CHAPTER - II

SOCIAL LIFE OF THE BHUYANS
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Living in an inhospitable terrain, in the wild high lands of the inaccessible hill ranges, having been isolated from the more civilized people of the plains and largely unaware of rapid changes there, the Bhuyan tribals preserved the primitive system of social organisation in tact. They furnished an interesting example of a primitive race of improvident social customs and habits. All those age old social customs and habits had been well illustrated in their village life.

Bhuyan Villages

The social life of the tribals can be best understood from their villages and their geographical settings. They preferred mostly to stay at the foot of hills covered with woods and at the side of hill streams. They also felt contented to live in this blissful obscurity. The mountainous and jungle environment guaranteed a tribal an isolated surroundings where he and the fellow members of his tribe could lead their lives in their own fashion. The Bhuyan tribals were

1. Feudatory States Gazetteers, P.51.
The Bhuyans displayed their own peculiar taste in choosing the site for their habitation. They preferred to build their villages in the valleys which were protected by the lofty barrier of hills. The size of villages varied in size, some long and winding and some circular. Clusters of villages were set up for the purpose of defence. Each village or group of two or three villages was separated from other villages by three, four or more miles of long and winding paths through jungles and ravines. The villages nestled in a fine grove of jack trees, to the fruit of which the Bhuyans were particularly partial. The villages were generally small in size containing homogenous Bhuyan population. Some of the villages were permanent. Most of the villages had two or more sites, on one of which they alternately built a new village every ten years.

2. Jeannette Bossert, *India - Land, People and Culture* (Delhi, 1974), P.89.
4. Ibid.
5. S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.56
6. Feudatory States Gazetteers, P.51
Bhuyans left one site when all the trees on it had been cut down and the lands prepared for carrying on shifting cultivation were exhausted, and removed to another site within the area. They, again, returned to the old site when new trees had grown up to some height.10

Other inhabitants in the Bhuyan Hills

Although the Bhuyans formed the important part of the population, there were found some other inhabitants, in the Bhuyan hill tracts. Some of them were the Pans and Kols, a low caste race, living in the outskirts, who performed all the menial tasks for the Bhuyans.11 Besides, the primitive-leaf wearing Juangs lived in Bhuyan hills.12 Although the Bhuyan villages were homogenous one or two Gour (cow herd families) lived with them on at some distance from the Bhuyan settlement to provide milk and milk products to them on important occasions and some Munda families were also found in Bhuyan villages, but they lived in separate hamlets.13 The Santals and Kondhs also lived with the Bhuyans in the forests of Keonjhar.14 The Bhuyans constructed no tank as they held it contrary

to their religion to excavate. Both men and women always bathed at separate places and they took great care not to surprise a female while bathing.\textsuperscript{15}

Houses

The construction of houses of the Bhuyan tribals were not identical and did not conform to any pattern. In some villages the houses were built adjacent to one another in rows facing the main street of the village, while some other houses were built here and there in the uneven terraces.\textsuperscript{16} The houses were nevertheless tolerably substantial and comfortable.\textsuperscript{17} The numbers of houses of each village were varied from about a dozen to 40 houses and each house was consisted of one to four huts.\textsuperscript{18} The huts faced the courtyard which were situated at the front of the house. The kitchen-garden was situated at the back of the house. The cow shed was constructed at a convenient place on one side of the courtyard.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{15} Feudatory States Gazetteers, P.51.
\textsuperscript{17} E.T. Dalton, op. cit., P.145.
\textsuperscript{18} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.57.
The huts were generally rectangular in shape with two sloping roofs. The walls of huts were generally made of logs of wood (timber) planted vertically on the ground and plastered over with mud from inside and the roofs were thatched. Average size of the house was 25ft. by 12ft. The rafters and beams of the roof were made logs of wood and the roof was thatched with variety of wild grass called Khar. Each house had a single door. Doors were made of spilt bamboo and plastered with mud and cow dung. A piece of rope was used to shut the bamboo door. An earthen elevated platform called Pinda was built either around the house or only in front of the house for sitting purposes. The houses did not have windows.

Functionally each Bhuyans house was divided mainly into three distinct apartments. The innermost apartment of the house was used for storing of food grains. The middle apartment of the house was divided into three parts. The portion where a hearth was made to serve the purpose of Chulla or kitchen. From the hearth a narrow passage led to a small and secluded apartment called Bhitar (Mulaghar) which served as the abode of the ancestral spirits. The

outer portion was used as the sleeping apartment which was called Basa. A wall was usually built between the abode of the ancestral spirits and sleeping apartment, and the outermost apartment and sometimes a door was fixed inside to separate the store and the kitchen-cum-bedroom from the outer apartment and was used for various purposes. In the middle portion of the house grains were husked by means of a pestle and this portion was known as Kutunisal or husking apartment.  

The cooking apartment or Chulla and the abode by the ancestral spirits or Bhitar or Mulaghar were considered to be most sacred. The outsiders were strictly forbidden to enter into these parts of the house. The cooking apartment was considered sacred, because the food cooked here was offered to the ancestral spirits in Bhitar. The entry of outsiders defiled the food and caused shortage of food in the family. The worst that happened was that ancestral spirits got angry and might leave the house and bring sickness to the members of the family. Further, the entry of menstruating women defiled the house. Therefore, the women, during their menstrual cycle, were not allowed to enter into these parts of the house and

did not cook or sleep here. The clothes were also not dried on the roof
of the *Mulaghar*. No birth took place in *Mulaghar*. A separate shed
was, therefore, built which served as the lying-in-room. After delivery
the parturient women spent one or two months in this lying-in-room
and was allowed to enter the *Mulaghar* after the purificatory rites.
The temporary pollution caused by death of person in *Mulaghar*
was removed by propitiating the ancestral spirits and by offering
them *Jau* which was cooked in a new earthen vessel.24

The house of the headman and the village elders was in the
centre of the main street of the village.25 In the middle of the village
in close proximity to the house of the headman of the village was a
most descent and commodious house called *Manda Ghar* or *Darbar
Ghar*.26 It was the resting place or guest house for travellers and
sleeping place or dormitory for the young men of the village.27 It also
served the purpose of granary of the village when the provisions
contributed by the villagers were stored for the immediate use of the

on the Pauri Bhuinya', P.28.
25. Feudatory States Gazetteers, P.51.
26. Ibid.;
27. E.T. Dalton, op. cit., P.145.;
guests. Further, it served the purpose of council house of the village elders. Some of important musical instruments like Changs or tambourines, and drums played upon by the young men in their dances, were supported against the wall of this Manda Ghar, while others were suspended with string from the pronged deer horns affixed to the walls. In front of the Darbar Ghar was an open and wide space which served as the Darbar or dancing place for the recreations of the maidens and youths of the village after their day's toil. It also served as the meeting ground where the tribal Panchayats meet when occasion arose. Some villages had a Dhangarin bassa, a house for the maidens. It was strange to say that they were allowed to occupy without any one to look after them. In some villages a separate house was built a little away from the village which was called Thakurani ghar.

Founding of Gai-Sri Khunta

On one side of the Darbar or dancing ground was installed the

29. S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.57.;
   Tribes of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, 1990, P.46.
sacred shrine of *Gai-Sri Khunta* or *Subha Khunta* made of a round piece of rudely carved wooden post from 3½ to 4½ feet high. It represented the tutelary deity of the village to whom offerings were made from time to time for the well being of the villagers. When a new village site was selected, this auspicious post was installed in the centre of the selected site with ceremonies and prosperity of the village was bound up with this post. If the post was blown down by the wind or was otherwise uprooted, the village site must be forthwith changed, otherwise, it was believed, dire misfortune would overtake the new settlement.\(^\text{35}\)

In the selection of a new settlement the Hill Bhuyans employed a form of divination. The *Dehuri*, took a bath and placed a handful of *arua* rice on the site and covered over the rice with a new earthen vessel and fixed it down on the ground by plastering the rim of the vessel with clay. The *Dehuri*, in the next morning, bathed and went to the spot and examined the rice. On scrutiny if he found that no insect or ant had eaten up or disturbed any portion of the rice, it was considered an auspicious site. When the site was found auspicious, the *Dehuri* cut down a log of wood and planted it upright in the

\(^{35}\) S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.58.
centre of the site. This post was called the *Subha Khunta* or auspicious post or the *Gai Sri Khunta* the post sacred to *Gai Sri* which stood out about 4 feet above the ground. Facing to the east the *Dehuri* offered rice and molasses, in the names of *Gai Sri, Basuki Mata, Boram, and Dharam Deota* and prayed,

"May we live here in health; may we have success in clearing the forest and get enough to eat"\(^{36}\)

The foundation of a new settlement and a new house must be laid either on a Wednesday or on a Friday.\(^{37}\) After the selection of the village site, each family selected a site for the family dwelling and the *Subha Khunta* or auspicious post was planted by the *Dehuri* and *Naek*, the secular head of the village, in the selected site.

The *Dehuri* offered milk, molasses and water to the *Gai Sri* and prayed,

"Oh Gai-Sri today we are installing you here in our new village site. Guard us from all the misfortunes. See that there is bumper harvest, so that everybody


gets enough to eat. Let the villagers and the cattle be in good health."  

The Gai-Sri Khunta forms one of the posts to support the roof.  

The Dehuri then put some turmeric powder and a few rice grains in the hole. Seven mango leaves were tied with a string (unbleached thread) on the top of the Subha Khunta which was covered with an earthen pot so that the birds did not pass excreta at the top. The Subha Khunta was then fixed to the ground without being tilted.  

The compartment of the hut, where the Subha Khunta stood, was selected as the Bhitar or sacred inner tabernacle where the ancestor spirits had their seats. After the construction of the house a minor ritual was performed before it was occupied. Jau cooked in a new earthen pot was offered to the ancestral spirits in the Bhitar to safeguard the family members from misfortunes and calamities.  

When a newly married couple set up a new house, the Dehuri placed inside the hut an earthen pot with its bottom upwards under

which the ancestor spirits were to reside and receive offerings and
libations. In many Pauri villages in the Keonjhar State, this Subha
Khunta is also known as Chhatra Khunta (lit; umbrella post).

FAMILY

Among the Bhuyan tribals the family was the smallest
elementary social unit. It was supreme and the social bond was not
that of the village but of the household. It consisted of the members
belonging to consanguinal (agnate) and affinal (cognate) relations.

As the hill Bhuyan family was partrilineal the descent was traced
through male line from father to son. Besides, being partrilineal, the
family was also patripotestal and father exercised supreme authority
on the members of the family. A daughter belonged to her father's
Khilli (extended lineage group) so long as she was unmarried, but after
marriage she became a fullfledged member of her husband's family.

In some cases, a Bhuyan, having no male issue, adopted a boy as
his son from one of his agnatic families. Such an adopted son was

44. Ibid., P.58.
45. Ibid., P.78.
46. Feudatory States Gazetteers, P.51.
47. Tribes of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, 1990, P.48
   on the Pauri Bhuinya', P.103.
treated as the true born member of the family and enjoyed all the rights and privileges of a son, including the right of inheritance.\textsuperscript{50}

Sons did not have right to property during the lifetime of their father.\textsuperscript{51}

Even in the rare cases, when a Bhuyan adopted a son-in-law in the absence of any son of his own, the family remained unaffected as the son-in-law was not included in the \textit{Khilli} (extended lineage group) of his father-in-law. The adopted son-in-law took care of his father-in-law in his old age and inherited all his property. Even then he was not counted as the member of \textit{Khilli} (agnate) of his father-in-law.\textsuperscript{52}

After the death of the father the property was inherited by the sons and the eldest son got a little more than other sons. In case a Bhuyan died without leaving any son, the property could not be claimed by the married daughters. The same property could be claimed by his close agnates such as brothers, father's brothers or father's brother's sons, living either in joint families or separate families. In case such relations could not be traced out the property was enjoyed by the tribal community at large.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.78.
\textsuperscript{51} Feudatory States Gazetteers, P.51.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., P.104.
The families of the *Pauri* Bhuyans were classified into four groups, namely nuclear, joint, extended and mixed families. A nuclear family consisted of such members as a married couple either widow mother or widowed father and their unmarried children.\(^{54}\) In some cases dependants like old parents or unmarried brothers and sisters were also found living with the nuclear family.\(^{55}\) A joint family is an extended form of nuclear family. It was consisted of more than one nuclear family. After the death of the father the married sons with their children continued to live jointly with their unmarried brothers and sisters. In the joint family the eldest brother was considered to be the head of the family and played the role of the father. Such joint families were extremely rare among the *Pauri* Bhuyans. After the death of the father the brothers might continue to live jointly for a few years.\(^{56}\) An extended family was a variant of joint family where the married sons and their children lived jointly with their parents, the head of the family being the father and not the eldest brother. A single married son with his children living together


\(^{55}\) *Tribes of Orissa*, Bhubaneswar 1990, P.48.

with his parents might also constitute an extended family. The types of families other than nuclear family, joint family and extended family, were termed as mixed families. Such families were consisted of widow, and her unmarried children, orphans, father's sister, sister's children and widow sister. The Pauri families were usually, small in size which had maximum three members. The largest families had more than ten members. The family was characterised by a tie of economic cooperation, common religious functions and inter-personal intimate relationship. All the members of a family thought themselves to be the branches of a common tree and the emotional attachment and the sense of oneness bind them together. If one of the members of the family was offended or beaten, the matter was taken into heart by other members of the family and a joint effort was taken to avenge upon the offender.

