer it.

The life cycle ceremonies (discussed in the previous chapter) reveal the concrete manifestation of intimate interrelationship between the Kandha and their spirits. The main object of all these festivals and ceremonies are two-fold; (i) to remove the pollution attendant on individual's household and village community and protect them against any calamities at the hands of the evil spirits; and to purify the individual keeping any hostile spirits and to ensure healthy and happy life, and (ii) to secure protection and to ensure blessing of the benevolent spirits¹⁸ meeting their needs of sustenance. However, the

¹⁷ It is like, Nuer “standing at any point has conceptual knowledge of what lies before him and can predict and organise and perform accordingly” (Evans-Prichard 1940:94).

¹⁸ District Gazette. Boal (1999) also has classified the rituals of Kandha more or less in the same manner; she classified their rituals under four major categories; (i) rituals of orders relationship between God, man and the land, (ii) rituals seeking the blessing and co-operation of the ancestors, (iii) ritual that seeks to

festivals or rites therein are oriented mainly for receiving the blessings or help from the deities or thanking the deities for what they have received and protect them from the evil spirits.

Madda laka (*Solpogachha* worship): As Kandha are the nature worshippers in the name of god and goddess, they come up with distinct cosmological worship. One of them is the Madda laka. There is a myth in this regard which is as follows:

A Kandha man went to the top of a mountain to find a wooden plough in the forest, and as he got tired he slept in the shade of a sago-palm tree. And after a while, he got up and started crying for he was very hungry and thirsty. The Hill God listened to this weeping, and assuring him help showed a tree and advised to cut or chop. When he did so, a liquid started flowing from the suspended branch and the hungry man drink it and his hunger and thirst were gone. After he got intoxicated, he felt better, told all about it and then after that the Kandha worshipped the tree thinking the sap of the tree is like the milk of their mother Goddesses.

It is how in these days, just before the winter, when the *salpa* tree is ready to offer milk or *salp* they worship the tree for providing the juice. Whether these trees are in the jungle or near the village, the Kandha collectively own them and worship in Margasira and Pous of the Hindu calendar in January. The Jani worships the *salpo* tree with some liquor and chicken. In the name of *salpa*, he cuts the head of the chicken brought by villagers who thank the tree for feeding them, as Kandha believe it to be an energy drink. The tree climber, sales up the tree first in the morning and hangs a wooden pot to a branch, and then collects the sap collected in the pot in the noon, afternoon and evening three times. The pot is also referred as breast. Both Kandha and Pano elders worship this juice and drink it, now even this tree is individually owned.

Bela penu worship: Also known as Bura Penu or Bela Penu meaning Creator God/ Supreme God, the God of the light. They recognize Bura Penu's influence in any kind of

guard against troubles and diminishment due to pollution, (iv) rituals in life-destroying situation (Boal 1982: 156-180).

worship of the Kandha.¹⁹ Bura is worshiped at the beginning of paddy cultivation and also on every ceremony the two great divinities viz., Bura and Tari, are first invoked. They are offered liquor and chicken as blood sacrifice.

Kanga/ Kandul parbu: This is a special festival organized honouring Dharni Penu after the harvest of pigeon pea crop for granting a good harvest earlier. However, the Kanga parbu is not celebrated in all villages but in few villages where a Hindu temple constructed near the *meriah* grove, people do celebrate this festival.

Mahasingi Kanga Purbu is considered to be their foremost festival for the Rajaghara person, which often remains optional to attend. But the villagers who have planned to sacrifice the buffalo go there for the blessing. After the first offering made by Patra Priest in Kanga parbu of Mahasingi, it is opened to the others to worship in their respective villages. Mahasingi is the first place of adoration and offering for the Kandha of entire Nuagaon and Balliguda Blocks. Not only individuals from this village but others also attend the Kanga Purbu celebration here in order to fulfilling the vows made. This also sacrifices goats outside the temple premises where two deities i.e., Dharni Penu/Thankurani represented by a stone. Maa Pattakhanda accepts only coconut offerings made within the temple. The nearby mountain is called the place of a saint, and Kandha claim that their forefathers sacrificed humans here. So the first offering here at the time of Kanga parbu is known as the supreme offering of all villagers.

The Mahasingi Kanga parbu takes place on the full moon day in the Hindu month of Chaitra (February-March). On this occasion the officiating priest worships the axe of Maa Pattakhanda who is also known as a form of Durga who is the goddess of weapons. As the Kandha return to their respective homes and organize the worship of the axe of the deity while celebrating the Kandul parbu.

In every Kandha village the ritual objects are under the custody of Jani household, who in fact owns them as he maintains a personal relationship with Jakeri of this particular

¹⁹ Many writers and the ethnographers have not recognized Bura Penu as the Creator god of the Kandha.

village. These objects include the weapons of the goddess Dharni known *tangi*, and an axe, and in each Kandha village there is at least one household that possesses such an axe. The villagers observe the Kandul parbu and collectively worship the earth goddess Dharni. First, Jani brings out the axe from his house washes it and keeps in the shrine of the deity in the village. Then the villagers worship the axe and offer chicken and a goat which are actually killed by Jani. After that they offer *punji* to the deity, and Jani at this time makes a statement about his plans to perform the Kedu in the same year or some other time. Later a feast is arranged for the entire village with the meat of the goat and chicken, people drink liquor and spend the day merry making and dancing.

Worship of Seni Penu – Paddy and Turmeric Cultivation: This is specific *penu* worship at the time of cultivating paddy and preparing for turmeric field along with worshipping of Bura and Tari. These gods are believed to cause rain and as the Kandha totally depend on the land, they should worship Bura and *penu* for these gods develop the new vegetation and the first fruits and also increase grain in every shape. They believe that Bura sent Seni Penu to men who taught the latter to identify seeds of all valuable plants and also to clear the forest, to make ploughs, to yoke oxen etc. So worshipping the Seni Penu with same liquor and chicken by every individual or sometime group also is necessary. The Jani requests Seni Penu on their behalf to allow them cultivation.

Parbata debata Festival: According to the Kandha every hill is the domain of at least one god and generally each god is named after the hill on which one resides. Dumbali, Samuli, Kamei etc., are examples of Soru Penu. Kandha believe that Soru Penu is benevolent and guards the crops against wild animals. So, every Kandha village worships Soru Penu throughout Kandhamal, by offering goats. The individuals who dream in the name of Soru Penu show some chicken to the deity and leave them for a while to avoid the dream and fear. And these can also be sacrificed on the same day. The common offerings are fowls, eggs, rice, and liquor. As the Kandha worship, the Pano shows their gratitude by providing assistance and drumming the *dhola* in this ritual. The Jani asks permission on the first day while second day they perform the sacrifice usually before

summer in and around the village. It is also called as Parbat puja by the Odia speaking people.

Ketta laka: It is a festival connected with paddy cultivation. The rite is performed just after sowing the paddy seed in the field, seeking the blessings of Dharani penu for the proper germination of the seeds. A hen or a pig as in other rites or festivals is offered but most of them prefer to offer hen as pig is not readily or easily available or it is costly. Individual households organize this rite, but Jani of the village is requested to do it on its behalf in the case of a sensitive location of the field like near the Kedu grove while the senior most household member first worships. He goes with a bamboo basket carrying some *mandar* flowers, *arua* rice, turmeric and water along with *mahuli*. He first removes the contents and turns the basket upside down and keeps flowers on it in a line. Then puts the *punji* on leaves under different names while the other male members of the house clean the pig's or legs of the hen. While worshipping, extra care must be taken that victim does not run away; escape of the victim is seen as an inauspicious event. Then some *punji* is offered to the victim to eat, and then he kills the victim(s) with a sharp knife or axe after the worship. The sacrificed animal or chicken is brought to the house and cooked outside in the backyard. A feast is arranged for the families close to them or for the entire village.

Goheli laka: Guhal puja is another important ritual celebrated by both Kandha and Pano of Kandhamal on the festival of Goheli. This ritual is performed to prevent sickness attacking the cattle like cows and buffalos and also domestic fowl which get small-pox in this area. They burn dry turmeric leafs and *jhuna* inside the animal shed besides by touching these animals with a specific leaf called *gendalia* or *gai gendalia* which is believed to remove the germs and other harmful insets from the animals and chicken. Also this rite is believed to protect these animals from tiger, leopards and bears while these animals graze in the hill slopes.

Loha Penu: Every Kandha village has sacred grove for the god of war. It contains a piece of iron from the time when the earth goddess first injected poison into iron of the

evil spirits. It has also a relic site, with ancient bows and arrows, an iron war drum, and possibly other weapons. Now in every household one of these weapons or some of them are found. The Kandha and Pano of Kandhamal worship the sacred grove as the house of goddess Easta Devi, the goddess is worshipped with a goat or hen in the month of Chaitra. This Loha Penu is worshiped by joint families who are living together, and if a person gets separated from the joint family and wants to worship individually the Jani or specialist is invited to invoke the goddess for the first time with the sacrifice of a buffalo or goat. Then after the first ritual, a model of the goddess that is daubed with blood of hen is worshipped with *palash* flowers which are available in the forest. In the house, the said goddess and the iron weapons which include the hunting ones also are garlanded with ornaments.

Poha Penu Worship: The Kandha worship Poha Penu to ward off dangerous spirits who are believed to be causing diarrhea and vomiting when certain foods are consumed. So they first offer such food to the spirits hanging outside the village. The priest conducts a rite in the house; he makes clay models of piglets or small chicks and drive them out by a rite using a pig, along with some red flowers, red powder, a piece of red cloth, soot, *algu* rice flour and a new cooking pot. He asks these spirits to get out of the house saying, “we are giving you blood take it and go away, don’t harm the people etc.” He repeatedly prays while taking these fearful spirits from the house and goes outside the village along the main track, which is usually made from the bamboo like a tray. As the priest walks fast the people of the village follow him to the jungle site to offer sacrifices driving the spirit by playing *ghanta* and *ghanti*. In some areas this is called as *roja melani* and in Western Odisha the same rite is conducted with little more elaborately what is called as Nuakhai. But the purpose of the ritual is to drive the spirits away and prevent them eating new crop.

Kova laka: This ritual is organized at the paddy field when the crop is harvested immediately before reaping the wet-paddy. It is usually performed by the senior member of the family who owns a particular field. The family members take chicken, uncooked rice, new earthen pot and some firewood and go to the field along with the male member

of the family and a Pano. Then the senior member prays saying, “We have cultivated the paddy with hard labour and toiled on it and now we are going to reap the harvest, please do not give any problem.” Then he cuts the head of the chicken and keeps it there with some liquor. The family cooks some new fresh rice and eat there itself. After returning home, they distribute a small portion of it in small leaf bowls to the neighbouring houses.

Punja/Sisa laka: Sisa is an ear of paddy which is taken for worship after the crop has been harvested. Villagers perform this rite before the threshing operations begin individually and collectively. In the case of individual, the Jani takes a few ear heads and goes to the shrine of Dharni in the village with a wooden stake and places it on the ground. Then holding a chicken and an egg, he makes an invocation saying, “Mother Dharni! the crop is ripened but the rats, birds and wild fowls are eating away, please guard it, here we are giving you blood.” Praying thus the priest sacrifices the chicken, cooks a little of the liver and offers it to the Sisa Penu with some rice. Then the men cook the meat and feast together. This festival is decided by the villagers after the paddy has been ripened. The *mutha* collects money or contribution from each house and buy a chicken and organize a festival collectively.

Budeli/Plambu/Tlambu Penu laka: The Kandha believe whatever they see around them is the manifestation of the creator of Bura and his spouse Tari who Kandha to survive by chasing the wild animals and the Kandha follow them and kill the animals for their food. However, the animals are believed to be under the control of a deity called Budeli or Plambu or Tlambu. So, this rite is specially dedicated to this deity. They do not to kill the female fowls or the female animal especially. The youth of the village get ready for the hunting, and first worship their bows and arrows and other weapons used for hunting. They ask the Jani to allow them, while he sprinkles water over them with handful of grass and then offers and slays a fowl he invokes the gods. On return they first give a portion of the hunt to the Jani which they think goes to the deity Budeli.

Koeri Laka: *Koeri* means millet, the festival is organized at the millet harvest or at the time of eating the new crop of millet. The rite is performed to seek permission from

Dharni, for taking or cutting the new crop *koeri*. The Kandha of this region also seek the blessing to eat this new crop while thanking for the blessing received. Villagers together collectively perform this festival wherein the Jani offers a rotten egg, millet rice and paddy by keeping them before Dharni in her shrine. Then he puts little food prepared by mixing the millet and paddy in his mouth and spits on the post of Dharni. He in fact eats the food in the morning without cleaning his teeth. From this day onwards, the people of that village are free to eat millet and paddy. It is said that the Jani represents the goddess, so it is actually the deity who tastes the food by doing this she is approving the millet crop as healthy food for the Kandha. The rotten egg symbolizes the colour of millet; they mix millet and rice together and eat which is their regular diet. Eating the food without cleaning teeth means the food can be eaten as breakfast.

Interaction between Kandha's Traditional festivals and Hindu festivals: The Table 3:1 shown above indicates the traditional festivals of Kandha that coincide with the Hindu festival. In the following, the impact of such interaction between these festivals is discussed.

The Structuring of the Traditional festivals: The most significant impact of Hindu festivals on Kandha festivals is that fixing of date for the festivals. Earlier, the Kandha had gone by the seasons indicated by physical environmental changes such as rains, lowered temperature or heightened temperature, that is, winter summer, blooming and flowering of trees, ripening of fruits etc. These also had reference with the Odia months, perhaps this was the next development. With the increased interaction of Hindus, now the Kandha have fixed the festival on the same dates of the Hindu festival or a day before or after it. Thus, the Kandha festivals are structured. The next important impact is the modeling after the Hindu festivals, and finally adoption of the Hindu festivals. Some of these changes are mentioned below.

Earlier all the Kandha used to grow *kanga* crop, and therefore, all of them celebrated the Kanga/ Kandul parbu festival at the end of the crop. Now it is observed around the Shiv Ratri festival. But these days some of them are not cultivating *kanga* crop, instead they

have shifted to paddy or turmeric or some other for various reasons. As described above, there is the worship of axe on the day of Kanga parbu, but it is not observed if the village is not organizing the Kedu festival in this particular year. Such of them, then worship the axe on the day of Loha laka if Kanga/Kandul parbu is not celebrated. Further, the impact of Hindu festival of Shiv Ratri can be noted in the offering of vegetarian food while worshipping the axe. In fact, the Kandha visit Mahasingi and worship the deity Pattakhanda where they receive the *prasad*, vegetarian offering that the Patra made and offered to the deity. After reaching home they worship the axe with this offering.

There is a very common ground in the worship of Bela Penu and Makar Sankranti. In both the cases, the Sun god is the object of worship. So at the time of Makar Sankranti, Kandha worship the Bura god like Hindus. Interestingly, they worship the Bura god, once Patra, the Hindu priest starts worshipping during the Makar Sankranti.

Ketta laka is losing its identity because the famous Ratha Yatra (Car festival of Puri) is falling on the days (June). Ratha Yatra is one of the major festivals of the Hindus of Odisha and after this festival they can prepare their land for annual agriculture cycle. The Kandha have adopted the Goheli laka of the Hindu worshipping Baladev and worshipping of *nagali* and *jueli*, which was not there earlier.

The Nuakhai (Hindu) and Poha laka (Kandha) are the festivals of eating the new crop, and the former is a very popular festival in the entire Western Odisha region which is replacing the latter gradually. The goddesses like Maa Pattakhanda, Samaleswari, and Khambeswari are being offered food at this time in their temples. But Kandha have their own way of worship on Nuakhai. Now *sindhur* (vermillion) is replacing the turmeric and similarly the milk is replacing liquor and *agarbati* (incense sticks) with the *jhuna*.

The presence of Hindu saints: The most important change that can be noted now in the area of religion is the presence Hindu saints. There are known as Babas and Gurus with their own belief along with Hindu gods who have large groups of followers in the state of Odisha and Kandhamal. These individuals try to convince people how violent is the

Kandha way of worshipping gods and goddesses and advocate for non-violent or humane worship and try to explain the benefits of the worship of *ahinsa* (without killing anything) so that regular worship can be stronger.

Having described various rites and festivals, it is important to examine certain important aspects like decision making, participation etc.

Decision making: If it is a village ritual like Bura Penu laka, Soru Penu laka etc., and that the entire village or *mutha* celebrate, Jani takes initiative. Generally, when he sees something in his dream, or if he can't sleep properly if something bad is going to happen or he senses something is going wrong, he prays to the goddess who reveals the need for conducting a ritual. So in such a case he calls Mutha Mallick and other elders of the village and the matter is discussed. No one questions the suggestion of Jani in this regard and the elders carry the news to the respective villages or households. Sometimes the Mutha Mallick goes to Jani with a proposal consulting the elders and heads of the households or the latter might also ask the Mallick to make a proposal to Jani. Collectively they decide the dates for these religious observations. If a decision is taken Mutha Mallick without the presence of heads of the households, Mutha Mallick instructs the Pano messenger to communicate the information to all the households of the village. The Pano goes to every house and informs the head of the household. In Rajaghara, the Pano messenger is called the *dakra*. For the Village Panchayat there is Ghasi who beats drums and informs the inhabitants of different villages under the Panchayat.

On the other hand, while initiating the ploughing of paddy field for the new agricultural season, cultivation and harvest the individual household takes decision and conducts the rites at its respective field and sometimes the Jani is called to conduct it. If it is a high risk activity due to its location which means if the field is near *meriah* Grove or some sacred place they seek help from Jani compulsorily, otherwise an elder of the house conducts the worship.

Worship in Rituals: Kandha worship their deities either individually or collectively on several occasions. In the above context, the worship involves a participation of entire family members or whole village whether one contributes his share of expenditure or not. Now if one can't give any cash or contribution in kind in terms of labour or grains for the ritual feast, the Mutha Mallick or ward member of the village takes care of his poor brother's family. A day before accompanied by his assistant, Bahuka, the Jani visits the sacred place or *meriah* Grove. The Bahuka cleans the specific place with new broom removing the remnants of the earlier worship if there is any, sprinkles water and plasters the ground with cow dung. Next day again both of them go to the same place accompanied by all the participants. Then, as Bahuka draws a design according to the instruction of Jani, Jani cleans stone of the deity with water if it is there and decorates with vermilion and turmeric spots etc. Then he keeps a wood-apple leaf (*bela patra*), *punji* in a leaf, makes burning coal separating and puts frankincense (*jhuna*) which they have collected from forest, on the burning coal. In case of offering blood Jani cuts the neck of the chicken or goat or breaks the coconut. First Jani, next Bahuka followed by senior most male, other senior members and lastly women and children salute the deity with folded hands.

Role of Women: by and large the role of women in rituals is minimum; in the rituals which are celebrated inside the village like the household worship in connection with initiating the paddy cultivation or Raja/Nuakhai women participate by sitting in there for few minutes and leave the venue. Sometimes they prepare the items required for the ritual. At home the female head usually cooks the sacrificial food - *muha*, *khiri* and *pita* for offering to the deity. While at the time of community ritual the Jani's wife prepares the required food items. The women usually remain in the village, except few senior women, while male members of the community go for the worship if it taking place outside the village. Outside the village usually the males cook for themselves. The rite ends joyfully in dance with the participation of both male and female in the background of drum beats in the village. The senior women of the community also often drink the *mahua* liquor while almost all men and adolescent boys drink.

In case of Kedu and household worship related to sickness or construction of new, installation of household god and goddess the *mamu*, mother's brother is generally invited. But he does not participate directly or acts as the main worshipper, he comes only to show his support and participates in the feast but he can't take the sacrificial food. Same happens in case of daughter and her husband and others who are not from the own kin. They are invited to come while women of the house cook food in a different pot for themselves, not in the common place where the community members eat together, and thus gender segregation can be seen.

Man: Kandha consider themselves a community and; there is no hierarchy – they are of some social status. An individual sees the other in equal terms though seniors are given due respect and regard. Parents receive high esteem from children and it is the obligation of the children to take care of the parents when they become old and suffer from any illness. The patrilineal clan is the social unit on the basis of which the society is organized. It is believed that the clan deities are to protect the clan members and the latter have obligation and worship to worship them with animal or chicken offerings.

There are two kinds of relatives: those related by blood having been born to a common ancestor in whom marriage is prohibited, and those not related by blood by marriage i.e., mother's brother, wife's father, daughter's husband. As the blood related ones should worship the deities collectively and they identify themselves as a *mutha* though live different villages but entitled to cultivate land in a particular area or each family has a share in the land of the *mutha*. They hold ritual objects such as axe, knife and brass pot as collective property and keep moving these objectives periodically from one village to another village. These sacred objectives symbolically represent collectivity of a *mutha* which is a clan or descendants of a common ancestor. They are expected to help each other and stand together as a single unit as opposed to other *mutha* and its members.

Though the daughter is given away in marriage she is not deprived off her privileges in the natal family though she belongs to the family of her husband after her marriage, she remains under the control and overall supervision of mother-in-law while father-in-law

remains as head of the family till his death or old age when the husband becomes the head of the family. In-laws play the complementary role, as man and woman are viewed in terms of complementary relationship. This is reflected in death and also in the organization of Kedu festival. Without daughter's participation the death rituals would be incomplete, and without proper death rites and post-funeral rites, the dead man cannot become an ancestor.

The dead senior members achieve the status of ancestors who protect their descendants from calamities and diseases and in return they are obliged to receive worship in Kedu festival and veneration from the living generation. Some individuals become priests of various deities and they are bestowed with special powers by the deities which shall be maintained with certain norms and prescriptions. They maintain special relationships with their chosen deities.

Non-Kandhas: As mentioned before, the Pano and Patra are the most important castes that are closely associated with the Kandha society. While the role of Pano is gradually is fading away, the influence of Patra is getting increased ever since the colonial administration gave more powers to them. With the suppression of *meriah*, the role of Pano decreased and the as the buffalo sacrifice in Kedu is also being discouraged their role is further getting reduced. On the other hand, the Kandha continued to take advice from the Patra and invited him for the Kedu ritual. Patra have been able to exercise their authority in fixing the date for the Kedu festival as mentioned earlier, and he also visits every Kandha village to get his share of crop from the Mutha Mallick which may a bag of paddy or one quarter bag of *kanga* etc., and preserve the traditional relationship as they think the government is providing full support to the tribe. Earlier their hierarchical relationship of super-ordination and subordination did not prevent them drinking liquor sitting in the ground but this friendly behavior has not changed despite having no need of maintaining such hierarchical relations. Even now when a Patra visits the Kandha village, he is offered water to wash his feet: as a Pano or Kandha pours water on the feet of Patra he washes his feet and throws water of the feet over his head to symbolically driving away the evil spirits that followed on the way and accompanied him to the Kandha

village. He is offered a cot to sit, and some liquor to drink. A Pano attends to him escorts him. Patra are officiating the Durga temples and keep Kandha closer to them through religious means also. They respect Kandha rituals but at the same time slowly spread their beliefs and ideologies among the Kandha very strategically. In these tactics the Panos are fallen out as they converted to Christianity and gradually distanced themselves with the Kandha's control and authority. More discussion on these issues is provided in Chapter Six.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Kandha worldview is distinctly different from that of others. The life of Kandha is finely integrated with the spiritual beings, the nature and the *mutha*. Most of the rituals and festivals of Kandha are concerned with the agriculture. There is a departure from their traditional living as they moved nearer to the rural centers of the plains where non-Kandha also live and started adapting a rural lifestyle with necessary accommodation and modifications in their traditional social organization, and religious practices also. Thus, the Kandha society as a category is in transition, one may find a place in between tribal-rural scale of change and development ²⁰ for some parts of the society.

²⁰ In Robert Redfield's (1956) course of change tribal – folk – urban, the Kandha are in transition from tribal to rural.

MERIAH AND KEDU RITUALS OF THE KANDHA

“As a bridge between separate worlds, the sacred and the profane, the collective and the individual, rejected his assumption that society would continue to be defined by the impersonal institutions of the state and a market-driven division of labour. In such a world, the personal and every day have no meaningful connection with society and history; so that it is left to experts, sociologists and anthropologists, to discover how the abstract principles by which we live are reproduced in religious ritual”.

Emile Durkheim

Introduction

The present chapter aims to describe the ritual *meriah* of the colonial times and the contemporary Kedu festival having given the necessary context in the previous chapters particularly Chapter Three. First, it deals with the ritual *meriah* in which human sacrifice is believed to have taken place till the colonial government began to suppress it i.e., 1836 BCE. Since the British permitted the Kandha to use a substitute i.e., buffalo for the human being the ritual continued for a long time after the independence, but now the trend has been set in to give up the animal sacrifice also altogether. The chapter describes the Kedu festival on the basis of researcher's observation for a couple of times. While examining various interpretations of these rituals, it is argued that these rituals/festival are basically related to agriculture like several others dealt in the previous Chapter and as such aimed for the productivity of soil that sustains life. The festival brings together the deified nature, land and Kandha and provides a unique cultural identity to the Kandha tribe.

Since the only source of information for the *meriah* of the bygone days is what is available in the colonial records and there is no firsthand information, and also Kandha experts of the traditional rituals do not speak a word about *meriah*, it is difficult to provide any authentic or reliable information about it. We are neither clear about its development nor the circumstances under which the human sacrifice was undertaken. The Kedu festival is organized twice a year, that is, in the beginning and at the end of the

annual agricultural operations if one takes the region into consideration though it is conducted once only in a Kandha village; in other words, the villagers organize the ritual either in the beginning or at the end of the agricultural operations. The first one is to beseech Dharni Penu for soil fertility, timely rain, good crop and bumper harvest, and the second one is thanks giving festival. It means, this festival triggers all agricultural rites ushering new agricultural season and closes the same at the end. After the harvest the crop becomes commodity and it enters the market, the world of cash economy or capital. Further, historically the extension of the over-lordship of local Hindu kings to Kandha hills, caused unprecedented changes in the ritual with the settling down of their representatives in villages. Further, immigration of more and more caste Hindu populations in the plains of Kandha area has a profound effect on the ritual as well as the religious practices of Kandha. These changes are discussed at the appropriate places.

Meriah Festival

British called the human sacrifice as *meriah* allegedly existed before the colonial administration, and since 1936 efforts were made to put an end to this practice on ethical grounds. The extent and degree of its intense practice can be guessed from the number of victims or saved victims. It is said, one Mr. Millar and the other Mr. Stevenson saved 12 and 17 *meriah* child victims respectively (Govt. of India 1854: 3-12) in 1837. Campbell and McPhersons had provided some details of *meriah* and rescuing of the human victims (Bailey 1960:176-77). According to Lieutenant Hills, the Baptist Missionary, who was well acquainted with the Kandhamal hill estimated that at the new Feast on the 8th January 1841, as many as 240 *meriahs* were sacrificed. It seems from 1838 to January 1842 Campbell rescued as nearly as 125 *meriahs* from Kandhamal region. It is said that a hundred and forty-two (142) *meriahs* were saved in 1844. Most of the *meriah* were Kandhas and Panos or another caste permanently residing in Kandhamal on the border territory of the *ghats*. Finally, a new post was allocated as Hill Agent or Meriah Agent. The first Hill Agent was Captain Macpherson. It is reported that in 717 males and 789 females, in total 1,506 Meriah victims could be rescued during 1836 to 1854 (MacPherson 1865: 71, MacNeill 1859:72)

In 1836, a British Revenue Officer named Russell produced a report in which the human sacrifices of the Kandha are mentioned for the first time (Padel 2000: 48-9). Two Scotsmen, Captain Samuel Charters MacPherson and Captain John Campbell, visited the hills in the following years to save the human victims and they also reported about the local tradition of female infanticide and *meriah*. The administrative body named “Agency for the Suppression of Human Sacrifice and Female Infanticide in the Hill Tracts of Orissa” was set up in 1845 and also produced certain documents about the practice of human sacrifice. MacPherson wrote probably the best reports which made a serious attempt to understand the point of view of the Kandha. He gathered information about the Kandha’s clan system, recorded various myths about the origin of the sacrifice and distinguished various ritual specialists and traditions among the Kandha. However, the available *meriah* sacrifice descriptions are mostly based on secondary information and only provide scarce data on the social context in which those sacrifices occurred. As early as 1842, MacPherson allowed the Kandha to sacrifice buffalos and monkeys “with all the ceremonies usual on occasions of human sacrifice” in an area of Ghumusar District (MacPherson 1865: 179-80). In the following paragraphs certain selected portions of the account as MacPherson (1852:216-274) described are reproduced.

A victim is acceptable to Tari only if he has boon acquired by the Khonds by purchase; or was born a victim, that is, the son of a victim father; or if he was devoted as a child to the gods, by his father or natural guardian.

Victims are generally supplied to the Khonds by men of the two races called “Panwa” or “Dom bango”, and “Gahinga” ...(page 242)

Ten or twelve days before the time appointed for the rite, the victim is devoted by cutting off his hair, which, until then, is kept unshorn. When a village receives notice of the day fixed for the sacrifice, all who intend to take part in it immediately perform the following ceremony, called “Bringa,” by which they owe flesh to Tari...(page 246)

No one may be excluded from the festivals of human sacrifice, which are declared to be held “for all mankind”. They are generally attended by a large concourse of people of both sexes, and continue for three days, which are passed in the indulgence of every form of wild riot, and generally of gross excess. The first day and night are spent in drunken feasting and frantic dances, under excitement which the goddess is believed to inspire, and which it would be impious to resist. Upon the second morning, the victim, who has been kept fasting from the

preceding evening, is carefully washed, dressed in a new garment, and led forth from the village in solemn procession, with music and dancing... Upon the second day, a post is fixed in the centre of the grove, and in some places between two plants of the sankissar. The victim is seated at the foot of the post, bound back to it by the priest. He is then anointed with oil, ghee, and turmeric, and adorned with flowers; and a species of reverence which it is not easy to distinguish from adoration is paid to him throughout the day. Infinite contention now arises to obtain the slightest relic of his person; a particle of the turmeric paste with which he is smeared, or a drop of his spittle, being esteemed, especially by the women, of sovereign virtue. In some districts, instead of being thus bound in a grove, the victim is exposed in or near the village upon a couch, after being led in procession round the place of sacrifice...(page 246-247)

Upon the third morning, the victim is refreshed with a little milk and palm sago, while the licentious feast which has boon carried on with little intermission during the night, is loudly renewed.

After the preparations which have been described, the following remarkable invocations, legends, and dialogues are gone through, -- the part of the victim in the latter, and occasionally also the parts of the chief and the priest, being sustained, in a semi-dramatic way, by the best impersonators of the characters that may be found...(page 248)

The acceptable place of sacrifice is discovered the previous night, by persons who are sent to probe the ground about the village with sticks in the dark, and mark the first deep chink as the spot indicated by the Earth Goddess. There, in the morning, a short post is inserted; around it four larger posts are usually set up, and, in the midst of these the victim is placed. The priest, assisted by the chief and one or two of the elders of the village, now takes the branch of a green tree cleft several feet down the centre. They insert the victim within the rift, fitting it, in some districts to his chest, in others to his throat. Cords are then twisted round the open extremity of the stake which the priest, aided by his assistants, strives with his whole force to close; he then wounds the victim slightly with his axe, when the crowd throws itself upon the sacrifice and strips the flesh from the bones, leaving untouched the head and intestines...(page 253)

During the night after the sacrifice, strong parties watch over the remains of the victim; and, next day, the priest and the Mullickos consume them, together with a whole sheep, on a funeral pile, when the ashes are scattered over the fields, or are laid as paste over the houses and granaries. And then two formalities are observed, which are hold indispensable to the virtue of the sacrifice. The first is that of presenting to the father of the victim, or to the person who sold or made him over to the Khonds for sacrifice, or the representative of such person, a bullock, called the "Dhuly", in final satisfaction of all demands. The second formality is the sacrifice of a bullock for a feast, at which the following prayer is offered up...(page 254)

When the victim is cut to pieces, the persons who have been deputed by each village to bring its share of the flesh instantly return home. There the village priest and every one else who has staid at home fast rigidly until their arrival. The bearer of the flesh carries it rolled up in leaves of the googlut tree, and when he approaches the village, lays it out on a cushion formed of a handful of grass, and then deposits it in the place of public meeting, to give assurance to all of its arrival. The fasting heads of families then go with their priest to receive the flesh. He takes and divides it into two portions, and subdivides one of these into as many shares as there are heads of families present. He then says to the Earth Goddess - ..(page 254)

Finally, each man goes and buries his particle of flesh in his favourite field, placing it in the earth behind his back without looking. And here may be noticed the idea which secures the distribution of the flesh of every victim to the greatest possible extent, that, instead of advantage arising to any one from the possession of a large share of the flesh, all are benefited by a sacrifice in proportion to the number of shares into which the flesh is subdivided. After burying the flesh, all return home and eat and drink, in some places holding a common feast, while in others each family eats apart. For three days thereafter, no house is swept, and, in one district, strict silence is observed, while fire may not be given, nor wood cut, nor strangers be received. Upon the fourth day, the people reassemble at the place of sacrifice, slaughter and feast on a buffalo, and leave its inedible portions as a gratification to the spirit of the Meriah.

The ceremonial of human sacrifice is finally completed by the offering of a hog to the Earth Goddess, a year after its performance, by the village which sacrificed. This offering is called the “Valka”, and the invocation to Tari is simply this? “O, Tari Pennu, up to this time we have been engaged in your worship, which we commenced a year ago. Now the rites are completed. Let us receive the benefit”. (page 255)

Other writings on *meriah* reveal that the ritual was organized differently in different places though the general theme remained the same. Now let me turn to Thurston who writes, “The ethnological section of the Madras Museum received a few years ago very interesting relics in the shape of a human (Meriah) sacrifice post from Balliguda in Ganjam.” (1909:372) It is the same area where the present research has carried out his fieldwork. Further, Thurston writes,

In 1837, Mr. Russell, in a report on the districts entrusted to his control, wrote as follows. †[12] “...In the Māliahs of Goomsur, the sacrifice is offered annually to Thadha Pennoo (the earth) under the effigy of a bird intended to represent a peacock, with the view of propitiating the deity to grant favourable seasons and crops. The ceremony is performed at the expense of, and in rotation by, certain mootahs (settlements) composing a community, and connected together from local circumstances. Besides these periodical sacrifices, Others are made by single

mootahs, and even by individuals, to avert any threatening calamity from sickness, murrain, or other cause. Grown men are the most esteemed (as victims), because the most costly. Children are purchased, and reared for years with the family of the person who ultimately devotes them to a cruel death...(page 372-373)

...on the day before the performance of the barbarous rite, (*victim*)¹ is stupefied with toddy, and made to sit, or, if necessary, is bound at the bottom of a post bearing the effigy above described. The assembled multitude then dance around to music, and addressing the earth, say: 'Oh! God, we offer the sacrifice to you. Give us good crops, seasons, and health.' After which they address the victim, 'We bought you with a price, and did not seize you. Now we sacrifice you according to custom, and no sin rests with us.' On the following day, the victim being again intoxicated and anointed with oil, each individual present touches the anointed part, and wipes the oil on his own head. All then proceed in procession around the village and its boundaries, preceded by music, bearing the victim and a pole, to the top of which is attached a tuft of peacock's feathers. On returning to the post, which is always placed near the village deity called Zakaree Pennoo, and represented by three stones, ..., they kill a hog in sacrifice and, having allowed the blood to flow into a pit prepared for the purpose, the victim, who, if it has been found possible, has been previously made senseless from intoxication, is seized and thrown in, and his face pressed down until he is suffocated in the bloody mire amid the noise of instruments. The Zanee then cuts a piece of flesh from the body, and buries it with ceremony near the effigy and village idol, as an offering to the earth. All the rest afterwards go through the same form, and carry the bloody prize to their villages, where the same rites are performed, part being interred near the village idol, and little bits on the boundaries. The head and face remain untouched, and the bones, when bare, are buried with them in the pit. After this horrid ceremony has been completed, a buffalo calf is brought in front of the post, and, his forefeet having been cut off, is left there till the following day. Women, dressed in male attire and armed as men, then drink, dance and sing round the spot, the calf is killed and eaten, and the Zanee is dismissed with a present of rice and a hog or calf." (page 374)

In the same year, Mr. Arbuthnot, Collector of Vizagapatam, reported as follows. "... The victim is seldom carried by force, but procured by purchase,..., which consists of forty articles such as a bullock, a male buffalo, a cow, a goat, a piece of cloth, a silk cloth, a brass pot, a large plate, a bunch of plantains, etc. The man who is destined for the sacrifice is carried before the god, and a small quantity of rice coloured with saffron (turmeric) is put upon his head...He is allowed to wander about the village, to eat and drink anything he may take a fancy to, and even to have connection with any of the women whom he may meet. On the morning set apart for the sacrifice, he is carried before the idol in a state of intoxication. One of the villagers acts as priest, who cuts a small hole in the stomach of the victim, and with the blood that flows from the wound the idol is

¹ added

smeared. Then the crowds from the neighbouring villages rush forward, and he is literally cut into pieces. Each person who is so fortunate as to procure it carries away a morsel of the flesh, and presents it to the idol of his own village.” (page 375)

Concerning a form of sacrifice, which is depicted in the Madras Museum through a post, Colonel Campbell records*[13] that “...After the performance of the usual ceremonies, the intended victim is fastened to the proboscis of the elephant, and, amidst the shouts and yells of the excited multitude of Khonds, is rapidly whirled round, when, at a given signal by the officiating Zanee or priest, the crowd rush in, seize the Meriah, and with their knives cut the flesh off the shrieking wretch as long as life remains. He is then cut down, the skeleton burnt, and the horrid orgies are over...” (page 376)

Campbell describes, “how the miserable victim is dragged along the fields, surrounded by a crowd of half intoxicated Khonds, who, shouting and screaming, rush upon him, and with their knives cut the flesh piecemeal from the bones, avoiding the head and bowels, till the living skeleton, dying from loss of blood, is relieved from torture, when its remains are burnt, and the ashes mixed with the new grain to preserve it from insects”. “Yet again, he describes a sacrifice which was peculiar to the Khonds of Jeypore.” It is, “he writes, “always succeeded by the sacrifice of three human beings, two to the sun to the east and west of the village, and one in the centre. (page 375)



Khond Meriah sacrifice post

... A stout wooden post about six feet long is firmly fixed in the ground, at the foot of it a narrow grave is dug, and to the top of the post the victim is firmly fastened by the long hair of his head. Four assistants hold his out-stretched arms and legs, the body being suspended horizontally over the grave, with the face towards the earth. The officiating Junna or priest, standing on the right side,

repeats the following invocation, at intervals hacking with his sacrificial knife the back part of the shrieking victim's neck. 'O! mighty Manicksoro, this is your festal day... Then, addressing the victim: — 'That we may enjoy prosperity, we offer you a sacrifice to our God Manicksoro, who will immediately eat you, so be not grieved at our slaying you. Your parents were aware, when we purchased you from them for sixty rupees, that we did so with intent to sacrifice you. There is, therefore, no sin on our heads, but on your parents. After you are dead, we shall perform your obsequies.' The victim is then decapitated, the body thrown into the grave, and the head left suspended from the post till devoured by wild beasts. The knife remains fastened to the post till the three sacrifices have been performed, when it is removed with much ceremony. (page 377).

In an account by Captain Mac Viccar of the sacrifice as carried out at Eaji Deso, it is stated that on the day of sacrifice the Meriah is surrounded by the Khonds, who beat him violently on the head with the heavy metal bangles which they purchase at the fairs, and wear on these occasions. If this inhuman smashing does not immediately destroy the victim's life, an end is put to his sufferings by strangulation, a slit bamboo being used for the purpose. Strips of flesh are then cut off the back, and each recipient of the precious treasure carries his portion to the stream which waters his fields, and there suspends it on a pole. The remains of the mangled corpse are then buried, and funeral obsequies are performed seven days subsequently, and repeated one year afterwards." (page 377-378)



The above descriptions make it clear that the procedure adopted in the sacrifice of *meriah* varied from place to place. In this background, what we have today is the information

² Virasat – E – Hind Foundation : Preserving, Propagating and Protecting India's Heritage.
<https://blogvirasatehind.wordpress.com/2019/02/06/a-journey-through-kondh-territory-a-tribe-that-once-sacrificed-humans/> accessed on 24.11.2005.

that anthropologists have partly explored: the buffalo sacrifices. Now, an attempt is made to explore the songs which are believed to have been sung by the priest Jani that are no longer in use.

