

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Colonial Construction of Juang Adivasis: An Anthropological Interpretation of Colonial and Post-colonial Era

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Abstract:

Anthropological analysis is one of the index for the evaluation of a primeval Adivasi like Juang community. The covert elements of the socio-cultural ethos and economic environment. The structural and behavioral changes in the course of colonial interference and post-colonial legislation is the extensive regard of the current study. The perceptions and scrutiny of the anthropologists of every stage reveal the acclamation and triumph of the community. How the socio-cultural and economic maturation visualize and the myths is the context to be authenticate. The notion of colonial as well as the British and post-colonial scholars, anthropologists and intellectuals contradict to each other. Especially the study deals with the archival secondary sources, the collected myths and folklores of 15 days considerable study of fieldwork in Gonasika and Banspal areas of the Keonjhar district, Odisha. Still there is a need of a rigorous and full-fledged experiment on the Juang community to explore the material, ideological and contextual interpretations.

Keywords: Colonialism, modernization, evolution, juang community, Anthropology

1. Introduction

The yoke of colonial era paved the way for the forethought of the intrusion and exploitation of the hilly land areas. Anthropological and sociological analysis of the society prepared the stage for looking forward to the future with the assistance of past instance. A full-fledged research and the perceptions of colonial and postcolonial anthropologists bring the primeval as well as isolated communities to limelight. They distinguished the study of anthropology in the Indian context like social anthropology, cultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology and biographical anthropology etc. The norms and varieties of research on the craggy region and its population, the practice of hunting, gathering, shifting cultivation (Podu chasa) were started during the colonial rule by the British anthropologists. The administration of the colonial rule was fruitful by the extensive knowledge provided by the anthropologists and different fractional interest groups within the subcontinent. The statement made by the administrator, i.e. Curzon in the House of Lord on September 27, 1909, provides a clear eye on the footsteps of colonial rule and the expansion of the colonial understanding towards the erstwhile and the existing management of the inaccessible areas. His assertion was: "Our familiarity, not merely with the languages of the people of the East but with their customs, their feelings, their traditions, their history and religion, our capacity to understand what may be called the genius of the East, is the sole basis upon which we are likely to be able to maintain in the future the position we have won, and no step that can be taken to strengthen that position can be considered undeserving of the attention of his majesty's government or of a debate in the House of Lords"¹

1.1. Adivasi Ancestry of Odisha Land

"Odisha" is named after the tribal name "Odra" as the Munda language termed a clan in the name of "Orea". Kalinga, Odra and Utkala named after the names of the tribes residing in this area.² The illustrious history of Odisha delivered an assimilation of the high land and plain land socio-cultural string. The colonial government entered into the Odisha political scenario in 1803 and applied many devastative rules to regulate the economy and social uprisings like other parts of India. This land is a center place of forest products, landed property, minerals, raw materials and man power which would be used for the well-being of the British East India Company. These materials are concentrated in the highland areas and used and usage by the people of the hillside. So the British administrators intended to enter into the high land and grasped the opportunity of the innocent people's ignorance about the company diplomacy. The rich forest resources and minerals of Odisha land attracted the curiosity of the colonial administrators. They used the resources as raw materials for the upliftment of their empire in India and to boost the British east-India company simultaneously. The adjoining Dhenkanal and Keonjhar district of Odisha has the largest population and the main concentration of the Juang tribal community. According to the folk tale, the first Juang person was appeared in the central spot of the Keonjhar, i.e. Gonasika, where this man stayed and generation by generation they spread out other parts of the Keonjhar. Around 45 percent of the inhabitants are from the

¹Edward W Said. (1995). *Orientalism; Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London, p 214.

² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orissa>

tribal community in this district.³ The unique characteristics of their socio-cultural livelihood and the exploitation and the oppression by the intruder are the occurrence of discourse in this task.