**Position of Women**

Among the Bhuyan tribals the position of women was high. They were found to have been well treated with rare exceptions. They

58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
had considerable influence in the matters of domestic economy.\textsuperscript{61} The women had their allotted functions as the men had theirs.\textsuperscript{62} The women were more hard working than the men folk. They performed all the domestic duties. In feasts and festivals and in marriage and birth ceremonies the women played a \textit{vital} role than men.\textsuperscript{63} She faithfully served her husband while he ate and helped him in homestead work. When outdoor work was required she bound her baby around her waist and went to the field.\textsuperscript{64} Women did not inherit property and ownership to all property, except the wearing apparels and jewellery of the female members of the family and articles made or acquired by them for her own use vested in men.\textsuperscript{65} Daughters did not inherit their father's property, but a maiden was entitled to maintenance out of her deceased father's assets until her marriage.\textsuperscript{66} On her husband's death a woman was only entitled to maintenance out of her deceased husband's assets till her death

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\textsuperscript{61} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.79.
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or remarriage. A man hardly scolded his wife and she was treated with affection and tenderness. The only disability of women was the periodic pollution caused by their menstrual cycle. Barren women were looked down upon by men and those women who gave birth to many children enjoyed considerable pride and prestige. The expectant woman underwent many restrictions during her pregnancy. She was not allowed to take meat of any sacrificial animal. She was neither allowed to go to the place of worship nor to forest lonely. She was not allowed to touch corpse or to see the smoke emitting from the cremation fire. Yet with all these limitations, the Bhuyan girls in any sense did not become the property of the husband. Even if pregnant she had the option to go back to her father's house within six months after marriage. If childless, at any time she could quit her husband and re-enter her own family. On the other hand, as long as the wife remained true to her husband, he did not contract a second marriage and keep a concubine without the consent of his wife. However, if such permission was granted the children of the concubine received equal treatment with the legitimate ones.

Food Habits

Rice was esteemed as the staple food by the Hill Bhuyans.\textsuperscript{71} It was considered superior to all other types of food. Whatever amount of paddy procured was never sold. Besides, they exchanged Biri (blackgram), niger and mustard for rice.\textsuperscript{72} Among the hill Bhuyans, one Seer of ragi, mustard, Biri, Mung or beans fetched two seers of paddy or one seer of rice.\textsuperscript{73} They grew some vegetables such as pumpkins, beans and yams in the hill slopes.\textsuperscript{74} Ragi, Suan, Guludi, Kangu and other cereals were grown by the Bhuyans.\textsuperscript{75} They took pulses occasionally particularly on festive occasions. Edible roots and tubers, flowers and fruits, vegetables and mushrooms collected from the forest supplemented the Bhuyan diet to a greater extent.\textsuperscript{76} They took Pej (surplus water of the boiled rice) after the meal or added to Dal (lentil) or meat to make it tasty. They ate Dal and curry on special occasions.\textsuperscript{77} They used to take fish and the meat of deer,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{71} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.60.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Tribes of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, 1990, P.48.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Nihar Ranjan Patnaik (Ed.), 'Economic History of Orissa, New Delhi, 1997, P.372, Nihar Ranjan Patnaik's 'Economic Life of the Tribals of Orissa'.
\item \textsuperscript{74} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.59.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Tribes of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, 1990, P.48.
\end{itemize}
sambar (wild deer), barking deer, hare, different kinds of birds, goat, sheep and fowl. But the Bhuyans never ate beef and buffalo meat. They also never took pork. They stored mango kernels for the preparation of cakes and porridge on festive occasions. They prepared porridges on ceremonial occasions to offer it to the family ancestors. Rice cakes were most common and preferred above all other types of cakes. Mandia (ragi) cake was eaten especially during the rainy season when they worked in rains to keep their body warm. They generally ate raw fruits and of all the fruits mango and jack fruit supplemented to their diet to a great extent. They used mango juice to make a kind of cake called Amsara by drying the paste on the mat. Fishing in their hill streams also supplement to their food.

Like other primitive tribes the Bhuyans are fond of liquor. Irrespective of sex and age they drank handia (rice beer) and toddy extracted from date-palms. Among other alcoholic drinks they take

79. ODG (Keonjhar), 1986, P.99.
81. Ibid., P.14.
84. ODG (Keonjhar), 1986, P.100.; S.T. Das, op. cit., P.309.
Mohua liquor called *Mahuli, Salapa Mada* extracted from sago-palms and liquor prepared out of cereals. They took liquor because of its following uses:

i. It was taken as an intoxicant to forget the troubles and tribulations of life and to get relief from fatigue after hard field work.

ii. *Mohua* liquor was used as medicine to cure cold and headache.

iii. Some Bhuyans drank liquor as a substitute for food and keep themselves fit for all hard work.

iv. Liquor was indispensable on ritual and festive occasions. It was offered to the deities and to the ancestral spirits to keep them in good temper and thereby solicited their favour for plenty and prosperity.

v. Liquor had great social value. It was customary for the Bhuyans to entertain their guests and relatives when the latter visit them. Plenty of liquor was consumed during important festive and ceremonial occasions when a large number of guests crowded their families. Important rites connected with birth,

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marriage and death ceremonies were performed by offering liquor to deities.86

The Bhuyans did not like to drink handia (rice beer) prepared by any other tribe or caste. Many of them owned date-palms and sago-palms for drinking.87 Campbell wrote, "Festivities of the tribal people usually terminate in universal drunkenness". At certain festivals each was reported to have consumed as much as six seers of handia a day.88

Besides taking the intoxicating drinks, the Bhuyans were habituated to both smoking and chewing tobacco. Men smoked tobacco grown in the kitchen garden, by rolling it in Sal leaf and both men and women chewed with lime. Besides, Bidi, Gurakhu (tobacco paste) and betel were popular among the hill Bhuyans.89 In addition to smoking and chewing some were addicted to opium, ganja (ganga) and bhang.90

87. Ibid.
90. ODG (Keonjhar), 1986, P.100.
Dress and Ornament

The Bhuyans were fond of ornaments and ornamentation of their bodies. The dress of the hill Bhuyans was very simple, but scanty.\(^91\) At home they wore only a very short loin cloth around the waist.\(^92\) The poorer men wore only a strip of perineal cloth kept in its place by a string round the waist. Both boys and girls upto the age of twelve or thirteen almost invariably wore such perineal cloth.\(^93\) Young men at their dances and festivals wore long loin cloths with one end hanging down below the knees. Each man had two full sized cloths, one wound round the waist and another as an upper garment. The poor man used a napkin as upper garment. The cloths of both men and women were generally dyed a light yellow with a kind of yellowish earth.\(^94\) Some people wore *ghusis*, a spare cloth of about 18" by 6" covering only the private region. This was the normal dress of men when they were at work.\(^95\) Generally, men wore *dhoti*, *lungi* and *gamuchha*.\(^96\) Their dresses consisted of a scanty cloth round the

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93. Ibid., P.67.
94. Ibid., P.67.
95. ODG (Keonjhar), 1986, P.98.
96. Ibid.
loins and in some cases a body wrap. E.T. Dalton writes, "In costume there is nothing peculiar, except that the men and women all wear dresses of brown cotton, or dyed a light brown." 

An adult hill Bhuyan female used a cloth about twelve cubits long which was worn as a combined skirt and shawl. The poor Bhuyan women wore only one such cloth while going out and a smaller waist cloth at home. The women wore a kind of coarse cloth called sari, but never used to veil their faces. The hill Bhuyan women were found to have only one cloth. They used to take it off before entering water. Sometimes a whole bevy of them bathed in absolute nudity in a hill stream.

The Bhuyan women were very fond of ornaments, mostly made of bronze and beads. The ornaments of the Plains Bhuyans were just like those of their neighbouring non tribal peasants. The ornaments worn by the Plains Bhuyan women were simple and of

lighter variety. The hill Bhuyan girls and young women wore a number of thick brass bangles (bera) on both arms, brass kankans one on each wrist just below the Kharu and more than one mudi (brass ring) on the fingers - a large number on the left hand than on the right, a number of jhuntia (toe-rings), one pahur (brass anklet) on each leg, one or two tars (wristlets) made of brass or lac or both brass and lac, on each wrist and one or more mari (bead necklaces). The Bhuyan girls and young women wore a number of thick brass bangles on both arms, brass kankans on each wrist, one brass ring, ear ring with pendants (phirphira) and also nose rings (guna).

Most of the young men wore necklaces made of beads. Neither men nor women practised tattooing nor cicatrization was practised. The hill Bhuyan women covered their neck and chest with bunches of multi-coloured bead necklaces and decorated their buns with wild flowers and hair-pins with pendants. The Bhuyans of Bonai wore a kind of ornament made of a few glass beads.

106. Ibid.
strung round the neck. Women dressed and their hair neatly with silver ornaments, hair pins and pendants.\textsuperscript{108}

**AMUSEMENT**

The Bhuyan tribals were fond of amusements. They amused themselves in numerous ways such as hunting, dancing and singing. The chief amusement of the *Pauri* Bhuyan youth of both sexes was dancing and singing. The younger boys, girls and children play games.\textsuperscript{109}

**Bhomra**

The pastimes of *Bhomra* (spinning the top) was a favourite one with the *Pauri* Bhuyan children. The spinning top was roughly curved out of wood by their elders and fibre-string was used to hold and spin it round.\textsuperscript{110}

**Bati Khel**

The *Bati Khel* was played with marbles made of sand and molten lac. Two parties, each consisting of one, two or more players, stood at some distance on opposite sides of a circle drawn on

\textsuperscript{108} Feudatory States Gazetteers, P.148.
\textsuperscript{109} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.281.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
ground. Each party took up many marbles and places them at the centre of the circle. One player of the other party started the game by shooting his marble with his fingers towards the circle. He then took his aim with this marble at a marble of the other party to push the adversary’s marble towards his own party. If he succeeded in pushing his adversary’s marble, his party won all the marbles of the adversaries.111

Bagri Khel

In the Bagri Khel the players were divided into two parties of three, four or more each. The two parties stood on opposite sides at some distance. One boy of either of the parties started the game by running towards the other party by reciting some distich without taking breath. The boys of the other party ran in all directions to avoid the touch of this boy. While repeating the verse in one breath the boy succeeded in touching a boy of the opposite party and in returns to his own party without being caught, his adversary was regarded ‘dead’. In this way, every boy tried his skill till all the boys of one party were dead and the party was declared to have lost the game. Thereafter the members of the defeated went over to the

opposite side of the circle leaving their side for the winning party.\textsuperscript{112}

**Chhur**

In the game of *Chhur* the boys were formed into two parties of four each. One party guarded over a store of salt and the other party tried to rob and eat the salt. The boys of the former party prevented the approach of those of the other party by stretching their hands to defend the store of salt. The robbers sought to take the salt by avoiding the guards. If the party of guards succeeded in slapping one of the robbers, the later lost the game and changed the places of the formers. Girls also played this game either among themselves or in company with the boys.\textsuperscript{113}

**Nuknuka**

*Nuknuka* was a game generally played by two girls. A low long ridge was constructed with sand or dust by one girl who managed unobserved to conceal a small wooden peg in one part of the ridge and smoothed out the whole ridge so as not to betray the place of concealment. The other player was then required to place her hand on the exact spot where the peg had been concealed. If she

\textsuperscript{112} S.C. Ray, op. cit., PP.282-283.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., P.284.
succeeded, it would be her turn to conceal the peg unobserved for the other to find it out.\textsuperscript{114}

Dhapa

\textit{Dhapa} was another game which was played by the unmarried girls. Two girls sat down facing each other and played the game with seven small pieces of stones. One girl took up the stones on the palm of her right hand, threw them up and tried to catch as many of them as she could on the back of her palm. If none was caught she lost the game and the other girl tried her hand. If the first girl could catch one or more of the stones in this way, they were kept by his side and with the rest she repeated the same process till all were caught on the back of her palm whether by ones or twos or more at a time. If she failed to catch any of the stones on the back of her palm, she lost the game. Thereafter the other girl began the game in the same way. Thus, the game went on one after another.\textsuperscript{115}

Hunting

The Bhuyans were passionately fond of hunting. Forest people

\textsuperscript{114} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.284.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, P.285.
that they were, they pursued hunting with eagerness and love. Akhni Pardhi was the annual hunting festival of the hill Bhuyans. It was held on the third day of the moon (Aksay Tritia) in the month of Chait.

