

## Ethnicity Diversity In Mayurbhanj District

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### I. Introduction

The term community comes from two words with a single meaning. “*Communis*” comes from a combination of the Latin prefix *com-* (which means ‘together’) and the word “*munis*” probably originally derived from the Etruscan word *munis-* (meaning "to have the charge of"). In sociology the concept of community has spawned infinite debate, and sociologists are yet to reach an agreement on the definition of the term. Traditionally, a ‘community’ has been defined as a group of interacting people living in a common location. The word is often used to refer to a group that is organized around common values and social cohesion within a shared geographical location, generally in social units larger than a household.

Mayurbhanj, being a bordering district of Jharkhand and West Bengal, in-migration and out-migration have been continuous feature of the district. The migrants have been continuously attracted by the fertile land and vast forest resources of the district. The migrants carried with them their own culture and tradition. Thus Mayurbhanj has been a home to a number of communities with distinct culture, language, dress, traditions and behavioral patterns. They have also well defined customary boundaries of operation. The district population has remained heterogeneous. Differences in the culture and ethnicity of population have been a characteristic feature of the district. All the communities are not equally numerous. Though some communities are relatively small in size, they have their own cultural identity. Varieties of human communities living in Mayurbhanj bear the imprint of their past culture, historical events.

### II. Features Of Community Heterogeneity In Mayurbhanj

The discrete demographic fusion with distinct community groups in Mayurbhanj has been impacted and shaped by a number of factors. **First**, the district population, besides the sons of the soil has been boosted by the assemblage of several castes and community groups migrating from outside. **Secondly**, there are several distinct tribal groups residing within their own cultural domains, speaking diverse languages and dialects, and practicing their age-old traditional ways of economic and community life. **Thirdly**, the tribes of Mayurbhanj have experienced socio-economic changes over several decades. Some of their rituals and customs have been influenced by the customs and rituals of non-tribals and the Hindu neighbors. According to a survey conducted by the Tribal Research Bureau, the first non-tribals to settle down in the hills and tribal areas were the SCs, namely - Doms and Panas. These people lived in the close proximities of the Kandhas and Saoras. Similarly, milkmen, oilmen and others live with the Bhuiyans. Many researchers put this relationship of the tribals with the non-tribals as parasitism; but more often than not it is a symbiotic relationship between them. Sometimes the non-tribals exploited the simple and illiterate tribal as the latter failed to understand the complexities of transaction. The resultant tension between the tribals and non-tribals often surfaced in the form of violent outbursts requiring direct intervention by the Government. The Kol insurrection and Bamanghaty disturbances were instances of the tribals’ refusal to accept outside system. **Fourthly**, with the intrusion of the non-tribals in the tribal areas, the latter were brought into the fold of feudal administration. The feudal lords had unlimited power over the lives of their subjects. The feudal lords functioned through the intermediaries like Sardars, Tahsildars and Lakrajders. The tribals lived in forests and Mayurbhanj had vast forest resources. But, the tribals had no freedom to enjoy the forest resources for their livelihood without the permission of the authorities. Making of agricultural implements with wood collected from forests unauthorisedly called for penalty and the intermediaries exploited the innocent tribals under one pretext or the other. **Fifthly**, land alienation is another problem faced by almost all the tribal communities. The non-tribal creditors uprooted the tribal borrowers from their land by indulging in usurious practices. The problem did not receive the attention of government until very recently. The hapless tribals are yet to understand the protective impact of law in this regard. Alienation of tribals from their land is deemed as violation of human rights. Now-a-days, government as well as non-government organizations are making efforts to create awareness about this among the tribals. **Lastly**, urbanization, industrialization and interaction with various communities, have changed the outlook of the tribes to a great extent. A large number of tribes go out in search of work in towns and urban centers, from where they return with new ideas and practices, which become sources of change for others. It can be seen that the divide between various communities is narrowing down over time.

**Demographic features of communities of Mayurbhanj**

The Scheduled Tribes constitute 22.21% of the total population in Odisha. The tribals of the state are divided into 62 sub-groups, of which 18 live in Mayurbhanj district. Of the total population in the district, tribals constituted 57.87% in 1991 which came down to 56.59% in 2001 and rose to 58.72% in 2011 (Table 1). The major tribes in the district are Santal (45.32%), Kolha (17.55%), Bhumijas (12.29%), Bathudis (8.59%) and ‘Bhuinyas’ (4.60%) (Table: 2). The other important tribes with about 2% of the district tribal population are Gonds, Sauntis and Mundas. In terms of number, these tribes are followed by Kharia (1.31%) and Ho (1.04%). These communities are spread over in almost all the blocks in the districts. The proportion of the remaining 9 tribes is less than 1% of the district’s total tribal population. The proportion of Kols (0.04%) is the lowest among the tribal communities. They are seen in Bijatola, Rairangpur, Barasahi, Kaptipada and Kuliana blocks. Other minor communities like Bhumijas can be traced in Bangiriposi, Shamakhunta and Morada blocks. Oraons who are equally less in number are concentrated in Rasgovindpur and Tiringi blocks.

**Table 1: ST and SC population in Mayurbhanj, 1991, 2001 and 2011**

	1991				2001				2011			
	Total	Male	Female	FMR	Total	Male	Female	FMR	Total	Male	Female	FMR
<b>ST</b>	1090626 (57.87)	546349 (57.38)	544277 (58.37)	996	1258459 (56.59)	631149 (56.19)	627310 (57.01)	994	1479576 (58.72)	730487 (58.15)	749089 (59.29)	1025
<b>SC</b>	131765 (6.99)	66844 (7.02)	64921 (6.96)	971	170835 (7.68)	85844 (7.64)	84991 (7.72)	990	184682 (7.33)	92127 (7.33)	92555 (7.33)	1005

Source: Census of India

Notably, as in other parts of the country, gender presence varies significantly across these cultural communities. The overall sex ratio in all ages or the female – male ratio i.e., females for 1000 males in case of the STs decreased from 996 to 994 between 1991 and 2001, while there was an increase in the sex ratio to 1025 in 2011. This is a favourable trend among the tribal communities as compared to the state sex ratio of 979 in 2011. The tribes having high FMR are Mahali, Mundari, Shabar Lodha, Bathudi, Bhunjia, Gond, Ho, Kharia, Kol, Kolha etc., whereas Lodha, Oraon and Saora have lower FMR of 959, 962 and 965 respectively.