The Festival: To briefly recapitulate the salient points the *meriah* sacrifice, it is a three-day festival, the preparations start much earlier. When the villagers decide to organize the Meriah festival in the village council the first requirement is procuring the sacrificial victim. The *mutha* according to the decision informs the Pano of the village to find out a victim. It is during the Magh and Pous i.e., January - February months of the year the villagers ask the chief of the village about the *meriah*. The victim is selected regardless of age, race, caste or sex.

It is learnt through discrete inquiries in the villages during the present fieldwork that there was also a practice of procuring the human victim long before and such person was discretely prepared to be the victim voluntarily on some day near or in distant future. Once these victims are bought, they are brought to the Kandha community and are allowed to have a normal life like others in the polity until he/she reaches the crescendo, i.e., the time of sacrifice. They are given land and animals to lead the life like Kandhas. They may even have a family and children individually. The victim resides in the house of the village elder or village chief until the victim is ready to start a life of his own and live separately. Special care of victim's health is taken and made sure that he/she does not die of a disease or elopes. The song sung by the Jani concerning the purchase of the sacrificial victim is as follows:

(a) "*O village-head,
Our eldest,
Have you got
Baby fowls, baby peacocks?*" and
*"Give us baby fowls,
Baby peacocks.
We will pay the market price."* (Mahaptra 1992: 63-74; Boal 1982: 276-328; Rath 2017:45)

It can be noted that the above song does not mention the human victim, but it does states the purchase. This may have been a change due to the intervention of the British. About

10-12 days before the day of sacrifice, the victim's hair is cut whether man or woman. S/he is worshipped by liquor or milk to welcome him/her to the village few days before the sacrifice. The victim is kept unshaven and kept without food from the second day evening onwards. However, a feast is organized by the Jani and Mutha Mallick with the help of villagers on the same night for the villagers.

On the third day, the victim is given bath and taken to the *meriah* grove³ where the priest invokes the goddesses and prepares him/her with turmeric bath for sacrifice. Then he stabs the victim. At this stage the following song is sung by the priest including other elders of the village:

(b)*Here we sacrifice the enemy,
Here we sacrifice the meriah,
The gods eat up this sacrifice,
The enemy is thus worshipped.
Let there be no collective loss,
Let not tigers prowl;
The gods need so many bribes,
So many offerings.
Let there be no dark forests,
No calamity,
Let all be happy,
Live in peace.* (Mahaptra 1992: 63-74; Boal 1982: 276-328; Rath 2017:45)

The second song of the *meriah*, as mentioned above, describes of the victim being sacrificed or being offered to god. The song can be interpreted since the goddess is fed or received the desired offering, they wish that they would be protected by the goddess from tigers, natural dangers and calamities, and would be blessed with a life of peace and happiness. All the sacrifices are viewed as “bribes”; though it is the duty or responsibility of the god or goddess to protect and bless the human, they do expect favours from the humans which is not right on the part of the divinities. Thus, the Kandha conceive god in terms of an official as custodians and also the source of all the natural resources. They also have to protect their dependents from all the mishaps. As in the society the officials who deliberately puts aside his/her responsibility given by the job but expects bribe for

³ Meriah grove is a forest grove where the ancestors worshipped the deities and made sacrifices originally. As mentioned in Chapter one, sometime the Kandha shift their habitation and if it has happened, they come back to the original grove at this juncture. It can also be a temporary place.

discharging the job as a favour so also the gods behave in the same manner. The Kandha song refers to such an attitude and relationship between the gods and humans: the gods are akin to humans and offering the greatest sacrifice, human sacrifice, is the only way of obtaining favours of peace and prosperity, and also worshipping a god or goddess is the means of bidding their gratitude for all that they were blessed with.

When the priest stabs the victim, each of the participants that represented a village takes a strip of the victim's flesh and departs for the respective settlements where they share it with their fellow villagers or brethren who bury the flesh in their fields. The following song, the third one, is sung at that moment:

(c) Invocation to earth (the Dhariti or Jhakar) goddess

*Let no famine
Visit our land,
Plague our people.
Our land and the world Let them be in peace.*

*In plenty,
Like the siali and gulchi creepers,
Our crops flourish.
This offering we make
To thee.*

*The hills of Kandarani, Tinirani,
Rekamali, Kulerpani,
Kodihinmadi, Sobahanmadi,
Pandramadi, Dandramedi,
Bayamadi, Hatimudi,
Guamadi, Andamadi,
Pasapatia, Sodtatia,
Lenjuwali, Raskakota,
They are our home,
So many offerings.*

*Let onions grow well,
Garlic grow. . well.
We commit no sin,
We have no guilt.
We only feed the gods.
To you, our gods,
This offering.*

*Let no creepers enmesh the head,
Nor thorns prick,
O god.
This rope you have made
To tie the meria,
This sword and the axe you have made
They eat the meria.*

*We have no sin,
We have done no wrong,
No crime have we committed.
Your blacksmith has fashioned
This axe,*

*Durga eats,
Durga eats everything.
Below: Dharti, the quiet ancient earth;
Above: Dharma, the god of justice;
And we offer
Only a small offering,
Insignifacant.
The land will be happy,
The god will be happy.
Let them prosper.
The lance eats (the sacrifice),
O God, we offer you
So many bribes. (Boal 1982: 276-328 Mahaptra 1992: 63-74; Rath 2017:45)*

The third song is an appeal to the goddess to protect their crops and bless them with bountiful harvest and give them a disease-free life and save them from natural disasters of any kind. They seek the blessings of the goddess to grant them a life of peace, affluence and great harvests. The Kandha live a life of dependency on the nature and natural produce. They believe that the offering of *meriah* to god would benefit the entire mankind and would be favourable for their community as well. Further, they assert that they are not committing any sin by killing the victims: they have offered only food to the goddess to satisfy her hunger. Similar expression has been made in the second song,

The chief gives a pig or a buffalo to the priest and the *meriah*'s seller as gifts for their services and concludes the event. Finally, the following song invoking the goddess Dharni gudi is sung that concludes the worship.

*“All my blessings and wealth Due to you,
All my health-excellence Due to you” and
“We, all your sons,
Are in peace due to your blessings.”*

At the end the priest chants to get rid of the evil spirits for the Kandha believe that these spirits residing near the village keep a watch on Kandha and if they commit any mistake immediately attacks them, and this is what it means when the priest says “Go away, green, Go away”.

These are very important songs that stand as an evidence for the practice of human sacrifices that the Kandhas in the past. The tradition of offering human sacrifices (though ill-famed) has made this tribe popular in the folds of history. These are originally dedicated to the *meriah* and their significance can be noted and, in fact, they are not to chant these songs on any other occasion lest the god’s curse befall them.

External Interference: The above description gives an impression that the Kandha used to organize the ritual quite independently which is true till the entry of Patra in Kandhamal. By the time the East India Company annexed the princely states in Orissa in 1803 BCE, it is not clearly known about the interference of external agency on the Kandha. As the British started collecting taxes from the hill populations the earlier agents of the Kings, Patras, put great pressure on the Kandha chieftains for taxes. In this context of exercising super-ordinate state power, the Kandha rebelled against the British, which is discussed later in this dissertation, as there was increased interference of Patra in the affairs of Kandha for the maintenance of peace, law and order in the hills. This paved a way for the Patra draw closer to the Kandha enabling them to indulge in the rituals of Kandha as well besides physical, political and economic control and domination over the Kandha and Pano also. In the Kedu festival described below one can notice the presence of Patra. Despite their entry into the tribal areas during the time of princely states, it seems their interference in the affairs of the Kandha was minimum though they did influence the Kandha religion. But it increased with the territorial occupation of the British Company, and there is further more increase after independence along with other Hindu ideologues and communities. In this regard several scholars are of the view, which

will be discussed later on, that some of the deities of Kandha are appropriated by the Kings during their over lordship and Hindu society in general, and the religious practices of Kandha also are also affected with association of the Patra and the Kings. One such incident has already been in connection with the Maa Pattakhanda temple at Mahasingi.

Kedu Festival

Besides on the annual celebration of Kedu, the buffalo sacrifice is also normally organized when the village as a whole begins cultivating a hill territory for shifting cultivation and it could be near a former settlement which was abandoned as a result of which the forest has grown again. After cutting down the trees, the villagers wait for three years and after a successful harvest they make a sacrifice to the earth goddess of that territory. Similarly, it is followed when a house is constructed and also a new village is established or relocated due to out break of an epidemic, serial deaths, fire or any other calamities and disasters. Also it is organized when an individual family desires to do so on account of recovery from serious sickness as it happened in Rajaghara village or any such other calamity.

The preparations of the annual festival begin a year before the actual sacrifice with the “pigeon peas festival” called Kanga parbu which has been discussed in the previous chapter. Kanga parbu starts with the worship of the sacrificial axe – *tangi* which is usually kept in the attic of Jani or a member of that status category: it cannot be used for any other purpose. It is believed that once it is brought out or kept open it seeks blood. This festival is celebrated few days before the Kedu parbu which normally takes place in the months of either Pous (December – January) or Magh (January – February) among the Desia Kandha, while Dongria Kandha it is celebrated after a month or two, usually in Phalgun (February – March) or Chaitra (March – April).

The Nuagaon Kandha celebrates the Kedu parbu between February and April. However, the date of the festival itself is not fixed, not even by the phases of the moon as it is done in many Hindu ceremonies. Kandhas of Nuagaon as well as Balliguda try to avoid celebrating the festival in two places at the same time unless the villages involved are located far away from each other. In every case Kandha’s seek information from the

Hindu as well as from Patra to determine an auspicious day for the rite, but the schedules are changed constantly for various reasons such as the sacrificial buffalo runs away or is stolen, conflicts arise between villages through brothers or between affines and agnates, important people become sick, the government does not provide the tin roof for the hut of the goddess on time, the villagers run out of money, and preparations cannot be concluded on time etc. When a conflict arises between the two village if they want organize the festival on the same date, the opinion from each of the village council is obtained for the final decision in the matter of whether the festival is to be celebrated and not. Among the Kandha of this region, the celebration of the Kedu parbu is not confined to from Friday to Saturday as it is the practice in Balliguda. The sacrifices are carried out on Tuesday, Wednesday and sometimes Sunday as observed among the Dongria Kandha. The differences between Dongria and Desia Kandha may be related to the greater importance attached to astrology for determining the time of rituals.

The typical period during which the Kedu falls is between the reaping of the crops and the preparing the fields for the next agricultural year i.e., between February/March and May/June; a ceremony of the Mango-twist actually signifies the end of the old year i.e., January/February and the beginning of the New Year⁴. It is also believed and said that following the Danda Yatra festival, the Pana Sankranti begins which is the New Year, called as Odia New Year. This period is considered to be a time of joy during which people relax from the arduous agricultural work.⁵ The young people find time in the dormitories to play games at night and during the day they visit each other living in different villages more frequently. The alcoholic *salap* juice (*mada kalu*) flows again and the adult men spend many hours drinking and chatting under a palm tree. These days are called days of joy and jubilation because people have enough to eat after the harvest and

⁴ There is a song which specially gives indication of new year, “amba baula sure sure, dina gadi jae kete kuade, barasa nua asilare..”. They can only get to know about New Year when they see mango-twist in the magno trees.

⁵ The question of recognizing the tribe and caste difference starts from here. When in April the non-Kandha Hindu also start farming activities around the Rajasankranti while the tribe Kandha also do practice agriculture activities during this period of time. Here we may understand how difficult it is to understand the caste and tribal festivals in this context or to recognize the worship and veneration which belongs to caste or tribe.

may have earned a substantial amount of money from the sale of their cash crops so they can afford to buy new clothes, cooking utensils, etc.

It has to be made clear here that if the Kedu is organized as a fulfilment of the owe made last year or before, it is usually done in either Pous or Magh month. This is also organized as a prayer or requests made to the gods and ancestors particularly the earth goddess, Dharni, to bless them with good rains and harvest besides keeping them healthy and safe. Then it is usually organized in Phalgun month. If we take a broad view of the region some villagers may be organizing Kedu as an owe fulfilment but some other may also be organizing the same as a prayer particularly during Phalgun.

The intervals between two Kedus in the same village appear to be connected to the agricultural cycle, yet the exact intervals depend on various factors and are certainly not simply determined by the practice of shifting cultivation. In Rajaghara and other villages in the plain area say it is organized in every two or three to five years, but in contrast, the Kandha of little remote places it is found, no definite interval is fixed, rather there can be a lapse of any number of years until the village council decides. Often villagers do not exactly remember the number of years that are gone by since the last festival but they point to a child this boy or that girl was a baby at the time of the last Kedu parbu. Some hints about the past celebration of the festival in a village may also be deduced from the condition and the numbers of sacrificial wooden posts found near the shrine of the Dharni goddess which stand in different stages of decay.

Kedu in Kui language of the Kandha tribe means in a broader sense a large celebration, a festival. It is held on the 1st Sunday or on the subsequent Sunday, which comes after and it should be a full moon day. But the festival starts from Saturday and ends on Monday. A suitable date is actually fixed in a meeting of the villagers and their traditional leaders in the presence of the Patra who was the territorial head of the erstwhile *muthas* in order to avoid clashes between the villages. Once the date is fixed and agreed upon, the head of the *mutha* or clan, informs the village heads of his clan who in turn circulates the information through the Pano within the respective village. The village becomes the center of ritual activities after the decision to organize the Kedu is made. Shrines are

being built from the ground up, ritual sites are being remodeled, and sacrificial poles are being erected.

Then the contributions are raised from the households for the purchase of buffalo and others, relatives and guests are invited and preparations begin in advance and the houses get cleaned and painted. A day before or on that day relatives start arriving, on that day people put on their best clothing and women engage body decorations, kinsmen and friends flock with presents. Drinking of the millet- beer, and *mahua* liquor goes on and on to make them forget all the worries, anxieties and hardship of the routine life.

During the season i.e., between January and May, it is common to hear the sounds of drum (*changu*) beating in the regions of Balliguda and Nuagaon starting from the twilight pre-dusk hour till the midnight murky nightfall. The sound is very exhilarating hypnotic vibe feasting the auditory nerves. One finds the enthusiasm and festive spirit in the air, climate and significantly in the ashes near the fixed *meriah* pole at the middle of the village which proclaims aloud when someone goes for a stay in the villages. Often the drum beats that tear the unbearable cold of the Kandhamal loudly announce the onset of the Kedu season. In the town the market especially the cow and buffalo market is filled up by the gust of middlemen and non-Kandha inviting for the purchase of a *meriah* (buffalo) and take home with affordable price. The seller, buyer or nobody would cheat in terms of money as they believe it is the *prasad* of the Mother. It is celebrated everywhere lavishly with great solemnity, accompanied by songs ,drum beats and flute music and also dance youth out of the songs is as follows:

*From the Down
We've come here
Searching for a buffalo
A male or female.*

*We can hear the voice
We understand
what you want
The world is starving
Hey Sindili (mountain)
Hey Chandli (mountain)*

*Listen, don't rush be quite!
As you wish
Calm down Settle down
For a year, twelve months
Here is something for you.
We come here
Don't spoil our happiness going somewhere.
We're going to give you a cock
A male or female
Still you're here We've got something for you!
We are giving you pig
Which looks so good
We give you a buffalo
Who is crying
The tears are coming
We have given them
Turmeric, oil, cake
And even rice
We have treated that like us.*

*No sin
We are killing
Don't put us in trouble
We have given money
Rice, cloths, wine etc.
We have nothing
No sin, we are not culprit
Make us happy
Bring the joy!
Namaskar! (Boal 1982: 276-328 Mahaptra 1992: 63-74; Rath 2017:35)*

General information about the Kedu festival: To this key event of Kedu festival and the rites related to it follow the following order: (1) Kanga parbu or Pigeon-pea festival,(2) *podha kina* or buying the buffalo and (3) *kedu khunti pota* or preparing the sacrificial. While this is supposed to be the general order it is found there is a flexibility now to perform these rites. Few months ahead of the main event of sacrifice, the

organizers prepare the sacrificial site while the whole village itself transforms into a sacrificial arena⁶.

The two most important sites where the village as a whole performs sacrifices are located, one in the village plaza and the other at Kedu grove: the first site is marked by stones collectively referred to as Jakeri. Over these stones or Jakeri deity the organizers together with their brothers from the same clan (*mutha*) temporarily raise a cottage called 'hut of the mother goddess (*dharni kudi*)' where the buffalo (es) is (are) sacrificed. The temporary structure or shrine consists of solid teak wood posts, mud-padded bamboo walls adorned with colorful lines and triangles drawn and the thatched roof which is made of bamboo and mountain grass (*wikang*). The hut not only gives protection to the goddess of earth, but it also represents the shrine of the goddess of earth. There are three teak wood stakes inside the shrine fixed on the ground. The main stake which is of two or three feet is carved out in such a way it would have two breasts and it faces the entrance which represents the earth goddess, Dharni, while the other two stakes on either side of it are shorter ones but face towards the rear side. They represent Kotewali (Abba) and Jakeri, the sister of Dharni. It may also be noted that there is a permanent site for Jakeri represented as a stone close to the village who is worshipped on every festival but now the focus has been shifted to the temporary site, the one located in the center of the plaza.

The various identities and functions of the sacrificial stake are revealed in the above description. First of all, there must be certain qualities in the tree itself, and it can be inferred from the way Jani begs the tree not to cause any diseases that they consider the tree to have supernatural powers. Second, like the tree, when it is brought into the village, the stake itself appears to be a kind of sacrificial victim. Thirdly, the posts seem to be a depiction or image of the goddess of the earth and other deities including the gods of the mountains. The Jani gets possessed of the earth goddess when the post is put into the hole and promises the people that there will be great harvest as well as good health. After that the post receives sacrifices of fowls, pigs and later the buffalo. Finally, before the sacrifice, the post has the very realistic purpose of a pole to which the buffalo is tethered.

⁶ The appearance of the present village might be different from what it used to be in the ancient times, but the Kandha did not forget the mechanism. This begins more or less within the time frame.

The other site of worship of Dharni is located outside the village, *meriah* grove, where they believe their ancestors sacrificed human beings. The site at the *meriah* grove consists mainly of three stones that represent Dharni Penu, Jakeri Penu, Kotewali or Abba. The stakes that are placed in the shrine temporarily located in the plaza of the village are identified with the same deities. Some villagers are now changing the shrine with *pucca* structure of bricks and cement with a boundary around it in the middle of the village as in case of a Hindu temple. In Rajaghara the shrine at *meriah* grove is a permanent structure where the sacred axe, and other material related to sacrifice are kept, whereas in Sirtiguda and Kudutuli a permanent structure is constructed in the middle of the village itself. In front of the structure one finds the sacrificial posts. However, to perform the ritual within the village, they seek permission from *meriah* grove. Other deities and ancestors are invited into the village shrine on different occasions including the Kedu festival, and to be present in the shrine of the earth goddess, Dharni, where the villagers worship them. As Kandha claim, the ancestors are watching them and still remain as spirits and they are to be welcomed to the village and given farewell after the sacrifice.

There is another collective site of worship which is also located on the village plaza but always on the east of the hut of the goddess. It is marked by a single stone which may be of various sizes. This stone is referred to as Kotewali, the husband of the earth goddess, and addressed by the Kandha as Abba (our father). The villagers worship this male deity on all festivals as in case of Jakeri. A brief worship is made here on the first day of the Kedu festival.

Ideally the Kandha used to bear the cost of the buffalo collectively, i.e., equally shared by all the households in the village, but now due to the market price which is hiking very fast not everyone can give huge amount when equally divided among the households. In this case now some village leaders like ward members of the village, Jani or Mutha Mallick, if they are rich give a maximum share to buy the buffalo. If it is for individual household's performance that household is supposed to pay the entire amount from their personal pocket and others would share other requirement of the festival and feast. It is observed in Rajaghara someone paid around Rs. 4,000 for an old buffalo which was

bought for the sacrifice. But it can go even more than Rs. 7,000. The prices are escalated if the seller knows that the purchase is for sacrifice as people would be ready to buy however much the price would be of the animal. Sometimes the dominant clan like, Gastu lineage in Rajaghara pays the entire cost of the buffalo in order to retain their status as higher than the rest in the clan.

When all set, the festivity begins with the worship of buffalo in the village by the Jani. Then accompanied by the dancing youth, musical instruments, Jani along with the buffalo goes in a procession to the Mutha Maliick who may be in the same village or in some other. He also carries with him the ritual *tangi* and knife which were used in the previous festival. Receiving Jani and the *tangi*, knife, Mutha Mallick worships the buffalo and he brings out the brass-pot of the clan which is in his possession. Then the process moves from house to house in the village.

Few days before the sacrifice, the buffalo is treated like a bride before her marriage. When a Kandha woman is about to get married as described in the Chapter One, visits her clan members along with a few unmarried girls and her mother's brothers and her friends residing in neighbouring villages. In the very same way now the buffalo is taken in procession starting from the village of the Mutha Mallick. On the next day, the young men along with seniors of Kandha lead the buffalo to different villages whose inhabitants are related to the organizers as either brothers or affinal partners or friends. In each village, the Kandha households present the victim with gifts in the form of white cloth tied to the horns, anoint the head of animal with turmeric water and castor seed oil and feed it with cooked rice and vegetable broth. The food offered to the buffalo is collected in one basket, mixed and then distributed again among the villagers and their guests. The Kandha thus entertain relations of commensality with the victim, thereby stressing that the victim belongs to them. If Pano reside in the village, they may also express their respect to the victim but may only offer raw rice because they are of lower status and thus excluded from the commensality with the Kandha and with their victim.

When taking the procession of buffalo, people from the village where Kedu is to be organized go to other village of the clan by playing the drum music that is called *girisana*, and the dance that accompany the drum beats. The men attire themselves with

the feathers of peacock as their head-gears, and the musical instruments include *timitini*, *jajinga* and *banshi* (flut) which are not used on other occasions. When the sound of music changes from *girisana* to *dikana* it is understood that the people have returned to the village where the Kedu is organized. And at the time of Kedu, which is the main event there will be a different music that is permitted at the time of main event is called *dakinaba endina*. They use the other music when the Kedu or buffalo is taken around the village for the last round called *karu gresena*.⁷

About a week before the main events to take place the villagers go to the forest in search of a suitable teak tree which shall be used to make a sacrificial pole (*gandi*) and after bringing it is fixed firmly in the ground in front just next to the eastern wall of the shrine of the goddess. The Kandha women also make two holes in this eastern wall as well as in some places in the western wall. These holes acquire importance on the main day of the sacrifice when the religious specialist Jani/Tolmba stands inside the hut and takes the sacred weapons – representations of the goddess – and stretches out his hand through one of the holes in order to stab the buffalo which is tied to the sacrificial post in front of the hut.

On the day before the festival, the buffalo is again showered, anointed and fed in the village of sacrifice, this time, however, by the organizers themselves who address the victim as “mother”. This again corresponds with one of the marriage rituals, because a bride on the day before her wedding will bid farewell to all the members of her native village. Like the bride before her wedding visits every house in her village and in each house she is given a symbolic bath and some food to eat, the buffalo is led to each house in the village before he is taken to the site of sacrifice i.e., shrine of Jakeri, sister of the earth goddess. Another apparent similarity between the wedding ceremony and the buffalo sacrifice is the timing of both events. *meriah* sacrifices as well as formal wedding ceremonies always take place from Friday to Sunday and follow a very similar ritual sequence.

⁷ For entertainment and death there are different sounds and music too called *tapka indina badire* and *edji inta paja* respectively.

The invited affine come to the village to defend the villagers and the sacrificial victim when the sacrificial sites are prepared. They carry long bamboo poles which they usually use for making fence. With these bamboo poles they make a barricade for preventing the young men who want to kill the buffalo before the appropriate time of the sacrifice. One barricade is set up near the post to which the victim is tethered and others at the entrance and exit of the village and at any other place where people can enter or leave the village.

During entire festival men play their drums the sounds of which are widely heard throughout the mountains. Girls sit on the verandas in front of their houses on the day of sacrifice, dressed in colorful saris, bangles, and jewels in the style of the plains people. The boys wore shirts and trousers and moved from veranda to veranda in groups of three or more. Standing in front of the children, they begin singing songs, mostly the most recent and popular songs in Kui, while holding each other's hands, swaying their bodies back and forth, and swinging one leg up and down rhythmically.

The Kedu festival as observed: I have participated in several Kedu festivals during the fieldwork, but closely associated with two of them: one in Rajaghara and the other in Kanjamendi on 17th February, 2017 and 18th March 2018 respectively. I have also participated in the Kanga parbu in a village called Kudutuli located at a distance of 6 kilometers from Rejaghara. The following description is based on these observations. And all of these began on a Saturday and ended on Monday after the full moon day of the month Phalgun.

Kanga parbu or Pigeon-pea festival: The Kanga parbu in the village Kudutuli was celebrated on 2nd March 2018, while the village celebrated Kedu on 18th of the same month. It can be interpreted as an owe fulfilment for the promise made to the earth goddess to offer a grand sacrifice after the next harvest if they are blessed with good harvest this year. As a result, the grand festival held in honor of the earth goddess can be viewed as a gift from the entire clan to the Dharni of their domain. Pigeon-pea is always the last crop which takes about six months and is harvested at the year of agricultural season. This pulse has a particular importance in the Kandha diet as they use pigeon-peas in almost every meal. This harvest ritual of Kanga parbu is celebrated in a very joyful atmosphere. As described in previous chapter after worshipping the axe of the deity with

sacrifice of goat and chicken a feast is arranged and the people enjoyed jesting. It was done as a party, involving various age groups as well as immediate affines who had come as visitors from neighboring villages. 'Role reversals' known in the famous *holi* festival of the Hindu occur here in a less dramatic form: guests are welcomed with respect as usual but are drenched in water on this occasion for wit and laughter. But nowadays it is changed slightly as people play *holi* with turmeric and other colours as in *dola* and *holi* festival of the Hindu. And in some villages the Kanga parbu is also celebrated on the same date as *dola* and *holi*.

My observation of the worship of *tangi* axe which is going to be put into use in the Kedu festival as mentioned in the previous Chapter is the same as that of the one I have observed in Kudutuli. In the previous chapter it has already been alluded to the fact that it also refers to the worship of Dharni/Thakurani at Mahasingi and axe of the deity which also has the reference to the nearby mountain where human sacrifice used to take place earlier.

Podha kina or Buying the buffalo: As I observed in Rajaghara where I spent most of fieldwork time, one week before the day of sacrifice, the buffalo was purchased through the Pano of the village. In this area of Nuagaon the buffaloes still have to be purchased from the Pano, or more concretely now due to the prevalence of mutual trust between the Kandha and Pano, there are few people who are assigned the responsibility of purchasing the buffalo for Kandha in the village and thus continue the good old tradition. Such Pano has the right to buy and sell the victim to his patrons and he fiercely defends his right if a Pano from another village tries to strike a deal by offering a buffalo to the organizers at a cheaper rate. In the village Rajaghara since the Pano stays together with Patra they assist Kandha for purchasing the sacrificial buffalo. For this reason the Pano customarily receive some additional gifts such as: some amount of paddy and five or ten rupees from their patrons when they provide a buffalo for the Kedu parbu. But I have also come across with some cases where Kandha directly purchase the buffalo without help of the Pano. As told by the villagers of the Rajaghara, it is the duty of Pano middlemen to follow some rules while purchasing the victim. There must be no white spots on the *meriah* buffalo's body, not even on its neck. The horns should have a gentle curve, point

away from the head, and no cuts or bulges. The ears, too, must be well-shaped and not broken. Any diseases, especially those affecting the eyes and nose, must be absent from the victim. It is also informed that when the buffalo is brought to the village they dance together with the beat of drum to welcome the victim.

Kedu khudi pota or preparing the sacrificial post: The preparations for Kedu i.e., sacrifice of buffalo started with the decision of the Jani and Mutha Mallick to set up the sacrificial posts for the buffalo sacrifice on Thursday. In the early hours of the day Mutha Mallick called all the villagers especially the young men to go to the jungle along with him and the Jani to select and cut a tree-trunk for new sacrificial posts. For this occasion, the Jani priest needed a chicken and *muhua* liquor, some rice and turmeric, water. After reaching the spot and identifying the tree Jani examined the tree minutely as if it was a living being by beating it, rubbing his palms against its trunk of the tree and smelling it to find out if a corpse had been burnt there or buried under the tree. The selected tree should be very straight, stand free and not touch any other when it falls to ground, it should have no dead branches, and there should be no bird nesting in it. Then the Jani and some seniors of the village walked seven times in anti-clock wise around the tree Jani started praying and asked for heavy drumming. He then threw a handful of rice against the chosen tree during the prayer, saying: “we will make use of you it for the sacrifice so that you can cooperate without harm. Now we want to make a new buffalo sacrificial stake, now we want to fall you! Let us remain healthy and have no sickness”. Then Jani worshipped the Soru penu (hill god) in order to get permission to take the tree down. He sacrificed the chicken uttering the mantra and began with the pronouncing *ehenja ehenja* and ended with *namaskar*. According to my informants, through worshipping, Jani listened to the tree and he would have rejected it if found unsuitable for the sacrificial posts if any noise came out of the tree. Finally, Jani prayed again before taking the tree down to the village, “Hey Tari penu, Soru penu we are cutting a stake for the buffalo sacrifice, don’t bring upon us any difficulty at all. We are taking it home”. They cooked the sacrificial food there itself which was consumed by only the elders and Jani of the village while the youngsters were sent back to the village with the wood for new stakes.

As the young men carried the trunk to the village, they danced with joy though it was heavy and placed it outside the village. On the next day, i.e., on Friday, several men shaped and carved it for several hours, and three sacrificial posts were ready by midnight. Then holes for the stakes are dug at the shrine in the village plaza: directly behind the old ones, one hole for the main post, and two others are dug on the eastern axis. At about the dawn the Jani threw a handful of rice around the spot where the posts are made and ordered the young men to take the new posts to the new temporary shrine. The Jani then washed them thoroughly and rubbed them with turmeric paste after the posts are fixed at the site and washed them again with water and then turmeric slowly.

Then the Jani sacrificed the chicken and let its blood drip on each of the stakes and meanwhile he was praying:

“We set up this stake here. We have carved this beautifully and we have bathed it. We wish to give the sacrifice of buffalo here”. It is said Jani was not eating anything keeping fast since yesterday. After fixing the stake he prayed, “we have not eaten anything mother, we are pure, give us good fertility, look after us and we shall sacrifice a buffalo, let us live in peace and don’t bring any trouble”. This time again the drumming went on louder and louder. It is said by the villager that the Jani summoned the gods saying, ‘we have promised to you giving a sacrifice of buffalo/goat and chickens and tomorrow we are going to offer these sacrifices, come and see’. On this day, all the households washed all their cloths and cleaned the rooms and purified them with cow dung.

Performing the sacrifice: By late in the evening of Friday, the sacrificial buffalo arrived Rajaghara village after taking the farewell from the clan members in the villages of the *mutha* Dedimaha, Gajipadar, Kudupakia.

Jani brought the purchased buffalo which was tied at the cow-byre of to the front of the house, then washed the buffalo with water and bathed him and then anointed him with turmeric and tied a special cloth round his neck. Holding a little rice in hands the Jani made an invocation to the buffalo with various names, addressing earth goddess, not to punish them and they have brought a buffalo. And urged the goddess not to inflict on them sickness, disease, not to destroy the cultivation, and grant them good farming etc.

After praying the buffalo was showed to the goddess and let him go free for some time. All the night there is drumming and dancing but in low key in order not to alarm the animals. Next day is the day of sacrifice, nearby villagers started arriving in the village from early in the morning, two of which belonged to brotherly clans and two affinal clans. While the clan brothers have come from Dedimaha and Gajipadar the affinal members are from Kudupakia and Gusanaju villages. They teased and beat the buffalo from dawn until the time of sacrifice. The day's activity started at the house of Jani. First, the Jani and other senior members of the villages danced round the buffalo with bamboo rattles singing songs like how they have originated from the mother Goddess. The buffalo is brought from house to house and fed rice before being bathed in turmeric water and anointed with castor oil.

Meanwhile the affines of the clan have made barricades at the site of sacrifice i.e., at the permanent shrine of *dharni*, earth goddess, located in the center of the village plaza. They also made other barricades in the village at the entrance as well as at the exit. Finally, the buffalo arrived at the shrine, people refreshed the buffalo several times by feeding him with leafy branches and pouring water over him. The senior members along with the young men took the buffalo inside the bamboo barricade and tied the buffalo with new ropes to the post already fixed. The Jani gave final bath to the buffalo with turmeric water.⁸

After that the buffalo's neck is tied tightly to the fixed post and the legs are also now tied together, the Jani priest called on the earth goddesses. For this he first went outside the village seeking permission from the Mariah grove; several times he went out and came into the village by welcoming gods and the ancestral spirits to witness the rite and participate in it. The Jani put some handful of rice on the head of the buffalo then made a chicken feed on the stake. Then he took a young chick and dashed him on the buffalo's head. Then he asked the helpers to tie the horns and muzzle also right against the posts with ropes while the Bahuka washed the sacrificial axe (*tangi*). Then the Jani threw a handful of rice over the buffalo's head and on the wooden post and a handful backwards

⁸ If there were some donated buffaloes, they would have been brought and tied to the posts. Priority is always given to the buffalo of the villagers.

saying mother 'we are ready for the sacrifice, please give us happiness, crop and free from disease'.

The Jani took the ritual axe and touched it three times on to the buffalo's neck, after that the Bahuka did it for seven times. Then Jani declared it to be sacrificed, and then pushed the buffalo inside and cut off the buffalo's head with one strong blow. Crashing down the barricade the villagers immediately rushed to the buffalo that fell down with heavy flow of blood on the earth, and slashed out the flesh of the animal. Other villagers collected a piece of flesh or skin and left immediately to their own village to bury it in the fields for good crop. Some people fetched a little blood for themselves and put it on their lips. After that, the head, liver and a leg of the is taken away (later learnt that these are cooked).

On the Monday morning, the Jani and the Tolmba clean the area of plaza. The important activity relates to *tangi*, knife and brass pot. After due worship and taking permission from the Dharni, Kotewali, Jakeri and ancestors, these items are properly cleaned with reverence. Now the Jani of the village where next Kedu festival is going to take place, takes this ritual symbols and goes to Mutha Mallick accompanied by youth. Sometimes Jani who has just organized the festival may carry the same. In the evening the remains of the buffalo are taken out and buried in the collective field of the clan in the village.

As the brass pot is kept with the Mutha Mallick, the *tangi* and knife are taken to the village where the next Kedu festival is going to take place. The movement of these ritual objects takes place again when the Kedu festival begins. It begins as mentioned earlier, when the Jani and his villagers come along with the *tangi* and knife accompanied by the buffalo and collect the brass pot from the Mutha Mallick. After that the procession along with the worship of the buffalo takes place and it initiates the new Kedu festival.

In the night of Sunday people assembled again after the feast, and spent some time singing the songs of the ancient times. Some of them are served with the cooked meat and liver of the buffalo. The villagers sang songs mocking each other. The guests are treated well with liquor and food marching constantly up and down the village. The young people enjoyed dancing; I witnessed some dances where all my young informants took me to dance, bringing the buffalo flesh and keeping it on the shoulder we danced.

Although some of them got angry while one of the drunken man put flesh on my shoulder but I said ‘nothing to worry.’ It is where they all feel one whoever comes to the ground for dance treated as equal in spite of gender and age difference etc.

In Balliguda hundreds of people huddled together holding sharp knives in their hands and waited for the command of the Tolmba and once the permission is signaled they pounced on the animal and stabbed it, slashed and ripped open the body and cut the flesh of the untied buffalo into tiny pieces. On the other hand, in Nuagaon, the audience was very composed as a procedure was followed, allowing the buffalo to be killed by a Kandha specialist who got it right in the middle of the head. After that it was declared as end of the sacrifice. Now people who were there including the villagers could take a piece of the flesh and left to their agriculture field.

In Nuagaon the scenario was very different from Balliguda where aggression was shown in killing the buffalo much more than the former. But in case of Nuagaon the whole affair was very smoothly carried out, it routinely happened without any interruption of the ritual. I understood there was no disturbance from the clans unlike the earlier time of the Kedu, how the affines still kept a watch on them before the sacrifice.

Now-a-days the non-Kandha do participate in the Kedu but less involved and remain in low-key. Panos who in the former days were part of the Kedu have become just outsiders. The exclusion or withdrawal of Panos of Kandhamal from the ritual is mainly due to their conversion to Christianity. It is also significant to note that some Kandha individuals do not participation in Kedu if they had already organized *yagnya* of Hindu society in their village. This is due to the influence of Hindu society as the cow / buffalo meat pollutes the Kandha and thus they get degraded themselves as untouchables.

Kedu Interpretation

There are several comments on the practice of human sacrifice besides questions against its prevalence and besides explanations for the existence of such heinous and horrible practice of killing a human being. In fact, such practices not alien either among the Hindu population of India and others also elsewhere in the world⁹.

Some scholars like Dalton who argue that in the Kandha community one section were worshippers of the goddess of earth for the fertility of the soil and they propitiated her with human sacrifice, whereas the other section on the contrary, worshipped the supreme God in reluctance towards the human sacrifice (Dalton 1872:286). It is true that besides these two sections there were also some Kandhas who neither practiced human sacrifice nor female infanticide, especially those who lived in the districts of Sarangad, Chandrghari and Degi of Kosadah (Dalton 1872:291). Even in the Ganjam Maliahs, some *muthas* like Kurtilli did not practice human sacrifice (Thurston 1909:111-380). Same goes in case of the Nuagaon and Balliguda areas where some Kandha villages from the time immemorial have not been practicing the *meriah* sacrifice and for them it remained only in the myth but never was it practiced in reality. Thus, the practice of human sacrifice was not a universal phenomenon among the Kandha.¹⁰ If this is so, what is relevance of the question? Was there really Colonial Burden¹¹ or was there really human sacrifice? Or was it a story created or concocted justification for taking over the land of Kandha under the control of the British?

In this regard the British government's claim of successfully suppressing the atrocious customs that prevailed over a long period and its obliteration in a relatively short time stands mostly invalid. The colonial army's dispatches, police documents and administrative reports of the era become less meaningful. In this regard the Kandha's resistance of blocking and fighting back against the advancing settlers were the sources

⁹ See Frazer (1890), Mitra (1876)

¹⁰ I met various people from different regions of Kandhamal district those who are well reckoned as the folk writers, poet and few of them are antithetical about the *meriah*. It can be substantiated with the findings of Pfeffer (2014) who argues that there are discrepancies between official and ethnographic views on human sacrifice.

¹¹ It is also written elaborately by Jagannath Pathy (1995) in his article 'White Men's Burden or Colonial Expediency'.

from which nearly all the prominent proof and cases of the threatening customs have been discovered to date. The ransacking of dozens of Kandha villages by the British army, plundering their grain stocks, and hanging several leaders of Kandha openly assume altogether a different meaning. The redistribution of the British army, ‘eye for an eye’, they took an eye, when the first batch of British soldiers was killed (Boal 1963: 1-7) become quiet meaningless with influence of *meriah*. May be the officer who was in charge of controlling force had attempted to expose the local British inability to annex the land of Kandha.

The above doubts get strength in view of fact that neither Campbell nor MacPherson knew the Kui, the Kandha language. Even their Odia understanding was negligible. Both relied for data about Kandha society and culture on Odia traders, chiefs and local officers. Now it is the question of the hour, the responses or the inquiry that took place over those periods, how far is it true? Since Kandha and British relations have not been friendly, how could it be documented what intentions lay behind this rite? Why did the British government just write about human sacrifice, becomes so essential? Small wonder that from their texts, little can be compiled with systematically or consistently about Kandha history and culture. Surprisingly, subsequent ethnographers and anthropologists have repeatedly quoted in their books and reports with approval and without any verification of facts. A number of subsequent British administrators mainly based on these formal accounts and books, wrote a few pages each on Kandha human sacrifice and female infanticide (Dalton 1872; Hunter 1872; Frazer 1890; Risley 1891; Maddox 1901; O’Malley 1908; Thurston 1909; Russell and Hiralal 1916; Roy 1922 and many others). Frazer even claimed on that grounds that the “best-known case of human sacrifices provided systematically to guarantee healthy crops are provided by the Kandhas” (1890:1-384)¹².

Risley who conducted field survey to write on the Bengal's tribes and castes applying the techniques of systematic sanctioned by European anthropologists of that time had as many as 391 issues that he discussed with his subordinates and Tahasildars. He discussed

¹² Quoted from Pathy (1995)

the regular inter-clan battles for wives, female infanticide, and human sacrifice in his writings. Luckily, he admitted that he had severe “trouble in ascertaining the exact form of exogamy practiced by them, and indeed in obtaining any data on the topic at all” (Risley 1891:1-399). If the data could not be gathered on such an inoffensive topic, how could he trust the troops that gathered data about the Kandha’s atrocious activities half a century ago?