Music and Dance

Marriages, religious festivals, seasonal changes and important events in the community provided the tribal people with manifold opportunities for musical performance and dancing. The Bhuyan tribals were no exception to it.

Like the other primitive tribes the Hill Bhuyans were passionately fond of dancing and singing. Dances and songs more than anything else brought zest to the otherwise dull and cheerless life of the Bhuyan tribals. These formed of the chief source of enjoyment in the hard and dreary existence of both dancers and spectators. Besides, being a means of intense emotional satisfaction and crude artistic expression, the tribal dances served as an expression of social solidarity and rejoicing and a means of

promoting courtship and marriage and occasionally a means of
inducing in individuals of a physic temperament and a kind of auto-
hipnotism.\textsuperscript{118} Besides its social and religious significance the tribal
dances appeared to have a magical import and some economic
value. Indeed, the dance was associated with almost the whole life
of the \textit{Pauri} Bhuyans.\textsuperscript{119}

Hunter writes, "No festival of theirs is found to have been
observed at any time without dance and music being accompanied.
Their festivals are usually all of their own".\textsuperscript{120} In every village there
was an open space for a dancing ground, called by the Bhuyans the
\textit{Darbar}. Whenever the young men of the village went to the \textit{Darbar}
and beat the drums, the young girls joined them and they spent their
evenings dancing and rejoicing themselves without any interference
of the elders.\textsuperscript{121} The Bhuyan dances had their peculiar features. The
men had each a rude kind of tambourine. They marched round in
a circle beating the tambourine and singing a very simple melody in

\begin{itemize}
\item[118.] S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.286.
\item[119.] \textit{Ibid.};
\item[120.] W.W. Hunter, Orissa, Vol.II, London, 1872, P.81.;
\item[121.] E.T. Dalton, op. cit., P.142.
\end{itemize}
a minor key on four notes. The women danced opposite to them with their heads covered and bodies much inclined, touching each other like soldiers in line but not holding hands and wreathing arms like Kols.\(^{122}\) Most of the villages had Akhara where the youths, men and women assemble almost every evening to dance to the tune of indigenous music. On festive occasions dancing was indispensable. At times dancing went on for days together.\(^{123}\) There was another special type of dance called Danda Nacha. It was consisted of several acrobatic and artistic dances with beautiful songs either taken from the *Ramayan* or the *Mahabharat*. No women participated in these dances. But there was no restriction of any caste or clan to enter. This was usually performed by the bridegroom's party when they went out to get the bride.\(^{124}\)

The *Changu* dance (*Changu Nat*) derived its name from a kind of drum called *changu* which invariably accompanied the dance. This dance was more popular among the Bhuyans.\(^{125}\) In this dance men confronted the girls with song and music and then receded

\(^{123}\) ODG (Keonjhar), 1986, P.100.
\(^{125}\) ODG (Keonjhar), 1986, P.101.
backwards when the girls confronted them. The girls danced standing in a row generally holding each other's hands. In the month of Kartik (October) or the next month the Bhuyans brought a branch of the Karma tree from the forest and worshipped it and performed the Karma dance in front of it. They believed that this worship would cause the Karma tree, the mango, the jack-fruit and the mahua to bear a full crop of fruit.

Udka Nat

The Udka Nat was another form of dance of the Bhuyans. In this dance the female dancers veiled their faces and danced in a stooping posture. Each dancer held the hands of the dancer to her right and the one to her left. Similarly each dancer joined her feet respectively with those of her two contiguous dancers.

Dega Nat

The Dega Nat was another form of the Udka Nat. In this Nat the girls danced without veiling their faces. They held each other's hands and danced in a stooping posture with one foot placed in front.

of the other, moving in a line and time and again wheeling round in a circle.\textsuperscript{129}

\textbf{Ghecha Pari Nat}

The \textit{Ghecha Pari Nat} was another form of stooping dance in which the girls did not veil their faces. They arranged themselves into two rows, one confronting the other. Each girl held the girl standing opposite to her in the other row.\textsuperscript{130}

\textbf{Tuki Nat}

The \textit{Tuki Nat} or Girl's dance was another form of dance. In this dance not only little girls took part, but both the young and old women might take part. It was distinguished by the agility of its movements.\textsuperscript{131}

\textbf{Buri Nat}

In the \textit{Buri Nat} not only old or elderly women took part, but all might join. The movements in this dance were particularly slow so much so that it was called the bashful dance.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{129} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.289.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
The most interesting hill Bhuyan dances were the dances in imitation of the movements of various animals and reptiles and birds of their native hills and forests such as the tiger, the beer, the elephant, the deer, the snake, the vulture, the gunduri bird, the cock and the dove.133

Sap-pari Nat

In the Sap-pari Nat or snake dance, a number of women knelt down on the ground in a straight row, bent forward their bare heads almost to touch the ground and in tune with the sound of drums and songs. The dancers slowly swung their heads sideways with short turns in imitation of the zigzag movements of snakes.134

Bora-pari Nat

The Bora-pari Nat or Bora snake dance was another form of dance of the Bhuyans. In this dance, the dancers similarly imitated the movement of a huge black Bora snake that could hardly move its body.135

135. Ibid.
Bagha-pari Nat

In the Bagha-pari Nat or Tiger dance, a few female dancers, dancing in a stooping posture, represented deer grazing, and a man represented a tiger attacking the deer.\(^{136}\)

Bhal-pari Nat

In the Bhal-pari Nat or Bear Dance, a number of female dancers represented a party of persons whom a man representing a bear attacked.\(^{137}\)

Mrig-pari Nat

In the Mrig-pari Nat or Deer Dance, a party of female dancers represented a herd of deer grazing in the forest and a man was shown as shooting an arrow at them.\(^{138}\)

Hati-pari Nat

The Hati pari Nat or Elephant Dance was another form of dance of the Bhuyans. In this dance, a few women each with a twisted cloth hanging down in front of her head to represent an elephant’s trunk and each with a boy on his back to represent the

\(^{137}\) Ibid.
\(^{138}\) Ibid., PP.291-292
rider on the elephant, danced with the heavy leisurely gait of elephant. 139

Gidha-pari Nat

In the Gidha pari Nat or Vulture Dance, the dancers represented vultures wheeling round a carcase and one after the other pecking at it. 140

Gundari-pari Nat

In the Gundari pari Nat or Sparrow Dance a number of girls with light steps briskly danced about in a stooping posture to represent little birds frisking about. 141

Murgi-pari Nat

In the Murgi pari Nat or Cock Dance, girls with cloth sticking out of their heads as cock's combs danced in imitation of cocks. 142

Like most other primitive tribes, the Pauri Bhuyans were intensely fond of song and music. But their musical instruments were very few and simple. They consisted of only of the

140. Ibid.
141. Ibid.
142. Ibid.
invariable *changu* drum and occasionally a bamboo flute. Sringed
instruments were not practically known to them. The themes of
the Bhuyan song included the feelings of human heart, particularly
the emotion of love. They had also acquired a store of songs relating
to the love of *Krishna* and *Radha* and they had borrowed it from their
Hindu neighbours of the plains. A specimen of the song was the
following:

*Dine Banamali jaithili kheli,*

*Kadamba mulre hele;*

*Vrishabhanu jema sethaku asite*

*Beni nayana dekhile krishna harasa mana.*

(In day time did Banamali go to play.

At the foot of the Kadamb tree;

soon as Vrishabhanu there appeared,

Her sweet eyes gladdened Krishna's heart.)

The following song about the bear of his native forest was
sung by the *Pauri* Bhuyan at the *Bhal pari Nat* or Bear Dance:

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144. Ibid., P.293.
Aila re burha Bhalu; bhairo khailu halu halu;
Rumejhume Bhalu paraila ban-ku.
Chanchithili bais thenga Bhaluke petite,
Rume jhume Bhalu paraila ban-ku.145
(The old Bear came and bar fruit gorged,
The flouncing into the forest it fled.
To kill the Bear, bamboo clubs I had scraped;
But flouncing into the forest it fled.)

E.T. Dalton was so impressed with their songs and wrote thus:
"They have certainly more wit, more romance, and more poetry in
their composition than is usually found amongst the country folk in
India."146

The Bhuyans sang various types of songs the principal ones
being seasonal, Kutuni and Ulsi. After attaining youth the girls
generally sang the seasonal songs like the Chaitra Parva and Pous
Purnima songs. Kutani songs were sung at the time of marriage.
Males sang beside the bride-groom, while the girls beside the
bride. The Ulsi songs were sung on moonlit nights where their hearts

146. Ibid.
were happy. Besides these traditional songs every youth composed songs and sang them whenever he chose and specially in tracking and on festive occasions.\textsuperscript{147}

The themes of the Bhuyan songs were simple and symbolic. It consisted of the poetry of the earth and the sky and of their environment like the forests, the hills, the rivers, the birds, the beasts of the native hills and the crops of their forests. Their songs include such themes as the changing seasons and the varied passions of man, 'particularly the love and emotion, naked and unshamed, unchecked by inhibition or restraint'.\textsuperscript{148} E.T. Dalton gives a close imitation of a part of the song sung before him as follows:

\begin{quote}
BOYS

"A Kanchan flower bring to us

We'll listen whilst you sing to us.

GIRLS

We'll gather greens for dinner, dear!

But cannot think of singing here.
\end{quote}


( 70 )

BOYS

As Radha's pretty little bird,
You sweetly sing and must be heard.

GIRLS

You silken meshes o'er us fling,
But truly, love! We cannot sing.

BOYS

A handful that of chaff and straw,
Us boys you surely beat at jaw!

GIRLS (pouting)

Ah! birds that chirp and fly away!
With us you care not then to stay?

BOYS (amorous)

Yes, yes, we've caught some pretty fish,
To part, dear girls, is not our wish.

GIRLS (pleased)

The clouds disperse, the looks fair,
Come back then lads our homes to share.
BOYS

No! by the bar true blossom! but
you come with us and share our hut.