**Table: 2 ST Population of Mayurbhanj**

Sl No	ST Groups	Total		Males	Female	FMR Ratio	Rural		Urban	
		No.	% of ST Population				No.	%	No.	%
1	Lodha	4250	0.34	2170	2080	959	4247	99.93	3	0.07
2	Mahali	8040	0.64	3956	4084	1032	7935	98.69	105	1.31
3	Munda	23945	1.92	12022	11923	992	23316	97.37	629	2.63
4	Mundari	5762	0.46	2801	2961	1057	5613	97.41	149	2.59
5	Oraon	4568	0.37	2328	2240	962	4537	99.32	31	0.68
6	Santal	565268	45.32	284661	280607	986	554210	98.04	11058	1.96
7	Saora	4208	0.34	2142	2066	965	3586	85.22	622	14.78
8	Shabar Lodha	9862	0.79	4908	4954	1009	8160	82.74	1702	17.26
9	Saunti	24437	1.96	12259	12178	993	24224	99.13	213	0.87
10	Bethudi	107129	8.59	53441	53688	1005	103729	96.83	3400	3.17
11	Bhuiyan	57328	4.6	28944	28384	981	55951	97.60	1377	2.40
12	Bhumija	153308	12.29	77154	76154	987	147327	96.10	5981	3.90
13	Bhumia	3224	0.26	1599	1625	1016	3217	99.78	7	0.22
14	Gond	24316	1.97	12025	12591	1047	24217	98.38	399	1.62
15	Ho	12971	1.04	6428	6543	1018	12864	99.18	107	0.82
16	Kharia	16342	1.31	8094	8248	1019	16267	99.54	75	0.46
17	Kol	3033	0.24	1505	1528	1015	2987	98.48	46	1.52
18	Kolha	218886	17.55	109052	109834	1007	217245	99.25	1641	0.75
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1247177</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>625489</b>	<b>621688</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>1219632</b>	<b>97.79</b>	<b>27545</b>	<b>2.21</b>

Source: 2001 census

The tribals (about 98%) mostly live in villages and forest areas. Being children of nature, they are averse to the artificial urban way of life. Further more, due to lack of skill, they find it difficult to earn their livelihood in the modern sectors of the urban centres. Among most of the tribal communities in the district, the urbanites constitute less than 3% of their population. Among the Shabaras and Saoras, the urban concentration is high, with 17.26% and 14.78% of their total population. These tribes are proportionately less in number and are dispersed throughout the district. They have been pushed out of their rural abode to the towns by the dominant tribes.

During 1991 to 2001, the proportion of SC population in the district increased from 6.99% to 7.68% but it came down to 7.33% in 2011. Both ST and SC population have increased over the past two decades, but the rate of increase is more among the SCs compared to the STs. FMR among the SCs increased from 971 in 1991 to 990 in 2001 to 1005 in 2011. The FMR among the SCs in 2011 higher than the district average, but

lower than that of the STs. There are 58 sub-categories of SCs in the district. The important among the sub-categories, which comprise more than 1% of the district's SC population, have been listed in the Table 2. No particular community dominates among the SCs like the Santals among the STs. While the Patials/ Patikars constitute 21.44% of the ST population, the shares of the Dhobis and Doms are 15.41% and 12.04% respectively (Table-3). The Panas are also no less numerous as they account for 9.75% of the SC population in the district. Most of the SCs live in the rural areas; but their urban concentration (9.60%) is higher than that of the STs (2.21%). Urbanization among the SCs is more than that of all the caste groups of the district. The SCs perform odd jobs and services, which are high in demand in the urban areas. Migration amongst SC groups, such as, Bariki, Dhanwar, Doshada, Kori, Manga, Mehtar/Bhangi, Pasi, Tanla, and Valmiki is found to be higher.

**Table: 3** SC Population of Mayurbhanj District

SI No	SC Groups	Total		Male	Female	FMR	Rural		Urban	
		No.	% of SC Population				No.	%	No.	%
1	Amat	5.775	9865	5023	4842	964	9823	99.57	42	0.43
2	Chamar/Mochi	1.389	2373	1181	1192	1009	2097	88.37	276	11.63
3	Dewar	4.117	7033	3629	3404	938	6234	92.9	499	7.1
4	Dhobi/Dhobi	15.41	26326	13337	12989	974	23609	89.68	2717	10.32
5	Dom/Dombo	12.036	20561	10341	10220	988	18285	88.93	2276	11.07
6	Ganda	2.802	4786	2273	2513	1106	4711	98.43	75	1.57
7	Ghasi	3.916	6690	3330	3360	1009	5110	76.38	1580	23.62
8	Haddi	5.764	9847	4966	4881	983	6739	68.44	3108	31.56
9	Karua	1.492	2549	1259	1290	1025	2247	88.15	302	11.85
10	Pan/Pano	9.75	16656	8329	8327	1000	15846	95.14	810	4.86
11	Pantauti	4.664	7967	3961	4006	1011	7511	94.28	456	5.72
12	Patial/Patikar	21.439	36626	18309	18317	1000	33984	92.79	2642	7.21
13	Tamudia	3.705	6330	3191	3139	984	6293	99.42	37	0.58
	Total	92.259	157609	79129	78480	992	142489	90.19	14820	9.81
	<b>District Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>170835</b>	<b>85844</b>	<b>84991</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>154440</b>	<b>90.4</b>	<b>16395</b>	<b>9.6</b>

Source: 2001 census

Over time, many tribal social institutions have undergone changes. With the spread of education and scientific knowledge, the traditional faiths and beliefs are losing ground and rational thinking is taking their place. Earlier, in some tribal communities, marriage was taking place by snatching and elopement. But in modern times, the marriages are being held in the same way as in the non-tribal households. This has added to the sanctity of marriage but the rate of divorce has gone up considerably in the area. The low caste people take to Christianity for its egalitarian philosophy and to escape from the social discrimination against them. The non-Hindu communities being proportionately (about 16%) low in the district, their influence is insubstantial.