Padel (2000)’s study on *meriah* (human) sacrifice primarily critically assesses the motives of Europeans, i.e., those of the colonialists, missionaries, and anthropologists¹³. He describes this development by claiming that the British and the Kandha were caught in a paradox. The colonialists attempted to abolish a rite they despised but ended up doing the reverse, as a result the number of human sacrifices get rise, because the Kandha probably believed that they were a way of gaining the requisite leverage to deter the British from entering. This portion of Padel’s argument seems to be convincing as it takes Kandha’s point of perspective into consideration (2000: 137). Yet, it continues to be enigmatic why did Kandha practice the human sacrifice? It attracted attention of great scholars in the past and continues to entice the interests of contemporary anthropologists.

Would it be that the colony and colonial government wanted to suppress the rites with an intention to rule over or with the intention to exploit the Kandha’s natural resources? Kandhastan was the only place where there were an excellent timber and non-timber forest products. Keeping an eye on this they distracted the attention of the public to the human sacrifice and female infanticide decrying them as savage practices and the Kandha had to be civilized.

If we keep aside the *meriah*, the practice of buffalo sacrifice in Kedu parbu has been in vogue for several decades. Niggemeyer (1964) seemed to have witnessed an elaborate clan cult directed to the earth goddess and his mountain wife at about the same moment in the 1950s among the Kutia Kandha. This ethnographer registers and translates the mythical recitations which dictate a human sacrifice to the Kandha people. McDougal (1963), Hardenberg (2017) follows the route of Campbell (1864) and MacPherson (1842)

¹³ See Ronald Hardenberg (2006)

George Pfeffer (2014) and others have experienced this ritual several times over the past thirty-five years. The present researcher also has witnessed this Kedu ritual which begs to find out the sustained reasons and relevance in the contemporary society.

When the Kandha call them sons of the mother Goddess it is quite unbelievable and difficult to understand the idea of mother demanding her own sons as sacrifice? How a mother wants her son or daughter who may be from neighbouring (Kandha) community or even others to be killed? An attempt is made to understand the theological paradox relating to the Kedu ritual.

One explanation comes from the feuds and fights among the Kandha villages and clans as Nayak, Soreng and Boal (1990) believe. And, the ritual, however, brought them for reconciliation and social solidarity, and this functional reason may have been the reason for the origin of the ritual. Thus, he says,

“Such believed killings or deaths as those caused by the persons supposedly graced with the *mlīva* power could not go on forever. Hence, the feuding villagers or clan members meet every six years in an open, neutral, holy ground. They make accusations against each other and confess their guilt in the name of the earth goddess, the sun and the moon. They then agree to stop the believed killings. Oral agreements are entered into in the presence of the entire gathering and peace is made. The day is marked by drinking, dining and dancing; these all go together. Although the process is periodic and involves a long, drawn-out procedure of reconciliation, the Kandhas have institutionalized the system. The punishment, in the shape of goats or pigs to the guilty group, is imposed by common consent. These are instantly killed for feasting together. Interestingly, the operation appeared to be like a battle where neither side claims victory and both accept full reconciliation” (1990:89-90).

Kandha rebellion against the British may also have contributed for the human sacrifice. Perhaps the Kandha and non-Kandhas who aided the British army that subjugated the Kandha were captured and offered as sacrifice to the earth goddess, as there was restriction on the human victim of sacrifice as the victim could be anyone from any community. However, it remains as a mystery for there is no evidence for such killings.

Human and Buffalo Sacrifice

While the above questions, doubts and explanations about the human sacrifice among the Kandha dominate in the literature available, the present attempt is to explore the interrelationships among the ritual, economic and political situation of the Kandha in the past and the present. Though it is difficult to analyze the historical process in which the ritual has been through due to lack of historical evidences, it can be inferred from the course of human progress the Kandha society has undergone unprecedented and irreversible changes over the years. An analysis of these how it has changes according to time and space is necessary and such an analysis it is believed would enable us to address the above beleaguered issues related to the Kandha ritual. In this context two aspects seem very relevant: Kandha's relationship with their land and their social relations within themselves and with others. These are briefly discussed below while these are further explored in the ensuing chapters.

Fertility of land and God and Human Relations:

The above description and analysis makes it amply clear that all the rituals of Kandha including the *meriah* and Kedu are primarily aimed to appease their gods who are personified elements of nature – rain, mountains, animals etc., for fertility of soil and productivity besides wellbeing of the humans and animals. Anthropologists have pointed out that this kind dependency on supernatural beings or nature had led to the evolution of religion. In the earlier appeasement of gods offering sacrifices of animals including human is a universal phenomenon. Frazer in his famous book *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* deals with the magical, religious, and scientific thought in an evolutionary perspective. Even though this theory lost its credibility for various reasons, the relationships among the land, human society and religion cannot be overlooked. Frazer notes the human sacrifice among the Kandha (1890:354-360) from the reports of Campbell, MacPherson, and Dalton, as in the following.

But from the treatment of the victims both before and after death it appears that the custom cannot be explained as merely a propitiatory sacrifice...These latter customs imply that to the body of the Meriah there was ascribed a direct or intrinsic power of making the crops to grow, quite independent of the indirect efficacy which it might have as an offering to secure the good-will of the deity. In other words, the flesh and ashes of the victim were believed to be endowed with a magical or physical power of fertilising the land. (358-359).

Frazer's religious thought includes the primitive man's idea of god being as that of man with special powers. In several of the societies there is the belief of god who also dies like human or god is killed before getting old and weak, and this death enables the god's power gets transferred to some other. He writes,

The same custom of killing the representative of a god, of which strong traces appear in the Khond sacrifices, may perhaps be detected in some of the other human sacrifices described above. (360)

The above observation is related to human sacrifice from religious perspective. It also justifies and explains the worship of the human victim in the *meriah* described above, and later the buffalo. However, it begs for a pragmatic explanation.

Further, Frazer notes the symbolic value (1968 [1922]: 636) of the rites of agriculture and productivity while others such as Hubert and Mauss 1968 [1899]: 61-66), and Eliade (1958: 345) mainly considered it as "agrarian sacrifices". Accordingly, the annual agricultural festivals and ceremonies have been organized with the aim of applying divine force for the seasonal regeneration of plants and new creation of life. Interestingly enough, one important symbolic transaction which is evident in Kedu organization is land and ownership. It should be pointed out that the sacred objects – axe, brass pot and knife - that are brought out at the festival have a dual function: on one hand they are used in the sacrifice itself (functional value) and on the other hand they reflect a particular relationship between the sacrificers and their land in possession (symbolic value). In the past the one which was used in festival were often passed on from seller to buyer when a piece of land was sold. The axe represents both the sacrifice of the buffalo and the clearing of the forest, which made the land arable. The brass pot carried around at the start of the festival on top of a long bamboo pole appears to signify territorial power.

Further, it looks like when there was proof of transfer of land probably which can be reclaimed also by the seller or his children, these may have served the purpose of proof of that the land originally belonging to the particular seller only. The knife refers to the pain that the victim feels which is same as that of the seller who loses the land, but assured it is not going out of the community. The transfer of these sacred objects in Kedu has the symbolic expression of collective ownership of land by the clan members and it can be passed on one to another only among the clan members. Perhaps the axe and knife also symbolically refer to injurious consequences if violation of land norms that is, illegal selling of land to other than the Kandha or other clans.

It has already been alluded to the symbolic construction of men and woman: woman being the field and man being plough. Woman does touch the plough whereas it is man's responsibility to plough the land. Earth is identified as goddess, Dharni, and she is the source of life and sustenance of human life; she is the mother of all whose received all veneration and devotion. Father Kotewali's presence in the worship of the earth goddess in *meriah*/Kedu is the symbolic expression of male and female, a couple in sexual relationship, and agents of reproduction as father and mother; Jakeri as the sister of Dharni, represents children.

The brass pot is a symbolic representation of food essential for their survival that comes from the land. The earth goddess who is the source of fertility of the soil and productivity has to be worshipped for ensuring continued favour by offering a valuable item or a being. This being either human being or buffalo is again related to the land/earth in terms of production. Therefore, the pot, land and buffalo that are associated with the land are inter-related, and both pot and buffalo represent the land and production. Further clarification emerges when buffalo is viewed as representation of a daughter when becomes a bride, to be married and become productive.

In the above description of the ritual, the allusion of buffalo referring to a bride has been graphically and explicitly made. In a positive sense a daughter is given in marriage to be productive and continuation of human society, but giving her away is a loss and it is a sacrifice which is very painful. Her return to home for grieving over the death of parents is mandatory such that the soul of the deceased person gets satisfied. Similarly, the

buffalo goes to other villages and returns home to be given away as a sacrifice to the goddess to be satisfied with food and honour; the sacrifice is like wedding which for the benefit of the community results in production. The sacrifice of buffalo will only bring fertility to the soil, and thus the buffalo brings back blessing in return to the community. Therefore, the buffalo is bid farewell in a grand manner as veneration to the departing being that is going to lay down his life on the final day as he is going to bring back blessings for the community or entire clan spread over several villages. The most important aspect and in fact the ultimate outcome of the ritual is obtaining the flesh of the sacrificed buffalo which is divinely enriched and empowered substance that will provide immense fertility to the land which would produce sufficient grains for the land cultivator. In this cosmological scenario buffalo is divine which is worthy of worship. The killing of buffalo cannot be viewed as a sin as in a way the sacrifice of buffalo is an offer in the serve of the community. In this way, the aspect of the human victim is convinced to become a sacrifice,¹⁴ as discussed earlier, makes a lot of sense and the rite becomes very meaningful which the British could never understand the logic behind this practice.

Furthermore, burial of the sacrificial buffalo in the agricultural field has also symbolic relevance. The blood as well as flesh is iconic symbols of turmeric tubers which have great relevance for the economy of Kandha who cultivate a high value variety of turmeric crop. Therefore, Kedu is more relevant than other crops for Kandha, and they cannot be persuaded to give up the buffalo sacrifice despite the government's persuasion. This line of analysis is followed in the next chapter.

Viewed in this light, the Kanga parbu corresponds with an end and the Kedu parbu which is organized after the harvest of paddy or other grains completes harvest but it also makes people to get ready for the new agricultural season. In other words, when the goddess has provided the people with all her gifts, including grains and pulses, she receives the most valuable gift, a buffalo, in return.

¹⁴ Voluntary sacrifices or self-immolations have not been strange in India. See the discussion in Parpola, (2007)

Social Relations as Reflected in the Ritual: Here we note the social structural reality in social action¹⁵. The organizers of the ritual belong to a clan, land owners and the benefits derived from the ritual are meant only for them but not the other, though other may attend the ritual to witness and worship the earth goddess. All members of the clan though spread across villages come together to work for organizing the success ritual without allowing any untoward incident to happen, and any differences or disputes that are there shall be settled and they bring unity and solidarity among themselves. They see that the goddess is not displeased with their offering and behavior lest she would show her wrath by inflicting death or causing calamity.

The ritual brings social integration within the community and across the communities as well. The Kandha society is structurally¹⁶ divided into consanguine and affine.¹⁷ The consanguine are those agnatically related on male line i.e., clan members who do not intermarry as they are blood relatives- brother and sister (siblings). The affines are the in-laws i.e., consanguineal members of son's-in-law and daughter's-in-law. As shown in the ritual, the in-law will have to provide barricades and assist the ritual organizing clan members in the sacrifice of the buffalo. They also ensure that the meat of the buffalo does not get into the hands of others i.e., who do not belong to the organizing clan.

However, Bailey notes that “such an integration of society is on wane as either agnates or their allies, or as in-laws are prospective enemies” (Bailey 1960: 85). He writes,

“The corporate activity of the founding clan in the positive parts of the Earth cult has vanished, probably because that cult was initially suppressed by the Administration, and later because its substitute, the buffalo sacrifice, is both expensive and frowned upon by Hindus”. (Bailey 1960: 83)

Such a change is attributed to the impact of the colonial administration in the tribal areas and the entry of money and sale of liquor, imposition of taxes etc. such development shows cause, effect and feedback which is discussed in chapter six.

At another level, the traditional integration can be seen between the Kandha and Patra in the beginning and later entry of Patra in the village. Before the entry of the Patra the Pano

¹⁵ In the sense of Radcliffe-Brown

¹⁶ In the sense of Levi-Strauss

¹⁷ See Hardenberg's analysis of Kedu (Hardenberg 2017)

had already established the master-servant relations with the Kandha as explained earlier. The participation of Pano in the ritual was a compulsory in the traditional social relationship as they had to acquire either a human victim or a buffalo for the community in which they are a part. After wards the Patra entered as audience in the beginning but later they became supervisors and advisors. They took the role officiating the ritual and bringing the ritual on the lines of Hindu rituals. The ritual is meant for common peace, harmony and wellbeing of the entire residents of the locality that goes beyond the social boundary of Kandha. But during the colonial times, the relations between the Kandha and Pano changed. Most of the Pano converted to Christianity and gradually disassociated themselves with the ritual and Kandha's service as well as mentioned before.

The land became previous with the increased population, and it became scarce also with the immigration of non-Kandha caste communities. In addition to this, the Forest Department not only imposed restrictions on the movements of Kandha in the forest and most the land also became reserved forest depriving off the Kandha from shifting cultivation. Thus, the pressure on the agricultural land increased. The land in which the Kandha live required to feed the growing number of Kandha; thus food production, survival and putting away the hunger is the primary need. There is also a need to protect the land from the land hungry non-Kandha.

Conclusion

Kandha ritual with unique practice of human sacrifice, *meriah*, appears to have existed during the pre-colonial era. The ritual that became an important topic in colonial ethnography is required a serious review, and examination in the most holistic way in the contemporary turn of events in lives of Kandha. The Kandha firmly held the ideology of human sacrifice along the worship of mother goddess or earth goddess, Dharni. Before the colonial government took over the region, the uncontrolled portion of the Kandha area was governed by the Hindu Kings of princely states but it remains again as a mystery as to did they entertain or stop the ignominious Kandha ritual as it seems they did adopt the deities of Kandha into the Hindu fold. They, therefore, perhaps had a powerful influence in viewing the mother goddess as an ideologically Hindu deity. While

the representatives of the king only became observers of the ritual initially and turned as specialists later on, and the Kandha supported the kings in controlling process of colonial annexation of their land. The ritual continues to occupy a central place in the lives of Kandha people even today with certain modifications. The chapter has discussed various reasons for the practice of *meriah* and interpretations offered by different scholars about the *meriah* and Kedu festivals. The chapter has tried to examine the practice of human sacrifice as recorded by the colonial authorities and anthropological explanation of the same. It also described the buffalo sacrifice that replaced the human being as it is practiced today. From these accounts an attempt has been made to find out the relations between the Kandha and their land and also the social relations within the Kandha society and between Kandha and non-Kandha.

KANDHA'S MEANS OF LIVING, MARKETS AND ECONOMY

Introduction

The means of living that were remotely influenced by the external factors in the past have now been greatly impacting the Kandha's life. They are in the transition from the tradition to modernity – from food collection, hunting and shifting cultivation to settled agriculture. Since India's mixed-economy is gradually inclining towards capitalist mode, it can be said that the Kandha's change is towards peasantry, agriculture labour and participation in capitalist institutions through selling labour. In this respect the initiatives of the state, entrepreneurs and markets that have wider networks are playing very significant role in the Kandha's social and economic transformation. The present chapter discusses the means of living of the Kandha, the focus is on the shifting cultivation, settled agriculture and market. This chapter begins with recapitulation of the agriculture in Rajaghara village where it is closely observed. It also discusses in detail certain aspects of Kandha's socio-economic transformation, economy during colonial period, contribution of turmeric crop, emergence of weekly market, marketing practices, the role of government in Kandha economy and their present economic condition. It is to be noted in this regard, the important element on which the means of living and others depend is the ritual life.

Agriculture in Rajaghara

The people of Rajaghara are more shifting cultivators than the settled farmers where they give priority to turmeric over other distinct food crops. Settled agriculture is practiced mostly for growing paddy but it does not contribute much to their economy. As shown in Table 2.8, out of 87 households 82 (94.3 percent) including the Pano own land where settled as well as shifting cultivation is being practiced, and 24 (27.5 percent) and 37 (42.5 percent) households possessed less than 2.5 acres and between 2.5 and 5.0 acres. They grow cash crops like turmeric, ginger, mustard, black gram, arrowroot etc., and

paddy for their consumption. Their annual income details as shown in Table 2.9 reveals that 33(37.9 percent) households earn less than Rs.10,000 while 28 (32.1 percent) households earn between Rs.11,000 and Rs. 20,000 and only 14 (16 percent) households earn between Rs. 21,000 and Rs. 30,000. Thus, it is very clear that they live with hand to mouth incomes.

Gardening the backyard of the house and space available around the village provides the villagers with additional meager source of living. Cattle such as cow, buffalo, goats, pigs and poultry are also reared by the villagers to provide supplementary income. They collect a wide variety of forest products in small quantities which used to be a traditional economic activity that has great value in the Nuagaon and Balliguda markets. Such MFP collection bridges the gap that increases before the harvest of cultivated crops, usually that starts towards the end of the summer and the onset of monsoon. They go for hunting in summer but do not add anything extra to their economy. Since it is banned by the Forest Department they do it stealthily. Their annual agricultural schedule is shown in Table 5:1.

Table 5:1 Annual Agriculture Schedule

Sl. No	Months	Lanju - Season in Kui (Odia/English)	Work done
1	January-February	<i>Peni-lanju</i> End of Winter	Staple crops – <i>kandul</i> , Maize, Paddy etc., harvested.
2	February-March		Harvesting ends
3.	March-April	<i>Weda lanju</i> - Summer season	Hunting and gathering Cleaning the field
4	April-May		Hunting and gathering Field is hoed
5	May-June		Hunting and collection of fruits, edible leaves etc.
6	June-July	<i>Piju lanju</i> Rainy season	Getting ready the Paddy land
7	July-August		Harvesting of the early millet starts
8	August-September		Cultivating vegetables, mustard and niger
9	September-October	<i>Peni lanju</i> - Winter season	
10	October-November		Begins the harvest of
11	November-December		Paddy and staple crops
12	December-January		

Transforming Kandha Society

Before the colonial period, the Kandha lived in and around the forest entirely depending on it by way of food gathering and hunting. In other words, they were at the mercy of nature and also suffered from the vagaries of seasons. They lived in intimate relationship with the nature and used very simple technology exploiting their environment. Such relationship has been well preserved in their mythology and folklore as discussed in Chapter Three. They learned to exploit the nature with the divine intervention, which in other words they acquired the required knowledge by experience. As a part of the story of the mother goddesses they tell how they originated from Tari Penu and Tada Penu etc., wherein they justify their worship as she is the mother who takes care of them through replenishing the fertility of the soil and the forest sources and blesses them with abundant means of living. So, they felt the need of satisfying her with the most precious offering, a human being that signifies their utmost devotion and later on it was substituted with buffalo.

The second phase of Kandha life is a gradual change in the late pre-colonial era adopting to shifting cultivation. Later, as they observed non-Kandha such as Patra, they also encountered another set of related beliefs along with settled agriculture. As a result, they revised the earlier beliefs with appropriate logic in response to the new ideology, technology and social conditions. New rite as described in Chapter Three came in as a mediator between the Nature and Kandha in a more organized manner with specialist like Jani. With this, the interaction and relationships between the Nature/deities became more complex in that the demands of the Nature/deities increased with the increased needs of Kandha due to increased interference of global political-economy. In the process, the mass society of Kandha gradually distanced itself from the Nature and moved towards the non-Kandha society while Jani maintained the original proximity with the Nature. Now, it could be understood how the Kandha who were depending upon forest and forest products became in large part settled agricultural society and through them the world of far distance.

So far the Kandha fulfilled their own needs and the needs of their community. The situation changed in this stage from self-interest i.e., serving one's own wants to serve the needs or wants of other communities, that is, the Kandha assumed the economic model of life. One must also understand through this that the Kandha who were self-centric have become self-critic and other-oriented. It means they compare themselves with others and strongly desire to identify themselves with the other dominant community and at the same time not to lose their tribal identity as it has certain privileges and worship of mother goddess is needed for she gives distinct identity and it connects all of them that give social solidarity and unity. At the same time, they sought identification with the similar deities of the dominant non-Kandha community and looked at the world around them and found that their mother goddess does not need any more killing people to get her satisfied. As the above is the broad framework, it is important to focus on the detailed process of interaction between the Kandha and non-Kandha. In this regard we shall note the observation of Bailey which is very appropriate:

“The Kandhamal are a high tableland, sharply cut off on three sides from the plains around by a precipitous range of mountains, and inhabited by an aboriginal people called konds. They are still today the most numerous elements in the population. But at least three hundred years ago Oriyas (A native of Orissa, of any caste, is called an ‘Oriya’. His language also is ‘Oriya’. In the Kandhamal there is also an Oriya caste.), who are Hindus, began to push up from the plains and established from field settlements in the hills” (1957:7).

With the entry of others, Kandha who were self-centric now got worried to make contact with the plain people. But at the same time, they also felt that it will help getting their needs met. The basic need at that time was salt and clothes. And as part of the forest economy, they had started improving their technology of cultivation. The hill slopes were cleared with the help of these middle men and regulated sequence of activities and cleared up the pathways in the forest and brought either side of the footpaths under the cultivation and named such areas as *podu*. Though it has a primitive way of cultivation which required more time to make it more productive. While their needs were met, the Kandha continued to meet the need of outsider by exchange of forest produce for salt, clothes, iron implements and it also resulted in the growth of economy of the middle men and other outsiders. This was an introduction of the market into the Kandha area. By this

interaction, slowly the shifting cultivation got developed with the system of communal and collective ownership.

Kings of the princely states were interested to be in contact with the Kandha for the forest products and control of the predatory bands that were stealing the crops at the foothills; they were not concerned with the social and political organization. They did not even interfere with methods of exploring the material world of the Kandha. The only way to contact these people was through the middlemen and so the kings appointed their representatives Patra who maintained a friendly relationship with the tribal people. In this regard, Bailey (1960) has stated:

The administration can scarcely be said to have extended to the villages. The civil functionaries were concentrated in the cities and larger towns; the judicial administration was equally centralized, courses of law being established only in the same local officials having their headquarters in the towns who were responsible for the patrolling of the main routes (1960: 164-165)

Not only king's representatives but other non-Kandha immigrants maintained very cordial relations with the Kandha respecting the tribal customs and practices. Such a strategy helped them to exploit the tribal people by selling clothes and others with escalated prices. In such a situation there was a gap in the area of communication for the tribal people did not know the Odia. The Pano could fill this gap that was the first caste to get into Kandha area and learned the Kui language of Kandha and took up the role of mediator or intermediary between the Kandha and the non-Kandha merchants and others as well. They became a part the Kandha community and even married their women.

The increased interaction with the Pano and the king's representatives made the Kandha readjust and redefine their needs and increased participation in the market with the increased area of shifting cultivation. A variety of crops were also grown, to suit the demands of the market. In course of time, the shifting cultivation carried on communal or collective ownership and the use of labour changed to individual ownership of land with the land being distributed to individual households. In this way, the systems of the terrace and wet cultivation developed with the emerging trends of private ownership of land. Increased use of inputs, increased use of labour,

and the active role of the market changed the entire social, economic and political life of Kandha. Further changes occurred after 1836 AD when the British extended their authority over the tribal areas. As Bailey states the situation in 1957s is as follows:

The Oriyas who arrived in the Kandha villages were the newcomers; they have taken the best land of Kandha. The religion and language were different from those of the native habitats. They took concubines, but rarely wives. They live in separate villages. They claim and derive the adjective *sita*, by which they distinguish themselves from Konds, from a word meaning 'the learned ones' or 'the knowledgeable ones'. Oriyas assert that before coming to the Kond lived like 'beast of the jungle' and knew nothing of the proper cultivation of rice. It was the Oriyas, they say, who taught the Konds to wear cloths, while once they had gone naked. Finally, like settlers elsewhere, the Oriyas shook off metropolitan control and retained only the loosest ties with Hindu Rajas on the plains. The relationship of the two races is till typical of settlers frontier. But the movement has been stopped for more than a hundred years. Although the Oriya villages throw off small suburban settlements, there is no longer a drive from the edge towards the interior of the tableland (1957:7).

With the existing relationship and market connection, the tribe who depended on the forest for food are now resorting to collection and gathering of minor forest produce only to supplement agricultural produce. They are cultivating small pieces of land and making themselves fit to the new conditions that the plain area people have created, but continue to depend upon their primitive agricultural implements and methods of cultivation. They are raising mostly one crop during monsoon and sometimes go in for a second crop in the winter.

Mythical background of Shifting Cultivation

The *Kui Ganni* mentions some mythical views of shifting cultivation, although today, much of this myth can only be remembered by the elderly members of the tribe. They use the legend of *Kui Gaani* to explain their conventional cultivation practices.

According to *Kui Gaani*, the Kui people left the underground world at Sapangada, bringing with them some domestic animals such as bullocks, buffalos, pigs and goats, together with many household objects. They also carried the *atpa bicha*, literally meaning eight types of crop seeds- which are their staple crops, and samples of different soils on which the different crops were to be cultivated. The *Kui Gaani* mentions how the people

brought soil on which pumpkin tuber and cucumber were grown. Other types of soil included *kamit vira* (red soil), *garli vira* (fertile soil), *sitka vira* (clay soil), soil from the mouse hole and soil from the anthill. Following the female Kandha, the male Kandha camp left the underground at Sapangada. Their emergence from the underworld at Sapangada is seen as moving house. Although they changed their place of abode, they continued a way of life already extant before their existence on earth. They survived by consuming food that they had brought with them and then slowly grown the crops with seeds that are brought. Initially they sow the seeds on the soil they had also brought with them. The men were required to prepare the fields, to clear the forest and to build houses. They were also expected to conduct acts and rites of worship, to share the cultivation activities with the women, and to hunt.

The myth also alludes to the fact that the patches of forest selected for shifting cultivation should contain a Dharni stone¹ and a bamboo bush. If no bamboo bushes are found, the field is either abandoned or bamboo saplings are planted. The presence of bamboo at the location where Dharni Penu is worshipped is important. Bamboo is said to have originated from Nerandali's hair when she was bathing after emerging from Sapangada near Sapangada. If a Dharni stone is discovered in a newly cleared forest patch, the Kandha believe it was left there by the ancestors who had previously cultivated the field. Since the cultivator needs Dharni Penu's permission before clearing a new patch of forest, she is appeased with a blood offering from an animal sacrifice. Without the blood offering, it is believed that the deity becomes enraged and can cause harm to the people by generating low yields in swidden plots and inflicting disease and other misfortune.

The swidden land belongs to both the community and the households. The household lands are distributed among the sons and daughters after marriage as an inheritance; when a son moves to his newly constructed house the landed property is shared among the sons and father. Similar to a son upon her marriage the father gives a part of his land to the daughter as dowry. In the past, as soon as the land was left fallow, it was reverted to the

¹ Dharni stone: The stones placed in a line beneath a large stone are regard as a representation of Dharni Penu, the earth goddess.

village community only to be redistributed among the residents at the time of a new cycle of shifting cultivation. But this practice is now given up.

Site selection: Now despite prohibition of slash and burn as per the forest law, it is practiced in Kandhamal because the tribe lacks any alternative means of livelihoods. If it is a wide area, entire community participates in it, but now it seems to be more diacaustic in nature. Many considerations are taken into account when experts, especially the elderly, select a piece of land in the forest. The soil's fertility is especially significant, and then it is left fallow. The size of the forest and distance from the village are other factors. Generally, the Kandha try to select land in the proximity of their village settlements, as less labour is involved in transporting the crops to their homes at the harvest. It is desirable to have a perennial source of drinking water near the cultivated field, and a salpa tree that provides *salpa* liquor. The size of the land to be considered for cultivation is also important and is to some extent determined by the availability of the labour needed for forest clearance, crop management and harvesting. A patch of land may be judged whether auspicious or inauspicious for reasons associated with its previous cultivation. The land is considered inauspicious if there was crop damage by wild animals or a villager was killed by any animal. The Mutha Mallick invites all the heads of the households of the inhabitants of the *mutha* on any convenient day and at the close of the meeting he fixes a day to initiate the site selection and on that day he inspects the field site as the Jani accompanies him along with other senior members with salpa liquor. If everything goes well after inspection of the site, a follow-up visit for a ritual (*ketta laka*) takes place before clear the land. Then a piece of area is allotted to each household for clearance.

Clearing the forest: After having been allotted the site, every household draws up its own schedule for clearing the vegetation. During the clearing period, people set off in the morning to their area, women follow the men of the family carrying millet or rice gruel for the mid-day meal; the slashing of undergrowth is often an arduous task, small families sometime pool their labour resource on co-operation basis. A household may also obtain help from his wife's or daughter's family sometimes.

The slashing is followed by burning of the entire area cleared, usually during April or May when the branches, twigs and leaves are reasonably dry. The cleared forest patches may be concentrated in one place or scattered. The fire is usually lit at night at the start of the peak agricultural season, illuminating many parts of the surrounding hill and forests. The ashes from twigs and leaves burnt form a thin layer on the ground and fertilize the soil helping the seeds to germinate properly. The Mutha Mallick distributes the land for the *mutha* i.e., among all the villages of the *mutha* after the clearing and burning of the growth of the forest. The *mutha* heads in turn allots a piece of land to their respective households taking the help of Mutha Mallick if required.

The Division of Labour: There is gender-specific division of labour in the Kandha society linked to the practice of shifting cultivation, women perform activities such as debushing, dibbling, hoeing, weeding, watching, harvesting, winnowing and storing crops, while men cut and burn the larger trees, plough, watch crops from damage caused by animal and birds. However, this division of labour is flexible, men and women support each other. It is in this context the proverb of ‘men as axe and women as basket’ become relevant.

By the end of the May, the preparation of the field is complete and people wait of the first shower of rain. When there are one or two showers of rain, hoeing is done to turn the soil upside down or cover the ash before the seeds are sown. The women are responsible for the dibbling and they decide whether to sow seeds of long or short dormancy. When Kandha decide upon the land on hill slopes it is never ploughed, but is simply hoed or dibbled before the planting of seeds. Land at the hill base is ploughed as it is high land and it is usually done by buffaloes not by oxen to cultivate mustard and niger.

Weeding takes place early in July when the crops reach approximately six inches in height. Women and girls mainly do this work; some weeds are used as vegetables and thus contribute to the nutrition while the remainder is gathered and decomposed, and thus contribute to the fertility of the soil. Young boys stay in the company of fellow tribe mates in watch-huts erected in the branches of nearby big trees until the harvest is over. Keeping watch from a lookout also favour the hunting of animals that come to feed on the crops. They use various types of traps for animals and birds during these weeks.

Various crops reach maturity at different times. Women collect the intermittent harvesting of crops such as *jhunang* (cow peas) and beans and store them in the watch-huts until greater quantities are accumulated. These are then brought to the village. The early maturing crops are legumes - beans, maize and castors that can be brought home directly, where they are processed. Millet is brought to the harvest grounds near the settlement where it is threshed by means of wooden mattocks or trodden by buffalo to remove the grain if it is large quantity. The bulk of the grain is collected by separating the straw or hay after the first threshing; the remainder is removed by the second threshing. Threshing is done by both men and women and the grain is then carried home by the women where it is stored in large bamboo containers (basket). Cowpea legumes are stored as bundles, while maize grain remains on the cobs that are tied together for storage. And rice cannot be cultivated in the hilly slope due to lack of water. However, there is a type of rice called *jhalka dhana* which is rain fed and cultivated in hill slopes also.

The Crops Grown: The crops of *kharif* cultivated with the onset of rains include: *mandia* (millet varieties), *mande* (elusine coracana) and *jhajang* (sorghum), *maka* (pop-corn) etc. and different pulse like *kanga* (*cajanus cajan*), *arka* (pearl millet) and *biri* (wild bean), *mug* (green pea), and *kultha* (lentil) grown. Others like *basanga* (dioscorea), *mundranga/kakdi* (cucumber), *kakharu* (pumpkin or gourd), *kanda alu* (sweet potato), *basing kanda* (cassava) tubers are also seen in the villages. *Jada* is also seen being cultivated which is popularly known as *jada tela* – castor oil (*ricinus communis*). Of the *rabi* crops (winter) *tila* (niger) and *sorisa* (rapeseed) are most commonly grown on regular basis. Some of these vegetables are also grown in their home gardens.

The crops generally sown in early June and July are harvested in October/November/December and most important *rabi* crop grown in October/November are harvested during January/February. Other *rabi* like *alu* (potato), onion, *kubi* (cabbage, cauliflower) are normally cultivated as an annual *rabi* crop in the plains with preferable water body close to it. They are usually grown in November and harvested in January/February. Produce like mango, flowers of the *mahuva* tree, thatching grass, tamarind, seeds of sal are collected by men and women and sold in the market.

Cropping Pattern: The shifting cultivation is a multiple cropping system and care is taken such that maximum utilization of land takes place getting optimal benefit with mixed cropping. The certain crops which grow tall like castor and maize are used to demarcate the boundaries and the cowpea is grown between the castor plants so that the former can use the latter for support. A field is cultivated for two or three years and then left fallow and after this when they return to the same field they cultivate mixed crops in the first year. They believe that the field becomes less fertile in the second year. So they do mix cropping in the first year itself to have good harvest. Turmeric takes more than three years sometime to grow in the same field.

Rituals in Donger / Podu chasa: The most important crop, turmeric (*singa*) which is regarded as a sacred crop due to its predominant use in religious rites is cultivated in *donger* or in *podu chasa*. It has high market value and therefore the surplus stock is sold. The crop is given so much esteem that that the patch of forest land selected for shifting cultivation should contain a Dharni stone (i.e. three stones placed in a line beneath a larger stone which represent Dharni Penu and a bamboo bush). If the bamboo bushes are not found, it means either the field is abandoned or bamboo samplings are just planted in the field. The presence of bamboo is essential at each site where Dharni Penu is worshipped. Discovery of a Dharni stone in a newly cleared forest patch indicates the fact that their ancestors must have left behind stone having cultivated the area. Since cultivators are needed Dharni Penu's permission before clearing a new patch of forest, she is needed to be appeased with a blood offering, or else the deity would become enraged and damage the people by creating poor yields or inflicting disease and other misfortune. It is strongly believed that Dharni Penu prefers blood on the fields. So the victim pig or hen known as *saru* and its blood is called *saru neri* should be shed in the field. Dharni Penu particularly desires have *saru neri* for growing turmeric. Jani/Tolmba and other religious specialists secretly perform this ceremony known as *nella katina/seni laka*, it is also referred to as Soru Penu worship. After this rite, other villagers can join on this occasion and worship Soru Penu.

This rite is performed not only before cultivating turmeric but other crops as well when the respective deity informs Jani beforehand of granting permission to cultivate a

particular site. If not, the area remains untouched. It is performed in the month of Chaita (March-April) shortly after the site is prepared. Any sound made by any wild animal is heard during this ceremony it is not considered to be auspicious and it is a sign that the Penu is angry, so they have to appease the goddess.

The next ritual is the *bicha* (seed) *suapani* organized in the forest shortly before the first rain when the field preparations are complete. In the ritual, the seeds stored for worshipping are kept in the center of the field together with the Dharni and Soru Penu; it is a kind of expressing apology to the hill gods for destroying their forest. Otherwise the gods may get angry and destroy the crop with heavy rain; it is observed in June-September/October with a hen or cock. There used to be rites performed in between the cultivation and now that the animal sacrifice is forbidden it seems the Kandha have restricted the ritual only once.

After that in October when the crops have almost reached maturity and the time of harvest is near another rite for the goddess of wealth called *dulu dakina*, is organized to find out if the goddess is happy or not. If she is happy she is prayed for a good harvest and thanked for her protection so far, and in case she is not happy she is asked whether the people are to be blamed. Although it is a small rite that Jani performs with a chicken sacrifice it is an important one.

The Colonial State and Kandha Economy

Export-oriented farming was widely involved with the consolidation of the colonial administration in India. British and other colonial powers worked to develop plantation crops such as coffee, sugar, tobacco and tea to make colonies for self-supporting.² In the same vein, as Odisha had no mineral deposits worth exploiting, the colonial government in Odisha considered agriculture to be the engine of growth. During this time, in the name of repression, the non-Kandha who had access to the Kandha area helped the British reach the unattainable regions.

² See Rotberg (2004), Shillington (2012).

At this juncture it is important to note with a suspicion whether the non-Kandha aided the colonial government with the motive of eliminating the Pano, the intermediaries between the Kandha and Patra and others in the Kandhamal area? It is because before the presence British in this region, the human killing was not reported and it was never considered an issue and was not addressed at all. Thus, a doubt arises if the non-Kandha Odia leaders hatched a plan to get rid of the lower castes, especially Pano so that they would have direct access with the Kandha and exploit the unscrupulous Kandha. It is because Pano was the only caste members who knew everything about the vast economic opportunities available in the hills or could tell about the Patra's strategy of ruling Kandha not to civilize them. The Pano regulated the economy and all other facts of the surplus of the Kandha. When others like warrior party (Patra, Khatriya)³ and merchant group (Sundi, Teli and Kumuti of Vaisya categories) could get access to the hills of Kandha the scenario changed drastically. The Patras who primarily belong to Khatriya and Vaisya, in a very formal way became priest as they officiated in the Hindu temples and rituals in Balliguda area. The Kandha also started to worship the Hindu gods and goddesses. And since these non-Kandha lived near the river side of Mahasingi, they could harvest good crops, so looking at the prosperity of them the Kandha started believing the rituals and deities and began to think they must have been dearer to the mother goddess, and ultimately they trusted these goddesses and changed their own thinking about Dharni Penu. Taking advantage of this, the non-Kandha introduced their farming technology to befriend and manage the ferocious Kandha who did not like their presence on the hills.

Finally, in 1894 Ghumusur was declared as a British Protectorate. Realizing the need for generating taxes for the administration of the Protectorate, the colonial government promoted export crops such as tea, cotton and tobacco, coffee besides turmeric of this region.⁴ Turmeric was the main export crop that a small settler produced. So they also encouraged the tribes to grow more turmeric with the motive of deriving benefits as middlemen as the Kandha did not have any idea of export value of the turmeric. Besides, believing in the superiority of European plantation farming, Campbell, the first

³ See Bailey (1957)

⁴ Daringbadi is a place nearly 30 km away from the Nuagaon is famous and known for coffee plantation.

governor, was keen to draw Odia settlers to live in Kandha land and practice export-oriented plantation and economy-driven agriculture.

The history of East India Company reveals that its administrators continued the traditions of the earlier rulers spending little on the native communities but made use of the existing institutions enjoying the lion's share of the revenue. It was the beginning of the provinces and the landlords were being established in Odisha as in different parts of India and the land became a commodity that can be sold. And through this, the soldiers of the East Indian Company invaded the various tribal areas to exploit resources to expand trade. But, seeing the abundant resources and cultivation practice in the forest, they tried to stop Kandha's *podu* and surprised them. The land owned by the *mutha* of the Kandha with which their political institution interlinked lost its collective interest; it had become a market value.

The Patra, being the administrators in the institution of the princely state were part of the *mutha* organization; Patra eventually became the owners of some property and they did sell some lands to non-Kandha in the colonial period. The colonial government and non-Kandha took various measures to establish good connections with the Kandha. On the one hand, where the colonial government had an eye on the Kandha region's rich flora, fauna and resource, the non-Kandha also really wanted to be part of the Kandha wealth. The government began accessing the tribal areas in the name of economic development and took control of the forests under the Forest Department for conservation and protection. In this context it is important to emphasize the fact that the Kandha while lost their land under the Forest Laws and subjected to the harassment of Forest officials, and on the other they also suffered from the loss of ownership or extraction of sap that they consumed as intoxicants with the establishment of Excise Department that auctioned the trees. Under this pressure, the Kandha had to exploit the land under their control and derive maximum benefits. Since the turmeric acquired greater market value and also being encouraged by the Patra and other traders, the Kandha expanded their turmeric cultivation which was earlier limited to the backyard of their residences. They also had to grow more food through shifting cultivation to meet the demands for their growing

population on one hand and restricted movements in the forest and loss of control over the land.

We hear about the cultivation of turmeric (*curcuma longa*) and pepper (*piper nigrum*) for the first time during this period. Harlan (1989) considers India and Malaysia to be the countries of origin of turmeric known as *haldi* in Hindi and *manjal* in Tamil and Malayalam, turmeric is used in every Indian home as a condiment. This crop is cultivated mainly in Tamil Nadu, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh on the east coast of India. There is also a wild variety, aromatic Curcuma, with aromatic leaves. The main growing areas are the districts of Guntur, Krishna, and East and West Godavari in Andhra Pradesh. In Tamil Nadu, significant turmeric-growing areas are Trichur, Salem, and Coimbatore. So, this was the period when Kandha of Orissa became producers and growers of turmeric in Kandha land.