GIRLS

The birds sing merrily, we agree,
To leave pa ma and go with thee".149

SOCIAL customs

Like almost all tribes and castes of India, the successive stages of development in the life cycle of the hill Bhuyans comprised of birth, early childhood, adolescence, adult-hood, old age and death.150 The commencement of each successive stage was marked by ceremonies and solemnities intended either to relieve the individual from the harmful spiritual influences or to assimilate his nature to the new state of life and make the entry into the new state safe and prosperous.151

Be it a male or female child, birth was always welcomed in the Bhuyan society. Those women who gave birth to many children

149. E.T. Dalton, op. cit., PP.143-144.
enjoyed considerable pride and prestige. But barren women were looked down upon by them.\textsuperscript{152} A male child was more valuable than a female child.\textsuperscript{153} The expectant woman underwent several restrictions or precautions during her pregnancy to protect herself and particularly the child in the womb against evil spirits. She was not allowed to go to the jungles and hills and in fact she was not allowed to leave the basti except to go to the stream for bathing purposes.\textsuperscript{154} Though not always, this prohibition was regarded in Bonai, but in Keonjhar and Pal-Lahera it was rarely observed.\textsuperscript{155} She was not allowed to see the smoke rising from a cremation so that Masani and Churni spirits those were believed to haunt cremation grounds might not do any harm to her and to the child in her womb.\textsuperscript{156} However, in practice the sight of cremation smoke was not much heeded. But a pregnant women was not allowed to go to the cremation ground and to touch corpse.\textsuperscript{157}

The expectant mother and the father did not eat any meat of any sacrificed animal. They were also not allowed to go to the place

\textsuperscript{152} Tribes of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, 1990, P.49.
\textsuperscript{154} JBORS, Vol.V, Part-IV, 1919, P.618.
\textsuperscript{155} S.C. Ray, op. cit., PP.178-179.
\textsuperscript{156} JBORS, Vol.V, Part-IV, 1919, P.618.
\textsuperscript{157} S.C. Ray, op. cit., PP.178-179.
of worship to witness the rituals. The woman did not eat curds or anything which tasted sour, because it was believed that these things hindered easy delivery. At the time of eclipse, the expectant woman confined herself inside the house or remained outside. If she was outside she would not come in and if she was in indoors she would not come out. If she violated this taboo the baby in the womb was likely to be displaced. 158

Difficult labour was believed to be due to the ill temper of the family ancestors, *pat*-spirits, play of witchcraft or due to other malevolent spirits. 159 In case of difficult labour, vows were made to *Dharam Deota* (the supreme God) and to *Basumata* (the Earth Goddess) to facilitate delivery. The head of the family addressed the deity saying, "Thou didst generate the child in the womb; now bring it out safely. We shall offer the *akshat* (*arua* rice) and *sital* (molasses) or *pondra* (fowl) (as the case may be) in case of safe delivery; otherwise (in the event of miscarriage) blame will attach to Thee". 160 In some cases, to effect an easy delivery the village priest worshipped the *Gai-sri* and promised to offer sacrifices on

159. Ibid., P.68.
behalf of the family. In case the pain continued for days together, a Raulia (witch doctor) was consulted and he read womens by measuring two pieces of reeds. In Bonai, in case of difficult labour, lids of earthen ware vessels in the house were taken out and thrown away to facilitate delivery through sympathetic magic. In Bonai no male was permitted to enter the hut during labour pains and before delivery. The delivery took place in a portion of the hut set apart as the lying in compartment.

An elderly woman who might be a Bhuyan or any other caste and tribe served as Sutrunihari (midwife). She took care of the new born child and the parturient woman and received rice, dal, a new cloth and cash for help. Usually the expectant mother received no assistance at child birth. After delivery she herself cut the naval cord and bathed the child with oil, usually castor oil, which was smeared all over the body of the child.

162. Ibid.
In case of death of an expectant mother the embryo was removed from the corpse and both of them were burnt on the opposite banks of a stream. This rite was performed to prevent the dead woman from becoming a witch as they believed that no spirit could cross a stream and the mother was unable to become a witch without union with her child.167

Soon after the birth of a Pauri Bhuyan child the naval string was cut by the aji (father's mother) or by some other woman either own or one in the classificatory sense to the baby. She received about half a pound of rice for her labour.168 In no case it was cut by the Sutrunihari (mid-wife).169 The naval string and the placenta were buried by her (Suruni as called in Bonai) outside the house.170

In case of a male child, the naval string was cut with an arrow, in case of a female child with a knife or sometimes with a splinter of bamboo.171

The mother of a child remained unclean after its birth for

167. Feudatory States Gazetteers, P.49.
seven days in Bonai.\textsuperscript{172} Usually the birth impurity continued for about two to three months. On the fifth or seventh day after the child birth the baby and the parturient woman took their first purificatory bath. The washerman washed the clothes. On this day the mother tied piece of new thread besmeared with turmeric powder around her own neck and that of the child. From this day other members of the family might take water from her hands. But till then she was not allowed to enter the kitchen and cook food.\textsuperscript{173} On the day of the name giving ceremony, the old earthen-ware cooking vessels were thrown away and new vessels were used. It was only after four months from the birth of a son and five months from the birth of a daughter that the final purification took place. The relatives were entertained at a feast.\textsuperscript{174} After this the mother might enter the kitchen, cooked food for her family and her tribe, and they might all take food and water at her hands.\textsuperscript{175} Until this final purification, the husband of the parturient woman, like the woman herself, might

\textsuperscript{174} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.182.
\textsuperscript{175} JBORS, Vol.V, Part-IV, 1919, P.620.
not approach the seats of the deities when any sacrificial ceremony was performed, nor might he offer any sacrifices.\textsuperscript{176}

A child born with one or two teeth was believed to bring ill-luck to its parents. Among the hill Bhuyans of the Bonai State, in some cases such a child was generally suffocated and thrown into a stream.\textsuperscript{177} But the hill Bhuyans of Keonjhar and Pal Lahera denied the existence of such practice.\textsuperscript{178} Johar Chhowa (Twins) were much prized.\textsuperscript{179}

To avoid the death of an infant whose elder brothers and sisters died prematurely, the mother of the Pauri infant in the Bonai State left it in a manure-pit saying "All my children die prematurely. What shall I do with a fresh child? Here I leave it." Another woman who was present there, exclaimed, "This child is mine" and forthwith took it up in her arms and carried it home. Subsequently the mother of the child brought it back from the house of the other woman.\textsuperscript{180} In the Keonjhar and Pal Lahera States, in case of such a child, five or six men went to the mother after the first ceremonial

\textsuperscript{176} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.182.  
177. Ibid.  
178. Ibid.  
purification and told her, “This is our child and not yours” and one of them took up the child in his arms and handed it back to its mother saying, “We leave this child of ours under your care. Nurse it for us by giving it dudhpani (lit, milk and water).”

**Nam-Tora**

The Bhuyans followed certain customs in naming their children. Nam-Tora (Ceremony of naming the child) was precisely the same as that was followed by the Mundas and Hos. The mother of a child remained unclean after its birth for seven days. The child's head was then shaved and it was named. On a day between the eighth and twentieth day from the birth of a child, a name was selected with certain rites. The children were often named on a Friday. The name of the grandfather was given to the eldest son (except when, in consequence of the failure of the test, it was found necessary to change it), the great grandfather’s to the second son and then the names of collateral branches were

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given according to seniority.\footnote{187} In case of a female child, her father's mother was first named, then the father's aunts in succession then father's grandmother and grand aunts and so on.\footnote{188} In the cases of both the sexes, it was only after the names of the dead agnatic relations were exhausted that the names of maternal relations might be taken. All the names taken must be those of deceased relations.\footnote{189}

Another not unusual method of naming a child was to give a name in accordance with some event happening on the day of the child's birth.\footnote{190} If a European happened to pass through the village on the day of a child's birth, the child was named as Saheb or Gora, so too, if a Musalman, a dealer, a peon or a constable, passed through the village the child was named as Pathan, Mahajan, Chaprassi and Sipahi. The anniversary of a festival also gave an opportunity for a

name, such as Sonia, Raja or Dashara.\textsuperscript{191} Besides these names thus selected, some children got pet names or nick names.\textsuperscript{192}

After the name giving ceremony was over the tribe-fellows of other families might accept drinking water from the hands of the parturient woman and cooked food from other members of the family. But she was not allowed to enter the kitchen and cook food.\textsuperscript{193} No food cooked by the mother of the child was eaten by the relatives and tribe-fellows of the family until four months from the birth in case of a male child and five months in case of a female child.\textsuperscript{194}

**Disposal of Milk Teeth**

Cast milk-teeth of children were thrown away on the roof of a hut by a parent or brother or sister saying, "Here! take this old teeth and give a new tooth in its place."\textsuperscript{195}

\textsuperscript{192} JBORS, Vol.V, Part-IV, 1919, P.621.
\textsuperscript{194} JBORS, Vol.V, Part-IV, 1919, P.621.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid, P.622.
God Dhuari Ceremony

The *God Dhuari* ceremony was performed after the child walked and became five or six years old. This ceremony was performed to propitiate the deities praying them for health and happiness of the child. Usually goats and sheeps were slaughtered to appease the *pat* and other deities and *jau* was offered to the ancestral spirits. If a child did not suckle property, the parents promised to offer sacrifices to the *pat* in *God Dhuari* ceremony.\(^{196}\)

First Hair Cutting

From two or five months after the birth of a child, the hair (\*janam bar* or *pap bal* or natal hair) of the child was shaved for the first time by the *mamu* or mother’s brother. The father or mother in Bonai State, but in Keonjhar State the mother’s brother of the child took the hair to the nearest stream and cast the hair into the water.\(^{197}\) Some Bhuyans took their children to temples and got them shaved by barbers.\(^{198}\) The child was then bathed by the mother. The mother’s brothers too took a bath and were then regaled with liquor.

and treated to a feast. In Bonai State, he was presented with a new cloth for his offices.\textsuperscript{199}

\textbf{Ear-piercing}

At the age of four or five years, when the child was able to walk about, any one skilled in perforating ears, preferably a paternal grand mother or grand aunt, pierced the ear of the child with a thorn of the samudrar phera or phani-mansa bush.\textsuperscript{200} When the pain consequent on such ear-piercing abates, either a small reed or a thin piece of wood is inserted into each hole to widen it or brass \textit{mudras} (ear rings) were worn. No feast was given to relatives nor were any other rites observed.\textsuperscript{201}

\textbf{Funeral Rites}

The \textit{Pauri} Bhuyans believed that a human being was subject to die one day or other being very old. Death occurred due to ill temper of spirits, gods and goddesses and due to the play of black magic. When death occurred they made necessary arrangements for the disposal of the dead.\textsuperscript{202}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[199.] JBORS, Vol.V, Part-IV, 1919, P.622.
\item[200.] S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.188.
\item[201.] JBORS, Vol.V, Part-IV, 1919, P.622.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Like the Santals, Hindus and others, the hill Bhuyans followed certain customs for the disposal of the dead. They practised both burial and cremation to dispose of the dead. After the death of a Bhuyan, the death news was conveyed immediately to the kinsmen and near relatives. Amidst loud wailing of the kinsmen and near relatives the corpse was carried to the burial ground. They believed if the relatives did not lament for the dead, it might feel offended in the other world. A pit about six feet long and three feet deep was dug. Then the corpse is laid down into the pit. The corpse was laid down on its left with the head facing the northern direction. In some other cases the dead which was either buried or burnt, was always placed with the feet pointing to its native village. Ear-rings and necklaces, worn by the deceased, were buried with the corpse. But bracelets and other ornaments were taken off among the Bhuyans of Bonai State but not among those of Keonjhar who

205. Tribes of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, 1990, P.50.
206. JBORS, op. cit., PP.196-197.
were said to leave even silver bracelets with the corpse in the grave.\textsuperscript{210} The corpse was laid on its left side with its head to the south and face to the west.\textsuperscript{211} Then the eldest son of the deceased first threw a handful of earth into the grave and thereafter other sons did the same. Next the kinsman (\textit{Kutumbs}) and then the near relatives (\textit{Bandhus}) did the same rites in honour of the deceased. Finally all threw handful of earth and filled in the grave.\textsuperscript{212} In the absence of the eldest son the brother of the deceased threw first a handful of earth into the grave after which others filled up the grave with earth.\textsuperscript{213} Besides, some other possessions of the deceased like mat, one or two pieces of clothes, a pitcher or a gourd, an axe, a bow and an arrow were buried with the corpse. They believed that the dead needed all the articles of daily use in the other world. If these articles are not given the spirit of the dead might visit its descendants and press for such articles.\textsuperscript{214} Pieces of stones were put over the grave and thorny twigs and bushes were

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{210} JBORS, Vol.V, Part-IV, 1919, P.625.
\item \textsuperscript{211} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.197.
\item \textsuperscript{213} \textit{Tribes of Orissa}, Bhubaneswar, 1990, P.50.
\item \textsuperscript{214} \textit{Adibasi}, Vol.XIX, Nos.1-4, April 1979-January 1980, 'Hand Book on the Pauri Bhuinya', P.89.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
spread over these stones so that wolves and other beasts did not
open it and disturb the corpse. In case the death of a pregnant
woman, the child in Bonai was taken out of the womb and both of
them were buried at some distance. But in Keonjhar only a mark
was made on the womb with the end of a paddy grain and the
pregnant woman was buried in its womb. If a baby of one month
old died, it was buried. In case of cremation of the dead, the
corpse was laid on the funeral pile with head to the south. The
eldest son first set fire to the corpse at cremation and put the first
handful of earth into his grave. After this the other sons did the
same rites in honour of the deceased. Next the Kutumbs (kinsmen)
and finally the Bandhus (relatives) put firewood over the corpse.