### III. Block Wise Distribution Of STs & SCs

The STs are found in all the blocks of the district and constitute a dominant part of the block population. Their share in the in the block population is two-thirds or more in 15 blocks, more than 50% in 7 blocks and less in only 4 blocks. The least ST populated block (39.8%) is Suliapada. On the contrary, SCs are a minority in all the blocks. The highest proportion of SCs (16.32%) is in Sukruli block, followed by Thakurmunda block (15.57%). The STs are less inclined for urban life for which their proportion is low in the urban centers. Only a relatively high proportion (17.26%) and Saora (14.78%) are urbanities. In the case of other communities, around 2% only of their population live in urban centres. But the situation is different in the case of SCs with relatively more concentration in the urban centers of the district. There are more urbanites among the Haddis and Ghasis, as the urban dwellers account for 31.56% and 23.62% of their district population. FMR of both SCs and STs vary across blocks as the community composition in the blocks and FMR of communities differ (Tables 2 and 3).

**Table: 4** Block wise Distribution of ST and SC Communities in Mayurbhanj

Block	STs. Population				FMR	SCs Population				FMR
	Total	Male	Female	Population % age		Total	Male	Female	Population %age	
Bahalda	42679	21126	21553	56.27	1020	4347	2163	2184	5.73	1010
Bangiriposi	62151	31266	30885	67.84	988	4824	2410	2414	5.26	1002
Barasahi	63883	32592	31291	71.7	960	11534	5876	5658	2.9	963
Baripada	43284	22089	21195	48.82	960	1768	891	877	8.81	984
Betanati	52122	26421	25701	40.43	973	11189	5632	5557	8.68	987

Bijatola	44567	21853	22714	76.61	1039	2099	1021	1078	3.61	1056
Bisoi	45266	22301	22965	67.84	1030	3485	1725	1760	5.22	1020
G.B. Nagar	35665	17929	17736	53.78	989	8473	4302	4171	12.78	970
Jamada	41198	20372	20826	73.83	1022	3131	1545	1586	5.61	1027
Jashipur	59888	29901	29987	67.4	1003	7106	3530	3576	8.1	1013
Kaptipada	80347	40569	39778	63.58	981	5540	2337	3203	5.09	1371
Karanjia	50527	25255	25272	62.1	1001	9939	5015	4924	12.21	982
Khunta	53577	26888	26689	78.2	993	2460	1212	1248	3.59	1030
Kuliana	58522	29793	28729	66.01	964	4829	2459	2370	5.45	964
Kusumi	52146	25547	26599	63.44	1041	5688	2777	2911	6.92	1048
Morada	39874	20174	19700	42.41	977	9183	4631	4552	9.76	983
Rairangpur	29943	14918	15025	53.41	1007	4755	2366	2389	8.48	1010
Raruan	29918	14904	15014	50.67	1007	5208	2592	2616	8.82	1009
Rasgovindpur	44764	22580	22184	53.52	982	5562	2826	2736	6.65	968
Saraskana	50770	25685	25085	64.4	977	5527	2766	2761	3.9	998
Shamakhunta	45641	22923	22718	56.8	991	3414	2159	1255	6.18	581
Sukuruli	27551	13609	13942	52.74	1024	8525	4215	4310	16.32	1023
Suliapada	36666	18712	17954	39.8	959	5330	2683	2647	5.78	987
Thakurmunda	57034	28218	28816	63.29	1021	14036	7015	7021	15.57	1001
Tiringi	36231	17780	18451	74.61	1038	2895	1490	1405	5.96	943
Udala	49086	24634	24452	73.4	993	3593	1798	1795	5.37	998
<b>Rural Total</b>	<b>1233300</b>	<b>618039</b>	<b>615261</b>	<b>60.9</b>	<b>996</b>	<b>154440</b>	<b>77436</b>	<b>77004</b>	<b>7.41</b>	<b>994</b>
Baripada M	15712	8413	7299	13.7	868	9833	5081	4752	10.1	935
Karanjia NAC	5638	2852	2786	26.3	977	3918	2016	1902	18.3	943
Rairangpur NAC	3827	1816	2011	8.3	1170	1814	900	914	8.3	1016
Udala NAC	2699	1395	1304	23	935	830	411	419	7.1	1019
<b>Urban Total</b>	<b>27876</b>	<b>14476</b>	<b>13400</b>	<b>17.83</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>16395</b>	<b>8408</b>	<b>7987</b>	<b>10.96</b>	<b>950</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1261176</b>	<b>632515</b>	<b>628661</b>	<b>56.6</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>170835</b>	<b>85844</b>	<b>84991</b>	<b>7.68</b>	<b>990</b>

### Occupational distribution of communities in Mayurbhanj

There is a cultural difference in the work participation pattern of different religious groups and communities. Work participation of the tribals is higher than that of other communities as both men and women among them work on equal footing. The level of work participation of the Hindus is higher than that of the minor communities. Muslim women do not work outside home. As Muslims originally do not belong to the place, they are not involved in traditional occupations. The avoidance relationship between the Hindus and Muslims also makes it difficult for the latter to get works in the conservative rural areas.