1.1.1. Perception on Juang Community

The Juang is a fascinating tribe and one of the most “primeval” tribal communities Odisha as well as India.⁴ This work also gives an analysis of colonial and postcolonial anthropologist’s judgement towards the socio-cultural behavior of the communities of Odisha, especially the Juang communities. A major concern of this work is to enumerate the rhythmic promotion of ethos of the academicians and scholars in British nexus and self-reliance Indian intelligentsia. The rich forest resources and minerals of Odisha land attracted the curiosity of the colonial administrators. They used the resources as raw materials for the upliftment of their empire in India and to boost the British east-India company simultaneously. The prosperous environment and social uniqueness led the British Anthropologists and Administrators and their anthropological analysis is the main focus of this study. This reveals the colonial and postcolonial ethnographic details and its effects. A comparison study between the British anthropologists vs. the Indian anthropologists under the colonial governments as well as the liberated Indian scholar’s views on the provenance, evolution, transformation and the constant changes in the life style of the Juang community is the major concern of this study.

The initiative was taken by E. L. Samuel in 1856 with the socio-cultural life and especially the wearing and clothing of the young ladies of the community. He made the description of the pattern of the dress and jewelries of leaves cover up the private parts. The jewelries made of earthen beads covered the upper parts. He did not mention about the shifting agriculture. His work has importance on the instance of occupational information which spoke about the hunting and gathering was their main source of subsistence.⁵

To frame an Adivasi society, the occupational behavior was not the only domain. Their habitations and customs also meant a lot for a community settlement. Except the contribution of Samuells, E. T. Dalton reveals the fascinating actuality about the ethnographical details of Bengal presidency. His description on the construction of the tiny huts and the customs and the rituals of community settlement is a landmark in the pages of Juang history.⁶ It reveals the socio-religious sentiments and tendency of the dwellers of the Juang Pirh (The region where the Juangs inhabited) along with the stratagem of building shack. W. W. Hunter, the then Assistant Magistrate and collector of Birbhum area, the lower part of Bengal Presidency, came to the field of anthropological exploration, which bring the community history more transparent. With the publication of Imperial Gazetteers of India, his work “A Statistical Account of Bengal” gives the details on the wondering and gathering category of occupation among the Juang Adivasis. They depended on the collection of wild products and used to the practice of barter for foods and daily consumed goods.⁷

Except this the Indian scholars left no resolution behind to reinforce the analysis of the community. The early step was taken by N. K. Bose to disclose the community accomplishments and practices. Ensemble his research work is regarded as a milestone in the Juang community history as well as to the community antiquity of Odisha. The report of N. K. Bose brought the Juangs into the academic arena with a descriptive note on their marriage, kinship relation and the rituals according to the field work in the Pal Lahara region (now in the district of Dhenkanal). His contribution to the community history in 1928 was on the wearing of leaf aprons and the marriage system. The honorable marriage system was the form of bride getting but the marriage by theft was also practiced. Widow Remarriage and the divorce in the society was not possible and easy.⁸ In 1929, his work on Juang Association released, the family emotional bond, collection of kinship terms and usages in different situations. He also justified the classification of the kin members into special line of categories. The society was patriarchal in general but the kinship can be reciprocal from each side. Among many clans, there were emblem and representation of kinship coordination.⁹ Except this the ceremonial events of the Adivasis from birth to death and every stanza to practice Swidden agriculture made their life full of entertainment.¹⁰

Associate with the work of N. K. Bose in the case of kinship organization, J. Dash extended his contribution towards the analysis of exogamous groups i.e. Kutumba (agnates) and Bandhu (affinal). They are staying in the nearby villages and the cooperation of the kin members needed in the process of shifting cultivation. The nature of this cooperation was mutual. The exogamous categories maintained the interpersonal relations, assign reciprocal rights, duties, privileges as well as obligations towards each other.¹¹ Along with Dash, Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training institute analyzed and released the functional aspects of extensive Juang Adivasi kinship details

The Juang adivasi history attained a juncture with the advent of Verrier Elwin in the discipline of Indian anthropology. The rediscovery of Juang ethnography on the line of Bose was given an illustrious elucidation of the Juang adivasi in the Pal Lahara and Dhenkanal region. He classified the Juang community, i.e. Thaniyas (The original settlers) and the Bhagudiyas (The migrated Juangs to Dhenkanal/ fled from the high lands to the plains). He discussed about the leaf dresses like Bose and oral traditions such as dance,

³ District Statistical Handbook, Keonjhar, Govt. of Orissa, 1993, P. 8.