After the corpse was buried the family members of the deceased
and other relatives prayed thus:

"As long as you were in this world, we shared a common life,
but now death has separated you from us. Please go and tell the

Yama (the God of Death) that you were the only person of the world and after you died there is nobody else left here."\(^{222}\)

In case of death of a pregnant woman special rites were performed. In order to prevent sorcery the *Pauri* Bhuyan practised black magic through foetus and drew seven lines on the womb of the dead before her burial.\(^{223}\) If a man \(\text{was}\) perished from snake bite, it was considered a natural death and in such cases the usual obsequies were awarded. This was because they revered the cobra as their first mother. The *Pauri* Bhuyans threw four to eight annas worth of copper on to the pyre or into the grave and if the deceased had a cow, some *ghee* or melted butter.\(^{224}\) They believed that man killed by bear and tiger turned into malevolent spirits. Especially the tiger spirits (*Baghia Bhuta*) killed human beings in the guise of tigers. In case a man was killed by a tiger, the *Raulia* (spirit doctor) was called on to perform some special rites in the burial ground. The idols of the tiger and the deceased were made of earth and the *Raulia* propitiated both of them by killing a *Boka* (uncastrated goat). The heads of both the idols were cut and


\(^{223}\) Ibid.

thrown into the flowing stream along with the head of the slaughted animal which prevented further attack of the Baghia Bhuta.²²⁵ The persons died of cholera, or small pox or falling from a tree were buried.²²⁶ E.T. Dalton writes, "They have no traditions regarding the order of creation, their own migrations, or any other ideas of a future state. They burn their dead near a stream, and throw the ashes into the water, thus following the custom of Santals, Hindus and others. Eleven days after the cremation all shave, put on fresh clothes and have a feast".²²⁷ In case of death of a child a fowl was sacrificed. On the death of a leading Bhuyan Chief, the inhabitants of all the neighbouring villages were called on to the burial. Nine days were allowed to lapse before the burial. The women kept up the funeral digre and the corpse was buried on the tenth day and a feast was given to the community.²²⁸

When the men return from the burial ground or cremation ground, some Bandhu pared their nails and shaved the hair round the scalp.²²⁹ All Kutumb males in the village in Bonai State pared

²²⁸  Feudatory States Gazetteers, P.50.
their nails and shaved round the scalp. But the widows and the daughters of the deceased were not required to pare their nails. The clothes of all the men who attended the disposal of the dead either burial of cremation and the family members of the deceased were made over to the Dhoba Behera (washerman) for washing and wear new or washed clothes. The death pollution lasts for two to three days. During the pollution period they refrained from taking any non-vegetarian dishes and anointing bodies with oil. At the end a feast was provided to all Bandhus as well as Kutums.

Jiba Anba (Calling back Soul of the Dead)

The Pauri Bhuyans believed that life did not come to an end with death. It only separated a person physically from his kith and kin, but the deceased continued to dominate the sacred world. It lived in the form of a spirit and all the time watched over the activities of the two family members. After death the spirit of the

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deceased took seat in the sacred *Bhitar* of the family and the spirit was duly propitiated on ceremonial occasions.  

The spirit of all the deceased could attain the status of the ancestral spirits (*Pitu*) and therefore could have a seat in the sacred *Bhitar* (the inner tabernacle).  

Except the spirit of a woman dying in child birth or during pregnancy, a person killed by tiger and bear, a person died from snake bite and died of diseases like cholera, small pox or falling from the trees, the spirits of other deceased were ceremonially invited to the *Bhitar* either on the third, fifth, seventh, ninth or eleventh day from the day of death with some rites.  

These ancestral spirits were very much benevolent in nature. Unless they were offended they safeguard the interest of their descendants and kept them and their livestock in good health and gave them prosperity and happiness.  

On the day of calling back the soul, a goat was slaughtered in front of the house of the deceased and was offered to the family ancestors. A few drops of blood and some meat were cooked in a

236. Ibid.  
new earthen vessel. The son of the deceased or any other male relative observed fasting for the whole day and remained seated inside the *Mulaghar*. At sunset a party of relatives either *Kutumbs* or *Bandhus* or both of the deceased proceeded from the deceased’s house towards the burial or cremation ground. One of them carried either two sickles, one in each hand, or a brass cup in his left hand and stick in his right hand, and another carried a new earthen vessel containing rice flour, and a third man carried an earthen vessel in which flesh of goat was cooked. On the way where two paths met or diverged they plastered a patch with water and fixed up the three sticks in the form of a tripod. The earthen vessel containing cooked goat’s meat was placed on the tripod and broken into pieces. When the vessel was broken, the men called loudly the deceased by name and said, “Come ! come! Do thou enter the hut.” It was believed that being attracted by the smell of cooked flesh of goat the spirit of the deceased came to the spot and entered into the earthen vessel containing rice-flour. Calling the spirit seven times, the Bhuyans drew some impression on the rice-

flour with thorny branches and carried the vessel home striking the sickle one against the other. Arriving at home they beat the roof of the house and the people inside the house asked them, "What have you brought?"243 Thereafter someone examined the rice-flour and looked out for the foot prints of the animal which was believed to have carried the spirit on its back. The rice-flour was then burnt eaten by the seven persons who had brought the spirit home. A fowl left in the Bhitar (inner tabernacle) before the men went for calling back the spirit, was sacrificed and its blood was offered to the ancestral spirit. Then some Kutumb or agnate of the deceased offered rice on a leaf plate to all the ancestral spirits and finally to the new spirit. From the very day of burial or cremation until calling back the spirit into the inner tabernacle (Bhitar) everyday, a son or younger brother of the deceased offered rice in a leaf cup to the spirit at the outskirts of the village for the nourishment of the spirit of the deceased.244 After the spirit of the deceased was brought to the Bhitar the members of the family and others became free from death pollution and resumed their normal activities.245

CORONATION CEREMONY OF THE RAJA

In a few Feudatory States of Orissa, the installation of the Raja was not completed unless the Chiefs of some tribal communities performed their part in the ceremony. In the States of Bonai, Boud and Keonjhar, the Bhuyans claimed an inalienable right to install the Feudatory Chiefs and such installation was performed in a special ceremony. The installation ceremony of the Raja of Keonjhar described to E.T. Dalton by an old retired Officer of the State was of great interest and it was described as follows:

"On the appointed day the Hill Bhuyans under the leadership of their Mahanayak used to assemble at the Raja's palace with their musical instruments. Then he presented the Raja with a pumpkin in token of allegiance of his tribe. Stooping on his hands and feet and thus representing himself as a horse, he carried the Raja on his back to the room where the Gadi was placed. Another Bhuyan leader, after offering flowers to the deity represented by a new earthen pitcher, placed a crown made of a long flexible creeper called Sualata on the Raja's head and invested him with a Poita (sacred thread) made of the "Seem Creeper" and marked the Raja Tika with sandal wood. Then the headman of the village, styled as
Rana handed over a sword to the Raja and told him, "Invest thee with the right of beheading people. Do thou they will." Then Bhuyans chief next made offerings to the Raja, in all kind rice, pulse, pots of ghee, milk, honey and other things, each article being touched by all the Sardars. And throughout the ceremony the Brahmin priests recited verses from the Sam Veda.\(^{246}\) E.T. Dalton, who himself witnessed the installation of Raja Dhanurjaya Narayan Bhanja\(^*\) of Kenojhar, described the ceremony in a very interesting way.\(^{247}\)

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

Among the Pauri Bhuyans marriage was endogamous so far as the tribe was concerned and exogamous so far as the agnates (Kutumb) were concerned.\(^{248}\) In the past marriage was forbidden within the village because they were agnates and belonged to a single clan believing to have descended from a common ancestor.\(^{249}\) Though quite uncommon, marriage outside the tribe was never ruled out. A Bhuyan might keep a Gour women, although not formally

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married woman without losing his caste and his offspring had all rights of legitimate children. But such cases were extremely rare. Child marriages were uncommon in the Bhuyan community. Marriage was adult. The boys usually married after twenty years of age and the girls after the age of eighteen. A Bhuyan girl never married before she was fully grown up and in this she enjoyed great freedom of courtship. But the more civilised Bhuyans were gradually adopting Hindu marriage usages and the parents arrange marriages for their children when they were young.

Marriage in the Bhuyan community was monogamous and after the death of the first wife one might marry again. In case the first wife proved to be barren, one had the liberty to have a second wife. Cases of persons marrying for the second time during the life time of their wives were occasionally encountered. Cross-cousin marriage was preferred in the Bhuyan community.

252. Ibid.
The hill Bhuyans recognised four forms of marriage known as Dhari-para, Jhika, Phul-Khosi and Mangi Bibha. Of them the first form marriage was the one the most prevalent and the last two were rather infrequent. The Dhari-para and Jhika marriages were love marriages between the adults and Phul-Khosi marriage a compulsory marriage. Mangi Bibha was in some cases a love marriage between adults and in some other cases it was an early marriage in which the guardians of the bride and the bridegroom selected a partner for their son or daughter. The latter cases of Mangi Bibha had been adopted from the Hindu custom and it occurred only in a few exceptionally well-to-do Bhuyan families.

The ceremonies observed in different forms of marriage in vogue among the Hill Bhuyans were described as follows:

**Dhari-para Marriage**

*Dhari-para* marriage was purely a love marriage which was prevalent in the Bhuyan community. In this form of marriage, the girls were wooed by young men when the latter visited a *Bandhu* village.

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and danced with the girls in the *Darbar*. After evening meals the boys took their *changus* (drums) and went to *Bandhu* village to dance with the girls. Before or just on their arrival the young men of this village disappeared in a body. The young visitors went straight to the *Darbar* (dancing ground in front of the *Manda-ghar*) of the village and played on *Changus*. Then some elderly women of the village, who looked after the girls, asked the girls to dance with the young men in the *Darbar* and the girls joined the young men and danced to the music played by them. They went on dancing and singing till late night and sometime till daybreak. In course of dancing if any boy and girl fell in love with each other, they sometimes retired to a distance. The elderly woman who did not show herself to the dancers, was always on the look out to see if there were any indications of growing attachment between one or more boys and girls. In the morning if she marked any prospect of attachment, she requested the young men to stay on for the following night and the young men did so. The girls prepared breakfast for

served and after taking their meals they went to the Manda-ghar (Bachelor's dormitory). After taking their meals the girls joined the young men at the Darbar and dancing and singing went on until sunset.\(^{267}\) Again, in the evening the girls prepared dinner for the young men and after evening meal they took up dancing and singing.\(^{268}\) In course of dancing and singing, if the attachment between a young man and a girl had ripened, the young man presented one of his necklaces usually made of beads to the girl and the girl as a token of growing affection presented the young man with the tender cob of maize.\(^{269}\) The acceptance of necklace by the girl constituted them Phul-mitras (flower friend) after which she would be considered as betrothed to the boy. Thus the young men stayed on in the Bandhu village for four or five days.\(^{270}\)

On the last day the young men received a formal invitation from the girls to a dinner. Fowls or goats were killed and the girls prepared dinner for the guests. Till then the guests were not supplied with oil and toothpicks. However, on the last day the girls brought for them toothpicks and oil to anoint their bodies. Thereafter some

guests went in search of one or two young men of the girls' village to sit at dinner with themselves. 271

After dinner, the guests started their homeward journey and the girls bore them company to the outskirts of their village. There they all halted for an hour, singing to each other by turns. 272 A short specimen of the songs was described as follows:

Girls: 

**Gagaila kau!**

*Natgit karibare, ar dinke thau.*

*Phuti gala kasi!*

*Tomar amar, Bhai phulbasiba asi.*

Boys: 

**Kankrir Kasi!**

*Ar din jaibo, bhai, bera, gelo basi*

**Kankrir kasi!**

(Girls: There crows the crow!