The incidence of poverty is very high among the tribals. Therefore, a number of tribes in Mayurbhanj have moved to mining, industrial and urban areas in search of a secured living through wage-labour. The process has started long since prior to independence. Mostly persons from the advanced tribal communities, Such as, Santal, Saora, Bethudi, Bhuinyan and Gond have been migrating to the neighboring industrial centres like Jamshedpur, Kolkata and Rourkela to work.

According to 2001 census, 27.96% of the total working population is engaged in cultivation among which 36.63% are male workers and 16.32% are female workers. Further, 38.37% of workers are involved as agricultural laborers of which 30.71% are male and 48.64% are female which is comparatively higher than the male counterparts.

Workers in household industry constitute 14.51% of workers. There is a marked gap in this respect between the male workers and female workers; respective percentages being 6.96% for male and 24.64 for female. Gender divisions of work are quite different from each other. Among the male members, 47.56% are coming under non-working population. However, among women the proportion of the non-working is particularly high. This low participation of women in working sector is the result of social rules and regulation which is keeping them back. The SC community is more involved in house hold industry than the ST community.

Other workers are those who are involved in non-farm activities like trade, commerce and services and constitute 19.17% of the total work force. In recent time this region has been characterized by the seasonal out-migration of many rural citizens to urban areas (even out side the district and state) in search of work.

#### IV. Education Amongst Communities

Spread of education among the tribals of the district is very slow, though promotion of educational interests among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has been emphasized since independence.

**Table 5: Literacy among the STs and SCs of Mayurbhanj, 1991 & 2001**

Items	STs		SCs		ALL	
	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
<b>Total</b>	24.1	38.8	37.79	53.56	37.88	51.91
<b>Male</b>	37.74	54.11	52.85	68.29	51.84	65.76
<b>Female</b>	10.5	23.51	22.12	38.84	23.68	37.84
<b>Gender Gap</b>	27.24	30.6	30.73	29.45	28.16	28.92

*Source: Census of India, 1991 & 2001*

The STs are the least literate among the caste categories in the district. In 1991, only 24.10% of them were literate, while the literacy rates of the SCs and all castes were 37.79% and 37.88% respectively. The situation was no different in 2001. While 53.56% of the SCs and 51.91% of all castes in the district were literate, the corresponding proportion of the STs was only 38% lying far behind that of others. The increase in literacy rate during the decade of the SCs was higher than that of the STs and all castes taken together. As against about 14% increase in the literacy rates of the STs and all caste categories, the improvement was 17% in the case of the SCs. As regards literacy, SCs are at par with the general caste people.

A similar picture is obtained when female literacy is considered. The proportions of literate women among the STs were 10.50% and 23.51% respectively in 1991 and 2001. The corresponding figures for SCs were 22.12% and 38.84%, which were not different from the corresponding figures for all caste categories in these two census years. Gender gap in literacy among different caste categories has not changed during this 10 years period – hovering around 30%. It has, of course, worsened among the STs by increasing from 27.24% to 30.60%. Lack of exposure and social mobility and the problem of inter-cultural communications are some of the retarding factors in tribal education. The tribals have their own languages and dialects, which are different from the medium of instruction used in class rooms. As the teacher and the taught in the tribal areas belong to different cultures, the communication barrier becomes almost insoluble.

#### V. Varied Tribes In Mayurbhanj District

Mayurbhanj is home to a number of tribal communities. Each community has distinct features. Each community has common ancestry, language and culture. The members of a community are related to one another through family, marriage and kinship. The communities are organized in certain characteristically organized social groups. The life-style, beliefs and values of the communities differ. Some of these tribes of the district like Santals and Saoras have developed their own scripts. Each community has its unique settlement pattern and house type, which varies from scattered settlements to arranged patterns. The food and drinking habits of the tribal communities are almost alike, but the methods of preparation of food vary.

**Santal:** In Mayurbhanj, the Santals are the most predominant tribal community. The Santals in the district account for 75.27% of the total Santal population of the state and 45.32% of the tribals in the district. The Santals speak Santali language. It was a spoken language till very recently when its own script was developed which belongs to the Munda group of the Austro-Asiatic sub-group. Over time, because of frequent interaction with the Oriyas, the Santals can speak and understand Oriya. The Santal economy is mainly based on agriculture. Collecting, hunting and fishing are subsidiary occupations. In the past, the Santals were nomadic in habits and used to wander to places in search of agricultural land. But now they have taken to settled agriculture and have their permanent place of residence. The Santal villages consist of a number of households along a long street with rows of dwellings. The Santals' sense of sanitation and hygiene are worth emulating. The Santal women keep their houses neat and clean. The women paint the walls of their houses with different colours.

**Kolha:** Kolha is one of the major tribal community of the district constituting 17.5% of its tribal population. Kolha community is one of the largest community in the state. Their families are nuclear in composition and monogamy is their common practice with the rare occurrence of polygamous families. Since Kolhas are in contact with Hindu culture, most of their villages have people from ohjer castes also. They follow a linear pattern of settlement with two rows of houses facing each other along a common road. Earlier, the Kolhas subsisted on hunting and collecting, but their gradual contact with other communities led them to take to

cultivation and adopt plain-land wet agriculture. Rice is their staple food. But the lack of agricultural land is forcing them to engage themselves as daily laborers. This has further jeopardized the traditional agricultural economy of the Kolhas. Though life is individual centric, communal labour still plays a role in agriculture. Labour groups comprising some members of the community carry on agricultural operations together for a share in the crops. Hunting is no more considered a means of subsistence. But communal hunting in which all the people of a village participate is being practiced as a symbol of social integrity. The Kolhas observe social functions very elaborately and spend lavishly in entertaining their fellow villagers. They practice monogamy. Religion pervades every walk of a Kolha's life. They are ardent believers in supernatural beings. The Kolhas are lovers of art and the walls of their houses are decorated with artistic drawings.