Turmeric (*curcuma longa*) Cultivation

Turmeric cultivation is an age-old practice. One of the twelve months has been named as 'Singa-Danju' (*singa*-turmeric, *danju*-month), the period between February and March when turmeric is harvested. Turmeric cultivation is done with religious fervour. The menstruating women, pregnant waiting to deliver, people under death pollution and waiting for purificatory ceremony are never allowed to participate in turmeric cultivation. Turmeric is an essential item in rituals⁵, a little of turmeric powder is sent as an auspicious element to the relatives and friends while extending an invitation to attend certain ceremonies like marriage, name-giving ceremony etc. It is used as medicine to cure, wounds and other eruptions of body.

Turmeric, locally known as *haldi*, which is a Hindi term, but in Kui it is *sidnga/singa* with some variation in pronunciation. It is also called *singam*. The meaning of *sidnga* or *singa* or *singam* is horn as the horn of rhino or buffalo. Turmeric is called *pasupu kommu* in Telugu where *kommu* is horn hence it is turmeric horn. In Tamil it is *manjal kombu*

⁵ In purificatory ritual of birth, the woman and child is given turmeric water bath, turmeric water is sprinkled on her head when she enters the house. The turmeric water bath is given to the girl who attained menarche. The turmeric tuber and leaves are used in marriage rituals. Similarly, turmeric water is used for purification in death pollution.

which also means turmeric horn, and in Kannada it is *arisina kombu*. Whereas it is *haldi* in Hindi and *haluda* in Bengali while it is *haridra* or *haladi* and in Odia it is *ada*. As the terms *haldi* or *haladi* or *ada* refer to the colour, *singa* refers to horn which is called *seeng* in Hindi. It means the Kandha give importance more to the horn than its colour in the nomenclature though colour has *indic* meaning associated with gold, auspiciousness and prosperity, and yellow is also identified with Brhamin *varna*.

It appears the Kandha's turmeric or *singa* has closer connection with South India, Kui belongs to Dravidian family of languages. Further, the horn also refers to the buffalo which was popular as the animal of sacrifice for the mother goddess in south and even now buffalo is sacrificed in village rituals wherein the participation of women is mandatory and it is observed before the onset of the monsoon rains and its objective has been praying the mother goddess for good rains and bountiful crops and animals and humans to be free from disease particularly cholera etc. In Bengal and Assam also the buffalo sacrifice for Durga has been the traditional practice.

The turmeric is grown in Rajaghara and Sirtiguda on the hill slopes for household consumption and for sale. According to Kandha of Rajaghara the turmeric plants existed naturally in a generous amount and the selling of the tubers in the market was not very significant. But in course of time they started cultivating it for market also. As it is appropriate to grow in the shade of the hill slope, the large Kandha mountains were covered by turmeric, and it also enhanced their cultural practice, i.e., belief in the goddess of the land that would help growing of turmeric in large quantities with the *meriah* sacrifice which satisfied the earth goddess Dharni.

According to the Kandha the *meriah* sacrifice had nothing to do with the turmeric's colour, but it has to do with the way they cultivate and process it. They cultivate turmeric, cutting all the larger trees in a scattered area, around the turmeric region, to some degree it was able to produce, but it did not turn red colour due to the direct sunlight. In fact, the colour of the turmeric depends on the condition of the rainfall with or without terracing as well as in plain land. The turmeric grows well in open and under the shade of mango, jackfruit, coconut and other forest tree such as *sal* tree. In Rajaghara and nearby villages, it has been observed in modern times that growth of turmeric crop is greater under mango

and jackfruit trees than under *sal* tree as these trees provide partial shade that is suitable for the crop. Although scientists and forest officials have confirmed that during the rainy season, the planting of turmeric rhizomes across the slope controls soil erosion and improves crop productivity, the Kandhas are discouraged to cultivate turmeric in the slopes in the hills of Kandhas.

Now there is an increasing commercial value for turmeric. A family in Rajaghara harvests on an average of about 3-4 quintal of turmeric in every two years. Significantly the non-Kandhas are little inclined to cultivate turmeric as they believe that they rather earn more as agents rather than growers. Turmeric cultivation, a traditional practice continues but not extensively while they have gained experience since ages, not exhaustively though; they attribute it to at least three reasons for this. (1) The people are not able to afford for the capital and human resources required to take up other activities particularly business, (2) the market fluctuates very often and there is no assured market, and (3) shortage of cultivable land as major areas are utilized for paddy cultivation.

The turmeric is the major cash crop in this area which is being supported nowadays by the government.⁶ Kandha and Pano dig out the turmeric rhizomes after two years in small fields on the hill slopes. There are a variety of turmeric such as *Lakadong*, *Ranga*, *Rasmi* and *Suroma* etc., which are grown in Kandhamal. In order to plant the rhizomes first furrows are made with spade and the mother rhizomes are planted keeping a distance between one to another of about 50 centimeters and covered with soil. Planting is done between June and August. Weeding takes place after about three months and then Sal leaves are placed to cover so as to prevent loss of soil by rains or any other means and conserve the soil moisture. Crop rotation takes place for about two or three years with paddy or any vegetables so as to keep the soil fertile. Turmeric cultivation is not very extensive work except for the fact that the fields must be cleared from all roots. Total man-days required for the cultivation of a hectare is about 135 days according to a study⁷. When it is grown in backyard poultry pallets and goat dung are used as manure. If a

⁶ “Odisha contributes about 21 % of India’s turmeric cultivation in terms of area and Kandhamal makes up for over 50 % of the state’s share. Odisha produced turmeric 59361 t from 24733 ha. Kandhamal district stands first in turmeric area as well as production (28,828 t from 11,088 ha)” (Babu, Naresh, A.K. Shukla, Pali Marwar, and Chettali Manoranjan Prusty 2015).

⁷ See Babu, Naresh, A.K. Shukla, Pali Marwar, and Chettali Manoranjan Prusty (2015).

Kandha is in desperate need of cash, he sells the entire crop field to a Patra before it matures for a lower price than the Kandha would have earned much if he had sold the same crop to the government. However, the Patra has to pay the Kandha for digging up the turmeric in addition to the sum provided for the crop. If it is a large one then the whole village is engaged in digging up the turmeric, and the landowner may host a feast at the end. In Rajaghara Motu Patra who occupies a larger extent of the land towards the Sirtiguda usually gives chicken feast, and an amount for purchase of some *desi* liquor. That is how he maintains a good relationship with the Kandha and Panos of Rajaghara.

The crop is harvested in seven to nine months from January-April when all the villages of this area are taken into account. The aromatic type matures in about seven months and *longa* type in about nine months. The main harvest season starts at the end of December and lasts until the beginning of March. Turmeric is harvested when the leaves begin to turn yellow and dry out. The entire clump is lifted out with the dry plant, the leafy tops are cut off, the roots are trimmed, all adhering mud particles are removed, and the rhizomes are then thoroughly washed with water. Harvesting of turmeric is done after pre-monsoon rain. After rains soil becomes loose and then the digging the rhizomes is easy. The field is usually ploughed and the rhizomes are collected by hand. Men and women split the finger rhizomes from the mother rhizome and keep them in the shade for 2-3 days. The mother rhizomes are kept for seed purpose and finger rhizomes are cured for selling. It has been noticed that in Rajaghara some are harvesting turmeric every year but some farmers delay watching the increase of market demand by allowing the rhizomes remain in the ground for maintaining its curcumin content. The average yield (green turmeric) is about 10 - 16 tons per hectare at farmers' field according to the Kandhamal Apex Spices Association for Marketing (KASAM) office at Daringbadi.

In traditional method of curing, rhizomes of turmeric are boiled in aluminum pots of 20 kilograms' capacity along with $\frac{3}{4}$ water for 45- 60 minutes depending on the quantity. The pots are covered with a lid. The boiling process is repeated until a white froth emerges with a distinct flavor. When the rhizomes become soft and the inner colour turns yellow, the cooking process is complete. Overcooking ruins the final product's colour, while undercooking makes the dried product brittle. Mother and finger rhizomes are

cured separately. Boiled rhizomes are dried in the sun for 10 to 15 days by layering them in 5-7 cm thick layers on bamboo mats or on the ground.⁸ This method of processing is only adopted by Kandha and Pano of Kandhamal as experts say.

As regards to the labour and intensity of cropping, while the paddy cultivation takes more labour and several procedures to follow, the turmeric requires less labour though it takes long time. So in comparison to rice, turmeric is preferred. Pulses are cultivated only after these two major crops. And in turmeric there is a high degree of interdependency of clan member helping each other. However, the poor Pano families work in the turmeric field of Kandha as an obligation and getting a share of good crops not wages. It is also true, some poor Kandha are cultivating the lands of rich Pano on share cropping basis which is called *bhaga chasa* where the Kandha works on Panos field with his labour, seeds, fertilizer, pesticide and other inputs and the harvest is divided between them.

Income and Expenditure in Turmeric cultivation: It is difficult to arrive at the income and expenditure pattern among the Kandha about the turmeric cultivation. The Kandha are deficient in keeping details of income and expenditure, Moreover, they do not like to talk about the income and expenditure in general and they are not willing to disclose the information as they do not like others to know about their savings etc.

A study⁹ based on a sample of 120 farmers drawn from three Blocks of Kandhamal district during the agricultural year 2016 - 17 has shown the following results.

The total cost of cultivation of the turmeric growers was found to be Rs 52,200. The total cost of dried turmeric production of the sample traditional farmers was (Rs. 522 /q). Yield of Turmeric crop in case of traditional Turmeric farmers was 100 quintals per ha. After processing (boiling and drying) this yields into 20 q / ha. But the average price received by them was Rs48/kg. The net return per quintal of dried Turmeric production was found to be Rs 40, 200. (Sahoo, Sarangi, Mohapatra, Mohapatra and Sangeetha 2017:5)

Turmeric, Kandha and State

Odisha produces about 21% of India's total turmeric, with Kandhamal accounting for more than half of the state's production. Due to its specific quality owing to its

⁸ See Babu, Shukla, Tripathi, and Prusty (2015:54).

⁹ See Sahoo, Sarangi, Mohapatra, Mohapatra and Sangeetha (2017)

geographic roots, Kandhamal, turmeric has been given the Geographical indication (GI) label by Intellectual Property India, an organization under the auspices of the Union ministry of commerce and industry.¹⁰ Therefore, even now turmeric is an important cash crop and more than 50% of these crop growers in Odisha are tribes, and Odisha produced 59,361 tons of 24,733 hectares of turmeric during 2011-12. Kandhamal is the first district in turmeric production with 28,828 tons out of 59361 tons in 11,088 hectares whereas Koraput is the second largest in this regard (7,761 tons in 3,168 hectares) followed by Nayagarh (5, 343 tons in 2,473 hectares) and Keonjhar (2,937 tons in 1,224 hectares)¹¹ respectively.

Because of increased demand in both local and international markets, farmers are increasingly taking up organic turmeric cultivation on a commercial scale. Kandhamal, Keonjhar, Raygadha and Koraput now grow organic turmeric. The government of Odisha is promoting organic turmeric cultivation in tribal area and set up an Organic Model plants with assistance from Agricultural Export and Processing Export Development Authority (AEPEDA). Agricultural Export Zone (AEZ) is notified in 2004-05 to be set up in Kandhamal for promoting organic turmeric among the tribes. Kandhamal Apex Spices Association for Marketing (KASAM) took initiative and organizing the 61 turmeric growing societies and now it has 12,000 tribal farmers with 68 women Shelf Help Groups (SHGs). Odisha Development Action Forum (ODAF) is also promoting organic turmeric cultivation and marketing through women SHGs in Kandhamal.

Kandhamal Organic Turmeric's total export value was Rs 1.25 crore in 2007-08. Kandhamal Turmeric is an important product and is now popular on Europe's and North America's organic food market. It is an organic product with “EKO” certification from SKAL Netherlands. No synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, are used during cultivation. It's perfect for hair and health care. As a result, good market share has been achieved in the international and local markets. The Kandhamal Apex Spices Marketing Association

¹⁰ Behera (2019)

¹¹ See Babu, Shukla, Tripathi, and Prusty (2015:52).

Kandhamal (KASAM) and the Orissa Milk Federation (OMFED) are promoting the production and marketing of organic turmeric in Odisha.

Meriah, Turmeric and Market Economy

The emergence of turmeric as a resource was rooted in international trade¹², colonialism and state-building. Turmeric is an indigenous root crop that the Kandha used and collected in the hills even before the entry of British to Kandha lands.¹³ But its specific connection with *meriah* comes to light only through the writings of colonial government and the literature in this regard claim Kandha practiced the *meriah* and placed the flesh in the turmeric region in order to increase the colour of turmeric and productivity of the soil. It is true that Kandha were producing turmeric for a long time. There are some questions that need to be raised, why Dom or Pano was the *meriah* seller or *meriah* victims, while *meriah* could be persons of any age, gender, race or caste.

Neither the field inquiries nor did the search for the above questions and practice of human sacrifice particularly in connection with turmeric have revealed any conclusive connection between the two and Pano selling the *meriah* in this regard. What is clear from the literature is that colonial government was more interested in possessing the forests for the timber and other forest wealth. They found two groups Kandha and Pano as hindrance for their mission while the Patra and others showed interest in the colonial efforts to subdue Kandha. They successfully entered the Kandha lands on the pretext of suppressing the *meriah*.

Kandha economy was vested in the forest since the people lived in the jungle. Neither the Kandha was interested in the politics of the princely kingdom's, nor were they interested

¹² A Brief Backdrop of Spices' Trade History of spices dates back to 6th century BC, if not long, long before that. Spices from Asian continent were carried by caravan to ports of the Mediterranean Sea or the Persian Gulf and thereafter to the market places of Athens, Rome, and other cities, where they were sold at exorbitant prices. During 1497 and 1498, British, Italian, Portuguese navigators undertook voyages to Asia in search of spices. Vasco da Gama of Portuguese landed in Calicut (Kozhikode, now) in Kerala on May 20, 1498, reported about Malabar region, the inexhaustible land of spices in India. Since then the Portuguese started trading directly with India. Between A.D. 1605 and 1621, the Dutch managed to drive the Portuguese out of the Spices Islands achieving a monopoly in spices trading. However, in A.D.1799 the Dutch East India Company went bankrupt due to many reasons and the Dutch ports of Malabar Coast were taken over by the British. By the end of the eighteenth century, the United States entered the scene of world spices trade (especially pepper), the most remunerative trade of the time.

¹³ See Boal (1999:25)

in trade and business of the East India Company or Indian business community. So the statements are given as;

“The Kond economy was a primitive agricultural one. It produced rice, oils, millets, pulse, fruit, tobacco, turmeric, and mustard. Konds also raised buffaloes, goats, pigs, and poultry” (MacPherson, 1865, p. 63).

The British learned about the Kandha, forest and their wealth through the non-Kandha. In this respect both Patra and Pano interpreted Kandha's life for the British. Whereas Pano was protective for their own life on one hand, given a picture of killing and sacrificing, the Patra on the other hand to remain undisputed with another picture shown to the colonial administration the 'crimes' of Kandha that they never questioned earlier. They tried to curry the favour of the British by providing some in a strategic way: one that terrifies them and the other it is a means to weaken the Kandha and overcoming them. First, about Kandha ferocity dealing with wild animals and practicing the human sacrifice and second, to separate the Kandha and Pano. Through the first the British can enter the forest surreptitiously justifying their subjugation of Kandha. The second is not that difficult as the Pano always wanted to be close to the power and they are eager to get educated through Christian missions and walk away from the Kandha. Patra also provided with the British additional information about the timber and other useful resources available in this dense forest. British knew that this could give little potential to enhance India's general economy, but kept its timber marketing secret while promoting turmeric as naming the tribe as having agricultural culture. Hence, they started addressing the tribe as an agricultural community. But it was the update what has been given to them by the plain land people with whom Kandha has a cordial relationship.

“Despite its permissivity, Kond agriculture was capable of “resulting in no small share of rural affluence” (C.R., 1846a, p. 49). The extent to which a Kond community enjoyed such affluence depended on “the capricious climate,” most notably local weather and animal activity, which varied across communities from year to year” (van den Bosch, 2007, p. 203).

By winning the goodwill of the Kandha after entering the tribal area initially, the Patra recognized the festival of *meriah* but they never attempted to suppress this as their belief system also supported the virtues of self-immolation and self-sacrifice to gods and goddesses. Perhaps they valorized the religiosity of Kandha, and their uncritical view

indicated their approval of such practices. Now, since joining of the Balliguda and Nuagaon area with other Patras, the royal association has taken care of the tribal deities adopting into Hindu fold or Hinduization of tribal deities, the Kandha could see the religion of the superior Patra or King is very similar to that of their own religious system. But the Pano, who is like a brother to the tribe, is not brought closer than for what they are by branding them untouchable and kept them far away from the Hindu universe. The Pano also fails to grab the land of the Kandha as in case of Patra being servants and weak except depending on the Kandha and what they are doled out for their services.

According to a myth, the mother goddesses appeared in a vision of their priest and said that she was not satisfied with the way Kandhas celebrated the festival.¹⁴ Therefore, the Patras became their worship leaders as well as political head. This association brought unprecedented but gradual changes in the social and economic conditions of Kandha with political influence. The Patra has now become the advisor of Kandha for everything including the *meriah* festival. Earlier they used to take permission of Patra for organizing the ritual but now they seek auspicious day for this purpose and also he fixes the date for the celebrations in different *muthas* so as to avoid clashing of dates. While in pre-colonial period they believe Patras were their King. Gradually the Patra became unchallenged king with power where his involvement in the community development remained unchanged such as the agricultural practice and techniques, participation in markets, religious programmes and local politics. Kandha believe that Patra as the superior son of the soil has better understanding of the ritual and political management. The mother goddess is really happy with these people. Down the hill the Patra have deliberately downplayed the significance of Meriah festival as a backward practice and tried to drawing closer to the Hindu fold; they try holding the Pano and their children at bay.

In hill the Pano and Patra worked as traders like Teli and Sundi who carry the bundles of salted-fish, cheap cotton garment and cosmetics from one weekly market to another. In course of time Patra stopped such itinerant trade as they accumulated sufficient wealth to

¹⁴ According to some other version the priest of earth goddess had a dream in which he saw a person with physical features - hairs on their ears – similar to that of a Patra. The goddess informed him that a person with such physical features should worship her as she was not satisfied with the worship of the Kandha. Then, the people went in search and found out that the Patras were having such features. So they requested them to come and organize the worship of their Goddess (Behera 2014:79)

start business in small towns down the hills and entered into wider economic structures. They are also financiers for the Kandha advancing loans and getting the lands of Kandha mortgaged or undertaking *benami* transactions with less formalities as they know very well the mind of the Kandha; how their money paid back; how to keep them in their control; how to extract money from the Kandha. The Pano continued to walk around the Kandha villages with the exchange of goods with what they purchased in the nearest market like Balliguda. The local markets are now in the hands of Teli, Sundi and even Patra, while Pano remain in the business of bullock and buffalo buying and selling.

It is clear from the above that the Patra's motive to associate with the Kandha through religion and maintain friendly relations has an implication of controlling the economy of Kandha and taking upper-hand over them. Another important implication is to keep the Brahmin away from Kandha by being the priest at the Hindu temples particularly at Pattakhanda of Mahasingi. The Patra are also temples priest of Kali or Durga Maata in Kandhamal though they are non-vegetarian and belong to Kshatriya *varna*. These temples are where Patra are priests permit the sacrifices of goats and chicken, and if it were Brahmin priest such sacrifices would not have been allowed. Thus, by holding key position in the Kali temples and not discouraging the Kandha to give up the sacrifices or organizing Kedu festivals they are able to successfully prevent the Brahmin priests. As already discussed, after the worship of Mahasingi only the Kandha are allowed to celebrate Kedu in different places, as this place in Mahasingi has gained reputation as the main place of worship. Furthermore, the paddy cultivation of Kandha by clearing the jungle and leveling the ground is taking place under Patra of Mahasingi. According the information collected in Rajaghara village different Patras were sent to every *mutha* suggesting the *mutha* heads to organize the ritual on the auspicious day suggested by him for high productivity and improved economy of that place. They may directly contract with other like Teli who could buy and sell the product in the plain or take product from the village down the hill for sale. In this kind of interactions and control of economy of Kandha the Pano is kept aside who has been in association of Kandha for ages as the intermediary between the Kandha and others.

Leeson (2014) applying his economic theory about human sacrifice to Kandha argues that it is a method of protecting property rights by which the practice enhances the security of the property. It prevents resource accumulation and few people or community itself plundering others. What it means is the following. The human sacrifice does not allow the wealth of the community for a long time and it helps maintaining the same structure for a long time. The surplus could induce hierarchy in the society. Therefore, in the name of ritual, the members spend away whatever surplus available through the sacrifice. He makes this argument against the economic irrationality (cf. Hunter et al., 1957:59, Ainslie, 2005:816). Applying the economic formula, he makes his point clear about the rationality of Kandha.

According to Leeson's logic the expenditure incurred on the *meriah* the practice would have ruined the Kandhas' wealth. Acquiring a victim from within the society would have a negative impact on itself and buying it from outside obviously would have been very hard, treacherous and exorbitantly expensive. However, if the Kandha had practiced the *meriah*, they must have done it in a very calculative and judicial manner. Nevertheless, it could not have happened very frequently not creating too much burden on the society depending on the opportunity. It is unlikely that the Kandha resorted to this practice to that extent there was such a need for colonial government to determine eliminating this practice if it were not the scheme of Patra.

Unusual demand of Turmeric in Kandha land: Why turmeric was so important for Kandha? Of course, turmeric had great value when both Indian princely states extended their rule over the Kandha due to medicinal and ritual importance which had been used very frequently on ceremonial occasions. Afterwards it assumed the market value during the colonial regime. The non-Kandha Hindu caste groups at that time only discovered the unique production style of the Kandha through shifting cultivation. They also found that Kandha had excellent knowledge of the cultivation of turmeric. In order to take advantage of the increased market value, the non-Kandha Hindu and Pano undertook the role of middlemen. Later, with the entry of the colonial rulers into the area, this production was brought to a different level. As the flora and fauna were diverted more and more, the British government began to suppress various rituals of Kandha associated

with turmeric¹⁵ so that the Kandha could focus on the production only without losing their time, money and energy on these 'wasteful rituals' in their own wisdom. The rulers supported the knowledge of Kandha, and the tribe felt it the turmeric must be having an excellent value outside their society. As they began to concentrate on their own development they realized that they needed cash, and it could be obtained through turmeric. The government officers got access to Kandha's hills on the pretext of suppressing *meriah* with the aid of non-Kandha. They tried to loot the Kandha hill, the valuable timber and other necessary raw material. But no Kandha or anyone else tried to protest against the British soldiers or protected the Kandha from their exploitation. No one has actually recognized the contribution of Kandha to turmeric market either in Indian market or the international market. As the Kandha began to move towards a market economy, it broke the social-economic structure of the tribes. Kandha, who had never seen the market came into the city. By this, the Kandha's political scenario began in association with the non-Kandha caste community. This way they got into the hierarchy of political, economic as well as religious life of the world around them.

Subsequent upon the Kandha's exposure to market of cash exchange and their direct contact and dealings with the non-Kandha traders and business men as the product of Kandha, i.e., turmeric became very popular in the plains, the Pano mediator became subordinate and even his role turned to be redundant and superfluous. Hence, the other non-Kandha like Patra themselves, Teli (oil extractors), Khauda (blacksmith) and Sunari (goldsmith) etc., visited the Kandha villages and provided necessities like, oils, sickles, axes, hoes, clothes, ornaments, aluminum pots and so on. Hadi who make baskets with reeds and bamboo and Kumbar of Kanjamendi used to sell their items of baskets and pots. Some hawked soaps, eateries, hairpins and sarees, *dhotis* etc., by going round the villages. They exchanged their items either for cash or kind that is, grains or forest products.

Kandha's Economic Change

¹⁵ In the account of Boal he talks about the exploitation of British and Ronal Heidenberg express his idea while talking about *meriah* suppression. See Nayak, Boal and Soreng (1990: 25).

In the light of above discussion, it is perhaps necessary to conceptualize the economic change of Kandha and its relation with the contemporary problems that they are facing. As already mentioned they are in transition from food gathering to food production, and in either case the natural needs of survival are met. Their conceptualization of life can be seen as an integrated relationships of spiritual and natural worlds, and in this regard the spiritual has taken a dominant role in organizing the natural world wherein the Kandha have been dependent on the former as much as they depend on the latter. However, their relationship is viewed as a metaphysical relationship and verbalized in metaphoric sense of mother-child relationship, spirit being mother who has power and authority over the child. They are in mutual obligatory relationships; mother has to protect and nurture the child meeting its needs and the child also has to take care of mother with respect and satisfy her in all respects. The productivity of soil which is the main means of living to satisfy the Kandha's natural needs, the exchange of the products of the soil is basically to meet the same needs only. Therefore, the Kandha never think in terms of surplus and saving the same for tomorrow. The *salap* of the *sago* tree and fruits of various trees and animals are meant for meeting their natural needs only, but not for sale or savings. In this regard, turmeric is also considered having more 'use value'¹⁶ in the beginning, but later it has acquired more 'exchange value' than others for it has special significance among the non-Kandha for its ritual as well as medicinal value. But this exchange transaction is only in line with the traditional primitive mode of production: sacrifices are made in exchange of blessings and productivity of soil.

The turmeric obtained the 'exchange value' more with the entry of the British who brought in the Forest Laws and encouraging the Kandha to grow more turmeric by cutting down the forest and killing animals such as elephants, tigers, antelope etc. Not only the turmeric but also the skins, tusks of the elephant and spices had export value; the Forest Department opened up Depots for collecting these items from the Kandha on cash payments. Further, some Kandha also sold these items to non-Kandhas either in the towns or whoever such as Pano or others that visited them in their villages in the hills and offered either cash payment and kind such as clothes, pots, pans, axes, knives and so on.

¹⁶ Marxist concept. See (Taussig 1977:130-133)

What is important here to note is that large a majority of Kandha individuals were quite unaware of the value of the coins or currency and also simple calculations. Mostly whatever is handed over to them they used to take home in good faith neither did they have capacity to argue if they thought that they were being cheated. They lived as powerless physically or mentally, and the non-Kandha were endowed with more articulating and convincing capacity. In these kinds exchange practices, they had been exploited by not getting proper value for their items that they sold.

As the Kandha started depending on the industrial or manufactured goods more and more, the demand for increased there was need for more cash. Therefore, they had to produce more that brought them cash, but their metaphysical means was to please Dharni goddess and other divine beings such as ancestors as described before in connection with the rituals of shifting cultivation. The ideas of divine intervention besides their hard labour made them to accept the gods and goddesses and ritual of Hindu such as Doli, Holi, Akshya Tritiya which are described in Chapter One. But most importantly the worship of Maa Laxmi during the month of Margasira while observing Mana Osa Gurubar which is popular among the Odia populations. In this worship the panicles of paddy are collected and arranged nicely along with other ritual objects and worshipped every Thursday during the month.

It is also believed that the loss of money due to misfortunes is due to Maa Laxmi's departure from home for whatever reason it would be. As long she is worshipped, she will bless the family with wealth but she will leave taking away all the wealth if once she is not worshipped. In contrast, the Kandha's traditional belief as already stated, the misfortune is the result of casting evil eye or sorcery with the help of a deity who is befriended by a bad person of the community. Again in order get the favours and increase of wealth etc., the deity has to be revered and worshipped very regularly and some go even to the extent of offering their own blood coming from the self-inflicted cut. As the deities are not there in the house one has to either forest grove or field or Dharni's post or shrine etc., to worship and reestablish harmonious relations with the deities through sacrifices.

The Kandha who never cared much either for cash or wealth have understood the non-Kandha are after these two things that are giving them power and authority in society. They have also started thinking that the source of wealth or cash is the blessings of deities besides their hard work. The Kandha accepted the equation that non-Kandha have drawn between the deities: the earth goddess Dharni is nothing but the mother goddess whom the non-Kandha worship as Durga or Kali or Parvati. Other goddesses are similar to the goddess of the Hindu religion. So, when the Kandha began to worship Maa Laxmi, they started considering Dharni and Maa Laxmi are one and the same. As Dharni cannot be brought into their house, they can bring Maa Laxmi who is another form of Dharni and worship her like any non-Kandha. Such worship it is believed would increase their wealth.

Either in the past or now, the Kandha are known for their lack of interest to save their cash or give serious thought about the future. No sooner did they get some cash they drink it away or would have lavish eating. They try to work hard, but save little towards that end; depend more on the favours of benign deities by offering sacrifices and organizing rituals. Unlike the peasant labour Columbia and mine workers in Bolivia of South America¹⁷ who find the cash in the capitalist economy as Devil in the Catholic worldview, here we find the Kandha's cash and prosperity transcending to spiritual world of blessings of the goddess who could be Maa Laxmi or Dharni who should be satisfied with sacrifices. Since the earth belongs to the goddess and her permission is sought whenever a piece of land is brought under cultivation and hence more turmeric can be granted only by her so that they can earn more cash for meeting their natural wants and desires. Thus few of the Kandha are now found in this kind of traditional pre-capitalism following the non-Kandha.

The socio-economic differences that emerged gradually after the colonialism can be found in Rajaghara where 33 households (39 percent) earn less than Rs. 10,000 per year i.e., nearly 40 percent of the households are Below Poverty Level (BPL). The rest of

¹⁷ Nash (1972) and Taussig (1977).

them earn between Rs. 11,000 and Rs. 50,000.¹⁸ If that BPL is considered proletariat, they work as wage labour particularly slack agricultural season though most of them possess land less than 5 acres which is hardly sufficient for them to live only on agriculture, they have to depend on labour. They are engaged in various activities such as road lying, construction etc. They work hard to earn, but do not save much as said before. Few households i.e., about 12 households that earn between Rs. 30,000 and Rs. 50,000 are in a better position than the rest. These are households that try to become members of the Panchayat or any other Committee Members outside the village also. While the traditional leadership depended on inheritance they now participate in the constitutional democratic electoral system on competition which require lobbying inside the community as well as outside with the non-Kandha also. The positions give them honour and prestige which the Kandha aspire. Thus, there is a sort of class difference within the community.

In the above scenario, the economy of Kandha the proletariat exchanged their labour for the cash wages fixed by the non-Kandha who largely engage them. However, in the village they work either for cash or kind or most often exchange of labour working in each other lands; in the towns they invariably work for cash and buy food material in the market run by the non-Kandha exchanging cash with which several of them were not familiar. The government in post-independence era set up institutional arrangements for the growth of turmeric and purchase of it and also collection of minor forest produce for better prices where the goods are exchanged for cash with proper accounting.

Market: In Kandhamal tribal areas, there is a strong link between the caste system and the evolving economy in terms of landholding, occupational distinction, and so on. The Kandha society that was outside the caste system is now drawn into it but remains at the margin. Unlike the traditional society where different *varnas* and associated castes mostly continued their caste occupations with some changes in taking up modern occupations and serves, here the case of Patra is very different. The Patras of Balliguda belong to Kshatriya *varna* whose traditional occupation has long been warfare but they became the

¹⁸ Household below poverty level is Rs. 32 per month for rural households which is Rs. 11, 520 per year according to Rangarajan Committee's Report for 2011-12.

ritual custodians after their entry to the Kandhamal and later entered into trade. But they started claiming Brahmin status. Here, during the colonial period the marginalized group Pano engaged in long-distance trade in salt. Their identity at Kandhamal is at the crossroads as they largely depended on services and non-traditional occupations like business unlike their counterparts in the plains. The situation can be understood in the background of the colonialism in general in India.

Before Colonial rule India already had a complex monetized economy, colonial period and changed the situation and India started to be closer to the world capitalist economy. Rather than fully overturning existing economic structures, colonial economic systems gave some merchant communities new opportunities to strengthen their status by reorienting themselves to changing economic conditions. In certain cases, new societies arose to take advantage of colonialism's economic opportunities and have maintained economic influence even after independence.

In order to understand the activity of markets economy in Kandhamal, especially in the Nuagaon and Balliguda area, we should analyze how specific arena is dominated by a particular community. One explanation for this caste-based specialization is that trade and commerce are largely conducted through caste and kinship networks. People in business are more likely than others to trust members of their culture or kin group, so they choose to do business with them rather than with strangers—creating a caste monopoly in certain businesses area. The Patra is more structurally and functionally into ritual and economy that was enough to coordinate the social organization of Kandha.

Emergence of New market

The Patra, perhaps the most popular and best-known business community in Kandhamal; they are named as Kumiti, a Vaisya caste in Telugu states. In the bazaars of the towns throughout the Kandhamal district, one finds shopkeepers and small traders. They took advantage of new opportunities in colonial cities such as Balliguda and settled across the district to organize trade and money lending. Like the Sundi, as Bailey (1960) says, the Patra's success relied on their extensive social networks, establishing the confidence

relationships needed to operate their banking system. Most Patra families gathered enough wealth to become moneylenders, and also supported British business expansion in Kandhamal by working as bankers. Some Patra families turned themselves into new merchant groups in the late colonial period and after Independence, and even today. Patra governs more than any other family of the Kandhamal industry. Since the Kandha's life has been closely associated with the Patra there is a need to understand this fact in the new socio-political and economic order of the society in which the Kandha is a part.

Periodic Markets: *hata*

Periodic markets known as *hata* are the points by which the rural surplus goods are sold or exchanged, and some of the produce gets to the urban centers. Such *hata* came into existence in Balliguda after the entry of British. Urban manufactured products that are sold in these *hata* reached the rural areas. The periodic market exchange system networks happen in two ways, i.e., horizontal and vertical. The exchange system of distribution and exchanges of rural or tribal agricultural and artisanal products within the surrounding areas is characteristic feature of rural or tribal societies in India even today.

In the early stages when the Kandha villages like Rajaghara were self-sustaining villages, the mutual exchange of goods and services took place within the respective villages. Tribal peasantry developed in limited intermittent markets. By 'peasant society' here it is meant overwhelming economic dependency on agriculture, agricultural food production, excessive land dependence, smallholding sizes, small commodity production, and a limited level of economic monetization. Therefore, in such societies like Kandha the periodic market symbolized the 'direct contact between the producer and the consumer' by the traditional norms of exchange like barter, measurement by number or volume of goods, and petty transactions. Further, these markets also became the centers of 'social gathering' where information related to daily lives of the surrounding settlements (villages), the vital functions (birth, death & marriage), transaction of 'usury' loans, marriage negotiation, dispensation of judicial functions of *mutha*, transactions on domestic animals etc., were carried out. In a peasant society like Kandha periodic market plays even an integrative role, economic and social, for the surrounding villages.

Weekly Market at Nuagaon: The Nuagaon Byabasayee Sangha organizes the weekly market on every Sunday though the other days the usual market is in place. The two big shops that Basant Patra and Sukanta Sahu own them sell dress, clothes. They sell these items in nearby Kandha village through hawkers and in return they get some good forest products or sometime pulse, turmeric from the Kandha families. Now, these hawkers who have been visiting the villages of Kandha have greatly reduced and the tribes do their most of the marketing in the weekly markets or the regular markets located in the towns like Balliguda and Nuagaon and small towns like Kanjamendi. But the people of Rajaghara prefer the weekly market in Nuagaon where they easily get things for cheaper price.

Tribal folks from Sirtiguda, Kanjamnedi and Kudtuli Grama Panchayat and others who live far away from the Nuagaon town visit this place. This market unlike other tribal market is having its special geographical location and outside contacts; it is existing since ancient times and have a distinctive lifestyle and socio-cultural ethos. This area is located near the main road that connects both Phulbani district head quarter and Balliguda sub-divisional head quarter. This is also a Block headquarter with Tehsil office, police station, health centers and other government and non-government offices. It also connects Berhmapur town. So sellers visit this place from different far off places sometimes on their own transport arrangements or public transport. These sellers move from place to place throughout the week as the weekly markets are arranged in places like Balliguda, Phulbani and so on different days.

Distribution of shops: The market in Nuagoan is distributed in different zones while the first zone is located from the school side where livestock is sold. Second is the meat or fish market located in the middle of the vegetables, spices and grocery market. The third location is near the police station where shoes, blankets, clothes, stationaries etc., are sold though it is not well organized. The blacksmith, ironsmith, weaver etc., are distributed in different places. While the general pattern of distribution of shops, there is no fixed or permanent place except for some vegetable vendors and spice vendors in this *hata*. Only few sellers erect a temporary shed to get protected from the sun's heat during summer or

else they shift to the shade of mango and some other trees. Most of them keep their items in baskets and sometime place them in heaps on mats in the open sun. Few of them carry a stool to sit on, so as not to squat on the ground in the fashion of the local or tribal people while a majority of them either sit or squat on the ground. It is observed that those who sit on chair or stool are relatively high ranked businessmen and those who squat on the ground are poorer.

Few sellers, who sell tobacco, umbrellas, shoes, clothes etc., bring the item on their own vehicle and open the shop in the vehicle itself. There are some Hindu traders that sell non-luxury items. They occupy more places compared to the cloth sellers who deal in cheap machine-made sarees, blankets and such others. Cloth is not a luxury item, and the sale of cloth is a prestige occupation so non-Kandha deal it better here. The dry-goods stalls also considered non-luxury items, viz., small utilitarian objects or staple foods.

Items sold and bought: Nuagaon market provides mostly the local commodities and products. The local seasonal fruits and vegetables include: *kadali* (banana), pears, *nadia* (coconut), *sapuri* (pineapple), *amba* (mango), *manda* (papaya), plum, *lembu* (lemon), *kubi* (cabbage), *chhui* (drum stick), *kakudi* (cucumber), *kakharu* (pumpkin), *baigana* (brinjal), *piaja* (onion), tomato, *biti* (radish), *mula* (carrot), *lanka* (chillies) etc. are Grapes and water melon come from the outside. The villages Raikia, Phiringia, Saranga and Daringbadi are known for the availability of seasonal fruits and vegetables but usually outside businessmen bring to this market. The food grains like rice, black gram, sunflower, and millet and other consumables like salt, spices, *atta*, sugar, dal, match box, *bidi*, cigarette, molasses, pickles, mirror, comb, hair belt, nail cutter, scissor, edible oils, etc., are also sold in small quantities. Condiments like chilies –both green and red, turmeric, ginger, and garlic are made available in Nuagaon *hata*. Turmeric is not usually sold in the *hata*.

Domb and Hadi traders occasionally sell bamboo and cane items such as small bamboo, conical carrying baskets, mats, chairs, and tables. Apart from them, sometimes Banjara or Lambada nomad groups from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh are also found in *hata* doing iron work. However, service like barbers, Ayurveda medicine sellers, shoe

repairers, cycle repairers etc., are found in the *hata*. Some traders from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan bring warm clothing, winter dresses, woolen blankets, mufflers etc., These traders leave after the winter and visit again in the next winter. Nepali and North-East traders also sell shawl and winter wear. At festival times, i.e., on the occasion of Mahasivrati and Dushahara, the Kandha usually come to the market where warm clothes and other clothes are available at a minimum cost.

At the time of the Hindu festivals like Rakhshya Bandhan, *rakhis* are made available. Sparklers and crackers are sold for Diwali. Moreover, various religious equipment such as tin vessels, necessary material for bolbom jackfruits, mug and fruits like mangoes are sold at the time of Sabitri brata. Kandha ritual materials are not in great demand. The young tribal women usually buy silver bangles, anklets, necklace and nose rings, ear-rings, toe-rings, armlets and multicolored bead necklace etc. They do not wear flowers. The young educated villagers are now using shoes, footwear (*chappals*), modern umbrellas, sweaters etc., which are available in the local *hata* for very low price.

Buyers and Sellers: The traders are two types: one who used to bring things from plain to hill and who take things from hill to plain.