To sing and dance, stops one day more.

Kasi flowers have blown!

Between thee and me, flower friendship.

272. Ibid., PP.78-79.
Boys : Tender fruit of cucumber!
Some other stay to sing we'll come;
The day advances; Tender fruit of cucumber!)

After the song was sung the girls bowed to the boys and the boys returned the salutations and parted with each other.273

After some days, the girls returned the visit and they were received by the young men in their Darbar. The young men spent the night with the girls in dancing and singing. Next morning after entertaining them a hearty meal, the young men escorted them to the outskirts of the village and there they halted for sometime singing to each other as before; after due salutation they departed.274 A specimen of the song was described as follows:

Boys : Phul dhau dhau, chali jau jau;
       Git pade mari debe chali jau jau
Girls : Nai janoi, Ginto!
       Sag torile chinto
       Mui nai janoi, Ginto.

Boys: Nui pani ananti, Ginto!
Bhai ai na janonti!

Girls: Pita rara khari janoi na janoi Bhai,
Jathakatha kari
Pitarar khari! Jatha katha;
O, Bhai, Jatha katha kari.

(Boys: Whilst hastening home, ye flowers!
Sing one more song, whilst ye go?

Girls: No songs I know, O friend!
Whilst I gather herbs you'll see no songs I know

Boys: Water from the stream you draw,
O friend, (yet) you say no songs you know!

Girls: Bracelet of brass! whether I know or not,
Some song (for thee) I'll sing;
Bracelet of brass! Somehow or other, Friend
Somehow or other (I'll manage to sing)

During visit to the girls' village one of the young men seized his sweet heart and arrived at the boundary of his village. From there the bride was escorted home by some female members and
some elderly woman of the family marked the forehead of bridegroom and than the bride with turmeric powder. Thereupon a simple form of marriage was performed by the elderly Bhuyan women. This marriage usually involved the payment of bride price which was paid either on the birth of first child or at any time within twelve years from the date of marriage.

**Jhika or Ghicha Marriage**

In the *Jhika* marriage or the *Ghicha* (forced) marriage, the boy wooed the girl at the *Darbar* in a *Bandhu* village. Thereafter the boy informed his parents that he wished to marry a particular girl. If the parents of the boy were not able to pay the customary bride price consisting of three oxen, five *Khandis* of unhusked rice or its cash value estimated at two rupees and one or two pieces of cloth, they sent some relatives to the parents of the girls to enquire if the girl's parents were willing to give their daughter in marriage to the particular boy. If they were willing they said, "*Ghichi Kari Lai Jeba*". (Seize her and take her) Then the relatives of the boy returned and gave the news to the parents of the boy. Then a suitable day

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was fixed on which the boy with a party of both Kutumbs and Bandhus went to the village of the bride. Arrived at the jungle on the outskirts of the village, they sent the news of their arrival to the parents of the girl and the parents sent their daughter with some other girls to the nearby forest on the pretext of gathering fuel or leaves or drawing water from a stream. When the girl entered the jungle, the bridegroom came up to her and seized his bride-elect.279

When the companions of the bride made an attempt at striking the bridegroom, the companions of the bridegroom made a show of striking the companions of the bride. While the two parties were engaged in fighting, the bridegroom escaped with his elected bride and arrived at his home. On reaching the village the companions of the bride informed her parents that the tiger had carried off the bride where upon the parents of the bride along with relatives armed with sticks went to the jungle in search of the girl. In case the bridegroom lives in the nearby village, the parents of the girl went to his house on the very day and made a show of quarrel. The party of the bridegroom said, “We have done it. Now deal with

us as you like."280 Thereafter all became quiet and the guests were entertained with a dinner and the parents of the bride promised to pay the bride price within a year.281

When the bride and the bridegroom arrived at the house of the bridegroom some elderly woman relative of the bridegroom smeared on their forehead with oil and turmeric paste and other women made the benedictory hur-hura sound. Both bride and bridegroom put on clothes dyed yellow with turmeric. Thereupon jau was offered to the ancestor-spirits and friends and relatives were entertained with a feast.282

Then the marriage was arranged as per the Dhari-para form of marriage which was followed by another ceremony known as Juhar-Pani ceremony as described below.

Juhar Pani Ceremony

The married couple stood on a yoke. The bride stood to the left of the bridegroom. Then some female relatives started pouring water mixed with turmeric paste over their heads and make hur-

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282. Ibid.
hura sound.\textsuperscript{283} Then wives of the bridegroom's brothers and some cousins besmeared the couple with mud which was brought from a flowing stream. Until the purification of the bride's first menstruation in her husband's house was performed, they slept separately. After some days bride's mother and sisters came to see her.\textsuperscript{284}

After a year or so later the parents of the bride were invited to take the bride price and a hearty feast was arranged for the purpose and friend and relatives were invited to it.\textsuperscript{285}

**Phul-Khosi**

The hill Bhuyans of Orissa practised another form of marriage which was known as "Phul Khosi". This form of marriage was made against the will of the girl if she rejected the marriage proposal of the boy.\textsuperscript{286} In such cases, the boy inserted in her hair a bunch of white thheur flowers, failing that, some kind of blood red flowers, by force. This amounted to betrothal and no other boy could claim to marry that girl. \textsuperscript{287} The boy himself dragged her while dancing. After

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{283} S.C. Ray, op. cit., PP.162-163.
\item \textsuperscript{284} JBORS, Vol.VI, Part-I, 1920, P.83
\item \textsuperscript{285} S.C. Ray, op. cit., PP.163-164.
\item \textsuperscript{286} Banshidhar Mohanty, op. cit., P.129.
\item \textsuperscript{287} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.164.
\end{itemize}
the girl escaped, the boy came back to his village and informed his parents and villagers. After some days the women and girls of the girls village brought her to the village of the boy for marriage.288

The marriage was performed as in Jhika or Ghicha form of marriage.

In case the marriage could not take place and the girl was to be married to someone else, the marriage could only be done through the ceremonies appropriate for a widow marriage.289

**Mangi Bibha**

"Mangi Bibha" was another form of marriage which was practised in the Bhuyan community. It was a traditional form of marriage of the Bhuyan community.290 In this form of marriage the parents of the bride and bridegroom usually selected the partner for their sons and daughters.291

The Mangi Bibha, which was different in many respects from the other forms of marriages, was only adopted by a very few well-to-do families of the Bhuyan community. Ordinarily, the mother and other female relatives of the boy selected a Bandhu girl as a bride

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for the boy. In case the boy agreed to the selection, negotiations were started through a *Kondra* (a *Bandhu* intermediary). In few instances, the boys fell in love with a *Bandhu* girl at the dances. In such cases the parents decided to marry off the lovers, and then male relatives of the boy were sent to the girls parents with about a maund of rice, one goat and a brace ring.

When the relatives of the boy arrived at the bride's house, if the bride's people agreed with the marriage proposal, some women of the family washed their feet and they were entertained with a meal. In the next morning the father of the boy or some other relative addressed the father of the girl, saying "O *Bandhu*, we have come in the expectation of eating certain fruit, will you give it to us?" The father of the boy replied "If you can bear the burden (meaning marriage expenses) of both sides, come on, otherwise don't." Then they presented the parents of the girl with the rice, goat and ring and put on the ring on the right ring finger of the bride by either the father or paternal uncle or paternal grandfather and grand uncle of the bridegroom. While putting on the ring, the man told the

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295. Ibid.
girl, "From today you become our Bahu. We shall take you home when the bride price is ready." The party returned home after a promise to pay the usual bride rice for the marriage.

Subsequently, a particular day was fixed by the parents of both boy and girl. A party consisting of ten or fifteen male as well as female relatives went to the bride’s house to bring her to her husband’s house. The bride was brought to her new house escorted by Kondras (companions) and musicians with dhol and changu. On their arrival at the boundary of the bridegroom’s village some men and women received them and some women washed the feet of the guests on the road. On their arrival at the bridegroom’s house the women offered them mats to sit on and Pikas (tobacco rolled like cigarette with sal leaves) to smoke. The bridegroom’s mother, sisters and other married and unmarried female relatives received the bride into the house.

But widows were allowed to accompany her. The Dehuri (the village priest) officiated at the marriage ceremony. He puts a little
arua (Sun dried rice) and turmeric powder on the ground in three
different places side by side as offerings respectively to Basu Mata
(Earth Goddess), Dharam Deota (the Sun God) and Pitrus (Ancestor
spirit) and invoked their blessings for the bride and bridegroom to
keep them in good health, happiness and prosperity. Then he
marked the forehead of the couple with turmeric paste and sprinkled
arua rice on them while women made the beneficatory hur-hura
sound or ulu-ulu. Among the Pauris of the Bonai State, some
married women marked the forehead of the bride with turmeric paste
and sprinkled arua rice on her while elderly women make the hur-
hura sound.

On the day of marriage the bride and the bridegroom
remained fasting the whole day and in the evening the Bhandari
(barbar) pared their nails and painted the feet of the bride with alta
(red dye) after which they were conducted to the courtyard where the
wedding ceremonies were performed.

On the following day the Kado-ghati or the mud-throwing
ceremony was performed. After their return from the stream the

302. Ibid.
bride and bridegroom sat, bride to the left of the bridegroom, before a yoke planted upright and bathed in the *chur-pani* (stolen water from the stream) and put on clothes dyed yellow with turmeric paste. Their foreheads were anointed with turmeric paste while some elderly women made *hur-hura* sound. All these ceremonies constituted the real marriage of the Bhuyan community.\(^{304}\) But among the hill Bhuyans of Keonjhar and Pal-Lahera States, the wedded couple never went to the stream and bathed at night. The *Kado-ghati* ceremony was celebrated on the next day. Some married women fetched water from seven houses for the wedded couple to bath in. The guardian of the bridegroom presented a new cloth to the bride and another to the bridegroom. After bath they put on those clothes and sat on the yoke. The *hur-hura* or *ulu-ulu* sound was not made. The female relatives of the bridegroom presented few coins to the bride.\(^{305}\) This completed the marriage ceremony after which the Bhuyans engaged themselves in feasting, dancing and singing in accompaniment to the rhythms of the *Changu* drum.\(^{306}\) But in Bonai State, after marriage was completed, dancing and

305. Ibid., P.172.
306. Ibid., P.172.
feasting went on for three days and nights.\textsuperscript{307} The Mangi Bibha form of marriage of the Bhuyan community appeared to have been adopted from the Hindus.\textsuperscript{308}

**Randi Bibha (Remarriage of Widow)**

The remarriage of widows in the Pauri Bhuyan community of Orissa was called Randi Bibha or Sanga. It was customary among them.\textsuperscript{309} As per custom of Randi Bibha the younger brother of the deceased husband was considered to have the first right over his elder brother’s widow.\textsuperscript{310} But it was not compulsory on her part to marry him.\textsuperscript{311} If the widow married some other man, she lost all right and authority over her children by her former husband.\textsuperscript{312} In case of remarriage of widow no ceremony was observed nor any bride price was paid.\textsuperscript{313} Marriage of a widow with an elder brother of her deceased was strictly forbidden.\textsuperscript{314}