**Bhumija:** Another important community in the district is the Bhumijas constituting 12.29% of the district's tribal population. The Bhumijas mingle with the Hindus. They live in villages with the Hindus, other castes and tribes. Their families are of nuclear type. The common practice in marriage is negotiation and payment of bride price. They practice both child and adult marriages. Polygamy is sometimes seen among the wealthier families. They sacrifice animals to satisfy deities. They have adopted some Hindu practices in their tribal religious beliefs and faiths. They revere the Sun. Now cultivation is the main occupation of the Bhumijas and it is supplemented by wage-earning, collection of forest produce and hunting. They grow only one crop-paddy. They also grow Rabi crops and vegetables in their kitchen garden. Rice is their staple food. They have given up dancing and singing. The young girls are fond of ornaments.

**Bathudi:** Bathudis like Bhuyans, Saunti and Lodha are Aryan language speaking communities. They do not have their own language and speak oriya. Bathudi is a highly Hinduised tribe. They are found in Karanja and Kaptipada areas. They live in villages of mixed population of other tribes and Hindu castes. They, of course, have their separate occupations. The Bathudis are more literate than other tribal communities. They follow the religious beliefs and practices of the Hindus. Mainly adult marriages are held after negotiations. Marriage is a costly affair among the Bathudis. The main occupation of the Bathudis is settled agriculture, wage-earning and petty business.

**Bhuiyan:** Bhuiyan is one of the primitive and important tribes of Odisha. Bhuiyans constitute 4.60% of the tribal population of Mayurbhanj. The cultural development of the Bhuiyans is not homogeneous. There are both backward as well as thoroughly Hinduised. As a whole, it is an acculturated tribe. They have no dialects of their own and speak Oriya. They have nuclear families. The Bhuiyans perform rituals at every stage of the life cycle starting with conception till death. They also observe public feasts and festivals round the year.

The Bhuiyans practice both child and adult marriage. There are different marriage practices. They consult Rauri (a spiritual doctor) at the time of illness. Bhuiyan hamlets or villages are located on a plateau land on hill top or on the hill slopes in the middle of forests. Houses in Bhuiyan villages do not follow any pattern. These villages are not accessible in all seasons of the year. Bhuiyans eat mahua liquor. Rice is their staple food. Bhuiyans believe in the existence of a number of deities, who influence their lives. These deities are presumed to live in the village or nearby spring.

The Bhuiyans earn their livelihood with both permanent and shifting cultivation. They also collect minor forest produce and take to hunting, fishing and wage earning. They also take to petty trade and commerce. Both men and women work to earn livelihood.

**Sounti:** Another community is Sounti which comprises 1.96 % of the tribal population in the district. The Sounti is a tribe of recent origin and consist of outcaste Odias. They usually go for adult marriage, though child and widow marriage is allowed. Monogamy is the practice though polygamy is also permitted. There are no restrictions imposed on pregnant women. The women do normal work during their pregnancy. The religious faith and beliefs of the Sountis are same as those of the Hindus and they observe the Oriya festivals. There is hardly any exclusive Sounti village. They mostly live in the midst of Hindus and other tribes. Most of the Sountis are landless and they depend on wage work. The land-owners amongst them do cultivation.

**Gonds:** The Gonds are a significant tribe speaking Gondi. They constitute 1.97% of the tribal population. It is a warrior tribe. The Gonds of Mayurbhanj are acculturated into the Hindu society. They live in villages inhabited by other castes and tribes. Usually marriages are arranged by parents. Their religion is a mix of tribal and Hindu beliefs. Belief in witchcraft and magic is very strong among the Gonds. The main occupation of the Gonds is cultivation and agricultural labour. They also collect minor forest produce to supplement their income. Now-a-days, they do little hunting. They have also given up dancing and singing they look healthy but suffer from

malaria, scabies, tuberculosis and digestive tract diseases. The Gonds have caste panchayats, which settle intra and inter-tribe disputes.

**Hill-Kharias:** Hill-Kharias population size is very small are still in a pre-agricultural level of economy and survive through hunting, fishing, food gathering and incipient agriculture. They are mainly found in Jashipur and Karanjia blocks besides in a few villages of Morada block of the district.

**Other Communities:** The other tribal communities in the district are less in number. The ST communities are now multilingual, speaking Aryan, Dravidian, Munda or Austric. The **Kissam Koya** and **Oraon** belonging to Dravidian-language-speaking clan are few in number in this district. Their language and literature are less influential. The tribal language is generally oral but development of four tribal scripts may help development of tribal literature. Those languages are Alchiki (The Script of Santali language), Soradam, Sompeom (The Script of Saora language) and Kuilipi (The Script of Kondh language). From phonetic point of view, 'Alchiki' is scientific.

## VI. Tribal Religion & Culture:

The religion of the tribes is an admixture of animism, animalism, nature-worship, fetishism, shamanism, anthropomorphism and ancestor worship. Religious beliefs and practices aim at ensuring personal security and happiness as well as community well-being and group solidarity. Their religious performances include life-crisis rites, cyclic community rites, ancestral and totemic rites and observance of taboos. Besides these, the tribals also resort to various types of traditional practices and if it does not yield any result, the next recourse is prayer to the supernatural force. The tribes of Mayurbhanj do believe in many gods and goddesses like their non-tribal counterparts. They believe in various deities, ghosts and spirits residing in the hills, forests and streams, and the ancestral spirits guiding every aspects of their life. Mother Ambika is the presiding deity of Mayurbhanj district. However, history is silent about this 'Santipith' due to non-availability of evidences. The legend says that the backside of the Ambika Temple was a high land, which was known as 'Baga Samal Fort' and it was the fort of the Bhuiyan kings who ruled over it. The presiding goddess of the Bhuiyan Clan was mother Ambika.

