

A VISIT TO THE JUANGPIRH

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The day was dazzling with the light of sun and the place was calm and quiet with the pleasing sounds of forest-birds in a heavenly environment. It was the first glad experience to meet such kind of innocent people and to know about their simple and environment-saviour life. The men and women were half and one-dressed simultaneously with some kind of traditional silver ornaments. The place is called *Juangpirh*. According to Sahu²⁴² *Pirh* is related to the political system only used by Bhuyan and Juang tribes. Each *Pirh* is divided by the king into three *Pirh* for the easy administration and there were many villages under a *Pirh* with one head for each called *Sardar*. Even from time to time for their comfort of life, they are changing their original habitation from those districts to Cuttack, Balasore and Phulbani and some other neighbouring blocks and districts. But more than half of the tribes are available still in their original tenanted Kendujhar district only. According to the Juang belief (a major tribe of Kendujhar district) they are the original inhabitant of the area and their ancestors have been originated from the bank of Baitarani river. The Baitarani river is sourced from the Gonasika hill and the river is also called Guptaganga (secret/disappeared Ganga) because of it has been disappeared after few meters of flowing on the rock bed path of Gonasika hill top. The hill is sloppy even on the days of summer with the secretion of secret water of the stream with full of natural beauty, cool weather and deep forest. A small village is also named as Guptaganga on the name of the sacred Baitarani and one goddess Ganga temple is also built there over the origin place of Baitarani. Two holes like the shape of cow-nose with thick waters flowing on the same force over the year, that is why the rock is named Gonasika (literally means ‘cow nose’ in Odia language) and the temple is a famous place for the shrine of lord Shiva and Ganga. The same force of the stream water of the whole year is the most interesting thing every visitor like to see and believe that it is the miracle of lord Siva.

Out of 533 tribal communities available all over India, seventy-five kinds are coming under Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and thirteen out of seventy-five are available in Odisha. Among those thirteen types Juang is one (See Table No.1). ‘Juang’ literally means ‘Man’ and

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²⁴² Champak Kumar Sahu: ‘Bhuyan and Juang Rebellion During British Rule’ (2014). European Academic Research. November, Vol 02 (8), Pg 11076-11087.

they are the first human species of the earth as per their belief. The Juang community uses Juang language to converse within their community which is the Austroasiatic language of the Munda family, but have no script till yet. With the states entry into the forest and tribal original inhabitants with modernisation process accepted the Odia language and started to modernise themselves steadily with other better developed communities. For the betterment of life-style and access of better facilities, some of them have been migrated into other areas of the same and nearest districts like Dhenkanal where they even started to learn Odia language and the next generations going far from their culture and language (as some villagers argued in a close discussion). The Juang are divided into two types by their settlement pattern as *Thaniya* and *Bhagudiya*. Those who reside in their original inhabitant called *Thaniya* and the revers as *Bhagudiya* (migrators). They also referred to themselves as *Patra Savars* or *Pattus* by local name. *Patra* means leaf and *Savar*²⁴³ means one kind of tribes. This name of *Patra* may be because of they were wearing leafs in the time of their ancestors. Even they claim themselves as the clan of a part of Savar tribe, those community people use to wear leafs. Before they were the hunter-gathers and steadily started shifting cultivation (slash and burn agriculture) with the sturdy scarcity of forest-foods. Even the government has banned shifting and podu cultivation, for which some of them now got settled in permanent cultivation in their small field which is insufficient to earn the whole year grain for their family. And even it is too difficult to get a small land for cultivation after the forest land has been captured by the forest department and the tribes are not able to get some minor forest products to earn little money to strengthen their family or to have some kind of seasonal foods like mushroom, mango, variety of barriers and many more. Some of them also became migrated labours and a few are going nearest villages to do the carpentry or the house-building works for the family sake though are not exports on this job. Because of their inaccessibility of job opportunities and the earning is insufficient for the whole year even for the bread and butter of the family, the Juang children and old people going to get some minor forest products from the forest just to help the family economically, but it is out of the forest captured land. The economic problem makes the students drop-out from the school which directly discriminates access to their Fundamental Right (Article 21 A)