⁴ Government of India 1986, Report of Sixth Group Monitoring Meeting, New Delhi.

⁵ E. L. Samuells, 1856, “Notes on a forest race called Pattooas or Juang”, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal* 25: 295.

⁶ E. T. Dalton, 1872, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta.

⁷ W. W. Hunter, 1877, *A Statistical Account of Bengal* 19, London.

⁸ N. K. Bose, 1928, “Marriage and Kinship among the Juangs” *Man in India* 8 (4): 233-242.

⁹ N. K. Bose, 1929, “Juang Association” *Man in India* 9: 47-53.

¹⁰ N. K. Bose. 1930, “A Juang Ceremony” *Man in India* 10 (2-3): 178-181.

¹¹ J. Dash, 1989, “Juang Kinship Terms: An Analysis” *Adivasi* 29 (3-4): 29-38.

song, folk lore, dreams, surroundings, physical and metaphysical world, the wood carving on pillars of dormitory (Majang).¹²Elwin also describes the biological phenomenon of the Juang tribal community, which traced their origin of the Juang to Rusi and Rusini, their supreme ancestors.¹³

The 1960s report by the Saranaidu Bose on the Juang community, shows the exceeding population of this group from Kadalibadi areas under shifting cultivation.¹⁴ The combined fieldwork of the S. P. O. Rout and Charles Mc Dougall resulted the social structure of the Juangs, relationships, age, sex, youth dormitory and organization, life cycle of the Juanga. All these reflects in Mc Dougall's PhD thesis and Rout's monograph.¹⁵ The medicinal practices in the traditional method among the Juang community was the vital scrutinize of the B. C. Choudhury. They believed in the supernatural powers, magico-religious rites, magical spell and enchanted objects were the indigenous mode of treatment.¹⁶ Further N. Patanaik took the sample of five villages, both quantitative and qualitative research he had done. He vividly furnished their day to day calendar work-rhythm, their food habits, fertility, and dietary aspects of the Juangs of Keonjhar.¹⁷

2. Conclusion

The community settlement and its breakthrough is the momentous in the study of the overhead. The evolution and interpretations on the way of acting of the Juang community illustrate the unlikeness and supremacy in the historical scrutiny. This study of community added a landmark in the arena of primitive community research. The procedure of house building, the exceptional socio-cultural activities, their religious tendencies, the kinship organization and especially the shifting cultivation procedure and the mythologies and adopted folklores records the whole ungreedily world of the adivasis. The changing behavior of the Juangs with the advent of the colonial power and after the liberation of the Indian Territory is clearly visible in the article. The interference of the Government, the influence of the NGOs, and the establishment of Juang Development Agency is the outcome of the post-independence development in the scenario of the community. The organic links between the colonial and post-colonial socio-cultural awakening among the Juang community are apparent in various ways. More observations and experimentations are needed to bring the ethos and norms of the Juangs.

¹²V. Elwin, 1948, "Notes on the Juang" *Man in India* 28 (1-2): 1-143; 1954, *Tribal Myths of Orissa*, London: Oxford University Press, Pp. XXXIX-XLI.

¹³V. Elwin, 1954, *Tribal Myths of Orissa*, London: Oxford University Press. P. K. Mohapatra, 1989, "Myths of Juang- An Anthropological Analysis", *Adibasi* 29 (3-4): 21-23.

¹⁴S. Bose, 1961, "Land use Survey in a Juanga Village" *Man in India* 41 (3): 172-83.

¹⁵C. McDougall, 1963, *The Social Structure of the hill Juanga*, New Mexico: University of New Mexico.

S. P. Rout, 1969, "Handbook on the Juang" *Adibasi* 11 (1-2): 1-97.

¹⁶B. Choudhury, 1964, "Traditional methods of Treatment of Disease among the Juang of Dhenkanal" *Adibasi* 5 (2): 35-40.

¹⁷N. Patanaik, 1986, "The Juang of Orissa: Their Work and Food Intake, Demography and Fertility" *Adibasi* (3): 25-65.

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