Different tribal clans worship the sun god with different names. They believe that sun is omnipotent and is the creator and father of the universe. Earth is the mother. Mother earth is the female and the Sun God is the male and all others are their off springs. The Santals name him as 'Thakur Jew'. The Mankadia and Oraon worship him as 'Bhagaban'. They are unilineal descent groups whose members trace their origin back to some common mythical ancestor. There is no totemic worship. They all are regarded as brothers and sisters and marriage between them is taboo. But nowadays, marriage is allowed between clan members. The Ho, Munda and above all some Santalese worship the all powerful Sun God as 'Singabonga' and Kolha as 'Maranburu'. Similarly they used to worship the mother Earth as 'Dharitree Maa', 'Basumata', 'Bhumidevata', 'Basuri Thakurani', 'Basuti Mata' etc. In some tribal communities, the religious beliefs and faiths are patterned after those of their Hindu neighbors. Bhuiyan, Bathudi and Bhumija having belief in Hinduism do worship 'Kali', 'Kichakeshwari' and other Hindu gods.

Under the impact of modernisation, the tribes of Mayurbhanj are gradually losing faith in the power of spirits and deities, and as such, some annual festivals are not observed any more. Despite the fact that their lifestyle has changed due to the impact of modernity, the tribals still mostly stick to tradition and maintain their cultural identity. The tribes believe in ghosts & witches. Like other Adivasis, the Lodha not only worship 'Bhagaban' Sheetala but they believe in witchery and sorcery to protect themselves from the curse of ghosts, witches and other incorporeal beings.

The uncanny faith in witchcraft among the tribals of Mayurbhanj has led to the murders of two people in August, 2009. Sombari Singh (45), wife of Hindu Singh of Nishinta village in Mayurbhanj district died instantly after Kalicharan Singh, a villager hit her with a "tangia", an axe like weapon.

Kalicharan suspected that Sombari was a witch and she used to use her supernatural power to harm his wife. Kalicharan's wife used to often suffer from fever and other illness and he thought it was due to Sombari's black magic.

In a similar incident on August 17, 30 year old Jatia Hembrom of Katruma village of the district beheaded his aunt Raimat Hembrom (45) with a tangia. Jatia walked nearly 8 kilometer with the severed head of his aunt from her village to Kuliana police station and surrendered before the police.

He claimed that his aunt, who was a witch used to hurt his family with her "evil" practice. Social activist Gourav Soren said there was need for a massive awareness campaign to rid the tribals from the banes of the superstitious beliefs.

The Adivasis here consider the trip to Damodar and immersion in the river Ganga, a very holy ritual. They celebrate different festivals which are linked to agricultural operations, social life and religious beliefs & customs. Celebrations are organized either in group or individually. All celebrations are accompanied by dance, music, playing of various musical instruments, above all, taking of local liquor called 'Handia'. The details of these are explained here below.

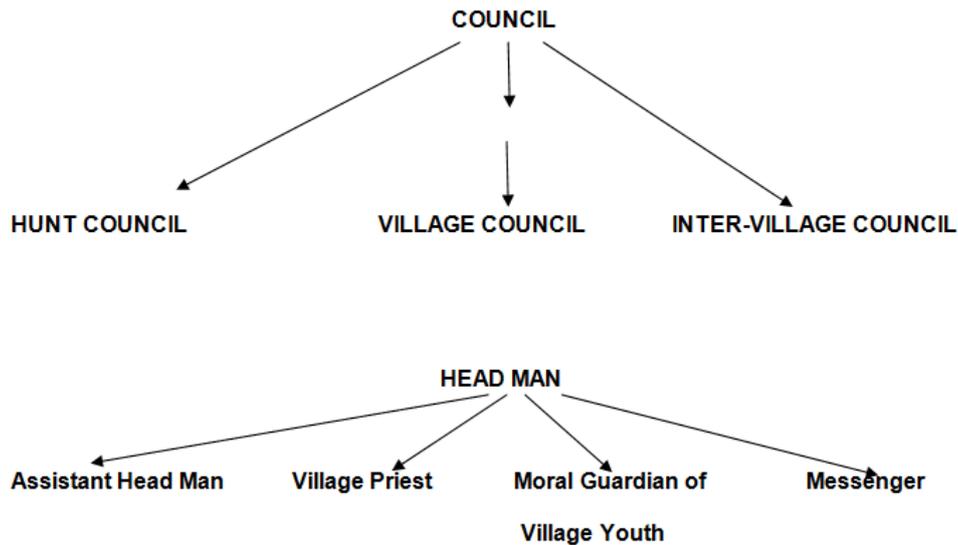
**Ersim** is a Paddy sowing festival. The Santals, Mahali, Bhumija and Lodha celebrate this festival on the day of 'Akshyatrutiya' to worship mother earth with religious fervour and enthusiasm. **Harialism** is an agriculture based festival like Ersim, which is celebrated with splendour and dignity when the land looks green with swaying paddy saplings and the cultivator's joy knows no bounds. **Jamtala Bonga** is a Jantal festival which is celebrated when the paddy hangs down ward and when there is threat to the crop due to scanty rainfall. In some pockets, this festival is celebrated as 'Ashadhi' or 'Bihuda' Parva. In this festival, the **Bhuyan community** invites the rain god with religious zeal. So also the Lodhas pray for bumper production. **Karama Parva** is a festival celebrated in the month of 'Ashwina' or 'Kartika' and the auspicious day is fixed by the 'Dehuri', the priest. A 'Karam Bough' is planted on the altar in the middle of village.