Both Kandha and non-Kandha participate in buying and selling, while most of the Kandha seem to be the buyer than seller. Usually the tribes and underprivileged come to the weekly market. The local vendors are usually from Hindu higher caste, who sell vegetables and others while specialized craftsmen, potters, weavers and blacksmiths sell products in the market. The majority of people who are the sellers in weekly market at Nuagoan belong to the Teli, Patra, Kumuti, Khauda and Sundi castes. Few Keuta, Kandha and Pano seem to run the meat and fish stalls in the market. Pano are engaged in the selling of the livestock along with few Kandha. The seasonal markets of crops are handled by Patra and few Brahmin now in Kanjamendi and Nuagaon. Some middlemen bargain with Kandha and buy the seasonal items and minor food products such as bamboo shoot, mushroom, *barda saga* (a kind of leaf people eats) etc., and bring them to the *hata*. Thus some Kandhas who live in interior villages are not coming and selling their products directly because they have not developed the skills of bargain or sell, they

feel shy in meeting with the strangers. Sometimes they give money in advance to the Kandha of remote villages and ask them to bring the required items to the weekly market so that the Kandha can buy other things available in the *hata* which the non-Kandha money lender takes away the things brought by the Kandha by bus or other suitable vehicle for selling them elsewhere. Because on *hata* day the transport system will be available but now with growing number of vehicles in this area people usually go to Kandha villages. The price also varies between the weekly market and village. There are people from Pano and Patra who live close by the Nuagaon market who get hold of the Kandha who are proceeding to the market to sell their products and buy in lump sum and earn benefits by selling them in the market again in retail. The Kandha yield to such buying as they could complete the transaction quickly even though they get less than what they would have got by selling in the *hata* by sitting for a long time.

Kandha Transactions: *Hata* is the only day where one can see people communicating with the other villagers; several things are being addressed here. It offers them an opportunity to meet individuals from nearby villages to confer and discuss on social, cultural and economic life. More than this, it's also a matter of pride for them if one brings vegetables from *hata* or if one usually goes there to buy something as they believe only those who are having money can go to *hata*, but not all. Thus, it a status symbol to visit *hata* for the Kandha.

The market is an important part of Kandha's social life. It is a gathering place for men and women from all walks of life, and it is also used for non-economic purposes. The market is used very effectively for exchange and sharing of knowledge as well as for people's economic prosperity. The exchange of ideas aids in the creation of better scientific methods of production and distribution as well as resource management. The *hata* helps to strengthen social structures by bringing people from both nearby and faraway villages together and providing ample opportunities for gossip, enjoyment, and discussion on any topic. Normally, the elders of the village discuss social, political, and religious issues in the tea stalls and communicate with each other in the villagers who come to the market.

Management of the *hata*: The Byabasayi Sangha, Nuagaon, fixes the license fee to a shop or vendor while the Kandha youth collect the fee. However, the places that shops can be set up are allocated by the Nuagaon Panchayat. But in reality it is few shopkeepers (who are the non-Kandha members i.e., Patra of the market Management) that give permission to the businessmen coming from outside. So, the Kandha are only nominal officials either in the Sangha or Panchayat. Their settlement is close to the place where the *hata* is organized.

Apart from this Sangha there is a Hindu caste group that holds the unofficial power over the participants of the *hata*. It consists of Teli, Brahman, Sundi, Kumbhar, Goud and Pano etc. They have lived among the tribal population for so long time, and they know every in and out of the organization and give priority for their personal interest. Pano also controls the livestock market actively under the observance of this Hindu caste group.

Politics and *hata*:

“The market is a paradigm of social relations; interaction in the market place is coloured by factors external to the marketplace, so that a Tribal interacting with a market trader does not see him simply as the purveyor of some good that he has in mind to buy, but as a representative of a category, relatively ranked in accordance with a sociological scheme of values. It is necessary to distinguish this categorical aspect of market relations (the replacement of the purely economic relation buyer/seller with the sociologically determined relation Tribal/Hindu) from the economic personalism often found in peasant markets elsewhere” (cf. Davis 1973)¹⁹.

There is politics behind the market management unknown to the people who come to buy here, especially the Kandha. It is observed in Nuagaon that the Kandha are now more interested to avail luxurious items when they have money they try such items at the time of the festival. Otherwise, they tend to buy luxury stuff in term-based debt from the market in Nuagaon. They buy most of the necessary items on credit and the local merchant groups in the town exchange their goods in return to get raw material or any other collection like crops or minor forest produce when valuable in the season; it is one wage safe mode of exploitation. Though there is a loss, the Kandha think it is more convenient as they get cash when they sell their agricultural products which varies from

¹⁹ It also quoted by Gell (1982: 24).

time to time, only few of them get their monthly salaries. And, in the *hata* days they usually go to the market with the commodity to sell to their product and get some cash and that too few times a year only. Earlier Pano used to be the intermediaries in these interactions while now others have occupied this place. Pano have become more or less independent and slowly becoming entrepreneurs or finding employment somewhere. As the *hata* is carried out by some specific people they keep their representative in every village and inform them formally and informally what is available with whom, and how to get. Understanding the situation some non-Kandha go to the Kandha to find out their financial need and offers cash without asking things in return directly, but finally the innocent Kandha give away the available agricultural or forest products in the return of money to have mutual relations for the future when they really need cash when some eventualities and emergencies befall.

With the impact of the modern politics the weekly market is playing a big role in Nuagaon. Political meetings were held by the Parties in the school area which is close to the market during the Panchayat election and Parliament elections. According to Vanavasi Kalyani Ashram (VKA) or other supporters of Laxmananda Saraswati say, 'Swamiji often comes to Nuagoan at the time of *hata* and Dashahara to communicate with individuals to give up the sacrifice of animals advising the Kandha to perform purified rituals in Hindu way, and he also preaches about marriage, tensions and girl child education etc'. The Christians of Nuagaon claim that Swami Ji provokes people on the religious grounds and, whenever he visited the town he used to create some kind of tension between the Hindu Kandha and Christian Pano. At the time of his death in Kanjamedi and Nuagoan area the Christian population and Missionary NGOs suffered most. Christians avoided the market for a long time and stayed away from the Hindus. In the light of the recent developments one might say that the *hata* in Nuagoan is less economic than political one. This is the reason why a CRF camp is stationed near the Nuagaon police station by the state government to control any consequence of tensions in the area. Even today, if they accompany with a Kandha, a Pano or Christian Pano everyone looks at them in an apprehension of fear and tension. But most of the non-Kandha Hindu accuse Pano and Christians and blame them as trouble makers because of

their breaking away from the traditional Kandha cultural practices while enjoying the socio-economic privileges.

Therefore, the *hata* run by some non-Kandha of this area are obviously one of the places where the tribe acts exposed to the new economy based political system. It continues to be a source of knowledge and interaction, as well as an ideal setting for group differentiation and the articulation of inter-group relationships. Where these diverse groups come into contact only spasmodically²⁰ which otherwise is not possible in the context of the daily routine of village life. The majority of the political meetings are held during the *hata* day in the last elections. They all are represented by both Kandha and non-Kandha.

Conflicts and *hata*: The *hata* was a special place for many reasons now, for the interaction, exposure to the global market, politics, economy etc., as it has been the place of convergence of from various villages where messages or news get circulated in a lightning speed. In the last few years, before the Kandhamal riot, the Nuagaon market limited its operation by buying cows and buffaloes. The *hata* usually consisted of people of different religions and if there was something that a minority was selling, deliberately the non-Kandha tried to trap them. Though Nuagaon has 30-40 percent of Christian families and Kandha are in majority it is in the control of 10-15 percent of non-Kandha.

Now, people in Balliguda and Nuagaon usually buy cows in weekly market for agricultural purpose. But the scenario of the weekly market is modified due to the Hindu organizations that adopted new rule of imposing restrictions on buying and selling cows keeping in view that Christians in this are eat beef. During the Christmas they prevent buying animals thinking they are brought for killing. One of the reasons for the eruption of riot was due to throwing up of a skeleton at a temple when the people of Barakhama were celebrating Christmas as reported by news. So now few Panos are specifically asked if a Christian needs animals, they have to bring to the notice of Hindu higher caste groups otherwise they would be taken to task. Swami Laxamananda, the RSS leader and Founding Member of the Ashram School in Kandhamal used to travel across the district

²⁰ See Alfred Gell (1982: 26)

when he was alive to report cow slaughtering as well as selling and buying, particularly on Christmas as it is surprising that he never attempted to guide Kandha against Kedu in this area, as stated by Kandha. After the riots, the relationship between caste and tribe has changed quite a bit and the opinion varies now. The Christian of these places cannot still believe it is a safe place for them as it may bring unnecessary problems regarding religion. In this respect, the old generation that is still in charge is able to restrain themselves, but young people show some aggressive form of temper to deal with this situation. If any conflict emerges in Nuagaon, the Patra never challenged Kandha because they know how to manage the situation like this. Their number in this town is quite large; they came from Ganjam but know how to deal with the Kandha; they do not directly engage them. Hence, if it is about the problem of Kandhas there are also few Kandha to oppose Patra. The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Party office in Nuagaon addresses the issue of every village if it is primarily related to Panchayat or Block. It is very critical of Christians of Nuagaon that controlled Congress Party office.

According to Christian informants, there is a problem with the Sunday *hata* as usually they are busy in church. It is learnt that they had given written complaints to the Panchayat for shifting the weekly market to another day. They say when this is held in the other towns in other days of the week why it is held on Sunday in Nuagaon? But it is said because Christians are a minority, while the committee remains in the control of Hindu businessmen and politicians their complaint or request will not be entertained. As the churches here are located on the roadside, the roads are crowded on Sunday with the weekly market and Church goers.

Religion and *hata*: The market is open for buffaloes during the Kedu festival time, though there are few Pano intermediaries who typically come with Kandha to sell or buy for them. There are few Pano in Nuagaon town who manage the animal market under Patra's supervision. Kandha just believe Pano in terms of buying and selling animals and trust Patra in terms of selling turmeric, *kanga* and *mahua* flower who only have license to buy and sell these here in Nuagaon and Sirtiguda. Actually the selling of *mahuli* and *desi* alcohol is banned in this region, but few manage to buy them illegally. At the time of Kedu, it is allowed for Kandha as the ritual drink, but not at all the time. Usually the

Kandha of this region brew it while people like Sundi and Pano sell it in their houses or in small shops in the village. According to the consumers, the Kandha made liquor is far better than the non-Kandha while they don't add any other material to make it strong. They brew it near the river or stream which has a different taste than the other who make in their houses.

Unlike in other areas such as Phiringia and Phulbani Blocks where some place is reserved for worshipping the local deities and in some areas where Hindu temples are constructed, there are no such religious places in Nuagaon *hata*. The latter are meant to attract the tribal people²¹. It is observed, wherever the temples are located these are opened on the day of *hata* and donations are collected on behalf of the committee in the name of specific deity and even bank accounts are opened in the name of specific committee to deposit money in the account. In case of the political leaders, whenever they visit they are asked to contribute donations etc. These contributions are used for organizing rituals, festivals and so on in which the Kandhas participate.

The committee of the Nuagaon weekly market collects the donations, but if other than Kandha are involved in this collection there would not be any cooperation which is evident from an incident in 2018. A drunken Kandha demanded a collection from an outsider from Uttar Pradesh who was selling winter wear. This man not only refused to give money but he also took an accessible axe from the nearby the iron shop and attacked the Kandha individual. Then, the Kandha started yelling at him, "it is our country and no one can be a king here." It means that in Nuagoan area, the *hata* lands belong to Kandha, who moved to another place after a Patra sold the land unofficially to other businessman who came here from the neighbouring town. Now the landless Kandha are frustrated for they have gained nothing from the *hata*.

Government and *hata*: Weekly market is the venue for the government to introduce its new programmes and take up propaganda of these for the economic up-liftment of the Kandha. The local products including crops which used to be found in the *hata* earlier such as turmeric, ginger and *kanga* are taken off by the government agencies such as

²¹ See Behera (2008)

Agency Marketing Cooperative Society (AMCS) at Daringbadi and Large-Sized Multipurpose Cooperative Society (LAMPS) at Nuagoan which purchase these agricultural and forest products. Similarly, there are several private licensee shops that are mostly owned by Patra and Teli who purchase *mahua* flower, *sal* seed, turmeric etc. These are usually attracting more people because of the instant and advance payment. LAMPS are providing subsidy loans and agricultural equipment, fertilizers to that Below Poverty Line (BPL). As the budget available is limited with the LAMPS it gets over soon with few beneficiaries, so several are not able to get the benefit. This gap is being exploited by the private shop keepers who extend loans against the agricultural produce and forest products. So some tribal farmers who take loans from these shop keepers sell their produce to the prices which are normally lower than either the government or market price. These shops are open on the *hata* days to distribute loans to the farmers and others as well, so we find heavy line ups and queues near these shops in the beginning of the agricultural season.

The people of Rajaghara go to Balliguda and Daringbadi to get loans. They sell turmeric at the time of festival, and at the same time some produce is sold in the market to buy some clothes or other necessary items for the house. Balliguda which is a biggest town of this area having several turmeric mills are located where the price is little better than what is available in Nuagoan and in Daringbadi where there is AMCS and a NGO called JAGRUTI which purchases the local products for a reasonable price. They usually sell at the time when exhibition and winter festivals are organized at Daringbadi which is a tourist place. People across the country normally visit this town to enjoy the winter. So the local tribes and businessmen with their products come here on regular basis in these days to sell their products. The broom sticks and bamboo baskets are very popular. The state and nation wide businessmen, the Sita Mohastav at Daringbadi, Kandhamal Mohastav at Phulbani use this opportunity to introduce food and minor forest products to each other across the state. These are bigger exhibitions for the Kandha who get exposed themselves to the global market. Whereas some exhibition organizers either of the government or non-government directly buy things from the tribal villages, as an effect of development programmes and the implementation of the modern marketing system into the tribal region. They are now specifically asking the SHGs in the villages that are even

taken to Bhubaneswar for the tribal festival. The Kandhamal and Balliguda stalls are also opened in this festival.

The Kandha economy: Now

The socio-economic conditions in tribal dominated areas of many other districts are not very different from the district of Kandhamal. The majority Kandha population of the village Rajaghara and Nuagaon town live as farmers of subsistence economy and depend partly on forest collection and animal husbandry. On an average the land holding per household rarely exceeds one acre if entire district is taken. The most widely cultivated crop is paddy followed by *mandia*, maize, and *rabi* and other horticultural crops. The most important cash crops of the area include turmeric, tamarind, garlic, and ginger etc. Now-a-days livestock farming has been adopted by younger generation from the loans obtained from government schemes and banks.

The production of vegetable is growing which was not a traditionally common practice, since the people themselves were not acquainted with the consumption of local vegetables and more over there was no market for such vegetables. However, in the last seven to eight years, they have become more interested in growing a variety of seasonal vegetable crops, depending on water availability. Some essential vegetables, such as beans, ladies finger, tomato, and various types of mushrooms, are readily available in local markets during the rainy season. In the winter, a wide range of vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, beet root, turnip, and others are available. Except for cucumber, potato, and other vegetables, there is a scarcity of vegetables during the summer, but fruits such as mango, jack fruits, and dry mahua flower, among others, compensate for the scarcity due to their availability. Since vegetables are highly perishable and there is little opportunity to use cold storage, farmers are forced to sell their products at a low price, even at a throwaway price, to various market vegetable vendors.

The collection of Minor Forest Products (MFPs) and fuel wood is a popular activity for villagers living near the forest. Most women have a vocation like this, if not for sale, then for domestic use. Otherwise, collecting wood from the forest is needed for fencing the kitchen garden, erecting temporary huts in agricultural fields, repairing one's dwelling

place and other domestic purposes. Apart from agricultural labourers, most Kandha residents can now earn regular and weekly wages through government-sponsored schemes and programs, primarily in road construction and other government building construction, which have been approved by the Gramsabha, with the exception of those who live in some interior villages. Through their local contractors and middlemen, some young and adult women attend construction jobs in Balliguda and Nuagaon town.

Young women, in particular, keep their earnings to meet their own needs and to save for their future marriages. Married women, on the other hand, spend their money on regular household consumption and if there is any surplus then they deposit it to their savings account to prepare for potential adversities. Furthermore, almost every household prepares leaf plates (*khali*) and cups (*dana*) for domestic use as well as for sale, but there is virtually no demand for them. As a result, the SHG allows for the bulk marketing of these products in a distant market through middlemen and other well-known agencies.

Historically, livestock rearing for the tribe has been more important than farming because it contributes significantly to their subsistence economy. Rearing of goat, cattle, and poultry is a prevalent practice. In the past, the Kandha never consumed milk of the cattle for the reason that it is meant for the growth of the calves. For ploughing, one or two pairs of the bullocks are commonly found among the tillers. Keeping goats is one of the main activities of the majority of households in the Sirtiguda and Kanjamendi Panchayats, especially the Kandha, since grazing is available in the nearby forest. Further, their ability to breed throughout the year have rendered goat rearing a highly remunerative activity, now with the natural flow of financial assistance from various government agencies. Furthermore, several women are involved in the goat rearing as their primary occupation through SHGs. Apart from financial assistance; these organizations also provide hybrid goat varieties, daily medicine, and training to SHG members in order to maximize their benefits. However, the acceptance of hybrid varieties of goat, hen etc. is shallow. Kandha women play an active role in the traditional economy.

Turmeric and ginger are the main cash crops of the district. About 18,000 hectare of land is being cultivated (Gramshakti, 1995:33) as against about 1.43 lakh hectare of high lands for the purpose. The most important aspect is the marketing of turmeric. A few private traders have monopolized the business by offering advances to the poor cultivators and are collecting the products at the time of harvest. As a result, the cultivator not only sold the produce at a throwaway price but also lost the price for the value-added quality products. To curb such exploitation, DRDA has made a provision of rolling fund for the Secretary, RCMS Phulbani to pay Re.1/- more per kilogram to the farmers who supply scientifically cured, polished and coloured turmeric.

The mining such as: sand of Sirtiguda River and stone, metal from the neighbouring forest emerging the place as market and business centres. Job opportunities and service in different sectors, and overall development programme initiatives of the state as well as central government, financial institutions and other agencies like NGOs, SHGs and Youth organizations etc., are now influencing much the Kandha youth.

According to a study²², the income of the tribes in Kandhamal district is between Rs. 6,000 and Rs. 8,000 a month for about 32.65 percent of the population. Further, 62 percent of the income is spent for the household consumption only and 70 percent of them do not have savings at all. Though 27.66 percent of them are having land to an extent of 3 to 4 acres it is mostly not very productive. Thus, the economic condition of the tribes in Kandhamal district is relatively very low.

Lucky became Unlucky and Unlucky turned as lucky: Non-Kandha and colonial administration with their vested interest brought several problems for the Kandha tribe. However, every time the Kandha has to pay for the consequences. Slowly Kandha have surrendered to the non-Kandha and got detached themselves with the neighbouring Pano as mentioned earlier. Patras by becoming their masters could get their share of the Kandha economic sources and benefits which proceeded only through rituals. The

²² See Samal, and Patra (2015)

condition of Kandha did not improve as in case of Pano with their educational achievements.

Here, if we examine how the economy changed over a period of time from the forest base to agriculture, there is a change in the socio-economic life of Kandha groups that practiced agriculture than the ones who continued to depend on the forest. In all the groups the association between Kandha and forest has started breaking though they consider this as the main resource and faster in some cases and slower in some other. Turmeric is considered to have substantial impact on the economy of the Kandha tribe where there is influence of the Partas and other non-Kandhas through turmeric trade. Through this and other means as stated above they could possess the lands of Kandha and sold them to others. In this regard, Bailey notes the following:

“If there no-one buys land from the warriors (i.e. Patra), how were they able to meet such contingent costs as deaths, marriage or the need to buy plough cattle without selling land? The most probable explanation- assuming that rites, which are the main expense, were conducted on the same scale- is that estates were not reduced to the margin of disintegration, not because everyone was richer in the old days, but because the joint-family was still a flourishing institution. So long as partition does not take place, the devastating effect of multiple inheritances is avoided and contingent costs fall upon estates of a size sufficient to meet them. The principle is the same as when a slump may eliminate a small business and be survived by big business.” (Bailey 1957: 92)

The relationship between Kandha and non-Kandha i.e. Patra, Teli etc., was an economic one, the non-Kandhas who entered the Kandha region spread the market system and immensely got benefited. They took interest of the Kandha's economy through the production of turmeric and acted as middlemen in the process and got themselves rich and became a lucky community.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, different aspects of the Kandha economy are presented from far back to the present. The urgency of the situation and the manner in which the need for pre-colonial and colonial economic thoughts often contribute to a point of thinking for the Kandha society. Not only does it offer the past economic scenario that was forest and forest product that became agriculture and recognized as an agricultural unit to the literature of Kandha. Therefore, it also questions whether it was done and what makes Kandha a agriculturist who was largely dependent on the forest. Therefore, when they don't know where it comes from, how this community has been cultivating it since the past, they also see Kandha as a turmeric cultivator. Not only did the turmeric become unusual commodity for Kandha, but it took an auspicious role in socio-cultural practices of Kandha. But the close association between economy and ritual, or we could say as Kandhamal's undetached scenario poses us the question about the social relationship between the people who live in the same area. So it's going to help us look at the history of centuries and continuation of the past problems into the present. It makes clear the ritual lead economy and the politics are behind the contemporary turmoil in Kandha region it in this regard. So the next Chapter is on politics and political atmosphere throughout the ages and that's going to help us to comprehend the Kandha disputes in Kandhamal that attracted the attention of the nation.

POLITICS, LAND, AND PROBLEMS OF KANDHA

Introduction

In the previous chapter attempt has been made to deal with the economic aspect of Kandha wherein the role of turmeric production and its relationship with the ritual, and market of the past and present with international network regarding turmeric and other products. The government interventions besides the role of non-Kandha are also discussed. In the same holistic view this chapter attempts to discuss the aspects in which Kandha leadership has played significant role in dealing with their problems of the past and present, and the interference of communities in the lives and affairs of the Kandha. It will begin with past situation of the leadership and the issues that are addressed, and it is followed by the contemporary scenario. In the latter the issues related to religious conflicts, Kandha – Pano relations, social discrimination being experienced by the Kandha in the plain areas of the Kandhamal district.

Political atmosphere of Kandha villages

Kandha's political life can be adequately described broadly in two phases: the period of pre-independence, i.e., before the entry of the British in Kandhamal and during 1836-1947 i.e., Kandha in the Colonial period and after the independence. Early British administrators' accounts would take an investigator into a distant past which helps her/him understand the people's political and economic situation that has vital importance for the present study. Thus, with the political history that comes mostly from the colonial reports of the early period and subsequently the writings of European scholars, who came to this land in different capacities, even under severe limitations immensely help to understand the present situation. Hence, an attempt has been made to discuss the Kandhamal's pre-independence history in two successive stages, i.e., the pre-British and British period.

Kandha before the Colonial period: The villages of Odia Hindu had been surrounding the foot hill areas of Kandha for a hoary past. According to Campbell the Kandhamal hills being difficult tracts of inaccessible territories due to forests supported by steep mountains, the Kandha living in interior forests could not be brought for a direct control of the princely states of the plains. However, by eleventh century they were able to subjugate the Kandhas and settle in the down hills and low lands, and the Rajas used to fix a sum as a tribute that all these tribal villages of low lands had to pay as they had no access to up the hills. There existed a mutual interest between the low land Kandha and Rajas who later became the Zamindars when the British, annexed these area to their domain.

The upland Kandha who lived in the interior forests and upward in the hills often used to come down to the low lands and plains and steal the cows, goats, etc. So, the non-Kandha officials who lived in the plains collected the tribute for the Rajas used to control the predatory Kandha on one hand and on the other hand they engaged the low land Kandhas as free labourers (*bethi*) apart from enjoying the *mamools* or tributes from them (c.f. Taylor (1838)'s memoir, Para 7). In course of time the rulers sent these Odia officers to the hills for the same purpose. The duties of these officers were also included to help the Kandha tribal leaders in their respective areas. As explained earlier, they gradually became supreme authority and acquired control over men and land in an intelligent manner, gradually well settled there obtaining the favours of the Kandha and came to be regarded as the representatives of the Rajas and the Zamindars in the plains (CR-Vol. V). These officers received the titles such as: Bisoye, Mallika, Naik, Dalbehera, Patro, Majhi, Konhara, Pradhan and so on from the Rajas. It is also said that the Kanda hill chiefs worked in a limited field, they had the political relationships between them to control their own affairs.

The Kandha people, when the colonization was yet to take place, needed to understand the officers who were mostly Patra and the princely states in terms of the encountering the different strategies of the non-tribal power. As already stated, the Kandha were ferocious and did not come under the control very easily. The Kandha came under the domination of the non-tribal state in a cooption of the powerful agency i.e., Hindu King

and therefore there was mutual trust and confidence with the conflation of religious ideology and politics. In this regard Campbell (1961) described that the hill chiefs were from the plains and enjoyed supreme political rank in the land. The Kandha's socioeconomic conditions and politics were same in Balliguda sub-division as in the other parts of the district Kandhamal.

At that time of British entry, the Kandhamals was divided into 50 *muthas*. The structure of such *muthas* or cluster of *muthas* which remained almost unchanged till date has already been described in the previous chapters. In the region numerically the most populous and socially the most influential and prosperous commune in the Balliguda was the Athar *mutha* confederacy or eighteen lands which occupied the center of the eastern half of the sub-division (Pereira, 1904:41). As already mentioned the people who came under a *mutha* identified themselves as clansmen, while this group of people had heterogeneous origins but claimed to belonging to one clan on a greater brotherhood maintaining tribal solidarity. It was because the Kandha who lived in the interior forests spoke only Kui and even their life styles were different from those of the down the hills and those living in proximity with the plains people who spoke both Kui and Odia. There were occasions when Kandha brought their wives from the interior places who could not speak Odia but spoke only Kui.

The British records reveal the fact that even the *mutha* organization was not a concept of Kandha as they did not live in a given territory. Larger families were introduced in the tribe and the senior of the house had controlled them. Earlier in the neighboring hills, when Pano came to hills, they sharpened the political institutions of Kandha. The entry of non-Kandha can be represented in two stages: one, when the Pano came into being, and the other Patra and other Odia followed by the British government. When Pano was the only outsider in the region, no Kandha institution was hindered, rather they became a part of it, but when Patra arrived into the hills not only interfered into the Kandha's political structure to the extent required, but also largely influenced the ritual and economic life as well as discussed earlier. The political situation at this point of time can be noted in terms of Kandha's association with the Princely states. Here the case of *Chhata Paju* as Pareira (1904) noted reveals internal feuds among the Kandha, one clan encroaching

upon the lands of the another clan, and one Princely state supporting one clan of Kandha and another state supporting the other clan of Kandha.

Kuanr & Behura studying eastern half of the sub-division quotes Pareira (1904) who wrote,

“Establishment of *Chhata Paju* may be conjectured from their tradition which is still alive in the minds of the people. According to one tradition, as Pereira (1904) has described, the home land of the people of *Chhata Paju* was in the district of modern Sambalpur. They had migrated to the Sankhemundi area and lived there for many generations around the hills of Doda Saru on the west of G. Udaygiri. Finally, they moved northward and defeated an older clan called Ropormendi and took possession of this area which is now called as *Chhata Paju*. The other tradition was that there was a fierce battle between the king of Boudh and San Khemundi for possession of a renowned idol enshrined in a temple of the village Mahasingi which is now in Balliguda Sub-division at a distance of about 75 kms. from Kandhamal sub-division. The *Chatta Paju* fought on the side of the King of Boudh. The battle continued for quite a longer period and many from both the sides lost their lives. The Mahasingi people too subscribe to this tradition and even claim that they had seen human skeletons scattered in the dense jungles of Mahasingi. The latter may not be a fact but surely supplements the tradition in spirit. The *Chhata Paju* played a prominent role and finally obtained a decisive victory over the Sanakhemundi King. The King of Boudh while returning got the idol of Baral Devi through divine revelations and it was installed at Balaskumpa, Bandhagada, (an administrative seat under the control of an Odia Chief) and finally at Boudh. In all these three places the idol of the deity Baral Devi is worshiped annually first in Boudh itself, then at Balaskumpa and finally at Bandhagada. Balaskumpa a *garh* (fort) of the Boudh King is in the center of the Chhata Paju which received the status of a *mutha* and it is one more addition to the existing *muthas* in the Kandhamals raising the number from 49 to 50”. (Kuanr & Behura 1996:99)

The above statement provides glimpses of internal disharmony and external interference in the land of Kandha. Further, the Kandha never wanted to associate themselves with the non-Kandha of the plain areas as the field inquiries have revealed. The following information collected and observations carried out and recorded as field notes make these points clear:

‘The Kandha of Rajaghara narrated that as a majority of them were living in the foothills, far away from any Odia caste groups’ reach and were independent. It was quite difficult for Hindu King to control them under one political organization. The only non-Kandha that was connecting them with the plains was

Pano, who are now called as untouchable and the second highest population in Kandhamal. As the Patra were facing some difficulties in dealing with the Kandha from their own places in the plains they had to come down to the foothills and settle there, leaving their places in the plains. In Kanjamendi, even now the Patra say that they still remember the Kandha never welcomed them. According to a myth (see chapter-3) their association with mother goddess opened the door for them to Kandhas. They changed their strategies when they realized that the Kandha cannot be controlled by force. This tribe was indeed very powerful to resist entry of any outsiders into their domain. So the Patra thought of bringing Kandha into their direct control was through establishing a good will and friendly relations rather than using coercion. They started living nearby the river, Mahasingi, in this area without disturbing the hill-tracts. Further, the Patra started taking up new occupations such as stone carving, cultivation of garden crops and paddy cultivation and they put up their residences close to the foothills at the places where the Kandha lived but away from them. The Kandha observed the full cycle of paddy cultivation along with their shifting cultivation. "Significantly however the Kandha adopted paddy as a good new crop but they rejected the Hindu practice. Instead with great unanimity they appear to have applied the stages of paddy cultivation to their basic Kandha theology" (Bailey 1957: 220). It was the first that a case among Kandha who diverted themselves towards the Patra social and religious life.

These people were the actual mediators between the King, his military authority and Kandha. Hence they started helping Kandha with the ritual as well as the Kandha leaders who were to maintain their area peacefully. However, they were the representatives of the Kings of plains, especially to this area Patra were the subordinate of Ghumusar King and they started collecting taxes.'

From the above the strategic processes that the Princely state adopted to draw close to Kandha was through political means as well as religion.

The Rajas or their representatives successfully had drawn the Kandha into major political issues starting from the innocuous religious arena. Until now, the Hindu Raja or any other Odia annexation did not adequately affect the political organization of Kandha. When they tried to break and assimilate themselves into this area, they gave importance to the worship of the Devis (which later conferred with the status of mother Goddess on Dharni Penu and other deities of Kandha). Kandha's turning point with regard to the politico-religious organization entered into a new arena that affiliated the Odia, who gave interpretive names and drawn them to a different level for their advantage and according to the Kandha's emotion. Kandha had no interest or some of them even protested against the Odia trick in the early part of this annexation or accepting of new ideas, while the

plain land non-Kandhas carved out a role for themselves in the social fabric of Kandha with myths and stories linking to their Gods and Goddesses in the formal context of Hindu. At the later stage, when the British annexed Princely states and entered the Kandha hills both Princely states and Kandha collectively resisted the British. There was increased mutual trust and good will between Kandha and Princely states and later conferred and honoured Kandha chiefs with titles and awards.

As already stated like every Kandha village, the village Rajaghara also had a territorially organized political system based on clan organization. This village was one among the 18 *muthas* or villages and each of them was under the occupation of exclusively Kandha households besides the Pano. But when the Patra came in to stay at Mahasingi they extended their administration over the area, and they were given charge of some *muthas* and they started acting as the head *mutha*. Under the guidance of this head *mutha* the Kandha's Mutha Mallick, started functioning as the leader of each cluster of the *mutha* villages; so far he remained as the political head of a Kandha's *mutha* territory. The term *mutha* was referred to the head of the local Kandha village as well as to the political territory of Kandha. Jani, Tolmba, and Jhakar continued to function as ritual head in different villages in the *mutha*. In this kind of set up, an important aspect of social organization was regulation of marriages among Kandha, with village exogamy was practiced as in case of North Indian villages where households in the village were only brothers and their children who did not intermarry. Even now in Rajaghara there is only one clan, that is, Mati clan which is exogamous and marriage within the village is punishable.

Though the relations between the *muthas* or different clans maintained more or less harmonious relations, there used to be occasional internal feuds and fights due to elopement with a girl with someone, marital disputes etc. One of the old informants of Rajaghara village narrated the following interesting story about his marriage. He married a woman belonging to Damsing clan of Balliguda. He went to see the Kedu festival where he met the woman for the first time and fell in love, and so he captured her at the dormitory house and eloped with her but his clan fellows who were with him at Balliguda got to know about it and chased them while the eloping couple was crossing the dense

forest of Mahasingi. However, they managed to reach the village Rajaghara. When they came to the village the Mutha Mallick called the informant and asked him about the case and told him to get permission from him and advised him to be ready to welcome if the girl's party comes to them. But actually when the woman's party did come there was a fight between the residents of two villages who belonged to two different clans. However, with the interference of Mahasingi Patra, the head *mutha* of Rajaghara settled the issue. In this case when the clan members of the informant initially tried to prevent the elopement by chasing the couple but the couple safely reached the informant's village and then his clan members remained silent and cooperated with him. But when the woman's clan members or brothers came to take her back to their village, the informant's fellow clan's men resisted as their brother brought her to marry. It means, there was no fight between brothers of the same clan as mutual understanding existed. Cases like this were not uncommon. There were other groups of people in the clan organization and were helping each other to maintain political harmony, cohesion, unity and solidarity showing some sort of alliance and animosity. In connection to this the clan appears to have been guided by the common principles of exogamy, religion, worship and right over the land. Thus, Rajghara is a homogenous residential unit of Kandha society and people claim to have descended from a common ancestor and the descendants of their forefathers comprised of three minimal segments got distributed in three hamlets now that come under one village, Rajaghra which comes under Kanjamendi Gram Panchayat after the independence.

The European culture and high-centered practices in Europe claim that peasants everywhere in the world are unresponsive, tradition-bound, and unable to change. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this stereotypical view became particularly prevalent among Europeans as they witnessed the speed with which the change in their own industrial economies were taking in contrast the peasant communities that resisted change, the Europeans expected the same in some of the peasant or agrarian societies that they had conquered. Karl Marx screamed against rural imbecility and lauded the English for breaking up tribal societies in India in order to make progress.¹ In this regard, when

¹ <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2018/05/marx-resonates-after-200-years/> accessed on August 16, 2020.

we talk about the stereotypical view and rapidity of change, we see or divide two dimensions that had been affected by the Kandha society— one at the initial time when they were targeted by the Odias, and the other when the British government attempted to occupy the Kandha land.

At a time when the British authorities were gathering and organizing ethnographic accounts of this highland around the mid-nineteenth century, the Odias were well settled in the hills by then. Although such accounts were inconsistent in describing Kandha hill situation in some details of the immigration process, people still remembered that Kandha's predecessors never welcomed the Odias, and they resisted Odias' intrusion. Bailey also pointed out that “there is ample evidence that the invasion was resisted at first and that subsequent relationships are obscure” (1958:27). But it is now seen that some Kandha families live in harmony in all of the Odia settlements, dispensing with the differences in the past between them.

Kandha Leadership during the Colonial Period: The British colonial government unlike the princely state came with coercive power and authority that destroyed the social fabric of Kandha in their relationships with the non-tribes. Such process took away the traditional practices resulting in a confusion and rebellion. The tribal world which was interdependent gradually became self-dependent by cutting off themselves from the non-tribal inhabitants due to levying of taxes and payment of the same directly through the government machinery rather than through the Patra. Further, the state deprived them off their rights over the land and other natural resources in addition to the interference in the sociocultural practices. Hence everyday practices have gradually changed which broke the Kandha natural world as discussed in Chapter Five.

In 1803 the British conquest began in Orissa and in 1818 they conquered Ghumusar princely state; a rebellion of the Kandha under the leadership of Chakra Bisoi took place, and further details in this regard are given later. The Kandha of Phulbani attacked Lt. MacNeil near Bisipara and all his soldiers were killed, but the British government thought it was only the Raja of Boudh who plotted against them giving support to Chakra Bisoi even though he had entered into an agreement with the East India Company. The

government decided to capture Boudh in 1855 and deputed Dinabandhu Patnaik to study the mind of the Raja but in fact he gave in writing that Phulbani *Taluk* was not a part of Boudh State and further agreed to sign any term in the instrument of accession. The Raja of Boudh finding it extremely difficult to maintain a semblance of control over the Kandha voluntarily agreed to cede this region during 1855.

The region known as Kandhamal meaning as the tract inhabited by the Kandha was constituted in 1841 as a subdivision of the then Angul district. When the British administration took charge of the area they did not see any specialized bureaucratic institution as in other parts of the highland. Along the Ganjam border the hill chief or Mutha Mallik was assisted by Karji and Karanam being the treasurer, Dalai, the commander of the Paiks, and Majhi, the collector of revenue. The Paiks were the sentries to maintain law and order and carry out orders of the Mallik. Almost similar organizations were found in Khemundi Malliah.

When the British arrived in this area the solidarity of the Kandha came into picture when they protested against the British army as stated above. The people of different origins got united together against the outside force even though there were many problems within the community but there was unity at the time of external aggression. The British found some sort of equilibrium between Kandha and Odias, as the Patras were ritual specialists as well as political leaders and came to be the economic heads also. Further, the Kandha became subordinates to Patra so far as their protection of life and property was concerned and maintained allegiance with the Patra as their leaders and priests. Hence the Patra made up the unity against external force and protection of common property but also socio-religious activities.

An important reason for which the British army entered the Kandha hills was to suppress the human sacrifice. By 1844 all the clans of Ghumusar District entirely abandoned human sacrifice. When the Kandha witnessed a plentiful harvest and neither rise in epidemics nor infant mortality in 1844 due to good rain in the summer despite the lack of human blood and the elderly of the Ghumusar clans began to think about the implications

of it in terms of both practical and theological stand that they had to take. In this period the identity of these three groups of people i.e., Kandha, Patra and Pano has changed dramatically under the subjugation of Colonial administration.

The Kandha were to be governed without difficulties, and in this regard one of the tactical measures that the British adopted in 1855 was a proclamation, the British would not interfere in any way with “established ways and principles of justice of the hill races or change injuriously the hereditary authority of the Rajas, the Bissoyes, the Mallickos, the Podies, the Kandhas and other hill chiefs” (Bailey: 1960: 181). They could speak Odia and Kui, the language of the Kandha, and in fact, they emerged as the sole protectors of the interests of the Kandha by putting forth the grievances of the Kandha before the administration. So far as the Kandha were concerned the Odias alone were the champions and demanded allegiance from the people in their own as well as in other adjacent territories. Each *mutha* head exercised his political authority even beyond his territory and consequently, his political supremacy was recognized in the whole of the Kandhamal. The *mutha* heads called *muthadars* ruled over their respective *muthas* and the tenure was hereditary. However, sometimes they were appointed at the pleasure of the British government. The primary duty of the *muthadar* was to maintain law and order within the *mutha*. They were the representative of the government and could exercise their power to allocate land to the outsiders and give them protection. The *mutha* is not only an administrative division but also a community and certainly there was a drastic curtailment of the Kandha political power which for centuries was of very independent of the political institutions of the Odias but existed side by side.

But after 1855 the situation became very different and it was the Odias' political institution which became more powerful and the relationship between the Kandha and the Odias emerged as the dependents and ‘the lords’ as described by Bailey (1960:180). In the same process the Mallika at the village level the Mutha Mallika at the *mutha* level and the Maha Mallika at the level of a group of *muthas*, in their traditional political institutions, derived many characteristics of a lord. The Odia Chiefs were, of course, remunerated by assignment of *inam* land (services tenure land) and also raising *mamools* (rent) from the villagers, some of which were supposed to have a bearing on land.

In *muthas* where the Kandhas dominated the situation was slightly different. The people used to give presents in kind to their headmen on occasions or even whenever they visited them as the custom demanded. Besides, the headmen enjoyed the free service of the people as and when needed. The economic and social issues were dealt with by the *mutha* heads. Crime was rare in Kandhamal. The Kandha when drunk used to murder their own relatives in connection with land disputes but such cases were few, of course such crimes were brought before the court. The other cases of crime were petty thefts committed by the Panas. Such crimes were dealt with by the village head or Mallikas and often by Maha Mallika, when those could not be resolved by the former.

During this period, apart from the Odia chiefs, the Sundis, the Panos, the money-lenders and traders played significant roles in the socio-economic and political life of the Kandha. There was a small caste group, the Sundi² (distiller caste) scattered throughout the Kandhamal. They migrated to this land in the wake of the British administration and made a living on drink-trading, owning illicit arrack and 'toddy' shops. The Kandha had the greatest weakness towards alcoholic drinks and consequently they were rapidly becoming paupers. The economic situation of the Kandha was comparatively better when they were distilling their own liquor. Meanwhile when the Kandha were forbidden to manufacture their own liquor at home, the liquor shops boomed enormously and were considered as a lucrative source of income. Some Kandhas mortgaged land for drinks and sometimes were dispossessed of their lands.