²⁴³ Savar is one type of tribe available in Odisha state. This indigenous community have special identity and prestige in Hindu religious life in Odisha. The non-Brahmin Priests in the Jagannath temple of Puri (according to the Hindu religion this place is one among four abodes) are designated as Daita and Soaro who are the descendants of the Savar tribe. And even the belief of worshipping trees, stones and some natural resources are still exists in Jagannath culture as even a great part of the culture of Odisha. It is believed that the name 'Jagannath' is the modification of "Jagant" which was another name of "Kitung", the Chief Savara deity. Even it is believed that Jagannath was the deity of Biswvasu (a savar king). See Pattanaik (Sasmita Pattanaik: 'The Cult of Lord Lagannath'. 2013, Odisha Review, October, Pg 01-04) for further references.

to free and compulsory education (RTE Act 2009). The poverty makes here excludes people from their access to right with the children as the weaker among the discriminated Scheduled Tribes.

Their chief diet includes Rice and ragi, supplemented with fruits, roots and tubers. After getting restricted by forest department from forest grains and fruits which was their main source of food, now getting affected by malnutrition and other diseases because of their low quality of foods. Occasionally they also take non-veg. items like meat, fish, egg, beans and various birds. Men consume alcoholic beverages regularly, while women drink only on festive occasions but the difference here is like before it was homemade called *Handia*, now mostly youths getting foreign liquors. Rice is the major food of Juang. They harvest paddy which is even not sufficient for half of the year as shared by them in a close conversation. Even the experience shows that most of them use to take water-rice (called *Pakhala* in Odia language) and green leafs in both lunch and dinner in every season which may be the cause of various diseases with poverty ridden weakness. Some seasonal foods they are getting which is very less and to get some other important daily-use household goods they do exchange sometimes with other in the weekly market.

Juang have their unique culture, sculpture, tradition, social identity, political union, religious faiths and beliefs, morals, norms, ideology and co-cooperativeness within the clan and even they are very kind, sober and co-operative by nature. They enjoy their life in group with their community people in a combined social order with the sharing of each other's suffering and enjoyment. They belief on the norm of their village-head and do respects the religious and social heads of the community also.

The area is mostly affected by malaria and the government has taken some preventives to provide safe drinking water before some three years around. Under the scheme in every little distance water tanks has been build-up. But the villagers of Gonasika (a Gram Panchayat of *Juangpirh* area) area specially have complained that those tanks got settled by the name sake only where getting drinking water is different, no water is available at all many times. They depend upon natural sources of narrow Baitarani stream from Gonasika hill for their daily uses.

They performs their traditional dance especially on the day of various festivals like *Puspunei*, *Raja Parva*, *Makar Sankranti*, *Amba Nua*, *Pirha Puja*, *Akhaya Trutiya*, *Asarhi* and many more with the rhythm of *Changu* (traditional musical instrument made with leather and wood). They prefers to dance in group with holding of each other's arm shows their closeness and strong

bond towards the community. And even now hunting became their leisure amusement because of the interference of the forest department and they do it in group now just in few special festivals for community feast purpose. In marriage ceremony they serve feast to the villagers with special non-veg. items mostly mutton for which they do animal husbandry and sometimes for economic purpose.

The government has been established a medical with the facility of providing free health check-up and medicines for those vulnerable. Some of the villagers complained about irregularity of the doctor and providing one type of medicine and tablets for any kind of diseases. That is why they do now not prefer to go to the medical and getting back to their traditional worship-based and by applying Ayurveda medicinal-plants cure style.

As they use the same water source for drinking, cooking, washing, taking bath of themselves and their domestic-cattle are getting affected by diarrhoea, malaria, various skin diseases like eczema, worm infection and many more. Sometimes they believe the *Gramsiri* (village deity) became angry so they have been suffered of diseases, not having rain, children and domestic animals getting died etc. Then they offer chicken, liquor and worships to the goddess for their welfare of the community in the community house called *Majang*²⁴⁴ (dormitory-house of the community). They believe on various supernatural powers and do worship to them with the natural sources of power like sun, wind and water as their god or deity with some ghosts.