**Makar Parva** is the prime festival of Mayurbhanj district and is celebrated by Adivasis and non-Adivasis alike in the Oriya month of 'Pausha' and English month of 'January' when the paddy reaping is half done and the mind is free from all cares and anxieties. Irrespective of caste, colour, creed and age, all participate in the religious festival with eagerness. Tusubhashani or immersion of Tusu idols in the holy pond is another attraction of Makar festival. The spinsters of Mohanta community worship the Tusu deity and immerse it in the holy pond singing the 'Tusu Song'.

In recent times, Mayurbhanj **Chhau** dance has become popular at both national and international platforms. As regards gaining of brides for marriage, the most widely prevalent practice amongst the tribes of Mayurbhanj is through 'capture', although other practices, such as, elopement, purchase, service and negotiation are also prevalent. With the passage of time, negotiated type of marriage, which is considered prestigious, is gaining greater acceptance. Payment of bride-price is an inseparable part of tribal marriage, but this has changed to the system of dowry among the educated.

## **VII. Tribal Political System**

The important tribal communities have their own systems of dispute resolution. This is carried out through a well-defined political set-up. Under the influence of modernity, the political system of the tribal communities in the district has undergone some changes, but it is still different from other communities. The Santals are the most numerous tribe in the district and their. They have a three-tier political system. The unit of traditional political organization of the Santali community is the Council, which is composed of office-bearers and the village elders and is headed by the headman known as Manjhi. The meeting of the council generally takes place at the Manjhi Than (headman's place). The village council is an important social unit for the administration of justice where family and village disputes are referred. The topics discussed in the council include cases of divorce, partition of property, adoption of children, land disputes, etc. Ceremonies such as death, birth and marriage are organized by co-operation and participation of the village council. The inter-village council (pirh/pargana) deals with matters like incest, adultery and inter-village disputes which cannot be settled at the village level. Hunt council may continue for 3/4 days. Nowadays, inter-village councils and Hunt councils are not functioning as before. However, the village council is still playing a vital role in the decision making process. Due to the introduction of the statutory panchayat, the old system is gradually fading away.



In the **Bhuyan** village, the panchayat meets at the ‘Darbar’ whenever required. The village headman (Pradhan) presides over the panchayat. A group of villages form a confederation called Pirha. The panchayat at this level is called Pirha Panchayat and the secular headman who presides over it is called ‘Sardar’. The primary functions of the village panchayat are to decide the partition of property among brothers, allot land for shifting cultivation, organize religious ceremonies and maintain peace and order in the village. The **Gonds** have caste panchayats which settle inter-tribal and intra-tribal disputes. The members of the Panchayat are selected by mutual consent and guilt, is established either by direct eyewitnesses, or ordeals.

The traditional political organization of the **Kharias** is constituted at two different levels, one at the village level and the other at the inter-village level in order to keep unity and maintain law and order. Among the hill-kharias, each village has a panchayat of its own headed by the ‘Pradhan’. The Kharias call the inter-village organization as the Parha panchayat or Kutumba Sabha or Bhira. The head of the Parha is called ‘Karthā’ which is a hereditary post. Nowadays, elections are held for this chair. Though the modern panchayat system has been introduced in Kharia area, it is not fully effective as the people are still guided by the traditional authorities.

Among all the tribes, traditional values, customs, norms and social integration continue to be achieved through traditional political organizations. The sub-institutions of social control, such as, family, kinship and public opinion continue to fulfill certain social control functions. The significance of tribal political organization in the context of economic development and social change remains undiminished. Modern elites in tribal societies command much less respect and have very little following. And as the traditional leaders continue to manipulate influence over their fellow tribesmen, it is worthwhile to take them into confidence in the context of economic development and social change.

Since independence and with the abolition of the intermediary system and merger of the feudatory states of Odisha, these traditional tribal political organizations have been weakened. The introduction of statutory Panchayat has further weakened the old political order and social organizations. In the present political scenario of Mayurbhanj district, each village elects representatives for its own Village Development Committee (VDC). The Committee members are trained in leadership, project management skills and the procedure to access government funding. VDCs regularly meet to discuss community issues and become increasingly responsible for planning, managing and evaluating community development. Youth groups and children’s clubs are formed to ensure that the next generations are also involved in the development process.

### VIII. Tribal Economy

Considering the general features of their (i) eco-system, (ii) traditional economy, (iii) supernatural beliefs and practices, and (iv) recent "impacts of modernization", the tribes of Mayurbhanj can be classified into six types, such as: (1) hunting, collecting and gathering type, (2) cattle-herder type, (3) simple artisan type, (4) hill and shifting cultivation type, (5) settled agriculture type and (6) industrial urban worker type.

The Kharia, Mankadia and Lodha are primitive tribals who need special mention. The Kharia & Mankadia are nomadic food gatherers and hunters found in the Similipal hill ranges in Panchpir sub-division, particularly in Jashipur block area. On the other hand, the Lodhas known as a criminal tribe need special attention for their socio-economic rehabilitation. They are found in Suliapada & Morada blocks of Baripada sub-division. The Kolha’s traditional mechanism of exchange has been replaced with a money economy. Their

economy is also dependent on making basket, rope, mending of cloths etc. Honey in its purest form is collected by **Kharias** and **Kolhs (Ho)**, traditional tribal honey gatherers of 'Simlipal' forest. It is collected from natural hives of Rock bees (*Apis dorsata*) locally known as 'Baghua' and they usually sell it in local markets.

The main occupation of the Santal is settled agriculture. At present, both men and women are engaged in cultivation but mainly as marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. The emergence of mining and industrial activities both in and outside the district has provided them with some scope for occupational mobility. The economic activities of the Santal community are carried out with the co-operation and participation of both the sexes. In the Santal area, land is mainly divided into three types, i.e. billa or low land, gudu or upland and bari or kitchen garden. Paddy the main crop being the main crop is produced in lowland, and in upland the Santals grow short duration paddy, gulji, janha, til and maize. However, in the kitchen garden they grow many varieties of vegetables, maize and pulses. This agriculture does not provide adequate means for their maintenance round the year. They raise only one crop during the monsoon, and therefore have to supplement their income by other subsidiary economic activities like collection of NTFPs and wage labour. In fact, their food is largely supplemented by roots, fruits and tubers collected from the forest. The forest also provides them with fuel and herbal medicines, tooth twigs and grass and timber to build houses and make agricultural implements. They also keep cows, bullocks, goats, sheep, poultry and pigs for domestic consumption and sale. They make various crafts for their daily use. Their cottage industry includes making of wooden materials.