The traders and merchants who came to the hills brought still more misery to these people. Between 1865 and 1866, a famine of the most unparalleled severity desolated the country and slew between 10,000 and 15,000 people by actual starvation (Maltby 1918: 157). During this period alone when the Kandha were in distress a large number of merchants and money-lenders came from Ganjam and Boudh plains. Apart from the

² They were being fast spoilt by the Sundis, a process of pauperising the tribals. "The most valuable portions of the land have, however, now passed into the possession and enjoyment of Sundis...." (Taylor, 1969:24). "About 1870, in its desire, to increase the Excise revenue, the administration banned home distills" (Bailey, 1958:12). Around 1908 the Kandha themselves started a movement to abstain their own people from the habit of drinking. The result was very satisfactory. The consumption of liquor reduced to great extent.

desire for drinks, the Kandha were obliged to borrow on occasions such as to secure animals for sacrifice during the rituals organized for protecting the crops by satisfying their goddesses. In cases of sickness, goddess required an animal to appease her wrath, and for weddings a feast must be given. The Kandha became more dependent on non-Kandha particularly the Odias and were exposed to many faces of exploitations and virtually surrendered completely to non-Kandha, a group with economic superiority.

Before British occupation of this land, the Panos looked up to the Kandha as their natural protectors and sought to identify themselves with them in every particular way. In later years they exploited the ignorance of the Kandha and acted as brokers and peddlers out of which they made their living. The Kandha for their part found them quite indispensable in the provision of absolute necessities for daily life. They were dealt with as traders, depended on them for specific purposes at the time of death. The Pano used to carry messages, acted as musicians and though they had no voice in the Kandha public council still had a robust private influence. But like any other traders, because of increasing dependence by the Kandha on goods from the plains the Panos became the inevitable link between the traders from the plains and the Kandha.

There were forest products that the Kandha collected for consumption as well as for sale, besides turmeric, tamarind, mustard seeds, ginger, sweet potatoes etc that they had grown. These goods were sold to the buyers, necessarily to the non-Kandha, only through the Pano who acted as a middleman. In the meantime, the traditional relationship between the Kandha and the Pano changed soon after the latter felt that the Kandha was no longer their protector under the changed administration under the Patra who supported the British and helped the latter exploiting the simple Kandha. Observation in their ethnological setting presented a disharmony in the natural living of the Kandha. However, in 1897 Kandhas were offered exclusive compensatory rights and privileges under the law to ensure them justice in the face of exploitations. The administration had the view that the Kandha were quite different from the present but, though of late, the administration felt the necessity to protect the Kandha who desired most. Ever since the Kandhamals brought under the direct rules of British Government, education for the

tribal children received attention under the Kandha Agency with the mission to suppress the *meriah* and the female infanticide.

But in course of time the unitary structure of the village experienced change with the immigration of members of other *mutha* of different clans as well as non-Kandha. With the coexistence of others in the Kandha village or area of Nuagaon, they encountered a complex population structure. *Mutha* became heterogeneous in nature. Further, their worship as well as growing crops also changed. In this regard, it may be noted that to maintain the Athar *mutha* of Mati clan of Rajaghara, Patra started worshipping the mother goddess in the nearby village Mahasingi as supplementing the tradition of spirit of worshipping the earth goddess of the Kandha and changed her as Maa Pattakhanda. Even now the Patra continue worshipping the deity in the name of Maa Pattakhanda with the offering of goats so that the Kandha could also participate. It helped the Patra drawing the Kandha close to them avoiding any discrimination against the Kandha. However, the Patra maintained their original worship pattern of the earth or mother goddess. Contrary to that of Maa Pattakanda, in the temple constructed for the mother goddess in Balliguda town only vegetarian offerings are allowed. Also the Patras initiated their annual agricultural season with Kanga parbu and worship of this deity. Following this new pattern, the Kandha who hitherto did not have such an initiation of the season started worshipping this deity by organizing Kanga parbu according to the details provided in Chapter Three in their respective villages. Thus, the Kandha not only voluntarily accepted the authority of the Patra without any resistance and acknowledged the superimposed power structure that remained under the control of head *mutha*, Patra, of Mahasingi so far as Balliguda and Nauagaon villages are concerned. Further, the crop that the Patra had grown used to yield bumper crops which made the Kandha to believe that it was due to the blessings of the deity who is worshipped differently from their ways.

Land, Ritual and Leadership

In the light of the above historical developments, the land, ritual and Kandha leadership in the post-independence is discussed hereunder. The Kandha have been living for ages in

the forest and hill terraces in harmony with the surrounding forest eco-system. It has been made clear in Chapter Three, the Kandha worldview considers the land which they cultivate belongs to the earth goddess, Adi Mata or mother goddess who brought out or created everything that is on the earth. Further, even though the earth belongs to the earth goddess different areas or parcels of land are in-charge of a goddess. Therefore, before taking up any agricultural activity permission is sought from the goddess in-charge of that land/area. Similarly, permission of the earth goddess, Dharni, is taken before the preparation begins for the celebration of *meriah* or Kedu festival for the objective is to show gratitude to the goddess for granting good harvest and also to pray for a bountiful crop. Since the area goddess also contributes by protecting the soil and crop she is also invited on the occasion. Thus, the land belongs to the goddess and god or Abba, the father head.

These deities are represented in symbolic forms at the sacred site of the *meriah* grove as three stones i.e., Dharni Penu, Jakeri Penu, Kotewali or Abba. However, these deities are represented again as three stakes in the temporary cottage built over the site of Jakeri at the village. As already mentioned in Chapter Four, the main stake that faces the entrance of the cottage is Dharni Penu, while the smaller stakes that face towards the rear side are Jakeri and Kotewali. Thus, this divine family together refers to the fertility, while Dharni represent earth the female, Kotewali represents male and Jakeri being the sister of Dharni. Interestingly there is representation of children. But Kandha claim that they are the children of the divine couple.

Further, in the Kedu festival also there is a representation marriage: the buffalo is treated as the bride. Similar to the bride who receives blessings from her clan's people before proceeding to the bridegroom's place for the wedding ceremony, the sacrificial buffalo is worshipped at each house of the clan members before he is taken to the site of sacrifice. As the marriage is for the union of male and female and begetting children, the buffalo sacrifice at the site where Dharni and Abba as married couple such that the land becomes fertile. If one considers the symbolic meaning, now it can be seen that axe which is used to hack the neck of the animal resulting instant death and gushing of the blood represent

the male while the buffalo is female. A piece of the flesh of the buffalo is buried in the soil where the crops are grown so that the soil become fertile; the soil become productive as it is female as rightly identified Dharni as the earth or land.

The symbolic representation can be further found in the gender construction itself. It is only man who can plow the land sow seed, women are not supposed to touch the plow. A menstruating woman is proscribed to enter the fields and undertake any agricultural activity, in other others she has to be in the fertile state, and menstruation itself is unfertile state. It has been mentioned in Chapter One while discussing the gender among the Kandha that according to a song axe represents man while basket represents woman. An axe also refers to vigour and struggle and it is one that strikes the neck of the sacrificial buffalo. Basket is the one that collects the produce of the field.

Further symbolic representations can be noted in the collective possessions of ritual items of Kandha clan that are transferred from one village to another village of the clan. These items are an axe, a brass pot, and a knife which symbolize sacrificial buffalo offered for the fertility of soil in other words the symbol of land itself. The pot represents the basket or woman and the knife represents man. Thus, we find land, woman and man in association with each other. However, here ritual axe is different from the axe used for regular agricultural activities that involves in cutting the branches and trees, but the ritual axes has been sanctified only for killing the buffalo. The axe in a symbolic form also can be noted when a person who belongs to a clan and purchases a piece of land of another clan, the latter gives an axe to the other. Therefore, axe can be seen as representing land and also like a document of the land.

As it has already been made clear, traditionally the land belongs to a clan. The birth entitles a person either male or female a piece of land of the clan. When the *mutha* i.e., clan clears an area or forest land, and is allotted to the clan members the head of the *mutha* allots a piece of it to each of the heads of the households. So a person inherits the land of the clan through father and the same is redistributed among the brothers as an

inheritance. In case of a girl she inherits a piece of land upon her marriage. From the above description it is clear that the land, ritual and leadership are closely interlinked.

Having given the above context of the past socio-political situation, it is necessary to focus on the changing roles of non-Kandha who have been closely connected to the affairs of the Kandha to gain the contemporary political power in the Kandha society. These non-Kandha are Pano who preceded the Patra who arrived latter, are directly and indirectly come into practice in this regard contributing to the contemporary disturbed situation.

Diminishing Pano's Role in Kandha Society

The role of Pano has been crucial till recently, the only caste group that remains under penchant dispute in the history of Kandhamal. The Pano had different roles in different periods of history in Kandha areas as described in the preceding Chapters. Pano were first visitors to the Kandha hill, lived as the part of Kandha society and they were the first tradesmen to enter the isolated area of Kandha and engaged in barter. They brought salt, dry fish and later on, ready-made food items, matches, country cigars, biscuits, clothes, ornaments and other things that were not produced by the Kandha. Till date the barter system exists in this village of Rajaghara between these two, mainly in harvesting period³.

However, till now most of the Kandha do not deny Pano as brother and remained in Raja-Parja (king-subject) relationship. The Patras who won the hearts of Kandha pronounced the Pano as untouchable and gradually pushed them out from the religious sphere. In the other hand they encouraged others like Kumbar, Teli and others to migrate to the hills and thus they made Pano's life difficult. Pano were given disgraceful work in rituals to beat drum, participate in death rituals, washing clothes of Patra and other agricultural labour like that of slaves.

³ MacPehrson, Boal and others defined them as the middlemen while some of Odia literature proclaim Pano as cheater or exploiter.

In this difficult time of Pano who was struggling to survive in hills the British came like rescuers. In search of Kandha King, they found many economic opportunities across the hills but had to fight with Patra and Kandha. They tried to win over the Kandha's good will but in vain while Pano and some Patra helped the British for their selfish interest. The Hindu King surrendered himself to colonial government but the British captured all powerful Kandha leaders. In this way the Pano and Patra introduced the plan of getting into the hills on the pretext of controlling the human sacrifice. Early attempts were made to abolish the Kandha practice of human sacrifice. Then Mr. Russell writes,

“felt it to be inconsistent with principle of humanity to enforce on such a race the immediate abandonment of ceremonies interwoven with their religion. Instead he took practical steps of establishing weekly market in more accessible Ghumusar and Surada locality. This step arose from his observation that Kandha were very fond of salt, salt-fish, brass vessels, scarlets and other cloths; and that they were entirely dependent on lowlander for these, whether obtaining them by exchange or by forest. At markets, he resigned, they could see, they desired and more, and form wider areas than ever before. Beside promoting Kandha-British relations, this feeding into them of new tests and new wants would afford us the best possible hold on their fidelity as subjects, by rendering them dependent on us for what might one day become necessities of life” (C.R. 1846 (B) 49-50).

In this process of suppressing the human sacrifice the British realized the problem of religious sacrifice as they believed their custom and beliefs are the result of good crops and problem between choosing right and wrong. They thought the Kandha adhered to the customs handed down by their ancestors, but they were wrong and they had to be brought to the state of civilization and engage them in different types of cultivation, collection etc., besides having communication with outside world. Initially the British tried to make communications with the Kandha through Odia and Patra but they ended up with a growing misunderstanding. When the Pano were taken into confidence, the colonial government was able to establish the communication with the Kandha. After many attempts of agreement, disagreements, acceptance and avoidance and under scary situations the Kandha finally decided to give up the practice of human sacrifice. But at the end after the demise of the colonial rule the Patra successfully separated the Pano from the Kandha with their religious ideology of discrimination and the practice of untouchability against the Pano despite no difference between the Kandha and the Pano

so far as the food habits are concerned except that the latter removed the carcasses of the animals.

Patra and the Kandha

The self-regulating political system of Kandha without a formal legal base gave in a space for the Patra as the Head of *mutha*, while the traditional the Mutha Mallick as subordinate leader of the Kandha and the village headman scaled down to the third level. The Patra provided an effective leadership to the people to carry on their political organization smoothly. It looked after more or less all aspects of Kandha socio-political life at the family, lineage, clan, village and inter-village level. With the effect of this to change Kandha theology Patra with the help of Kings constructed temples, the Shiv temple near Nuagaon is an example of it where they appointed Brahmin priest who presides over the ritual worship. And with mutual concern neither the Patra nor the Brahmin disturbed each other while Kandha became subordinate to the King. Patra accepted regulating Kandha resources and also became mediator of trade.

Patra's intention was mainly extending the Hindu King's territory through religious means of constructing temples in different places where the King also worshipped the deity. The temples of Maa Pattakhanda at Mahasingi and Balliguda are examples and thus brought the Kandha into the religious fold of the Hindu. Kandha do not undertake any major ritual activity without consulting a Patra priest till date as all the other village deities are centered around the main goddess at Mahasingi. In this way the Patra become successful in establishing a bond of brotherhood among the Kandha population which still goes strong and also plays an important role. The ritual king Patra turned as the local king gradually while regulating Kandha political organization which was unsystematic till then.

With the presence of Patra who had been playing very significant role as explained before there has been a growing number of other castes besides Pano. As Brahmin, Sundi (distiller-caste), Kumbhar (potter), Kamar (blacksmith) were able to penetrate the hills,

the influential Patra now could do anything that they wanted through the political relationship established with the majority Kandha. Bailey states,

“Indeed, it is as if the warriors are on occasions drawn out of their own system of political relationships and compelled to act in terms of Kandha political institutions. Conversely, on occasions the Kandha are drawn out of their tribal political system and act within the Oriya system, as when they fought at Mahasingi” (Bailey 1960:173).

Being a forest dwelling community, the Kandha developed strong social and spiritual ties with the forests. Patras never interfered in this regard rather encouraged other caste groups to come to hills and provide their occupational services to the community, so these castes remained loyal to the Patra. By maintaining mutual understanding the Patra arranged exports and imports for the Kandha who also started agricultural practices following the Patras. After the arrival of British when markets improved the Kandhas directly participated in the markets as explained in the previous chapter. Patra became money-lenders also and the Kandha more dependent on them leading to increased exploitation. As the rituals became costly day by day the Kandha borrowed more and more from the Patra.

The ritual for the Kandha has been basically clan-centered from the earliest days though in-law groups balanced⁴ the lineages of a clan, with clan and lineage heads as natural intermediaries between their kin groups and the supernatural powers. As it is described in the Chapter Four, in the cognitive map of the ritual the ancestral spirits of Kandha also participate along with their deities. It follows thus that the emphasis is upon the relationship of ancestors with living kin which is tied down to the land and to the clan leadership. Any clan involved in migration it would have doubtlessly worked through the problem of reassuring themselves of the presence and co-operation of their ancestors. As the ancestors never changed their location, they maintained contact with the ancestral territory whether they have temporarily migrated or roamed about or permanently quit the location. As regards to the leadership the Kandha society remained egalitarian though the Mutha Mallick till recently, the head of the clan took the final decision, following a democratic process. It is all because of their strong determination to preserve their clan

⁴ It is a balance between consanguine and affines.

identity besides the tribal identity rather than being absorbed into the powerful and better organized but alien culture where they have migrated to. But today maintaining such an identity is very important in the background of the changed social profile of the region and the current wave of invaders from outside, the details of which will be presented later on.

However, a significant shift had taken place; the Hindus entered the hills on such a large scale that the traditional ways of assimilation became ineffective.⁵ The principal religious elements such as fetishism, animism, the cult of fertility, human sacrifice, ancestral worship, etc., of the tribes were accommodated into Hinduism, which was not the case with Christianity.⁶ On one hand a wave of community feeling grew with the emergence of Hinduism, and as a result, the various faiths and creeds that prevailed in the land gradually disappeared and a universal and straightforward religion based on the strict monotheism and ethical-devotional code of conduct sprang up.⁷ In the political sphere, too, a feeling of identity was proliferating among the tribal leaders out of internal political necessity. But such Sanskritic culture and religion could penetrate the hill regions of the Kandhamal possibly with a process of slow penetration. On the other hand, the timely arrival of Christianity also affected this sanskritization of the tribal cultures and religious practices.

Of course, the different forms of resistance continued in the colonial period while the colonial government encountered the Kandha culture and customs which gave them a culture shock. The power relations between the state and the Kandha affected the relations between the Kandha and the caste groups. This changing relationship has given rise to an explicit consciousness of class on the basis of religion such as Hindu Kandha, Christian Kandha, Patra (Hindu), Hindu Pano and Christian Pano. In the process of acculturation, the Kandha came closer to Patra and gradually got Hinduized and have moved deeply into the Indian caste system to claim higher status over the marginal and lower caste groups. However, some Pano relieved themselves from the bondage of

⁵ Krick (1913:120).

⁶ Such an accommodative policy, according to Baruah was help in organizing civil society and the making of significant cultural influence to Tribal people in India (Baruah, op.cit., 158 & 254).

⁷ Ibid., 252.

Kandha with the advancement in their socio-economic and new cultural order offered by Christian missionaries. More significantly the transfer of some Kandha lands located in towns into hands of Patra, Pano and other immigrants had badly affected the economic conditions of the Kandha. These developments of self-protection, and resistance gave rise to many heroes (Kandha and non-Kandha) and ideologies which further created more problems. Kandha are totally disturbed and placed themselves in a pitiable situation by claiming themselves as “sons of soil” who are now fighting on the same soil to acquire their rights over the land.

The colonial presence made altogether a different situation in case of Patra. As ever, the response of the Patra was very calculative, they realized now their self-turned ritual may go away with the British concept of new agriculture and economic development schemes. So, they who were against the British military invaders. When the latter, called the Patra as warrior they turned it into their good account. The radical and well-reasoned priesthood had not changed, rather they silently retained the position of main priest or master under the obviously powerful British without reacting to the position, an ascribed position of warrior. Few of them also changed their theology and started accepting the religious ideology of Missionary.

The early organization of Kandha and Patra could not continue when the government was under British rule. The sociopolitical life of the tribe was ruled over, the British government tried to rule the Kandha through the existing system as the Patra showed some kind of obligation to them. They thought these people who were living here in Kandha areas were the religious and political heads or can exert influence on the Kandha and Pano of this area. In the changed political situation as Kandha and Patra aligned themselves together while the Pano sided with the British as stated earlier and this attitudinal difference of Kandha against the Pano continued even after the independence.

Rameswar Patra of Kanjamendi village narrated that his father and grandfather "were invested with *sadhi* (a piece of new silk cloth to be worn as a turban) as a formal recognition of their headmanship in the village Kanjamendi by the British administration. People were obeying them with great respect. Their decisions were accepted without

being opposed under any circumstance⁸. The democratic spirit of the indigenous political institution decayed, and much of its functions were more or less autocratic which could be attributed to its alignment with the British administration. But clearly the Odia chiefs were much closer to the administrators than were Kandha a situation which was exploited by the former for their self-interest. The Kandha and Odias chiefs were to collect certain revenues like plough tax, (the plough tax was collected by the *mutha* heads and therefore the unit of administration was transferred to them) and watchman tax.

Loss of Kandha Power

The British administration imposed in Kandha had serious consequences for the Kandha leadership. As already pointed the Patra obtained most superior power, while the Kandha lost their power. This had happened particular with the introduction of police to deal with all criminal cases and maintenance of the law and order. Thus the traditional leaders lost their authority and power. The Revenue department settlement of land registration deprived off the Kandha to bring the origin land under the control of the *mutha*. Further, land as a commodity could be purchased and sold which enable the individual to claim ownership of land and also the right to sell it. Thus, the Mutha Mallick lost control over the land and individual. The commodification of liquor and ownership of trees under the Excise department, the Sundi obtain control in this area while the Kandha *mutha* had lost control on this count also.

These administrative changes helped Patra and other non-Kandha in several ways. Since these department provided employment to the educated, the non-Kandha seemed employment which help them to protect their interest while the Kandha who were largely illiterate could not find employment. Further, the education helped the non-Kandha and Patra to get acquainted with legal procedure and become mediator between the government and illiterate masses. Thus the Kandha had to depend on Patra and other whenever they had to approach government departments either revenue, police or any other. The British also introduced education and health facilities which had different impact on the Kandha and these are discussed at appropriate place.

⁸ The same status prevailed throughout the Kandha land as Kuanr and Behura (1996) found in northern Kandhamal.

As these new administrative changes helped the non-Kandha Hindu including Patra they were able to grab the land and acquire wealth which led to the problems of exploitation of the majority of Kandha. As middlemen they safeguarded their self-interest more than the Kandha political institution. And as a result of this the Kandha chiefs like Mutha Mallick, religious specialists Jani/Tolmba and others in related power or in important positions became insignificant, their role was confined to religious rites only. Then the British government after few years felt to change the power distribution through opening of different police stations and administrative units to protect exploitation. Thus, the clan's political roles were curtailed and the responsibility of protecting life and property had been withdrawn from the village and clan (Bailey, 1960:115). Hence the traditional political and administration gradually started losing its importance, the necessity of the Mutha Mallick, head *mutha* and other functionaries occupied less of the whole field of political activity.

The Kandha's Political Institution in Post-Independence

The traditional political structure of the Kandha which turned as less of importance in British period decayed steadily. But the socio-religious life remained unchanged even after the independence. Although the roles of the *mutha* and head *mutha* remained insignificant in the society the territorial and village organizations continued to exist and able to solve certain issues to the extent possible. As observed in Rajaghara village, the principles of hereditary succession of above positions are denied. Now the decisions of the traditional leaders on some issues are being questioned by the people, so, they seek help of Panchayat and police station. Thus, the traditional political institution is becoming weak with the introduction of Panchayatiraj system. Now people are being organized under different organizations who are actively participating in this region specially.

Now people of the Rajaghara if not completely denying the traditional political activities as stated but at times they revisit depending on the context; in some context they deny and in some other context they return to the traditional system. Such situations prevail in social and political issues relating to mostly Kandha and non-Kandha issue. But it comes to religion, the help from the religious functionaries like Jani/Tolmba is sought for all village rituals and they control the religious institution with the help of Mutha Mallick.

These traditional leaders do contest in the Panchayati elections in the post-independence era and hold the position of Sarapancha and Ward member etc. In the last election it is observed that more young men have participated both in Panchayat as well as Parliament election. The choices of these leaders are based on the traditional status. If someone is related to the person who held the traditional leadership such as *mutha* or Jani as father or some other, such of them are more approved in the contemporary politics. The sons or grandsons of these traditional functionaries, are given preference as candidates who may be government servants like teachers or businessmen of the area who are working here for a long time now.

There are few common features in the villages of Rajaghara and Kanjamendi. Now, the Kandha think that a ward member or Sarapancha who can stand for the tribe or have good economic base, land holding, education, social involvement etc., are eligible for holding the political offices. They believe that the grassroots leader should be committed and resolve the problems of the village by taking the issues to the Panchayat and Block offices. But now there appears to be anomalies, since the competition is rising day by day. According to some educated youth of Rajaghara, earlier there was neither competition nor was much politicization. But now-a-days there is an increased competition. It has been found that the representation from the Pano and Patra is more at the district level politics and Kandha are showing more interest at the Panchayat level and a growing interest in the mainstream politics. In Rajaghara village a retired Army Officer Gubar Sing is asked to participate in the village elections by Balliguda and Nuagaon party offices. So the Odia population including Pano and Patra are exerting pressure on the candidates at the village level in the election. If it is SC or ST seat the Kandha and Pano of the region basically the school teachers, other retired government servants having good amount of land are asked first. And in case of general seat in the Panchayat or Block the traditional leaders like *mutha* head i.e., non-Kandha and Mutha Mallick arrange meeting within the village to decide in whose favour they should vote. They usually decide the person who promises to provide some development works in the village. There are few groups in every village constituting Pano and Kandha who are being hostile towards the dominant group Patra or non-Kandha Hindu on the basis of traditional alliance and solidarity. The latter generally approach few individuals like

turmeric businessmen and school teachers at the time of election who can influence and motive the villagers. On the other hand, the Patra of *mutha* organization takes advantages of their traditional relationship for influencing villagers' opinion. According to certain reliable information these leaders do bribe such mediators but the money does not reach the people at the ground. Some Pano of this village who are not having land are given land by the Patra to control or motivate people so it is now their duty as they remain close to the Kandha village to motivate them.

Now, there seems to be a big change in politics in the area of Rajaghara or Nuagaon and Balliguda. There are several leaders who seem to have participated in the electoral politics as there are positions reserved for scheduled tribes and scheduled castes in Panchayat, Block, State Legislative Assembly and Parliament etc. In this context, the major blocks/groups or factor dividing the Kandha and Pano is religion at one level i.e., Hindu and Christian. While some Christian youth remain on one side seeking to take control of the rest of Kandha and Pano, while the other is the Hindu group who try to influence insisting upon the traditional culture. But contrarily also, there are few instances that have been observed where some BJP / BJD party workers went to various churches appealing for votes. A worker of Jana Vikas Organization in this context said, "I am surprised to see this angels of Christian youth, after such a riot as we know how everyone got involved in it, now they get motivated by the BJP people". It was not only an incident but the 'Kui Kula Samiti' and its member of various areas travelled every village to approach for vote as saying the cultural upliftment and socio-economic development manifesto of the BJP in specific. Here what brought them together is cultural identity despite political or religious differences. According to them this is the only party which is motivating and civilizing Kandha rituals, while Biju Janata Dal remaining silent giving candidates of different groups to motivate the tribe across the region. BJD always plays safe game to choose right candidate for working at the grassroots without taking much on the religion. It is seen from the earlier leaders of BJD these are more businessmen who can control the Kandha population quite easily.

Therefore, the decision making of the village Rajaghara and Balliguda region in general now lies under the leadership regulated by others (non-Kandha). In view of the tribal

socio-political and economic condition they are following this approach for it is more tangible to get development close to the tribal people. Although it is a complicated matter it seems to take a U-turn in this area as these local Kandha leaders think that in the tribal development their involvement is necessary. At this point of time at the same time they do not give up the traditional esteemed practices but want to rescue certain traditional status and position. This situation become became sharper basically after Kandhamal riot as the Kandha and Pano, Hindu and Christian accused one another for the situation prevalent at the moment here.

On the other hand, the kinship factor now remains important for Kandha of this village and other villages, they see to what clans are interrelated in marriage and which clan is more influential and in what village etc., because people are expected to align themselves on clan lines and vote for a brother who is contesting in the election or a person related by marriage alliance who should be supported. Such mutual support and alignment could be seen in Kedu festival as discussed earlier. Thus, primordial ties and loyalties are also being exploited in the political mobilization of voters. There are now several individuals who try to improve their social standing with better education in the presence of others belonging to surrounding neighbouring communities. Earlier people tried to elevate their status by drawing their connections with the person of higher status like 'Sarpancha ra gaon' (the village of Sarpanch) which means 'we the men of Sarpanch of this village'. The individuals were treated as 'Sarpancha ra loka' (Sarpancha's men) but it is still there in any regional affair with less effect. In contrary to it now people are putting more confidence on the Panchayati system itself and at the same time they are getting attracted towards and invoking the traditional system as some issues are still solved in the village in accordance with the traditional framework. Basically in connection with 'Grama Sabha' Panchayat is conducting meeting in every ward when an important decision is to be taken but usually the decision of the village welfare is taken by the old generation though opinion of those who are in government positions are also considered.

Moreover, the most important factor now why the Kandha are trying to politically strengthen themselves because of the land; though majority of the land belongs to the Kandha they are feeling inferior. As the Kui Kula Samiti leader Manoj Mallick said, 'We

are not lesser than others there are few things which we should change in terms of marriage, ritual and other which are not fitting to the modern society'. While addressing some of the problems such as tattooing, drinking, dancing etc., he said, 'they are not the good practices of Kandha so we are incorporating new elements of Hindu way of life into our own'. In contrary to it now there are few Hindu organizations that are showing some disagreement while some NGOs and other organizations are coming in support of them addressing as part of the culture to keep the value and identity of their own. As mentioned before, Jana Vikas at Nuagaon is trying hard bringing representatives of the villages creating awareness, arranging programme exhibiting dance, music and traditional instruments every year. They are now also creating some kind of group like Samaj, Pano Samaj, Kui Kandha Samaj, Kui Damanga Samaj to create awareness and to preserve peace and harmony in this area irrespective of religion and caste. There are few individuals of this village who usually attend these meeting along with other neighbouring villages.

The post-independence changes in Kedu

In Rajaghara village Kedu remains one of the biggest events wherein few changes are noted due to the influence of Hindu festivals. The priest not only worships earth goddess but also diagnoses sickness in the families which is a new phenomenon. The festival is not organized every year now, due to the reason that often the Hindu festivals especially the Yanjya are organized around this time. Further, in villages like Kanjamendi the village Panchayat office is coming forward to help organizing the festival and avoid clash of the festival with other villages. Also due to the changing circumstances though the educated youth are giving up traditional forms of worship, few continue practicing the age old traditions.

Earlier there used to be specialist for every rite and religious power was vested with Jani, Tolmba and others who mediated between people and Tari/Bura deities. God or goddess directly used to choose the priest who in turn selected the successor and these priests were supposed to remain unmarried and poor. But today they have family like anybody else and there are a negligible number of priests of the olden days and they are mostly engaged in diagnosing the cause of trouble or sickness and cure. Now people are also

attributing to the earth goddess for sickness and other misfortunes. Thus there is change of ideology.

The Jani had authority to punish people of his own community if they violated the law of offering and disobey his command regarding rite but today they compromise with the changing times. For example, it is informed that a Jani has cured some Christian families of their sickness even though they do not believe in the sacrifice. According to him, if one belongs to this land one should worship the mother goddess in spite of following other faith. The mother goddess does not say no to either Pano or Kandha who may be a Hindu or Christian. According to him all are sons of the mother and all should respect her by giving her offerings. It is also learnt that some Christian Panos are not actively participating in Kedu but give their share of cash contributions. Also, the priest himself is violating the traditional food taboos. The priest used to be part of the village council in dispute settlement, but today the council lost its significance as major issues are dealt at the Panchayat consequently priest lost his role in the decision making process.

There is a new trend of caste based organization where an issue related to a caste due to conflict with other caste etc., is discussed. In case of Pano and Kandha traditional *mutha* organization deals with such issues. But now there is a gradual emergence of separate Kandha and Pano Samaj in the district of Kandhamal, while the Kui Kula Samiti and Kui Samaj unite the people in general. Thus people are divided by language, caste and religion.

In conclusion, it may be said that the traditional office and officials are losing authority in the village of Rajaghara while individuals accept the modern systems. Nevertheless, for the religion and social activities the traditional offices and officials are still included for the purpose of development, however, the extra powers such as non-Hindu try influencing the Kandha to take decisions and work in their favour. In recent times, they are grappling with economic as well as political life, offering their relationship with Kandha some kind of emotional attachments. In this regard, as somehow being lower status in the village, the Pano who are in this village maintain a cordial relationship while others like Patra staying outside the village are regarded as important in decision-making. Now, though in the name of rescuing identity, some forces have arisen in the village, they

still do not find a concrete base to build themselves in their own goals, but make themselves triggered by other political parties in the town and region.

With the above gradual changes in the social, political, economic and administrative set up over the years the society in Kandhamal hills has transformed into a new community. While the government had taken complete grip over the area and launched several development initiatives, and several corporations, banks and financial enterprises started their operations extending support to the tribal families for improving their economic conditions. Further, in order to counter the Christian Missions which initiated during the colonial times and some more added later on, some Hindu organizations such as Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, and Hindu Jagaran Samukhya were set up. Also, there has been increased activism of several political parties of right and left wing extremist orientations. Thus, the Kandhamal society became more complex compared to the situation that existed before independence. An analysis of this complex situation can be briefly presented hereunder which help understanding the Kandha tribal society's predicament in the present context.

The Class in the Contemporary Kandhamal Society

Pre-colonial relations of production have disappeared in several parts of Kandhamal, and it is difficult to conceive of any 'articulation' without the capitalist mode of production initiated during the colonial period though the country has not completely changed to a capitalist state. Independent India has also inherited tribal mode of production⁹, some provisions for the protection of tribal interests and problems created by the colonial system. Given the constitutional commitment to the goals of justice, social, cultural, and political, equality of citizenship, and opportunity as enshrined in the preamble to the Constitution of India, the government is obliged to protect tribal culture, identity and strive for their socio-economic development. To meet these goals several legislations, administrative regulations and laws were brought in place, several development policies and schemes were also implemented.

⁹ Some kind of socio-economic equality and democratic decisions and absence of accumulation of wealth and class besides the communal life.

One of the most important impact of the democratic politics in the post-independence on the Kandha society has been on the political structure that based on the territorial organization in which the Maha Mallik (non-Kandha head of the *mutha*), the Mutha Mallick (Kandha head of the *mutha*) and the Mutha Mallik (head of the village) played very significant role as discussed earlier. But now these traditional leaders lost their authority and their power has been reduced as village elders only like any other head of the household. Many earlier functions of the clan such as engaging in warfare, distributing land to members, defending their lives and property are no longer valid, and the clan's political roles have been curtailed and the responsibility of protecting life and property has been withdrawn from the village and clan.

In the changed circumstances of the socio-economic and political domain, the strength and forces of the wealthy non-Kandha or the caste people will have to either shrink or expand along with the changing situations as explained in case of Pano and Patra as the history has unfolded. The previous 'despotic exploitation' (human resources, products and cash) has changed; the continuous transformation of the Kandha political scenario is quite visible. At the end of the British rule, a formal education system and a modest measure of socio-economic development began. Furthermore, the National Government took on planned development as a constitutional responsibility and chalked out various programs to accomplish the fantastic task of tribal development. As a result, now there is a perceptible and measurable improvement in the Kandha's life and in their economy mainly due switching over to settled agriculture as primary means of food production particularly for certain individual households. In several cases, the change can be observed but they look more like urban poor who have resorted to additional means of earning.

The contemporary situation wherein the Kandha find themselves as aliens reminds us the response of the Kandha to the immigration of non-Kandha with the arrival of the British. The ground realities as the present reveals the analysis of the conflicts need to be understood in terms of actors and action. Earlier during the period of the colonial administration the Kandha had to encounter the British forces opposing for the taxation, demands of the state, forced labour etc., as mentioned earlier. Similar behavioural

patterns can be noted as characteristic of peasant communities in general and Kandha in particular, protesting against the forces that undermine their rights and privileges.

From the perspective of the Marxist tradition, the responses of Kandha society to the external forces and the changes that had taken place due to immigration of largescale non-Kandha, their appropriation of lands, ill treatment meted to them apart from giving a low status in the caste hierarchy can be viewed as a kind of class struggle, though not exactly in the classical form, with the system of production relations. This can be seen as the key or even the only aspect of the relationship between the strategies of social morphology and the actors. However, 'peasant resistance' in Ganjam (and elsewhere, it appears) did not assume the classic forms of collective action, duly classified by the independence movement. At that time the 'confrontations' between Kandha and non-Kandha opposing the colonial state apparatus and collective action by both plain and hilly people was named as 'Paika Bidroh' known as Paika Rebellion that occurred in 1817, 1825 and 1837 for independence from the British. In spite of this the British introduced reforms to minimize exactions and make the Kandha a part of the system slowly. Certain 'development operations'—although the term 'development' did not exist at the time, the reality as defined at the beginning of the present work was already in motion—the colonial state thus came up against this type of resistance, either because these operations were just another aspect of the despotic exploitation system, or because they resorted to similar methods, or still resorted to similar methods. Often individual peasant tactics were in practice and disputes were not articulated by collective actions. There was no 'coordination' of any kind controlled peasant behaviour. There was no 'village community' whatsoever to control its members' modes of economic action. But this does not mean that individual methods were 'free' or haphazard based on the constraints established by production modes or ties. Individual strategies accumulation operated along obvious lines of force¹⁰.

As regards to the present situation, the particular reservation system and the Constitutional safeguards in the post-independence era have ensured the Kandha to enter

¹⁰ This has been discussed in detail by Raymond Firth (1996) in his book *Religion: A Humanist Interpretation* where he describes religion, politics and sacrifices of 'the Malay world-view' or 'Malay magical thought'.

into a complicated socio-political situation. With the emergence of the new and complex political nexus as discussed above, the leadership pattern, authority structure, factionalism, fissions and conflicts the Kandha have entered into politics and religion encountering with the non-Kandha immigrants. The new leadership in a predominantly is following more or less in the old ascriptive system i.e., through the male descent lines. Thus, the post-independence situation helped the traditional leadership with a twist to function not in the traditional way but differently. The old form is coming back to meet the contemporary needs of controlling land and clan members through the modern political institutions, but not with the same effect as before. This is the emergent class as against the poor Kandha who remain at the margins of the society and these are being patronized by their privileged brothers who moved to the higher echelons along with the non-Kandha community. These are at the helm of affairs at the Panchayat, the Panchayat Samiti, and the Assembly constituency. The indigenous customs and the ethnic composition of the village people and their interaction with the leaders, is quite complex at general level, indeed. The change in the pattern of leadership is in fact, quite significant, as one can assume leadership roles through achievement in a tradition-bound society where leadership was predominantly ascriptive in the past.

The post-independence developments in Kandhamal area as mentioned above have placed the Kandha society in a very difficult situation. They are torn between the ideological polarization on one side, and on the other threat to the 'son-ship of the soil' or becoming strangers in their own soil. There is a need for maintaining their ethnic identity which is under threat. These are some of the major problems that the Kandha tribe has to address today. All aspects of life – political, economic, religious and linguistic are interconnected in this regard. Let us examine these in brief.

Conflicts of ideology and Beliefs

An important turning point in Kandha society took place with the entry of Christian Mission in 1883. When the colonial government slowly took control of tribal areas and became the supreme power in the state-making process, it tried to educate the Kandha in the name of civilizing the tribe and thus exposing them to the wider world of opportunity and power. In their efforts they allowed the Christian Missionaries to extend their

activities in the tribal areas. The precursor of such events is being the ideological conflicts to which the present discussion is turned to.

A significant change in the area of religion has also occurred. The principal religious elements of Kandha relating to fetishism, animism, the cult of fertility, human sacrifice, ancestor worship etc., were not found strange to Hinduism and therefore their exposure to Hindu beliefs and practices did not create any friction with their religious ideology and practices. On the other hand, the non-Kandha Hinduism could accommodate the Kandha deities without any major issues as discussed already. According to Baruah, the latter helped organizing civil society and the making of significant cultural influence on the tribal people in India.¹¹ Against such smooth change the Christian Mission that accompanied the Colonial administration brought in rupture and antagonism within the Kandha society i.e., between Kandha and Pano communities and within each of the Kandha tribe and Pano caste separately.

The Christian Missionaries arrived at Visakhapatnam from France in 1845 and 1848 respectively, and they left Visakhapatnam for the Ganjam Mountains and arrived at Berhampur to explore the possibilities of evangelization of the Kandha. This was the period when Kandha encountered a new ideology. The Missionary hence started to continue their mission and work of exploration any further in this Kandha land or part of Odisha. After the exploration of jungles, the missionary realized that the people of the forest had never seen a person preached the Kingdom of God who created them and the destination for which they were made. All that they had heard was new for them as the Missionaries did not have a complete knowledge of the people, their language, and their economic and political conditions.¹² They had no specific method of evangelization initially; neither did they even bother about such concerns. All that they were interested in was to find a breakthrough, which would bear fruit. Whatever they did, they did it to the best of their ability and according to the knowledge based on the only information available which was an account of the military operations dealing with the insurgencies

¹¹ Baruah, op.cit., 158 & 254.

¹² See, Jesraj (2003 p7)

arising from *meriah* and female infanticide. People accepted these Missionaries to such an extent that they were believed with an open mind whatever they were taught.

The Missionaries gradually gained an understanding of Hindu castes and their way of ruling tribals¹³. And slowly they started learning Sanskrit and interacting with Brahmins, where they came to know about the essential matters on religion, philosophy and on the Hindu *shastras* and started writing the prayers, songs etc., in Odia. Nevertheless, they soon realized that they must not exclude the Hindu society and the Brahmin in particular, who constituted the most influential and privileged class in the Hindu society. They started building rapport and holding serious dialogues with the Brahmins and writing in composing lyrics in the Odia language, the epic poem on themselves such as God, divine attributes, creation of the universe, man and his destiny, paradise, hell, sin, redemption, life and death of Christ, Catholic faith as the true religion. This ‘Christ Purana’, is in harmonious verses numbering 5,496 lines, each line formed in nine letters known as ‘Navakhyara Chhanda’ or rhythm, and two such lines making a couplet in perfect poetic rhyme¹⁴. However, with the conversion of Brahmin Pandit the spread of the new ideology in this era reached to every corner of the Ganjam Mountains.