Even after the establishment of JDA micro project for their overall development, there was unsatisfactory progress on educational attainment of Juang. According to the 2001 Census, there were only 25.4 per cent literate among Juang. Even the Juang matriculated number was very less as three per cent for male and less than one per cent for female²⁴⁵. Those who got little educated, through non-formal and adult education scheme under Gyan Mandir, Adult Literacy Centres, Anganwadis, village workers like 'Gram Parichalaka' and 'Gyan Maa's' efforts and very recently coming under governmental education system. The main problem of the nearest Guptaganga primary school children shared that the Odia language, which they are not able to understand properly. The incident happened in Duarsuni village, Odisha as like this:

²⁴⁴ *Majang* (dormitory-house) is the community house of Juang, where they worship, do merry making and the unmarried male youths sleeps in night time and getting technical education regarding hunting, gathering of food and other community norms. Even there always has been thick firewood on burning and people sleeps there when feel sick and suffers from fever and cold.

²⁴⁵ Abhaya Narayan Nayak: 'Primitive Tribal Groups of Odisha: An Evaluation of Census Data' (2010). Orissa Review. December, Pg 202-205.

Paina Juang, a primary school Juang girl dropped out from school after just few months of her entrance. She found it extremely difficult to follow the language of instructions of Odia language. Her parents agreed that such an education was irrelevant for her Language barriers lead to low enrolment rates, high dropout rates, and frequent absenteeism among Scheduled Tribe children²⁴⁶.

Recently the MLE (Multilingual education teacher) got appointed from the same community under SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) and their effort to write new books based on their own language also became success. But the problem is, appointed teachers are less in number so not able to attend five classes everyday as one teacher got appointed per school.

After all Juang Development Agency, got established on 10th March 1978 and the initial special officers (IASs getting appointed as special officers of micro projects) has been worked very seriously for the development of the community. But the recent officer not even coming to the headquarter of the agency in Gonasika Gram Panchayat and living in Kendujhar town itself as shared by the villagers and also personally experienced. That may be a major reason of the underdevelopment of the community, which should be taken into consideration.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs looks after all matters of tribal economic development under the Ministry of Planning Commission including economic development, proposal design and implementation other than Tribal Sub Plan, Finance Commission and the Department of Economic Affairs. In a Human Rights era all are talking about their discrimination on individual and group level, but the policy must prioritise the most underdeveloped at least to get access to their basic needs. Still the policies need special review and should be on special need basis and should be differing from community to community with the appropriateness of their problem and perspectives. Of course Juang community coming under development and modernisation, but it can be possible in a better and rushing way with more active participants like NGOs, ITDA, special officer with other officers of JDA, the tribal development ministry, researchers and even active social workers in an overall manner.

Note:

Table No. 1: NAME OF THE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS/PRIMITIVE TRIBAL GROUPS) (PTGs) IN INDIA (STATE / UT WISE)

²⁴⁶ UNICEF 2010. Education in Orissa: A Language to Call Their Own Learning from Practice: Strategies for Promoting Equity and Inclusion. December: 4-6. [http://www.unicef.org/india/Booklet_\(High-res_for_Print\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/india/Booklet_(High-res_for_Print).pdf) (Available on 11th July 2014).

Name of the State/UTs	Name of the PTGs
Andhra Pradesh	Bodo Gadaba, Bondo Poroja, Chenchu, Dongria Khond, Gutob Gadaba, Khond Poroja, Kolam, Kondareddis, Konda Savaras, Kutia Khond, Parengi Poroja, Thoti
Bihar (Including Jharkhand)	Asurs, Birhor, Birjia, Hill Kharia, Korwas, Mal Paharia, Parhaiyas, Sauria Paharia, Savar
Gujarat	Kathodi, Kotwalia, Padhar, Siddi, Kolgha
Karnataka	Jenu Kuruba, Koraga
Kerala	Cholanaikayan (a section of Kattunaickans), Kadar, Kattunayakan, Kurumbas, Koraga
Madhya Pradesh (including Chhattisgarh)	Abujh Marias, Baigas, Bharias, Hill Korbas, Kamars, Saharias, Birhor
Maharashtra	Katkaria (Kathodia), Kolam, Maria Gond
Manipur	Marram Nagas
Orissa (Odisha)	Birhor, Bondo, Didayi, Dongria-Khond, Juangs , Kharias, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Sauras, Lodhas, Mankidias, Paudi Bhuyans, Soura, Chuktia Bhunjia
Rajasthan	Seharias
Tamil Nadu	Kattu Nayakans, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyans, Todas
Tripura	Buxas, Rajis
Uttar Pradesh (including Uttarakhand)	Buxas, Rajis
West Bengal	Birhor, Lodhas, Totos
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Sentinelese, Shom Pens

(Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2015)