\textsuperscript{307} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.173.
\textsuperscript{308} Banshidhar Mohanty, op. cit., P.130.
\textsuperscript{309} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.175.;
\textsuperscript{310} H.H. Risley, op. cit, P.114.
\textsuperscript{311} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.175.;
\textsuperscript{312} R.V. Russell and R.B. Hira Lai, op. cit., P.317.
\textsuperscript{314} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.175.;
\textsuperscript{315} JBORS, Vol. VI, Part-I, 1920, P.87.
\textsuperscript{316} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.175.
\textsuperscript{317} H.H. Risley, op. cit., P.114.
Am-Bibha

Another peculiar type of marriage was prevalent in Bonai State in the Bhuyan community. This type of marriage was known as Am Bibha.\textsuperscript{315} As per the custom of this form of marriage a man who did not have any child by his first or second wife and he decided to marry again, had to be wedded to a mango (Am) tree, a day or two before such marriage. Probably this was intended to make him fruitful like the mango tree so that he might be blessed with children by such subsequent marriage.\textsuperscript{316}

Dowry System

From the remote past the dowry system was in practice in the Bhuyan community. The bride price among the Pauri Bhuyan consisted of two bullocks or cows, one of which given to the girl's father and the other to her brother.\textsuperscript{317} In the Jhika form of marriage the customary bride price consisted of three oxen, five Khandis of unhusked rice or its cash value estimated at two rupees, one or two pieces of cloth.\textsuperscript{318} In the Mangi Bibha form of marriage, the

\textsuperscript{315} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.174.
\textsuperscript{318} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.160.
minimum customary bride price consisted of the following in Bonai State: One cow for the bride's mother; two bullocks, one for the bride's father and another for the maternal uncle; two goats, one castrated and the other not castrated; five pieces of clothes, each fourteen cubits long, one for the bride's mother, one for her mother's sister, one for her father's sister, one for her elder sister, and one for her younger brother; one rupee in cash for the mother as the price of milk with which she suckled the bride in her infancy; a certain measure (five Khandis or more) of husked rice and the same quantity of unhusked rice. In the States of Keonjhar and Pal Lahera the maximum bride price consisted of two bullocks, one for the bride's father and one for her mother's brother; one cloth for the mother; one goat, five Khandis (2½ mds) of rice, and one rupee as Khirikhia (or eating Khir or condensed milk as consideration for mother's milk).

Divorce

The tribal society recognised the chances of friction between man and wife in domestic life and also provided maladjustment.

Divorce and mutual separation were freely allowed on grounds of incompetence, cruelty, desertion and adultery.\textsuperscript{321} Throughout tribal India divorce was easy and generally the wife had the same rights as her husband.\textsuperscript{322} As such was the case among the Bhuyans of Orissa.

The Bhuyan community recognised divorce. But such instances were very few and it was granted in certain extreme situations. A Pauri Bhuyan might divorce his wife on various reasons, as S.C. Ray writes (i) For habitual neglect of her household duties, such as not regularly cooking the meals or not giving sufficient food to eat to her husband and his parents, brothers of sisters; (ii) For frequently quarrelling with her husband or other members of the husband’s house; and (iii) For carrying on an intrigue.\textsuperscript{323} Divorce was permitted when the wife proved to be unchaste. No restriction was there on the remarriage of a divorced wife and she could only marry a widower.\textsuperscript{324} If the wife proved to be unchaste or the husband neglected to maintain her, or if either husband or wife suffered from incurable

\textsuperscript{321} D.N. Majumdar, \textit{Races and Cultures of India}, Bombay, 1965, P.191.
\textsuperscript{322} Varrier Elwin, \textit{The Kingdom of the Young}, Oxford University Press, 1968, P.211.
\textsuperscript{323} S.C. Ray, op. cit., PP.175-176.
\textsuperscript{324} Ibid., P.311.
diseases, such as leprosy or impotence, divorce was permitted with the sanction of the Bhuyan Panchayat. A divorced wife might marry again by the Randi Bibha or Sanga form of marriage.\textsuperscript{325} No bride price was paid by a man marrying a divorced woman.\textsuperscript{326} Divorce was allowed for misconduct on the part of the wife or mutual disagreement.\textsuperscript{327}

\textbf{Polygamy and Polyandry}

Polygamy as a practice was said to be rare in the Bhuyan community. Theoretically polygamy was allowed and a man might have as many wives as he could maintain. Usually the social customs of the Bhuyan community did not favour the practice of polygamy.\textsuperscript{328} But if the first wife proved herself barren, the husband might take a second wife.\textsuperscript{329} Polyandry as a practice was also said to be very rare in the Bhuyan community. But they had the survival of fraternal polyandry which consisted in allowing the unmarried younger brothers to have access to an elder brother's wife during his lifetime.\textsuperscript{330}

\textsuperscript{325} H.H. Risley, op. cit., P.114.
\textsuperscript{327} R.V. Russell and R.B. Hira Lal, op. cit., P.317.
\textsuperscript{328} H.H. Risley, op. cit., P.114.
\textsuperscript{329} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{330} Ibid.
Adultery and Abduction

The Bhuyan tribals of Orissa observed a high standard of conjugal fidelity. Adultery was said to be very rare among the Bhuyans. Even a Bhuyan man did not touch the wife of his younger brother’s wife. Adultery was looked down upon by the Bhuyans. In case a woman was proved to be unchaste, she was divorced by her husband. A woman involved in adultery was divorced and she was not again admitted to the caste. Her parents took her to their village and she lived there in a separate hut and earned her own livelihood. Cases of adultery were generally considered an inter village affair. The offender involved in adultery was brought to justice by the joint council of elders of concerned villages. At the meeting of the joint council the two headmen in conjugation with the older men of the two villages discussed the case and in most cases the abductor was ordered to pay a fine in shape of money which was handed over to the aggrieved husband towards his bride price and marriage expenditure. Besides, the abductor also gave a goat and some rice which were used in a feast for the assembled

FEASTS AND FESTIVALS

The Bhuyans of Orissa, like most other tribes, observed a series of public feasts and festivals round the year. Besides their religious significance most of the festivals were closely associated with the agricultural cycle. These festivals marked the turning points in the annual round of the economic life of the tribe. Besides their economic significance these festive occasions provided ample scope for interaction and get together of kiths and kins. Of all, the most important purpose of the feasts and festivals was to break the monotony and boredom of daily routine work and to provide relaxation and leeway for enjoying life. A brief account of these feasts and festivals were described below.

The Magh Paroi or Magh Jatra Festival

The *Magh Paroi* or the *Magh Jatra* festival marked the

337. Ibid.
338. Ibid., P.123.
termination of the agricultural year. It was a festival of merry-
making and thanks-giving for the blessing of the outgoing year and
of preparation for entry into the fresh labours of the incoming year
with its manifest dangers. It was celebrated in the month of Magh
(January-February) for three days. The ceremonies and
observances described by S.C. Ray were as follows:

**Hurt Burning**

"An open space outside the settlement is cleaned, and four
newly cut logs of wood brought from the jungle are planted upright
in the ground to form a small quadrangle which is roofed over either
with logs of wood as in Keonjhar and Pal Lahera or with grass,
leaves and straw as in Bonai. At mid-day, the Dehuri, with each eye
covered up with a rice flour cake, in some places, but uncovered in
others, sets fire to this quadrangular shed while all present shout
"Hari-bol". In some Bhuyan villages (as I found at village
Bhonjpali in the Bonai State) fire on this occasion is kindled by the
friction of two pieces of wood; and the hut burning is done with new

on the Pauri Bhuinya', P.126.
345. Ibid.
fire. All fire in other houses is extinguished, and few fire is kindled from this ceremonial fire, with this new fire jau (rice boiled in milk) is cooked for offerings to the Ancestor spirits.\footnote{346} On this day, no Pauri Bhuyan will allow fire to be taken out of his house by anybody. This ritual of hut-burning does not appear to be a rite of purgation or purification to which similar hut-burning by sterile women in several parts of India.\footnote{347} The present rite may be a mimetic representation of jungle clearing for purposes of Koman cultivation and is intended to have a magic influence on their agricultural operations.\footnote{348} The ashes of this burnt hut are also believed to have a magical virtue. The Pauris of Keonjhar and Pal Lahera States note the direction from which the echo of "Hari-bol" appears to venerate, and conduct their Koman or Jhuming operations on that side in the ensuing year, as it is believed to promise success.\footnote{349} Everyone present puts a mark (tika) on his own forehead with the ashes of this burnt shed. The remaining ashes are taken up by the Pauris present and some take their share home and some keep theirs in the Manda house. The ashes are believed to bring them

\footnote{346}{S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.232.}
\footnote{347}{Ibid., P.233.}
\footnote{348}{Ibid., P.233.}
\footnote{349}{Ibid., P.233.}
In the Bonai State some one carries the Dehuri home on his back and others follow him. Arrived at his house, the Dehuri pours a little water on everybody's feet (this being evidently a relic of an older custom of regular feet washing), and brings out rice flour cake which he distributes to all present. Since morning, the men have all remained fasting, and now everyone returns home where an exceptionally good dinner awaits him. But now a days, in every village (as I found in Keonjhar) only the Dehuri observes the fast.  

"Next morning the Dehuri bathes and goes to the spot where the extemporised hut was burnt and there scatters a handful of paddy-seeds over the ashes and leaves the place. Then two other Pauris of the village go there with a plough; one of them holds the plough and the other drives it over the ashes sown over by the Dehuri, and then go away. The Dehuri with a number of villagers who have remained fasting since morning go to the Darbar by the side of which Boram and Gai-sri have their Asthan (seats). There

351. Ibid., P.234.
352. Ibid., P.234.
353. Ibid., P.234.
the Dehuri offers some rice and sacrifices a few fowls to Boram and Gai-sri and then cooks the meat of the fowls. The Dehuri and other villagers take each some rice and a new earthen vessel with him to the place and everyone boils his own rice and eats it with a little of the cooked meat given by the Dehuri."

"It is only after this ceremonial burning of newly-cut logs of wood and the ceremonial ploughing and scattering of seeds on the ashes, that the villagers may cut wood or fell trees from the jungles, begin new clearing on their hill-slopes, and commence fresh agricultural operations. If anyone cuts wood before the Magh Jatra festival, sickness to the Dehuri or his cattle is apprehended. Any person who may happen to cut wood before the festival will be required to propitiate the Boram spirit by sacrificing fowls. Should he omit to offer the sacrifices, the Dehuri will do so himself."

"It is particularly on this occasion of the Magh Jatra festival that Pauri boys (especially in the Bonai State) form ceremonial friendship with one another. The different forms of such artificial

355. Ibid., P.235.
356. Ibid., P.235.
357. Ibid., P.235.
friendship are known as Maitra, Sanga, Jamdair and Maha Prasad.\(^{358}\) The Maitra form of friendship is formed between boys who happen to bear the same name. Each presents to the other seven handful of arua-rice and a few pieces of turmeric and salutes him by saying "Johar Maitra".\(^{359}\) Subsequently the friends (Maitras) invite each other to a feast at their respective houses and each presents the other a new cloth. In the Gamha Punai Parab they exchange sidhas or presents of rice, pulse and other eatables, and on every occasion of a festival, the two Maitras entertain or make presents of food to each other."\(^{360}\)

"The observances in the Makar and Sanga forms of friendship are the same as Maitra form which differ from the former in the absence of identity of names of the two friends.\(^{361}\) In the Maha Prasad friendship, which, too, may be formed at any time of the year but is generally contracted during some festival, one boy puts into the mouth of the other a little arua rice with a few petals of some flower and then they salute each other by saying, "Johar, Maha Prasad". Clothes are exchanged and each entertains the other to a

\(^{358}\) S.C. Ray, op. cit., PP.235-236.
\(^{359}\) Ibid., P.236.
\(^{360}\) Ibid., P.236.
\(^{361}\) Ibid., P.236.
feast at his house. In a Jamdair friendship, which is also formed either on the occasion of the Magh Jatra or on the Makar Jatra festival, a boy puts a tiny jam (Eugenia Jambolana) twig on each ear of the other and then each salutes other, saying - 'Johar, Jamdair'. They entertain each other with feasts and exchange presents of clothes as in other forms of friendship. Girls form similar friendship variously known as Karamdair, Bairkoir, and Makar. The Makar friendship of girls is formed with the same ceremonies as in the case of the boys. The Karamdair and Bairkoir forms of friendship are similar to the Jamdair friendship of boys with this difference that instead of a jam twig, a Karam (Nuclia parvifolia) twig is worn on the ears of Karamdair friends and flowers of the bair (Zizyphus Jujuba) are worn on the ears of Bairkoir friends. Karamdair friendships are entered into on the occasion of the Karam Jatra and the Makar and Bairkoir forms of friendship on Makar Jatra day.