This ideology spread to the Kandhamal including Balliguda, Daringbadi etc., and several individuals showed interest in the new faith, but gradually the number of people attending the church decreased. It was soon realized that the people had to face the sicknesses caused by the evil spirits etc., which was interpreted as a consequences of trying to abandon the age old traditions. Missionaries and Fathers of different missions pursued a new strategy by holding healing meetings besides organizing meetings in an open platform where Christian and also the leaders and even the caste Hindus discussed the most relevant and agitating points. In course of this meeting, many prejudices were cleared as also false rumors and the Christianity started gaining confidence as a new faith. In this respect, it was a significant loss for Hindu whose interest of ritual and way

¹³ The Missionaries studies four volumes of Robert De Nobili in Madurai Mission; these volumes contained the caste system and the role of Brahmins in Tamil Nadu in the 18th century.

¹⁴ Biswas (2012) states that it was made known to the Kandha that the ‘Christ purana’, was the Catholic Bhagabat Gita which is similar to Jagannath Das’ Srimad Bhagabat Gita. It became a popular appeal to Kandha and Pano but to others also who believed it to be true, good and holy religious book and it could bring eternal salvation to very man and woman.

of living ideologies are targeted. The major healing practices of non-Kandha and the Kandha's belief in *meriah* received a major setback. A fire of conflict broke out, but the Missionary countered to check all kinds of disinformation spread by the caste Hindus.

In the context of Christian Missions impacting the Kandha it is also important to consider the practice of human sacrifice which was already under the severe attack from the Colonial administration. At the same time the latter was out with the package of aspirations for the advancement of the tribesmen in this high land while the Christian Missions offered health and education. The Carmel schools near Nuagoan, Balliguda including Divya Jyoti pastoral center, Jana Vikas at Nuagoan and MMC Mission Hospital at G.Udayagiri are some examples of Missions to uplift health and education facilities in these area. Also, the power of British over the Pano was significant, they were already under the local pressures from the Patra over-lordship and other non-Odia entry into Balliguda region as discussed earlier and they were gradually marginalized in the Kandha society. So, they felt nervous and slowly distanced themselves from the traditional ritual practice of the Kandha and supported the then government, and many of them came under the ideology of Missionary.

Further, as discussed earlier, the Pano experienced more and more discrimination after the entry of the Patra and latter other castes into the district Kandhamal; they were forbidden to enter the area of the Hindu populace with foot wear; forbidden to walk with unfolded umbrella over their head in the presence of Hindus; even the shadow of an untouchable falling on a high caste Hindu caused pollution effect on the latter, who then had to take a ritual bath for self-purification. Though such practices existed in the plains, the Pano of Kandha society never had such experiences; they were treated as brothers of Kandha. The developments as described above, i.e., the power of the British and the invitation from the Christian Missionaries attracted a large majority of them but it had affected the sentiments of the larger Kandha community.

Having realized the influence of the Christian Missions at that time some decided to leave the Hindu society that was unsympathetic and assigned them the lowest state in the caste hierarchy treating them untouchable which prevented them from entering the Hindu temples. The Pano, were very grateful to the Christian religion that gave them equal

status, and the Missionaries went ahead sowing seeds of the new faith in fertile field. So, from one side, the Christian Missionaries advised the Pano not to take quick decision in favour of the non-Kandha Odias who were taking forward the Hindu nationalist ideology in the region. It resulted in the less participation of Pano in the freedom movement instead they took a neutral stand.

At this point of time the Missionaries planned to set up schools in a different part of Kandhamal including Balliguda and Nuagon region. But the Raja of Kattigia remained hostile to such endeavours due to Pano refusal to pay land tax which is discussed latter, though the Christian Fathers made every effort of reconciliation. The Patras encouraged the Rajas of Kattingia in his hostile attitude, and they were caste Hindus who wielded significant influence over the Kandhas. They were like secretaries as they knew reading and writing and aware of the administrative procedures and legal approaches, as well as official correspondence with the government. They never wanted to lose their hold over the illiterate Kandhas; hence they opposed the project of opening schools in the villages violently and compelled the people to boycott the Fathers. The school opened for the Pano as well as for the Kandha remained aloof as student did not join as they have demotivated by the caste Hindus.

In comparison to the Patra and Pano, Kandha are now in the state of dilemma whether to be traditional or modern while on the other hand Patra are claiming to be the most superior in the society while Pano are trying to prove as educated and modern. Each group has been struggling show themselves to be powerful but the main difference is that Patra never outwardly show what they possessed while Pano are not leaving a single stone unturned to showed what they are in terms of style, education etc. However, the increasing Pano's westernization is understood by the Kandha as material accumulation or wealth or cash economy obtained through unethical means instead of traditional hard work. The exchange value of the Kandha's service has been diminished compared to that of the Pano which is considered quite disturbing and it questioned their cultural identity that dominated in the past.

Above all, Kandha needed more cash to show others, how civilized they are! by organizing socio-religious activities imitating the upper castes. In this regard, they

believed that adding new elements to their rituals they can prove themselves to be not inferior to any other and equally modern. But through these religious festivals at village and or at *mutha* level with advice from non-Kandha upper castes they are drawn into this caste system. Unfortunately, in the wider social system the Kandhas are not able to obtain the higher social status that they have hoped for along with the upper caste religious practices, instead they are looked down as uncivilized and inferior. Therefore, the distinctiveness of tribe prevailed, yet the Kandha like to see themselves superior to others as in the past with more land compared to others. They do not like to lose any piece of their land to others as it is concerned with their status but they don't know how to redistribute it among themselves either or with others so that no conflict will arise and they will get benefit out of it. Thus, status and social inequality as one of the critical issues that the Kandha are facing today in the district.

The Communal Conflicts

The Kandhamal's communal conflicts that came to limelight recently has deeper roots than what appears to be. It has historical background that the world does not know much. The riots that occurred during December 24 – 27, 2007 wherein a Christian Nun was raped and two others murdered and a retaliation occurred on August 23, 2008 with the killing of a Swamiji and two others. It was described as 'Hindu-Christian War', 'Religious Violence', 'Communal Violence', 'A Caste Conflict' etc. Several newspaper articles published it as the manifestation of the pent up ill feelings and anger of the Hindus against the evangelization and non-stoppable conversion of people to Christianity over several decades.

In a visit to Kandha and Pano habitations located in about 10-15 kilometers inside the forest one can find no differences among these households of Kandha and Pano and they call themselves together as Kui/Kujengu with no distinction. However, towards the town which is close to the main road one can find a serious impact of this riot. It is because of the affiliation of people who are not of their own; they are outsiders, not even Pano. The problem apparently relates to insider and outsider, as much as it is with Kandha and Pano - it is just another side to think about it.

To begin with as already discussed earlier, more Panos are indeed converted to Christianity for another reason of feeling of being insecure under the Hindu Raja's kingdom and the self-proclaimed King, the Patra known to be God-king or local king. The latter did break the cordial relations between Kandha and Pano, but they could not be detached the Pano totally from the Kandha for they have been more or less like kin members for ages. Conversion of a large number of Panos did create some sore relations between these two communities but not to the extent of killing each other. Actually, the conversion did not limit to Pano, but some Kandha also converted. Therefore, the strained relations are not simply due to the religious difference; it became a problem when it is turned to the combination of ideology vs nothing, education vs illiterate, development vs underdevelopment, and civilized vs uncivilized.

The binary opposition that the colonial rulers brought into the Kandha hills, the hill dwellers being uncivilized and were to be civilized drew the attention of Pano who were already disappointed with the Patra's attitude and treatment given to them unlike their ethnic brothers Kandha. The Pano explored the resources available to them and taken the path that the colonial rulers opened up for them and not to turn back; they appreciated and recognized Missionaries efforts of making them civilized with education, equality and means of living. The initial conflicts with the colonial government were easily forgotten with the steps that the Missionaries had taken. But later, when India got independence and the people's government was formed to rule, the people with the system of reservations and land rights developed new problems. In fact, such problems are the legacy of the British rule.

The second was that when Biju Pattnaik, the then Chief Minister, Odisha, decided to split Boudh-Kandhamal after a strike in 1994 demanding to name it Kandhamal district, the demand was conceded for political reason to gain the vote bank ignoring the fact that the area has been inhabited for ages by not only Kandha but also Pano. This decision of the government encouraged the Kandha to roll up sleeves against Pano, particularly with Christian Pano, as various informants believed. The inquiries in Midiakia (Balliguda block), Brahmanigaon (Daringbadi), Mandasur (Raikia) and so on revealed more or less the same findings pointing out to the prosperity of the Christian Pano. The rebellion

started against Pano as they possessed considerable extent of land and most of them were also enjoying decent positions in the society. Even a glance at the residences of Christian Pano reveals their prosperity in contrast with others in Nuagaon and Balliguda. While the Pano besides the Patra have good houses and resources, the houses of Kandha remains poorer with low economic conditions. When the people of Kanjamendi had the ‘Satsanga’ and ‘Yangya’, and most of the Kandha joined the celebration of these occasion, the nearby Christian were profoundly unhappy with the procession of above celebrations. Even in the Dashahara, it was Kandha who participated more in number in the procession of the market association led by Patra or others. The non-participation and self-exclusion of the Christian Pano made the Hindu Kandha and Pano who became emotional in the name of ideology and felt slighted with the behavior of their counter parts.

As the Pano consider themselves the district's most significant Dalit group, but the Kandha feel they are superior to the Pano. The Panchayati Extension to the Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act passed by the Parliament in 1996 has very little impact. While the state already has a law prohibiting the sale of tribal land to non-tribal people under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, the Orissa Scheduled Area Transfer of Immovable Property (by Scheduled Tribes) (OSATIP) Regulation, 1956 Act had further strengthened the land preservation clauses. This has created a rift between the Kandha and the Pano and contributed to the disputes between the groups in 1998. As already discussed, the Kandha invested their land unofficially benefitting the non-Kandha high caste outsiders, and in fact some Pano who had money also purchased the land of Kandha. At the end, Kandha felt they are the land losers. In this context, even the PESA also has become ineffective even though the traditional leaders have got power in their hands and this has frustrated some of the revengeful Kandha.

The Christian Pano obtained Scheduled Caste status around 1996, but one gets forfeited when converted to Christianity leaving the Hindu religion. So, they liked to be covered under the Scheduled Tribe status because religion does not affect the ST status. In this regard, the President of India's Amendment made in 1982 to the List of Scheduled Tribes, under The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order 1950 (C.O.22) that came into

effect in 2002 gave a big relief to the Christian Pano since ST status cares all Kui speaking people.. But the Kandha strongly opposed this despite the fact that they do not lose any social status by being converted to Christianity. As a result, tension between Kandha and Pano and between Hindu and Christians mounted day by day. Pano strongly felt a threat for their religious freedom, and it opened up a ‘board game’ to play for politicians and religious fundamentalists to get the situation for their own advantage.

The simmering differences of opinion between Kandha and Pano and skirmishes of conflict, spread of rumors, raising voicing and challenging the government decisions, and so on escalated the emotions on both the sides in some way or the other. The atmosphere scaled up to the point that the perpetrators swung into violent action having been supported by the VHP, Bajrang Dal, etc., on one side and Christian groups on the other. All these finally culminated into the communal conflicts and violence on the Christmas eve of 2007 and subsequent incidents due to the failure of the authorities in averting such incidents in anticipation of the same to repeat. In this regard, the connection between the Kandha and others and the land is an important aspect which needs to be carefully explored.

Land Disputes

As has been argued already in the preceding Chapters land being intimately connected to Kandha’s society and religion, it is also equally important for others to sustain their life. In 1875 the British government abolished the payment of plough tax for the Kandha but the Kandha volunteered to pay the tax but the Raja of Kattigia around 1883 started oppressing the Pano for their refusal to pay the annual personnel tax of one rupee per family. They claimed that the Raja had no right to levy a tax on them, as they were only bound to pay a tax for the fields they cultivated. The Raja had filed a suit against the Pano of Kattingia in the Court of the British Magistrate at Berhampur¹⁵. This conflict of interest started and became immensely sharp in this period.

¹⁵ See *The Little Mustard seed: The catholic mission in the soil of south Odisha 1850-1922*. by Anselm Francis Biswal (2012).

The Pano being afraid of losing their lands sought the support of the Missionary who took the side of Pano. They consulted their advisers and appealed before the Berhampur Magistrate, who acknowledged the rights of the tenants and condemned the Raja of Kattigia.

The Kandha, who once felt themselves to be the sole owners of the land needed protection against alienation of the land. The members of the territorial clan lived within their own boundaries and wished to die there as the traditional holders of the land with rights and privileges not to give away those rights to other inhabitants even when the land became salable according to the colonial governance. But, the Kandha could not retain the land due to their weakness for intoxicant drinks on which taxes were collected by the colonial government. Because of the considerable expenses incurred towards payment of debt to the non-Kandha caste who opened country liquor shops, several Kandhas lost their land to Odias and even to Panos. This process received further support due scarce availability of cash and increased market economy.

The British government sincerely wished to restore the land lost by the tribals. So to prevent alienation of land, Agency Tracts Interests and Land Transfer (ATILT) Act was enacted in 1917, and it came into force on 14.8.1917. Section 4(1) of the Act provides that all transfer of land situated within the agency tracts by a member of the hill tribes to any person who is not a member of the hill tribes shall be null and void unless the transfer is made with the previous consent in writing to the Agent or any other prescribed officer. According to section (6) neither the land of a hill tribe can be attached nor can it be sold under the agreement of money decree except the rules prescribed under Section (7). The rules prescribed that in such sale, the property unless otherwise ordered for disposal by the Assistant Agent in writing must be sold in public auction only to the hill tribes. However, this can restrict the non-Kandha interest over land, while the government asks the help of non-Kandha to settle this issue. The term hill tribes have been defined as anybody or class of persons who are resident in the agency tracts that may from time to time be notified as such by the Government.

Despite these protective measures the tribal lands have been changing hands popularly known as 'land alienation' of tribes. There is case of the land transfer in Brahmanpad

Panchayat that came to the notice of the researcher. One Kandha man suddenly discovered that the land that he has been under the cultivation over several generations and his parents who are still alive, the revenue records showed that it belongs to someone else but none claimed it so far and even his father does not know about it. When inquiries were made at the office of the Tahasildar, Chakapad, regarding this it was found that his father sold it to the other person for a drink in 1920 in a settlement according to the records, this point is discussed later. Surprisingly the lands that surround the informant's land belong to Teli, and Sundi which remained undisputed while the Kandha informant's land got in trouble. Had the land belonged to a higher caste person and a Zamindar there would never have been any problems. It became clear that officials in the Tahasil office deliberately involved in a corrupt practice in an attempt to dispossess the land from the innocent Kandha. It is an example as to how revenue officials got involved in illegal practices adopted under the influence of higher caste people. So like this there are many lands under disputes and in this kind of unfair environment, Patra and other non-Kandha higher caste Hindu have played important role and got things done in their favour.

This is confidential information leaked to the researcher at the Tahasil office. It is said, some people who are living in the Nuagaon town are not the original owners of the land, and this land belongs to Kandha who moved out into the forest to live. These upper caste people who are now living here are trying to get the land records in their names by being friendly with the Tahasil office since a long time. Another case related to the building of Adarsh Vidyalaya in Nuagaon town where the land is in dispute. Interestingly, the Kandha in Kandhamal would ignore such incidents but they cannot tolerate if it happens in case of Pano. In fact, it is Pano after Kandha's who knows about Kandha land as to what belongs to whom, the rest are strangers who settle down there recently.

The Pano who know ins and outs of the local populations also engage in possessing land wherever it is possible like anybody else. They are also engaged in market, grabbing the space if available, money lending, selling of cattle and collecting the forest products as surviving mechanisms as discussed in the previous Chapter. Such practices are alien to

the Kandha but the Pano are relatively fast in adopting to the new situation and readjusting to the changing social environment unlike the Kandha.

Thus, the loss of Kandha's land is certainly important reason for the Kandha's unrest which added fuel to the burning issue of ideological or religious bigotry according to Kandha who are getting huge support from the Hindu fundamental groups. It is not only the physical loss of the property but also symbolic loss of traditional authority in the area and controlling power over the immigrants and the traditional dependent Pano who are becoming independent day by day. In this regard it is important to note the following observation of a study about the forests of Kandhamal and the strained relations between the Pano and Kandha. The following observation in this regard is quite apt.

In recent years the age-old relationship between Kandha and Panos has been fraying, and there has been increasing conflict between them, mainly related to the settlement of Kandha customary land by Panos individuals and the alleged Pano's exploitation of Kandha through money lending and trading. (Kumar, Behera, Sarangi and Springate- Baginski, n.d:12-13)

There are allegations leveled against the Pano which include seizing of tribal land forcefully, claiming of false tribal status and obtaining scheduled tribe certificates, the unauthorized constructions of buildings for the worship (mostly churches) on tribal land, religious conversions, and promoting insurgent activities. These shall also be examined briefly.

Land Transfers, Forest Law, Conservation and Loss of Land

The Kandha have been hard pressed for conserving the land in their occupation as the immigrant populations started encroaching upon the tribal lands. Having realized the exploitation and encroachment of the land and in order to protect the interest of the tribe the colonial government demarked certain areas of tribal concentration as Scheduled Area and designated as Excluded and Partially Excluded Area. Accordingly, they enacted Scheduled Districts Act, 1874 as discussed before.

By the time the land settlement and survey of lands was completed for 645 villages out of 1,137 in 1921-25 about 10,159.09 acres of tribal land have already been transferred to non-tribes. Again the Revenue Department, Government of Odisha, took up the village

survey in 1965 under the Odisha Scheduled Area Transfer of Immoveble Property aglulation No.2 of 1956 which was amended ATILT Act 1948 and completed the process by 1982 in case of only 892 villages. Then, it was decided that the land settlement occurred by 1921-25 to be considered as *Raiyati* lands which are held by the non-Kandha. This survey did not provide any special privilege to the Kandha and it made a provision that if land is held for more than 12 years before 1969 such lands do not require any settlement, and this provision has been misused by several non-Kandhas. By then all the lands under the shifting cultivation has already been settled by the Revenue Department leaving large portions of such lands for the conservation of forests depriving the Kandha the rights to possess such lands. Thus, the survey and settlement in several villages in the district remain incomplete till date.

Thus the land has been steadily shrinking over the years starting by the imposition of Forest Laws beginning by the colonial government till now. Though, there was natural forest conservancy in the Kandhamal until 1889 when the Forest Laws came into force. Further, due to implementation of the Forest Conservation Act 1980 about 30 villages in the interior forests are taken out of the Reserved Forests. With the strict implementation of Forest Laws and Protection of Wild Life Act etc., the Kandhas are hard pressed for the land as they have been directly and indirectly made to depend more on the land rather than the forest. Thus the land has become very precious resource for their living.

According to a recent study 71 percent of the forests in Kandhamal district has been classified as legal forests and 12 percent is declared as the private land. Only 16 percent of the land is settled that the households own. Only 38 percent of the households are holding land only to a marginal extent. The average landholding is approximately 3.18 acres. Thus, majority of the Kandha in the district are landless.

Under the given circumstances and the land grab attitude of the non-Kandha has undoubtedly created great tension due to loss of resource base. Further, the piece of land that the households possess required to produce not only for their own personal consumption but also for obtaining hard cash for other domestic needs. Obviously, the religion associated with the land takes important role for the production from the land as divine benevolence is seen necessary for this purpose. It is also necessary to make use of

the political power in this regard by maintain the tribal identity and son of the soil claims as well.

With the strict implementation of the Forest Laws the *mutha* head in each of the fifty *muthas*, allowed to have a right over a portion of the nearby forest. (Administrative Report 1989-90: para 68). This concession was meant to stabilize the man-nature relationship. Thereby the administration provides the benefit what the Kandha had been deriving traditionally. Their inherent rights, love for and the management of the forest and its produce can be observed even today¹⁶. And, whenever the Forest Department tries to evict the villagers living in the forest for the Afforestation and also when declared Reserved area, there has been protests, and a recent one is the protest at Pidadamaha, in Kandhamal district (see Mohanty 2020).

Interference in the Scheduled Castes status of the Pano

The issue of social status in Kandhamal area has already been discussed earlier and in Chapter one wherein it is explained how the British treated all the populations that spoke Kui as tribe which was reiterated in the Presidential Order of 2002. This emboldened the Pano to claim scheduled tribe status though they are assigned the scheduled caste status rather than the tribal status though they speak only Kui and Odia being the state language for all. The scheduled caste status to Pano though provides certain privileges but it cannot provide the land rights as in case of Kandha despite the fact that the Pano have lived in the Kandha hills for centuries. Therefore, for Pano scheduled tribe status is far better than the scheduled caste status. The attempts that the Pano made to obtain scheduled tribe status on the ground of speaking Kui language have been resisted by the Kandha. Such demands have been summarily rejected by the Kandha for the Pano not only belonged to a caste despite speaking Kui language they also got converted to Christianity leaving the Hindu religion. Again the Kandha's stand has been supported by the Hindu Fundamental groups that resulted in the communal conflicts.

An interesting case regarding issue of Caste/Tribe certificate in the year 2007-08 at the time of Kandhamal riot informs the whimsical attitude shows towards a scheduled caste

¹⁶ See Kuanr and Behura (1996).

person. He was issued a certificate of socially and educationally backward class (OBC) under the Government of Odisha, Department of Tribal Welfare Resolution No- 25455. Emp.(vii)-M-23/93 dated 10-09-1993(TW) published in Odisha Gazette (supplement) No.40 dated 1-10-19. It also said that his family ordinarily lives in Kandhamal district and he does not belong to the persons/sections mentioned in column 3 of the Schedule appended to the office memorandum No.4030/dated 29-1-1992, EMP (VII) 92-93 as he is a Kumbhar by caste. But he was saying his father belongs to scheduled caste and questioned how come he was declared as belonging to OBC? Thus, it is argued that the government officials who are favouring the Kandha are working against the interest of the Pano.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided the past and present leadership of Kandha and undoubtedly explains how leadership has been impacted from time to time. It is clearly pointed out how the socio-cultural and religious framework of the Kandha has been altered over the years under various external pressures. The recent problems and tensions between the Kandha and Pano of Kandhamal district can be better comprehended from the historical background of the entry of British, interference of the non-Kandha Odia into the Kandha lands and shift in their political stand. Thus, the issues of Kandha are quite complex and therefore the solutions also require very careful and thorough understanding taking into confidence of all stake holders.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the present research contained in this thesis is broadly to explore the dynamic property and potency of ritual or religion in shaping human society and its self-transformation owing to inherent correlation with other aspects of the society. Also, it is to examine the relationships and interconnectedness of religion with the economy, politics, other communities and social processes in general. More particularly the thesis attempts to gain insights into the religion of the Kandha tribal society inhabiting Kandhamal district in the state of Odisha, and the lessons drawn from it are expected to throw light on the general issues raised above. The significance of this study lies in examining the eruption of contemporary ethnic conflicts in the background of historical antecedents in which the colonial rule initiated new social processes in the lives of Kandha by interfering in the religion and suppression of *meriah* ritual and increased market value of turmeric.

The review of literature makes it clear that Kandha received the attention of anthropologists in England as well as social reformers with religious orientation during colonial and also in the post-independent era for various reasons but more particularly with the practice of human sacrifice - *meriah*. The historians were more interested in the rebellion of Kandha against the British which has been seen as a part of the freedom struggle. The colonial administrators found connection of the *meriah* ritual with the cultivation of turmeric but there has been little exploration on this issue. In fact, gaining insights into this aspect helps in understanding the connectedness of ritual with the economy, internal and international markets, and productivity of land, politics and Kandha's relation with other communities. In the light of the above, the research has some specific objectives relating to the study of Kedu festival which is a transformed former ritual called *meriah* – human sacrifice, role of economy and politics in religion, markets in which Kandh tribe participates, social relations between the Kandha and non-Kandha, and tensions in Kandhamal district with reference to Kandha and Pano communities.

The study has tried to apply a framework of political economy in an ethnohistorical perspective instead of structural-functional approach that anthropologists have been most

commonly applying for the study of tribal communities. This conventional approach did not face any serious problem as the communities are relatively isolated, homogeneous and lack historical records. In this context, the subjects like kinship, religion, any and other unique socio-cultural phenomenon in a static situation and in isolation. But in a dynamic situation of changing socio-economic, political and environmental conditions, studying institutions in the conventional approach has been found to be quite inadequate to capture the social reality. Therefore, it was thought that an alternate theoretical model can be tried for gainful insights and means of explanations of the issues at hand. The political economy framework adopted in this study follows the work of Maurice Bloch's study of circumcision ritual among the Marina of Madagascar within the broad Marxist's framework.

The data for the study comes from secondary and primary sources (documents) of colonial period available in various libraries in Odisha, and primary ethnographic data from anthropological fieldwork carried out during 2017-18 mainly in Rajaghara hamlet of Kenjmenda village Panchayat, near Nuagaon of Balliguda sub-division for micro-level observations. The fieldwork also covered Balliguda and Nuagaon towns and some other villages in these two sub-divisions where interviews were held and observation of rituals, market and other events had taken place. One of important constraints for data collection has been the researcher's inadequate speaking ability of Kui language that the Kandha mostly spoke among themselves. In fact, this inability must have played important negative role even in case of colonial administrators and ethnographers who represented the Kandha about a century ago. This constraint must have got coupled with the problems of translation from Kui to Odia and Odia to English.

The thesis is organized into different chapters providing the analysis of Kandha society and culture in ethnographic context, worldview – man, nature and spirit complex, *meriah* and Kedu festivals, economy and market and politics in relations with land and contemporary problems. After giving the general socio-cultural background of the Kandha tribe, a regional, specific ethnographic profile of Desia Kandha in Rajaghara village has been provided. The Kandha life and love or sentimental attachment for the nature is reflected in their cultural tradition, religion, and social organization which still

function as a legacy. The forest and other natural resources available to them have shaped their religious ideas and moral values that are expressed in their myths and sentiments in Chapter Two and Three.

Kandha is a generic name for several tribes with linguistic and cultural similarities who are spread over Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. However, they are found in large numbers in Odisha and within the state, they are concentrated in Kandhamal district. Categorized under the ancient Gondi race of the Proto Australoid group, the tribe Kandha seemed to have originally inhabited the Himalayan ranges and gradually made southward migration and finally settled in the south of Vindhya mountains. About ten tribes claim to belonging to Kandha who are spread over in different areas as mentioned above. However, their language and dialects show affiliation with the Dravidian family of languages. Despite linguistic variations in these tribes, there are several cultural similarities with reference to settlement pattern, social organization, social control, economy, music and dance, religion and other features. While Kutia and Dongria Kandha who live in upper ranges are classified under the PTG category, the Desia Kandha who live in the foothills closer to the towns are little more advanced and Hinduized than the rest. While they identify themselves as Kui Lowku, which means those speaking Kui language and living in Kui Deena and claim their society being Kui-Samaj or Kui-Jati, others have been calling them as Kond, Kondh or Kandha etc.

The Kandha came to light of the day with the Ghumusar Rebellion of 1836 and subsequently the establishment of Meriah Agent or the Hill Agent under the Act, XXI of 1845. Further, the writings of MacPherson and Campbell among the British soldiers and H.H. Risley, the British administrator and ethnographer with some details of the Kandha came to the public notice. Among the anthropologists of the time Frazer (1890), Thurston (1909), Russell and Hiralal (1916) noticed the peculiar practice of human sacrifice and documented in their ethnographic presentations. These documents unravel the Kandha life during the pre and during the colonial period.

According to these writings, the other social groups that were associated with Kandha include Pano and Patra whose interactions had been playing very significant role in the

life of Kandha. This interaction pattern brought them in contact with the outside Kandha world particularly during the pre-colonial period but later it led to several conflicting situations. The Kandha lived in small groups belonging to a clan; few of such local units practicing shifting cultivation and depending on food gathering each covering a small area claimed to have belonged to a clan. Clan being exogamous they married from the local units of other clans. Before the entry of the British, the Kandha clans were under Patra who were employed by the local kings, and these clans were called *muthas*. The British called these Patras as *muthadars* who collected taxes from the heads of the Kandha clans.

The clans known as *klumbu* are composed of several lineages called *gochi* or *gassi* and each of them consisted of several families. They are patrilineal and patriarchal practicing clan and village exogamy as said before. Nuclear family being the norm with few exceptions, they practiced monogamy with some exceptions of having more than one wife and generally it happened when the first wife was barren. Land is inherited by sons only but father could donate a piece of land to daughters also, but she could not claim land as a matter of right. The youngest son gets the lion's share for he has the responsibility of taking care of the old parents. Marriage by arrangement through negotiations, capture and service have been practiced. In case of the negotiated marriage there is the practice of paying bride price that included cash, ornaments, buffaloes, cows, goats, utensils etc. Remarriage after the death of a spouse or divorce after the return of bride price is not uncommon. Basically Kandha have been agriculturists growing rice, horse-gram, hill-gram, black-gram, red-gram, *jowar*, *ragi*, sweet potato, turmeric etc., in *podu chas*. They also plant fruit bearing trees like jackfruit, mango, papaya, *mahua*, tamarind etc., between the foothills and in the outskirts of the village. Thus, food crops take priority over the only cash crop turmeric, but slowly the importance of the cash grew and it attracted several non-tribes besides the minor forest produce. The British were more interested in teak, sal and skins of wild animals besides turmeric for export and domestic use, and so they encouraged clearing some parts of forest. They also wanted to grow coffee and sugar cane that had good market value. The British also introduced the cash while buying the forest produce, and markets were also wide spread with cash

exchange. So, gradually the Kandha switched over from barter of products to cash market and got exposed to modern world.

The senior most head of the clan called Mutha Mallick is the final decision making authority for the clan members who lived in one of the habitations of the clan. The head of each habitation or village has a leader called *mutha* or headman of the village who is the senior most among all the members of a couple of lineages of a clan living in a habitation. Male head of each family represented the family in the village council. All the disputes of the village are resolved at the village council, and those not resolved are taken to the council of the clan which is headed by the Mutha Mallick in which heads of all the *muthas* or habitations or villages of the *mutha* take part. The clan owns land and Mutha Mallick distributes it for the first time to the villages, and in turn the *mutha* or head of the village makes further distribution to the individual households. A brass pot, a ritual axe, and a ritual knife represent the land and people. These ritual objects are transferred from one habitation to another when the Kedu festival is celebrated in a habitation. These are placed or used in the buffalo sacrifice at the time of festival. When the clan happens to sell a piece of land to someone of some other clan or someone else then, they exchange an axe with the buyer of the land.

The Kandha worship a number of deities, but Dharni Penu, the Mother Earth is the chief deity. As the traditions of worshipping these deities is described in Second and Third Chapter in detail, it shall be mentioned that the interaction and culture contact with plains people and several non-Kandha castes and groups, their rituals and festivals are changed. While only a few converted to Christianity a large majority of them have been drawn closer to Hinduism or the impact of Hinduism is more. These processes of change are discussed in other Chapters. But here mention may be made several Kandha families observe the following Hindu festivals: Yagnya (fire sacrifice), Prabachan/ Satasanga (sacred talk/ good friends), Mahashiva Ratri (A night of God Shiv), and Danda Yatra. One important festival relates to worship of Maa Patakhanda at Mahasingi; a sword represents the deity who is officiated by a Patra priest. The goddess, who is the Balliguda regional deity, accepts only vegetable offerings, but outside the premises of the temple, there is a stone that represent the deities Dharni and Thakurani that accept animal

sacrifices. Interestingly enough, all these deities represent Durga, the consort of Lord Shiv, and an axe blessed at the temple of Maa Patakhanda on the occasion of Kandul parbu, is taken by the Kandha which is necessary for organizing the Kedu festival wherein a buffalo is sacrificed. Further, close to the temple there is a hillock where it is believed the ancestors of Kandha organized *meriah*, human sacrifice. Thus, it appears the deity Maa Patakhanda is originally a tribal deity who is adopted by the non-Kandha and made her a vegetarian Hindu goddess. The deity and festivals organized here represent a transition from tribal deity to caste deity. Similarly, the deities such as Baraladevi, Thakurani, Maa Barali, Manikeshwari etc., are though worshipped by both castes and tribes, they seem to have been tribal deities and the Hindu kings of Ghumusar and Boud gave the status of Hindu deities identifying with Durga.

Given this significance of female deities, the status of woman among the Kandha is unique in the sense, they are well respected. They toil like men in the fields, however, there are no women priests, and they are proscribed from touching a plough. A girl child is never seen as a burden, and in fact marriage is not a problem for she brings bride price for the family. In this background it is difficult to accept the prevalence of female infanticide as claimed by the British.

The Kandha tribal sub-divisions are covered under the Fifth Schedule and ITDDAs, the government has provided Tribal Residential Schools, Teachers' Training Schools, Primary as well as Sub-Divisional area hospitals and other offices. The government has taken initiatives for preservation and promotion of tribal art and culture, agriculture development and collection of forest products and market as well. Growing turmeric is also encouraged as it has a lot potential for international market that can boost the economy of the tribes. The government has been making efforts for communication facilities and access to remote areas.

Having given the general cultural background of the Kandha tribes, it is also necessary to have an idea of the area where the present research has been carried out with a historical backdrop which has relevance for the present and a profile of Rajaghara village or hamlet under the Kenjamenda Gram Panchayat, near Nuagaon town where most of the time has been spent in observing the life of the Kandha closely and interacting with them intensely

which provided the necessary insights and people's perspective about their own world and that of others.

Kandhamal one of the 30 districts is located on the western part of Odisha state, and it has historical antecedents which are quite relevant for the present as the name itself suggests, 'the hill of Kandha.' The Kandha's sentiments are deeply connected to the land because of various events that took place even before the British entered the area annexing the Ghumusar princely state in 1835. The Kandha's autonomy was already under threat with the presence of the representatives of the princely states such as Ghumusar, Khemundi and Boud. However, these kings maintained friendly relationships with the tribal chiefs and the inhabitants in the hills through their officials belonging to Patra case as stated above. When the British were able to overpower these princely states, the colonial administration introduced new territorial administration through the formation of districts and tehsils wherein the Kandha were distributed in different districts, and the post-independence followed the same system.

After several configurations of the districts, sub-divisions, tehsils since 1836, the present Kandhamal district came into existence and took the present form in 1994. It is important to note at this point that the district was formed on demand of the Kandha; it is sentiment and claim that the Kandha are original natives distinguishing non-Kandha as aliens and strangers who have been dominating the area, and that the land belong to the Kandha inherited through their ancestors and that it belongs to their gods and goddess as well. Therefore, it is they who have every right to decide matters that affect the Kandha, but not others. As the demographic composition shows the numerical domination of scheduled tribe and scheduled caste population: ST - 53.58 % (3,92,820) and SC - 15.76% (1,15,544). There are two sub-divisions – Phulbani and Balliguda with the district headquarter located at Phulbani. While there are three C D Blocks in Phulbani, the Balliguda sub-division has nine Blocks. These Blocks also correspond with the revenue Tahsils.

The present study has focused on the Blocks of Balliguda and Nuagaon. However, more attention has been given to Rajaghara village where intensive fieldwork is carried out by living in the village. Rajaghara village is one of the wards of Kanjamendi Gram

Panchayat which comes under the Nuagaon Block. The village is at a distance of three kilometers from Kanjamendi Panchayat and five kilometers from Nuagaon town, and the distance between Rajaghara and Balliguda town is thirteen kilometers. Nuagaon and Balliguda are the two important towns with which the Rajaghara village maintain close interaction and dependency apart from Phulbani the district headquarters where all government offices are located, and markets are available, and these are the places where a great deal of political activism takes place with the participation of various ethnic groups.

The village layout indicates three divisions where separate descent group members live with their families. There is an Anganwadi at the entrance and hand-pump for water and a bus-stop as these are located close to the road on which auto-rickshaws, buses and other vehicles ply regularly. The village is surrounded by mango, *mahua* and other trees besides the agricultural fields and the hills are very close to the village. There are some uncultivated patches of land also around the village. There is a pond and also a cremation ground on one side of the village, and there is a shrine of mother goddess and there are three Dharni posts under a mango tree which are indicative of the villagers having performed three Kedu festivals in the village in the recent past.

Out of 87 households 60 belong to Kandha tribe while the remaining 27 are of Pano, the scheduled caste. While 73 stated to be Hindu while the remaining 14 Christian. Out of 341 total number of souls, 174 are male and 167 females. The traditional *kutcha* Kandha houses made with the walls of sal-tree planks lined by mud, the roof with wild grass and the floor plastered with red soil or stones are now being replaced with *pucca* houses with cemented walls, RCC slab and polished stone floor. Such *pucca* houses are 32 (36.7%); semi-pucca 38 (43.6%); *kutcha* 17 (19.5%). They are able to gradually switch over to *pucca* houses by availing the Indira Abas Yojana and Biju Pakka Ghara etc., but not because of their great economic improvement. Some families fail to make use of the government support for their inability to spend from their own resources. All the families belong to single clan, that is, *mati klambu*. Nuclear family is the norm, as soon as a son gets married or after some time a new house is set up to him, and thus there are 59 nuclear households (67.8 percent) and 17 (19.5) joint families but most of them are in the

transit at the time of study. Though the residents of Rajaghara collect minor forest produce, they largely depend on the shifting cultivation and settled agriculture to a less extent. The landholding shows that a majority possess between 2.5 and 5.0 acres of land, but it is not very fertile due to hill-slopes. Several of them own cows, buffalos and goats besides poultry. Women toil along with men and work hard in agricultural production. They grow paddy, turmeric, ginger, mustard, black gram, arrowroot and so on. Their annual income is less than 20 thousand rupees in at least 70 % of the households; it is barely sufficient to meet their daily needs. Therefore, during summer they collect MFP, work as construction labour or any other that is available in Nuagaon town. The Mutha, i.e., headman of the village comes from Mati clan, and the village Rajaghara is one of the 17 habitations of the clan. The village priest Jani also comes from the same clan. The Mutha Mallick, a Patra under whose authority the tribal chiefs worked earlier lives in Purana Nuagaon and help organizing the Kedu festival of the Mati clan. Though a large majority is illiterate, 31 of them have studied beyond intermediate and of them nine are men who hold degrees. So, there is a gender bias towards male in education. The villagers avail the health facilities i.e., PHC located in Nuagaon town and there is a ASHA worker in the village.

The worldview of the Kandha, i.e., the man-nature-spirit relationships marks the Kandha's cultural identity. It brings to light the conceptualization of the spiritual world emanating from their relationship with the environment on which their life has been dependent. The entire natural world, earth, sky, rain, hill, stream or river, forest, grove, and so on, each one is considered as a divine being. The deities include: Dharni Penu (earth goddess), Jakeri Penu (sister of earth goddess), Soru Penu (mountain god), Gosa Penu (forest god), Suga Penu (stream god), Piju Penu (rain god), Bela Penu (sun god), Jori Penu (river god), Burpi Penu (first fruit god), Pilanu Penu (hunting god), Ruju juga Penu (calamity god), Pideri Penu (ancestor god), Sande Penu (border god), Naju Penu (village deity), Budi Maa Thakurani (village goddess) and Baral Devi (village goddess) etc.

What is significant in the worldview of the Kandha is that they believe to have been the children of Dharni Penu who is said to be all encompassing, basic, essential, root or

‘mother’ of all penus/gods or goddesses. She is there everywhere - in the village, in the hills, in the forests and in the fields. Nothing happens without her knowledge and benevolence: she is either mother or sister to any other *penu* who take care of entities such as hill, village boundary, water, rain etc. So in every rite organized either in the forest or field or village of the Kandha’s, the first offering goes to the Dharni who created them and then subsequent offerings are made to all hill and forest deities. Otherwise the goddess would be enraged inflicting disease and miseries. Once she is befriended with sacrifices and prayed for, she can do evil things also for the innocent.

For exploiting any of the natural resources the Kandha are required to appease and take permission from the deity concerned which involves in the ritual organization. The spiritual world is mediated through the priest who is called with different names such as Jani, Tolmba, Jhankar, Dehuri, Bahaka, and Mati Guru. The land is the major source of living and it is identified with Dharni, the earth goddess, and the Kandha being the children of the deity. All the rituals are organized with reference to the fertility of land, rain, agriculture etc., that are viewed as deified spirits, ancestors and deities that are invisible. The following festivals that include a worship with a rite are essentially related to land/ food or health; these are meant either to pray or give thanks/express gratitude to the deities.