Agriculture is the primary occupation of most of the tribals of the district. Those of them owning land work as small and marginal farmers; others take to wage labour on farm land or mining and quarrying activities. They supplement their income by collections from the forest, handicrafts, handloom activities, etc. Hunting and fishing are also taken resort to at times. But with the ban on hunting by the government, many tribes no longer go for it.

The weekly market or Haat plays an important role in the tribal economy of Mayurbhanj. Almost all except those who live in the proximity of towns are fully dependent on these local Haats for the purpose of their daily necessities and sale of agricultural and forest produce. Nowadays, LAMPS, District Supply and Marketing Society (DSMS) and TDCC sell things for daily consumption and purchase produces of the locals at a reasonable price.

### **IX. Tribal Healthcare And Sanitation**

The tribal communities of the district suffer from diseases, like malaria, stomach troubles, influenza, scabies, itches, leprosy, T.B, yaws etc. Usually they are not conscious about the treatment of their diseases. For their primary treatment, they first consult their village medicine man-cum-spirit doctors. The 'doctor' first gives herbal treatment and if he fails, applies magic-religious methods to detect the causes of the disease and cure it which is believed to be the doing of the evil spirit. Faith in traditional healers in these areas dissuades many people from accessing the existing modern health care facilities. Lack of nutrition, drugs and primary health treatments are the main obstacles in the way of the treatment of children. The social, cultural and health conditions related to low status of women in Mayurbhanj have also a negative impact on child survival.

Dense forests in the area provide ideal breeding ground for malaria-carrying mosquitoes. Malaria kills more people than any other disease. As there is not enough safe water in this area to cater to the needs of all, water-borne diseases, such as, diarrhoea, cholera, typhoid and dysentery are rife. Malaria was hyper endemic through out the area in the past.

### **X. Tribal Developmental Programs In Mayurbhanj:**

Mayurbhanj has the highest ST population (12.58 lakh) among the districts of the state. Under the tribal Sub Plan approach, various schemes are operating for the overall development of the tribal areas and to integrate the tribals with the mainstream. These schemes envisage bringing about transformation in the socio-economic condition of the tribals and the indigenous people living in the district. Four integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) are functioning in the district covering all the blocks exclusively for the development of the tribals. Besides promoting the economic well-being of the tribals, due emphasis is given on the development of the basic infrastructure in the tribal areas. Various schemes, such as, modified Area Development Approach (MADA), and 2 micro projects, e.g., Lodha Development Agency and Hill Kharia and Mankadia Development Agency are operating in the district. The schemes for the development of communities are of 2 types: (1) individual family beneficiary oriented schemes and (2) Community Benefit Schemes as indicated below.

#### **1. Family benefit schemes**

- Land development
- Crop demonstration
- Supply of plough bullock and agricultural implements
- Supply of pump sets for irrigation

- Backward plantation of fruit trees
- Citrus plantation, banana plantation
- Cultivation of summer vegetables
- Supply of milch cattle, goat/sheep, poultry birds and fishing equipments
- Leaf cup and plate making
- Bee-keeping
- Tailoring
- Grocery shop
- Supply of cycle rickshaw and trolley rickshaw

## **2. Community Benefit Schemes**

- Construction of dug-well for irrigation, water-wells and tube wells for drinking
- Construction of chatsalis, houses under Indira Awas Yozana, cross bundhs, community centers and village roads
- Supply of nutritious food
- Supply of instruments for entertainment

## **XI. Hindrances For Development**

The developmental programs undertaken by government have not succeeded in ameliorating the condition of the tribal communities. There are implementation failures, no doubt. The intermediaries have exploited them over ages. Government functionaries are unable to sensitize to them about their stakes and rights in the successful implementation of the developmental programs. The conservative tribals themselves as a consequence, are averse to changes. To be specific, the constraints in tribal development are:

- (a) Social factors:** The tribal society now comprises two categories of people, those limited members who have benefited from the development programs in course of time and those who remained outside their reach. The former favour the changes, while the latter, oppose it. The consequential conflict has destroyed the social cohesion and adversely affected the implementation of the programs.
- (b) Psychological factors:** The changes that usher in with the onset of modernism strikes at the root of the old life the tribals were accustomed to while they themselves are not well-equipped to take advantage of the new opportunities. They are less literate and poor. Because of these opposing views, the tribals are sceptical about the developmental programs .they are suspicious of changes. There is need for government and NGO intervention to bring about changes in the attitude of tribals.
- (c) Cultural factors:** For the tribal community culture represents a total pattern of life, the way they live, the language they speak, the religion and belief they repose faith in and the ways they think and act. They are conservative, have faith in their leaders, believe in supernatural powers and are amenable to witchcraft. They are hard nuts to crack. They exhibit stiff resistance to any change. Any developmental work among the tribals should not lead to destruction of their culture and religious beliefs, which they have cherished over generations. Successful implementation of development and welfare programs needs to strike a balance between the developmental works and the tribal culture. The development activities should be aimed at reversing the apprehension of tribals. They need to be convinced that they are no more objects of exploitation but masters of their own destiny. The tribal communities should be allowed to have right to and access over natural resources around them.

The comparative analysis of community diversity in Mayurbhanj district brings out the distinct features of each community. Their development needs to be addressed multiculturally. So that no resident community in the district remains excluded in future from the general process of human development.

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