1. Madaa laka festival/solpo gacha puja – worship of toddy tree or toddy ritual
2. Kanga/Kandula parbu festivals - First offering to the earth goddess and also to get prepared for Kedu festival.
3. Kedu/Meriah/ Podha/Kadru parbu festivals - worship of earth goddess for granting good harvest and overall development of the community.
4. Seni Penu worship (Preparation for Paddy field or Turmeric cultivation) - Praying for good harvest and seeking permission for cultivation.
5. Daba/Soru Penu/Parbata debata worship - Mountain deity – Praying for good rain.
6. Danda festival – Praying for good rain and for good harvest too.
7. Ketta laka (worship at Paddy field with a sacrifice of pig/hen) - Praying for good harvest.

8. Goheli laka/Shala laka (Cowshed worship), and Loha Penu laka (worshiping for Iron) - Praying for good harvest and protecting the cattle from diseases.

9. Poha Penu/Rosa Melani/Nuakhai festival - For eradication of deadly diseases.

10. Kova laka festival - Worship of ripen crop, praying for good harvest.

11. Punja/Sisa laka festival - (before grinding the paddy) - Thanking for the earth goddess for granting harvest and enabling them taking the harvest home for the first time.

12. Budeli/Tlambu/Plambu Penu laka Festivals - Worship the Hunting God before starting the hunting expeditions.

13. Loeri laka Festival - Thanks giving before eating the new crops.

Kandha worship their deities either individually or collectively on several occasions. Invariably, all the collective rites are led by the mutha or Mutha Mallick and Jani, the priest. Besides the above, Kandha started now worshipping several of the Hindu festivals such as Shiv Ratri, Dusserah, Diwali, Danda Jatra, Akshaya Tritiya etc.

The most important aspect of Kandha culture relates to Kedu festival as of today, but in fact, it was *meriah*, human sacrifice, during the colonial period with which the Kandha came be known to the world. The Kedu festival is organized twice a year, that is, in the beginning and at the end of the annual agricultural cycle i.e., harvest, if one takes the region into consideration though it is conducted once only in a Kandha village; in other words, the villagers organize the ritual either in the beginning or at the end of the agricultural operations. The first one is to beseech Dharni Penu for soil fertility, timely rain, good crop and bumper harvest, and the second one is thanks giving festival. It means, this festival triggers all agricultural rites ushering new agricultural season and closes the same at the end. After the harvest the crop becomes commodity and it enters the market, the world of cash economy or capital.

According to a Colonial Report 1,506 (717 males and 789 females) *meriah* victims were rescued from 1836 to 1854. “Agency for the Suppression of Human Sacrifice and Female Infanticide in the Hill Tracts of Orissa” which was set up in 1845 was able to eliminate the practice of *meriah*. However, the Kandha continued the festival of Dharni Penu by substituting with a buffalo which is now called as Kedu festival. Since Kandha religious

specialists do not utter a word about *meriah* under the religious oath and there is no survivor or eye witness, there is no way that one can know how *meriah* ritual was organized except what the colonialists left behind in their records.

The *meriah* was a three-day festival; first plans were made for procuring the human victim through the Pano of the village. A victim could be of any caste or creed, male or female and young or old, and means of procurement could be anything, either by enticement or allurement or purchase. It was said, sometimes that the poor families used to sell their member or given away in lieu of cattle, grain, gold ornaments etc. That too, first the victim is taken into possession by advancing certain cash or kind and the remaining payment was made after the ritual. In some cases, the victim is not subject to sacrifice immediately rather he/she was allowed to live along the Kandha, even get married and have children also. At a later stage either the victim or progeny is used for the sacrifice. When there is a long gap between the procurement and sacrifice, the victim is indoctrinated to become a volunteer to be sacrificed which will ensure eternal bliss and blessing to the community.

The Meriah festival was organized during Magh and Pous months i.e., January – February. Since entire clan i.e., residents all habitations had to participate, the Mutha Mallick and Jani, the priest decided the date in the council of the clan, and the respective *muthas* i.e., headmen circulated the news within their habitations who in turn invited their in-laws for the occasion. As the day approached, the victim was taken in procession accompanied by traditional drums, music and dancing to all the habitations for worship by each family. He/she was given *mahua* liquor to drink as much as one wanted. A day before, the villagers set up the Dharni post at the *meriah* groove erecting a temporary shrine, but most often a separate location was selected in the inferior forest and secluded place. The victim who was well fed till now was now asked to go fast. The guests i.e., in-laws and friends who were invited arrive by evening and the event took place in the night. All the villagers accompanying the victim with the music and dance reached the spot in the night after the dinner. As the victims was tied to the Dharni post, a pit was dug into which the blood of the victim would flow in and a fence also was erected so that the surging crowd could be controlled. Only the clan members were entitled for the flesh of

the victim, and ideally the representative of the village shall take some flesh of the victims and take it back to his village where it was distributed to all the residents. But in practice, there would be more people to grab the flesh and because the demand for the flesh was much higher given the number of clan members present there, there was always rush and people wait for the announcement to be made by the Jani priest that the sacrifice was over so that each of them take a bit of the flesh of the victim. So, it was the responsibility of the in-laws to control the crowd so that other than the clan members would not steal the flesh of the victim. The priest, Jani when stroke a heavy blow on the victim by the ritual axe or spear from inside the shrine and declared that the sacrifice was over, the crowd pounced upon the victim and cut a piece of the flesh and wrapped it in a leaf cup and immediately rushed to their respective villages and buried the same in their fields. The rite was primarily meant for fertilizing the fields and pleasing the earth goddess Dharni to bless the people with good harvest and free them from diseases.

Now the Kedu festival is organized substituting the human with a buffalo not only on regular annual agriculture cycle but also when new site is brought into cultivation collectively. On these occasions as the village collectively buys a buffalo, some individuals also donate a buffalo when they have constructed a new house or some family members recovered from serious sickness etc. Thus, it is not one buffalo that is sacrificed but there can be more than one. If the village has planned to organize Kedu festival, it is mandatory on their part first to worship Maa Pattakhanda at Mahasingi occasion of Kanga parbu (pigeon pea festival) when the Patra priest worships the axe of the deity. Otherwise, the axe must be worshipped on the festival of Loha Penu. Once this condition is fulfilled, the purchase of buffalo follows. Before the start of the Kedu, the Jani brings down the ritual axe which he kept on the attic or in the shrine and offers a hen as a sacrifice. Then preparations start for erecting the Dharni kudi (shrine) near the village or in the village plaza or at the *meriah* groove. The buffalo is taken in a possession with music and dance to different villages of the clan where he is worshipped and brought back to the village a day before. Along with the buffalo the ritual symbols of the *mutha* i.e., axe, knife or spear and brass pot are also carried in the procession and worship of the buffalo. The Kedu festival usually starts on Saturday and on that day the villagers go to the forest and bring the suitable wood for making Dharni post for tethering the buffalo,

and also posts for Dharni, Kotewali/Abba and Jakeri deities for worship. While these posts are housed in a tent erected for the occasion the Dharni post is fixed outside the temporary structure but within the reach of the stretched out hand. On the second night, i.e., Sundha, the buffalo sacrifice takes place. By evening all the invited guests including non-Kandha arrive, and the buffalo is worshipped in the village during the day and gets ready to be taken to the Dharni post in the night. Late in the evening, after the evening meal the villagers gather together and take a procession to the sacrificial site with the music where the animal is to be sacrificed following the formalities. First the Jani priest invites and invokes Dharni, followed by Kotewali, and Jakeri who are husband and sister of Dharni, and other deities besides the ancestors. Then he goes inside the temporary shrine where the axe and spear or knife are placed and goes in trance talking with the gods seeking permission and blessings etc., and holds the axe. Meanwhile the buffalo is taken to the Dharni post and tied there and a ditch is dug near to it into which the blood would flow in. Afterwards, Jani beheads the buffalo with a single stroke using the ritual axe, *tangi* by stretching out his hand through the hole made to the wall of the shrine that is arranged for this purpose. The people thronged there try to get a piece of flesh of the animal and rush to their respective villages where it is distributed to others to be buried in their fields. The music and dancing continues all night, and next day i.e., Monday, a dinner is arranged for all the villagers in the host village with goats' meat besides the buffalo meat. After this, everybody leaves for their respective villages, however, the village *mutha* and elders of the village where the next Kedu takes place carry with them the brass pot, ritual axe and spear along with them. As the brass pot remains with the Mutha Mallick, the axe and knife are taken by the Jani of the village where next Kedu would take place.

There is no total consensus on the practice of *meriah* among all the groups of Kandha, and there is no information as to why it is not practiced in some groups. Given the status that the Kandha women enjoyed and the bride price that they get to the family why did the Kandha practice female infanticide? Therefore the question is why did the British try to suppress the *meriah* and talk about the female infanticide? There is no clear answer for this and Kedu has little to do with the law and order problem and infanticide is not even imagined. It can thus be surmised that it is because of their own selfish interest of

exploiting the forests of the Kandha the Colonialists exaggerated the prevalence of these practices for justifying their own entry into the Kandha hills. Secondly, on this pretext they tried to suppress the Kandha rebellion and instigate them to turn against the local kings and create a gap between the tribal community and the non-tribes. Further, the ritual has very little to do with the turmeric, the colour of turmeric that gives more value depends on the cultivation and processing of the tubers according to the Kandha. The ritual Kedu is essentially thanks giving or praying for bountiful crop and fertility of the soil. Therefore, the festival is essentially related to land in terms of control and production. It also helped to reduce hostility within the community and built social solidarity.

The Kandha experienced several changes in their immediate physical as well as social environment after the entry of the British into the Kandha hills; they encountered a different socio, economic and political life. There was increased immigration of non-Kandha populations such as Sundhi, Teli, besides Pano and Patras. Kandha leaders became more aggressive and tried to resist the advancement of the British by joining with the native kings, but in vain. The Panos turned away from Kandha and moved towards the British and the Christian Missionaries and the Patra shifted their attention towards the new rulers i.e., the British. The Kandha society which was under the strong leadership started slowly becoming weak; there was increased agriculture with decreased dependency on the food collection in the forest. They also learned the settled and terrace permanent cultivation by following the Patra and others in the plains, and thus there was more and more individual farming while shifting cultivation demanded more community participation. As a result, there has been more dependency on rains and land and this invariably increased ritual activity as well. Though, it cannot be proved statistically, there must have been increased *meriah* and subsequently Kedu festival for pleasing and praying the earth goddess and other spirits for blessing them with good rains, fertility of the soil and harvest.

The British took control of the forest and brought forest laws that restricted the movements of the Kandha and free access to the forests and started exploiting the forest wealth. They auctioned the teak, sal and other tree to be felled and opened up depots for

collection of forest products, turmeric, and spices, and the forest contractors that engaged the Kandha also for forest clearance and collection of minor forest produce introduced cash to the Kandha. Some of the tribes were employed at the lower level in the forest department that also undertook regeneration programmes of the forest. Though the Kandha were permitted to brew liquor for their consumption they were not allowed to sell it; Sundi caste got more benefits out of this excise rules. There has been more production activity as the Kandha increased the felling of forest for shifting cultivation and produced turmeric and rice. Since international market increased for the spices including the turmeric, the export and demand for turmeric increased, elephant tusks, animal fur, cashew, and so on. So, the Kandha grew more turmeric which had great demand because of its high quality and in others the market grew in the Kandha hills and the Kandha barter economy slowly got replaced with cash and there was more demand for cash. The Sundhi, Teli, Pano and Patra traders purchased the products of the Kandha. A complex market system came into existence; there were middlemen who purchased the turmeric and others from the Kandha and sold the same to the traders who again sold them to big traders of international markets. The Kandha not only had to interact with several non-Kandha which increased their dependency on the Pano and Patra and some of them had to learn Odia and started directly dealing with the world outside. They also started receiving the modern manufactured industrial products, cosmetics besides iron implements, clothes, salt etc. On one hand the Kandha were found gradually becoming civilized wearing clothes but on the other hand they continued to be very superstitious with peculiar beliefs and practices.

In this changing scenario, the local markets contributed significantly to the Kandha's experience with the outside world particularly in the growth of weekly markets called *hata* or *haat* that spread to all towns while regular markets existed in big towns with all modern goods, domestic needs, necessities, gadgets and appliances. The *hatas* were organized once a week in a fairly big village that was also connected to a small town and it could attract few nearby villagers within the reach of seven to eight kilometers. This is the place where the villagers exchanged their produce and it was the place where the consumer and producer met. However, Kandha remained mostly buyers rather than

sellers; the latter being the outsiders who sold mostly urban manufactured products while the Kandha sellers sold the local vegetable, fruits and nuts. *Hata* also became a center for social gathering and exchange of information, and place for exchange of pleasantries, social drinking, where boys and girls could meet. In course of time, it became important site for the government agencies also from where they could disseminate government information to the unreachable villages. Over a period of time more non-Kandhas also started visiting to purchase the turmeric, pulses, oil seeds and minor forest produce from the Kandha. They also settled down permanently maintaining good and friendly relations with the Kandha and became money lenders. Then, they constructed small Hindu shrines and temples also closer to the *hata*, so that the visitors to *hata* could worship the Hindu deities. With the donations collected from the visitors and particularly political parties during the election campaigns, rituals and festivals were also organized. The *hata*s also became the sites where political or religious meetings. Thus, the *hata* became a more complex and heterogeneous in which there was a gradual marginalization of Kandha as they gave away their lands to the non-Kandha on demand or exchange of loan etc., unofficially. Several of the *hata* shop keepers had become mobile as they shifted their shops from one village to the other according to the days on which of *hata* changed routinely. Here, there has been a gradual loss of control and authority of the Kandha traditional leaders.

In small towns the government established different offices of forest, revenue, health, police, excise etc., besides educational institutions - schools and colleges, and thus development was visible while the country side remained without proper road connectivity with agricultural landscapes or forests. The post-independence era witnessed more changes in the towns with electricity, other facilities and amenities besides coming up of several building and massive constructions. Not only the Odia speakers but also others from North India and other parts of India were found among the immigrants with the increased transport facilities and market networks connecting different parts of India and abroad. The Kandha visited the weekly markets more frequently than the towns where they could get their daily needs. Only when they had enough cash did they go to the towns for purchasing things that they required.

In the above changing scenario, the first demand of the Kandha in 1994 for a separate district with Kandha nomenclature reflects the simmering undercurrent in Kandha society. It clearly and loudly speaks of the identity crisis and unrecognition of their native citizenry amidst the presence of huge non-Kandha populations. On the part of non-Kandha, the divide has been drawn on the religious and ethnic lines. The former helped to draw together huge support connection from the rest of India on religious sentiment by keeping their rival ethnic group Pano on other camp. And, thereafter the conflicts or skirmishes between Kandha and Pano and Kandha's active participation in the politics and joining in hands with the Hindu fundamental groups finally culminated into the communal conflicts in 2007 and 2008. These incidents demand our attention to Kandha and non-Kandha relations tracing down from the history to the present situation with regard to the control of land, socio-economic development of communities, political authority, religious and social discrimination in the light of the foregone long discussion. As it has been already pointed out, Pano was first non-tribal and non-Kandha caste that maintained close contact with the Kandha; they acted as mediator and sold salt other essential commodities to the Kandha, they lived along the Kandha and spoke Kui language in addition to Odia and identified as one among the Kandha. They had a specific and defined role of providing *meriah* and buffalo when the former was substituted with the latter. Usually the Pano accompanied a Kandha when the latter went down the hills on any important business with the non-Kandha and the Pano acted as a medium for any transaction. Pano was a trusted friend and a brother of Kandha and all issues of the Pano were resolved by the Kandha and they depended on the latter for day today life. Such harmonious relationship changed gradually with the entry of the British. The Pano got attracted to the Christian Missionaries, became Christian and went to mission schools and became educated and secured employment in the schools, hospitals and government offices, and thus they were able to improve their socio-economic conditions and similar response came from very few households only among the Kandha, and a large majority rejected the Christian Missions. The change is more drastic in the town than in the Kandha villages, and a kind of rivalry developed between the Kandha and Pano. When they became Christian, the Pano distanced themselves from the rituals of

Kandha and even stopped paying the normal contribution for organizing the Kedu festival with which both the communities had identified for centuries. Moreover, the Pano aided the Christian Missions for acquiring land for establishing Christian institutions such as Church, schools, hostels, hospitals, colleges, training institutions etc.

After the Pano, the non-Kandha community that closely interacted with the Kandha for centuries was Patra, that was originally Kashatriya in *varna* classification, but after establishing themselves in Kandha hills being appointed as officials of the local princely states, they occupied the position of Brahmin and also entered into trade and business. They successfully extended the rule of the kings and collected the tributes from the Kandha for the kings. When the British tried to annex the Kandha areas, they were able to bring the Kandha leaders in support of the kings, but when the British succeeded in taking over the princely states, they surrendered to the British and became the *muthadars* for collecting the taxes from the Kandha and thus continued as overlords of the Kandha with more judicial powers and authority given by the British. As the two communities changed their stand with the entry of the British, the Kandha were left alone, but they maintained more friendly relations with the Patra rather than the Pano. The Patra continued to show their goodwill to the Kandha and advise them in all religious matters and brought them closer to Hinduism by recognizing and bringing the Kandha goddesses into the Hindu fold. Such strategy in fact helped the Patra to acquire landed properties in the Kandha areas besides the new land regulations brought in by the British. They became traders of turmeric, money lenders and obtained permission from the government for the purchase of minor forest produce. They also encouraged several other castes to provide caste based services to the Kandha, and thus several castes migrated to Kandha areas particularly to the small towns at foot hills and plains.

Patra who maintained friendly and cooperative relations with the colonial government and more so with the Kandha and thus they became untitled kings in Kandha area even after the demise of the colonialism in India. The post-independence that brought several changes with the migration of traders and businessmen from various parts of India besides religious persons changed the entire social and political and social atmosphere in

Kandha areas. As the Christian Missions actively engaged in proselytization of the tribes, Hindu Missions also set up their own educational institutions schools and colleges, established shrines and temples though the Patra continued to hold their authority over their temples particularly Durga and Kali. They also acquired lands of the Kandha for these institutions and engaged direct and indirect relations with the Kandha.

The post-independence India's important issue relates to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe status and the reservation policy regarding employment and political positions. A confusion arose with the declaration of scheduled tribe status in Kandhamal region with regard to those who speak Kui language, and Pano who claim Kui as their mother tongue started claiming scheduled tribe status. But it was not acceptable to the Kandha as the Pano cannot claim scheduled tribe status being a non-tribal community and it was not their original mother tongue. Further, as the Pano are better educated than the Kandha the Pano will deprive them of the jobs reserved for the tribes. Due to their educational advancement, they also tried to enter the political arena as Kandha are not well educated, inarticulate and unaware of the world outside the hills. The Kandha feel that either the Panchayati Raj, or the Fifth Schedule is not giving them the earlier status that they enjoyed in the hills. In this background, the Patra and other Hindus supported the Kandha, and Kandha also felt being cheated by their traditional friends and brothers Pano, who not only converted themselves to Christianity but also did not subscribe to Kandha culture of organizing rituals particularly the buffalo sacrifice of Kedu festival which is very important for the fertility of soil.

As the demand for the land for cultivation increased, the Kandha found their land being under the control of non-Kandha including the Pano, and further shrinking of land was due to imposition of Forest Laws and banning shifting cultivation and restrictions of the movements of the tribes in the forest. The loss of land also meant loss of exercising the local leadership and authority. Also, in the towns where the non-Kandha concentration is high, the decisions in the local panchayat, weekly markets etc., are mainly decided by the non-Kandha outsiders including the Pano. This is felt as the loss of Kandha tribal identity.

The Kandha like to be identified with the Hindu, the upper caste Hindu do not like to grant them equal status in the social hierarchy which the Kandha enjoyed hitherto as they looked down the Pano in their villages as their servants. Several Hindu saints and *swamys*(godmen) desired that the Kandhas should give up the primitive ways of worship and animal sacrifice, particularly the buffalo sacrifice. As the Kandha eat buffalo meat after the sacrifice, they are being treated as untouchable much against the taste of the Kandha. This kind of frustration is an additional burden to they already lost in terms of power and authority, due to the colonial administration such as police and court that were vested with the powers of law and order and equal justice to all. Earlier, the Kandha leaders used to enjoy such powers and privileges. The revenue regulations made them powerless to control land. Now, the social discrimination that the upper caste Hindu practiced is keeping the Kandha away from the Hindu society or reduced them to a very low status. So, in order to regain the original status, the Kandha believe that it is necessary to maintain the tribal cultural identity, and this requires the Kandha to continue practicing all the traditional rituals with the cooperation of the Pano, but that is not coming through. Thus, there is grown up frustration and disappointment among the Kandha who take control of the situation as it was there before the entry of the British in earth nineteenth century.

Thus, according to foregone discussion, the Kandha tribal culture, however, varies greatly in social, political, economic terms from the urban population to the rural hinterlands. Nevertheless, in all religion plays a significant role in the lives of people within a tribal society which continues to be tradition-bound, where religion, ritual explains everything. Here in Kandha religious rite of offering sacrifices earlier in the form of *meriah* and now Kedu, where the officiating priest of ritual as well as political chief actively participates along with the active support of all the members is a process of life indeed that encompasses clan, economy, politics, productivity of land, human and animal and the whole world.

The Kandha claim that they should not be deprived off their rights over the forest and nature. As they argue to be the son of the soil and inhabitants of forest, they have been

brought up there and they developed their culture in symbiotic relations with nature since times immemorial. But the modern world has broken down the deeply interrelated relationships. They do not like the presence of the exploitative traders and governments who are compelling them to live in areas away from the *podu chas* (shifting cultivation) which is major means of living. The present day living is marked with resistance and resilience of traditional ways of food collection and shifting cultivation. As a result, the Kandha are continuing to live in the way they are familiar with favoring both the people and nature.

As the predominant population of undivided Kandhamal district is the Kandha, a generic name, it includes several sub-tribes. Although these sub-tribes indicate significant racial affinity, marked differentiation does exist in their economic, social and cultural life. All these sub-tribes are different from one another culturally and linguistically as much as they vary in geographical and other extraneous factors like communication, education and above all exposure to urban centres. Though they differ from one another, they seem to maintain a consistency in sharing the basic socio-cultural characters. Broadly, the Kandha tribe can be described under the three major sub-tribes, such as, the Kutias, the Dongrias, and Desia Kandha. A comparative study of these would have given better results, but as the present research is restricted to only Desia Kandha only broad generalization could be made based on the study as discussed above. It has revealed the hidden structure of the Kandha ritual giving some insights into the present conflicts in Kandhamal. Another limitation of the study as already pointed out is the language barrier because majority of the Kandha are not familiar with the Odia which is the mother tongue of the researcher, fortunately he being the native of Kandhamal could understand the Kui to some extent though he could not talk fluently. There is certainly some loss in the translation of the original thought and idea.

Land alienation is one of the major causes of conflict between STs and Non-STs in Kandhamal. A detailed study is required in this area but what is noted here is that a persisting notion exists for longtime about the land alienation as an important problem. The continuous mal-functioning of revenue system that constantly ignored the most

critical issue of land ownership has made the situation a chronic problem. It amplified the frustration and under-current tensions among the communities. There has been no attempt made by the revenue administration for a long-term permanent solution to this most critical issue. It appears, there has been no serious will and commitment by the Government authorities, to carry out the mandates of its institutional accountability leading to serious disruption of social harmony and peace in Kandhamal.

Among the most burning and hot issues coming in the headlines in recent times in Kandhamal is the conflict between Kandha and Panos relating to illegal grabbing of Kandha land by the Panos. Careless publicity of the issues in the media and irresponsible politics have led to periodic violence at a time resulting in loss of lives and property. Though land grabbing has been a major issue in Kandhamal but the focus now has been shifted to Pano community or those who belong to a particular religious' community as land grabbers. Similarly, as mentioned above, the false claims of ST status by other communities has been there in Kandhamal in the past but now the focus is on a particular religious' minority who have allegedly claimed SC or ST status to avail benefits of government schemes. However, real villain in the whole drama seems to be the insensitive revenue administration, which consistently fueled the divide by ignoring and hiding the facts of its records. A single community has been stigmatized although the tribal lands have been grabbed by all irrespective of their social stratum and not only by Pano. The Pano might have taken more shares but others do have a good share in the issue. Therefore, tribal land alienation in Kandhamal should be understood in the context of changes happening in the social relationships between two major communities Pano and Kandha who are often presented in inimical terms, one against the other, in a district where no other community can claim to be a real friend of the Kandha. History of Kandhamal is full of cases of land grabbing, exploitation and breakdown of revenue governance system.

However, the Kandhas, due to the extension of the communication network, residential ties with Odia culture for generations, acceptance of elements of Hinduism, role of extraneous forces of change and development, and sentiment for modern nationalism,

becomes a category, and in spite of this they represent a contrasting cultural unit to a degree that they are a homogeneous, ritualistic and economically backward group of people, whom we can differentiate from others. The Kandhas as a category of people may find a place in between the tribal rural scale of change and development.

To conclude, the present study made an effort to revisit the history of ritual, here it is Meriah and Kedu festivals in relation with economy and politics that give a cultural identity to a group. The identity is related to belongingness to the land that provides the material gains and wealth which in turn gives social status and importantly control over the people. The study has found a strong correlation between ritual and land and these together contributed much for an indomitable leadership and unity of the vibrant Kandha tribal community. Kandha of Odisha has been known not only for their resistance against the British annexation of their habitat, and rebel against the colonial rule but also to their religious practice of human sacrifice called Meriah. The British also found the Kandha to have been practicing female infanticide. Turmeric was one of the indigenous crop the Kandha cultivated by shifting cultivation and it obtained international acclaim and value; it became a source of cash which encouraged the Kandha to bring more forest land into cultivation. The British claimed to have successfully suppressed these infamous practices and have civilized the Kandha. At the same time, they attempted to exploit the natural forests for teak, *sal* wood etc., and brought Forest Laws impinging upon the Kandha's authority. After independence also, the Kandha attempted to assert their dominant position when more and more Odia and others immigrated to their habitat with increased access and penetration of market and along with political domination.

With the increased markets, need for cash economy and Kandha's modernization made the Kandha more dependent on the land that became more valuable. It also required to practice of Kedu for pleasing the earth goddess as her blessings were necessary for obtaining abundant production from the land. But the Hindu festivals have affected the ideology and conceptualization of deities particularly Dharni, the earth goddess in their contact with the Hindu society. Government policies and programmes also contributed to the Kandha for getting integrated with the mainland community but they experienced

bitterness of discrimination and marginalization in their own territory where they ruled in the past.

Kandha is definitely in a transition between tradition and modernity. External programs or policies intending to increase the efficiency of resource use so as to cope up with increasing population pressure, depletion of resources, fluctuations in the environment or other contingencies require a blending of relevant formal and informal knowledge and institutions. Social equality is an indispensable requirement for socially just and political legitimate access to the use and management of natural resources. Throughout the history the Kandha have been oriented towards an egalitarian command over the natural recourse, inside the boundaries of their customary law. But the Pano, Patra and the British changed the inherent larger social set up. The post-independence period contributed much to the bitter experience having been placed at the lower position of the Hindu hierarchical society and pushing to the marginality in political and economic sphere. The Patra drew closer to the Kandha by advancing loans and being political advisor besides being moneylenders and in the process they became politically and economically powerful along with the immigrant rich caste Hindu who controlled the local economy and markets. They surreptitiously acquired land and other properties while the Kandha remained poor as ever.

This study deals with a very complicated and controversial matter of the Kandha's contemporary problem. The way it is projected by the media is a kind of religious dispute having deeper and wider social implications. Questions asked in this respect are: what is the position of religion? And the question of anthropology is how do we comprehend religion? Whereas, among many social activists, journalists and historians, the issue of the Kandha or the explanation for social tensions poses many questions without anthropological concern. But how do we look at religion in respect to anthropology? One approach is what is the contribution of religion for maintaining the social system but it did not seem to be appropriate approach as the inherent or core issue of accounting dynamic aspect of the ritual or religion. Alternatively, it is considered that the political economic approach with its dynamics nature would be able to answer the question of religion as it changes along with the political economy; each of them become cause and

effect. Here as the study of Kandha society makes clear about close link between political economy and religion where religion is not causing problem but having invisible power and a contribution and at the same time it gets influenced.

The ground realities reveal the fact that though the Kandha support the Patra who have been there with them and they are very conscious of their own tribal and native identity i.e., son of the soil identity. And to maintain their identity it is important that they continue the traditional religious practices despite changes that occurred therein. Without organizing the Kedu festival with the buffalo sacrifice it is imminent that the Kandha will lose their tribal identity and also the social identity as Kui Samaj or Kui-Lowku or Kui-jati, and they would become one among the Hindu society. Some Kandha who have converted to Christianity and being Christian support the Kedu festival. Hence it is not religion but society where one lives in is important and the need to revive their ethnic identity vis-a-vis with others. The Kandha tribe by and large does not either resist or support the Hindu religion while the Pano who accepted Christianity reject both Hindu religion as well as Kandha traditions even though they lived like brothers and servants to Kandha. In between the relationship between Hindu Patra and Christian Pano, the tribe comes closer to Patra. In this background the Kandha are trying to improve their status, they want to go ahead of Pano by favouring the Hindu religious traditions which are close to Kandha traditions. As their ethnic identity is closely tied with the Kedu and buffalo sacrifice they want to pursue and continue it despite discouragement coming from the Hindu saints to give up the animal sacrifices. The operationalization of Kandha rituals, economy and politics is inseparable which told us history, literature and colonial records.

Hence this study in a way tried to gain insights into the history of dispossession of land of Kandha and it necessitated to examine the role of religion and ritual identity. According to Berger, "Secularization theory is the idea that modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion" (1999:2). Contrary to secularization theory, modernity has not made the world less religious. In reality, it has only become more religious. It is true in case of Kandha and others as well in Kandhamal. We inherently know that religion has some kind of effect on politics and economics, but we are not sure to what degree. Huntington asserts that "people identify themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history,

values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity” (1996: 21). Now the same incase with the Kandha, the Kui people, Kui-Lowku, Kui Jati, Kui Samaj and Pano Samaj and others are the example of consciousness in this regard. The situation here in making a strong case of their identity, the Kandha have entered into a problems of social conflict. So the society is now becoming more religious as it has been before, worshiping certain kind of god and goddess has the functional value of social unity and solidarity against the other.

But with the passage of time, Kandha continue to appropriate their culture through a process of transforming nature into culture- that is, they appropriate without becoming proprietor. The Kandha have so far survived the deterioration of their surrounding forests although this process has not yet come to a halt and it is not clear if this ability to survive will continue, should political and the environmental system worsen. The Kandha cultural identity, however, is always linked to a feeling of belonging to their landscape and cosmos, even if they do not hope to own land or to gain material wealth from the land, many hopes may fade away with every passing decade.

Human sacrifice and politics that constituted the Kandha world view earlier, has been changed and the tribe has adopted new and emerging religion like Hinduism and Christianity and these give them different identities. With the the impact of outside, the polymorphic Kandha rituals and practices turned towards the monomorphic emergent one. Due to the passage of time with the change in ritual-politics the traditional political power is gradually substituted with the modern one. As a result, though the traditionally operated norm and regulations of the society appear to be nominal they do surface and at times they may be revived. This study of the contemporary Kedu not only bridges the gap between the traditional and modern ways of celebrating rituals but also it is part and parcel of the Kandha culture or *habitus* (c.f., Bourdieu 1977:78-79)¹ that is historically received dispositions to react to the outside world. The distorted study of the Colonialists not only legitimized colonial terror and brutalities but also dehumanized the Kandha

¹ Bourdieu, Pierre (1977). Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge University Press. pp. 78–79.

(Pathy, 2010) as the present study also strongly assert. Further, there is no sufficient evidence for the female infanticide either. Moreover, the present study has tried to present the Kandha with their own history and ethnography, written from their own point of view. This has been contemplated in the context of a Kandha struggle for safeguarding their identity and resource base.

Finally, a word on the constitution of Indian society or tribe's transition to caste would be in order in the light of the insights gained through the present study of Kandha society. Bailey's idea of "a continuum based on politico-economic factors, places emphasis on the territorial clans that claim ownership on land, people and ritual. He claims a strong connection between the segmentary clan organization based on territory, and this connection he believes to be the defining feature of 'tribal society'" (Bailey 1961: 12). He goes on to show that "these ideal types are empirically not totally distinct or different from the caste society since the Kandha have an organic relationship with a local untouchable caste called Pano and the villages dominated by the warrior caste can be seen as segments similar to the territorial clans of the Kandha" (Bailey 1961: 13). Thus, he finds each caste is like a tribe wherein the caste is segmented into sub-castes, and a particular group or sub-caste dominates over the other. Louis Dumont (1962) briefly comments on Bailey's opinion mainly criticizing "Bailey's self-imposed restriction to the politico-economic aspects" (Dumont 1962: 121). Almost in passing, Dumont points out to the important fact that "the two extreme ends of Bailey's continuum are of unequal value, tribe being regarded as a whole society, caste as part of a whole society" (Dumont 1962: 120). For Dumont religion is the basis of caste system and politics or economy is secondary to religion, and each part contributes to the whole undertaking occupational specializations which are classified under the purity and pollution spectrum. In opposition to Bailey's view, Pfeffer (2010) makes the important point that "not only values but also social interaction in Hindu 'caste society' marks a major difference between the 'tribal society' and caste society in middle India. The relations between these categories are regulated by prohibitions of intermarriage and inter-dining just as in the caste system of the plains" (Berger 2002: 71).

If the above debate is examined in the light of the present research, the Kandha tribal society is drawn into the caste society as a constituent part of the whole. But the role of the part is not based on any specific occupational function which has been a common phenomenon in the country. Interestingly enough, since the Kandha's religious traditions which are analogous to Hindu traditions or Kandha have accepted the Hindu traditions it became a part of the caste system but without any occupational specialization. But here the issue relates to the hierarchy based on the religious value that form the basis of caste system according to Louis Dumont. The Kandha have rejected the position assigned to them² due to their practice of buffalo sacrifice and eating of the buffalo meat. However, few of them who are trying to follow the Hindu traditions are avoiding the buffalo meat though they participate in the ritual. Therefore, it may be considered that Kandha are on their way to accept the Hindu religious values. The claim of Kandha's higher status does not base on religious values rather on their historical relationship with the soil, ownership of the land and political control or role of the traditional leaders in social organization within the clan and territory. According to them the immigrant non-Kandha cannot be superior to them. The performance of Kedu gives them the ethnic identity with a higher status, and as sons of the soil, they have authority and control of the land and people within their territory.

If we take the above arguments and practices of the Kandha further into the discussion relating to the status that religious values and contribution of political economic power, in case of Kandha both play a significant role. Within the community, the religious head, the priest Jani or Tolmba enjoys a higher status relative to the rest, but they do not constitute a separate group or sub-tribe; it is the functional role of an individual Kandha and anyone can become a priest upon the calling of the earth goddess. In fact, the society does not recognize any status difference between the Mutha or Mutha Mallick or the priest; both have functional roles to be performed for the wellbeing of the community, while the priest gets authority by the divine calling, the leader gets power through the birth. According to the Kandha, their religious practices or religiosity cannot be

² This is true in several ex-untouchable castes but Moffatt (1979 a; 1979 b) argues that there is a general consensus on the religious values and the untouchables do accept of their inferior status, and what they reject is the status assigned to them.

considered inferior to the immigrant Hindu. However, the Patra obtained superior status due political authority given to him by the princely state and he got the higher status over a period of time in religion also only when they gradually convinced that Hindu deities and Hindu religious practices are helping them to get good crops and authority over the Kandha.

Here, it is important to consider the strategies employed by the Patra in winning over the Kandha which has been discussed earlier. The Patra brought Kandha into power relations initially by maintaining friendly relations unlike the British who deployed coercive forces against the Kandha who reacted in the equal spirit of resistance. Such friendly relations and the adoption of the tribal deities particularly Maa Pattakhandha of Mahsinghi in Balliguda region into Hindu fold and allowing the Kandha to participate in the worship of Hindu deities and even allowing the animal sacrifices but maintaining a separation between these two kinds of worship have helped the Patra to gain confidence among the Kandha who eventually accepted the superiority of Patra.³ Though respect and deferential interactions are clearly visible between the Kandha leaders and the Patra who was the Muttadar appointed by the British government with power and authority over the Kandha, the Kandha do not consider the Patra caste is in a way superior to the Kandha in Kandhamal area in terms of the social hierarchy. The social discrimination meted to them and the lower position granted to them is not acceptable. This discussion contributes to the tribal absorption⁴ and tribe-peasant and caste continuum.⁵

If we examine the role of religion in Kandha society, the religion is more to do with the nature or natural elements – earth/soil/field, rain, forest, groves, hills etc. Spiritual values are attributed to these natural elements. The nature helps the survival meeting the physical needs and the invisible spiritual mediate between the natural elements and the Kandha. In fact, Kandha place themselves within the nature only, they are not part of the spiritual world. The spiritual beings are dependent on the Kandha only despite the fact

³ See Rao (1998) who discusses the non-coercive nature of power in a south Indian village.

⁴ Bose, N.K: *The Hindu Mode of Tribal Absorption*, Science and Culture, vol. vii, 1941
Munshi, Surendra 1979 *Tribal absorption and Sanskritisation in Hindu Society*. Contributions to Indian Society. 13.2:293-3127.

⁵ Mathur, K.S and Agrawal, BC 1974 *Tribe, Caste and Peasantry*. Lucknow: Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society.

that they are autonomous and superior to Kandha and they are to be satisfied with the offerings that include the animal or fowl sacrifices i.e., members of the nature only. So, they maintain interdependent and exchange relations with the Kandha. Therefore, it may be noticed that the status of spirits is ambiguous. The production from the land or forest, control over land in terms of its distribution among the members and people remain with clan and its leaders and they enter into conflicts in claiming over control or authority over a piece of land. Such power is not autonomous, it is conditioned by the spirits or religion which enjoys an ambiguous status but reinforces the political and economic power in the Kandha society. Interestingly, the same political and economic power gives significance and authority to the religion as Kandha continue the celebrations of Kedu with buffalo sacrifice and expects the Kui-Samaj, Kui-Lowku and even Pano Samaj to participate in it. This discussion, therefore, does not support Louis Dumont thesis of the superiority of religion and subordination of political and economic power, rather in a way supports Bailey's understanding of clan based territorial organization that gives due emphasis on political and economic power in structuring the society.

So this study has tried to make a contribution to an anthropological understanding of Odisha society, particularly in Kandhamal district, and Indian anthropology at large. It also tried to demonstrate that the present lies in the past and the anthropologist has to decode events of the past for getting insights into the present. As far as the present crisis in Kandhamal is concerned the history, interconnections among the land, ritual, ethnic identity, economy and politics have to be taken into consideration when attempts are made to solve the conflicts and tensions for better governance and harmonious living. Society or the local community neither remains completely isolated and autonomous without the interference from the external world in the present and it was true even in the past.

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PHOTOS



Pic-1: A view of Gastu sahi in Rajaghara



Pic-2: Researcher with Key informant Bata Pradhan in Raiaghara.



Pic-3: Marriage negotiations.



Pic-4: Yangya at Rajaghara



Pic-5: Hindu Saints addressing a gathering in Rajaghara



Pic- 6: Kedu festival at Rajaghara.



Pic-7: Dharni Kudi at Kudutuli



Pic-8: Tholmba along with elders of the village chanting mantra at Rajaghara.



Pic- 9: Pottery used in Kedu.



Pic- 10: Sacred Grove at Rajaghara.



Pic-11: Mutha meeting at Kanjamendi



Pic-12: Worshipping the Paddy after harvest.



Pic-13: Jagruti NGO measuring turmeric at Sirtiguda



Pic-14: Weekly Hata at Nuagaon



Pic-15: Turmeric field near Rajaghara and Sirtiguda Road



Pic-16: Turmeric stall in Adivasi Mela,



Pic-17: Cleaned Haldi



Pic-18: Haldi after harvesting.



Pic-19: Moving shop at Rajaghara



Pic-20: Mahua flower collected by Rajaghara women.



Pic-21: Kandha women on the way to Nuagaon market



Pic-22: Sal plates and cups making process by Kandha women and children



Pic-23: Paddy-field at Mahasingi



Pic-24: BJP Rally at Nuagaon



Pic-25: BJD Rally at Nuagaon



Pic-26: Tribal eating after attending a political party meeting at Mahasingi.



Pic-27: Posters of candidates contesting for Panchayat election.



Pic-28: A campaigning of Rape at the time of Assembly election by BJP.



Pic-29: Kandha women welcoming researcher to a meeting at Damerikia with Jana Seva NGO.



Pic-30: Researcher at Jana Seva's meeting.



Pic-31: Ornaments exhibits in Prashanti festival.

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