"On the occasion of these Jatra - festivals the Magha Jatra,
Makar Jatra and Karam Jatra - Pauri boys also enjoy themselves in another way. They go in a body from house to house in their village and beg for pithas or cakes and rice and any other eatables, such as pulse or vegetables, that may be had. They eat the cakes together on the same day, and on a subsequent day enjoy a picnic on the bank of a hill stream, where the rice and other eatables thus obtained are cooked and eaten.368

The Makar Jatra Festival

The Makar Jatra festival was not a traditional festival of the Pauri Bhuyans of Orissa. It was only observed by the Bhuyans of Koirā village in the Bonai State. It was not known to the Pauri Bhuyans of Keonjhar and Pal Lahera.369 On the fullmoon day in the month of Pous (December), the Bhuyans from different villages of Koirā Pargana and some Pauris from Pauri Pargana assembled at Koirā village to observe the festival. The Bhuyans, coming from other villages, came with cakes and other food for their day's meal, if they did not have either friends or relatives at Koirā. In every house cakes were made and those who could afford killed fowls or goats.370

369. Ibid.
In the morning, the Dehuri offers water, molasses, flower and arua rice to a sacred stone called Nageswar Mahadev installed in an open field at the outskirts of the village. In the afternoon, in an open place in front of the Asthan of Nageswar Mahadev the men danced Paiki dance. Other tribals and castes in the neighbourhood of Koira such as Gours and Kols also took part in the dance. As the tribals believed, after this festival the servants were released from their years engagement and new servants were appointed. It was the harvest festival of the Bhuyans of Koira Pargana Bhuyans who appear to have borrowed from the semi Hinduised Bhuyans and other tribes and castes of the Plains.

The Karam Jatra Festival

The Bhuyans of Bonai celebrated the Karam Jatra festival in Asvin or Kartik (October-November) after the cutting of low land paddy but before it had been threshed. Two or three days before the festival the Dehuri and Naek (village headman) met at the Darbar and fixed up a date for the observance of the Karam Jatra Festival.

372. Ibid.
374. Ibid., P.293.
375. Ibid., P.293.
On the morning of the fixed day the Darbar ground was cleared with cow dung and water and a mud alter with a canopy of leaves and twigs was prepared over it. The Dehuri, who fasted the whole day, planted a Karama branch on the alter and worshipped it by offering arua rice, frankincense, molasses, milk while some women went on making the hur-hura sound. The girls who had also fasted provided fried Gangei to the Dehuri to offer to Karama Deota. The girls bowed down before the Karam Deota and said, "O Karam Raja, O Karam Rani, we are making Karam Dharam." An old man who knew the legend (bakhani or katha) of Karam Raja and Dharam narrated it. The girls spent the night by lighting lamps near the sacred Karama branch. That evening cakes and the other delicious food were prepared at each house and guests from other villages were entertained at different houses and feasting, dancing, drinking and merry-making formed the order of the night.

Only men danced and sang that night to the accompaniment of drums.

Next morning the Dehuri again worshipped the Karam Deota and offered rice and molasses to it. After the plant was worshipped the Dehuri uprooted the sacred Karama plant and handed it over to the boys of the village and seven boys carried it to each house where they were greeted by the women with offering of rice cake. In every house the women washed the feet of the Karam Raja by pouring water at the lower end of the Karama branch. The boys finally immersed the Karama branch in the water of some stream.

Akhni Pardhi or Akhan Paridhi

Akhni Pardhi was celebrated to mark the Annual Hunting Festival of the Pauri and other plains Bhuyans. It was held on the third day of the moon (Akshay Tirtia) in the month of Chait. In the preceding evening the Dehuri informed the villagers to start on the Annual Akhni Pardhi expedition on the following mornings. The men wishing to join the Akhni Pardhi observed continence and slept away from their wives. Early in the morning they assembled in the Darbar armed with their bows, arrows and axes and with drums and sticks. Before they started the hunters brought seven bows,

384. Ibid., PP.241-242.
seven arrows, two chickens and some husked paddy (Akata) and turmeric powder and gave them to the Naek.385 The Naek worshipped the Dharam Deota (Sun God), Basuki Mata (Earth Goddess), Gai-Sri (Village Deity) and Boram at the outskirts of the village and offered two chickens to the deities. He sprinkles the blood on the bows and arrows and prayed; "Today we were celebrating the Akhni Pardhi. Let the hunters meet all sorts of games on their way and let them be able to shoot down all." He also burnt some incense to please the forest and hill spirits (Baghias and Bauti) to ensure success in the hunting. The chickens offered to the deities were burnt and the hunters took it before they started for hunting.386

After reaching the forest the party of hunters were divided into two groups and the Ghatias (those reputed as the most daring and fearless) sat on key places and hid themselves behind the trees and remained seated with their weapons ready for use.387 The rest of the party beat the drums and the bushes, shouted loudly, threw stones and made peculiar sounds to drive the animals towards the

386. Ibid.
Ghatias. When the game ran near by the Ghatias shot it down with the help of their bows and arrows.\(^{388}\) After the game was begged the Dehuri or in absence of the Dehuri an elderly man took some blood of the game and offered it to the Dharam Deota, Basukimata, Gai-sri, Boram, Baghias and Bautis and prayed "Hear we offer you the blood of the slain animals. May we have many more and ever". \(^{389}\) The man whose arrow shot the animals also took some blood from the game and offered it to his ancestor spirits praying for success in future hunting.\(^{390}\)

After the hunting was over, all went with the spoils of the day to the house of the Naek where some woman of the Naek's family washed the feet of the hunters with turmeric water anointing their forehead with turmeric paste and kissed their hands.\(^{391}\)

The two hind legs of each game were presented to the Naek as Akhni Bheti (present of the hunt) and in return the Naek gave the hunters a cloth of ten cubits if a Sambar or a pig or a Deer is killed and a Gamcha (napkin) for a Kutara (a barking deer). In place of

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cloth he might give twelve annas for the long cloth and four annas for the napkin. Besides, he offered a basketful of rice cakes to the members of the party both in successful and unsuccessful hunting.\textsuperscript{392}

One of the loins of the game was offered to the hunter. The rest of the meat was equally divided into two shares. One share is equally distributed among all the members of the hunting party and the other share was equally distributed among all the families of the village.\textsuperscript{393}

The ceremonial Akhni Pardhi (Akhin Pardhi) was observed for three consecutive days, i.e. the first day being the Naek's day, the second for the Dehuri and the final day for the Barabhais or villagers. The same procedure were followed on all these days except that the Naek presented the party with a basketful of rice-cakes on the first day to carry with them to the forest and the women offered mandia cakes and rice cakes to the hunting party on the third day.\textsuperscript{394}

Before meat was distributed, the brain, the heart and some

\textsuperscript{393} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{394} Ibid.
meat was roasted on ember and was offered to the spirits and the deities for whose favour they met with the success in hunting. The meat thus offered was considered sacred and was believed to carry the power. The husbands of the menstruating women were not allowed to eat such meat. If any outsider ate such meat the real hunting power was believed to be transmitted to his body and the villagers might not have the good luck to have more success in hunting. The Bhuyans believed that good or bad harvest depended on the quantity of game begged.

In subsequent hunting, people went singly or with companions and the game was divided among the hunters per capita, although a little meat was generally presented to each of the families who had not deputed any one to the hunting.

**Am - Nua**

The *Am-Nua* festivals was observed in December or January when the mango blossoms came out. A day was fixed by the *Dehuri* for the observance of this festival and the same was

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396. ODG (Keonjhar), 1986, P.103.
communicated to all the villagers. On the appointment day after taking bath in the morning the Dehuri husked new paddy collected from the individual houses. With the arua rice thus prepared and a little frankin sense, molasses, mango blossoms and rice flour the Dehuri proceeds to the seat of Gai-sri and offered to Gai-sri and Boram. The villagers also attended the puja after taking their ablutions. On every alternative year either a male goat or a pair of chicken (one hen and one cock) were sacrificed to appease the deities. Thereafter the Dehuri prepared jau by boiling arua rice in water with mango blossoms in a stone vessel and offered to Gai-sri and Boram and then gave to the villagers present. After the rites were observed the meat was cooked on the spot and all took a hearty meal and return home. Until this ceremony was performed in the village, no Pauri Bhuyan might eat raw mangoes or other new fruits of the season or manure his field. If he broke the taboo, calamities were likely to be fall him and the villagers.

399. S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.244.
401. S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.244.
403. S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.244.
Tirtia Muti or Aksay Muti

The Tirtia Muti or Aksay Muti or Tirtia was observed on the third day of the moon in the month of Baisakh (May) by individual family heads to initiate the first sowing of paddy and to ensure good crops.405 One day preceding the ceremony the man kept fasting and after taking bath he husked some paddy. After arranging husked rice, turmeric powder, vermilion and other offerings, he ate only one meal at late hours of the day. That night he observed fasting and continuance. Early next morning he took a bath and proceeded to his Bakadi or paddy field with the consecrated materials. Facing to the east, he cleaned a patch of land and worshipped Gai-sri, Dharam Deota, Basu-mata and Boram by offering rice, milk and molasses.406 He then sacrificed a fowl in honour of the deities and sprinkled drops of blood on the piles of offered rice grains.407 After propitiating the deities and praying for good harvest he dug up some soil with a plough share and touching the paddy on his forehead sowed to basketful of paddy in a separate plot, the produce of which was consumed by the family members. It was

405. S.C. Ray, op. cit., PP.244-245.
406. Ibid., P.130.
neither sold nor given to others. On return from the field some jau was cooked in a new earthen vessel and offered to the family spirits in every house.\textsuperscript{408}

Bihira Puja or Asarhi Puja

The Bihira Puja or Asarhi Puja was intended to ensure seasonable and abundant rainfall and a bumper harvest.\textsuperscript{409} In the month of Asarh (June-July) the Dehuri called the villages to the Darbar and fixed up a date for the observance of Bihira Puja. On the morning of the appointed day each village took some paddy to him. After bath the Dehuri took the rice and went to the seat of Gaisri and prayed for abundant rainfall and good crops.\textsuperscript{410} The sacrifice of a goat or a fowl was made alternatively every year. In some villages, sacrifices were made on this occasion to other village gods as well. After Asarhi Puja the Pauris might undertake such agricultural operation as cross-cultivation, transplantation and weeding of low land paddy.\textsuperscript{411}

\textsuperscript{409} JBORS, Vol.VI, Part-II, 1920, P.296.
\textsuperscript{410} S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.246.
\textsuperscript{411} Ibid., PP.246-247.
Gamha Punai or Gantha Punai

Soon after the *Pirh Jatal Puja* was over the *Pauri* Bhuyans observed *Gamha Punai* in their villages on the fullmoon day in the month of *Sraban* (July-August).412 Two or three days before the fullmoon the men of the village assembled at the *Darbar* and request the *Naek* and the *Dehuri* (secular headman of the village) to borrow some paddy and molasses for the *Gamha Punai* festival, the loan to be paid after the harvest.413 The day before the fullmoon, the paddy was threshed and husked in every house and those who possessed any cattle gave them some salt to eat and anointed their horns with sesame oil.414

On the fullmoon day the *Pauris* offered *jau*, rice cakes and meat curry to the ancestral spirits in their respective houses. In the evening such *Pauris* as possessed any cattle, washed their hoofs after their return from the jungle and anointed their foreheads with turmeric paste and horn with oil and fed them with raw rice and a kind of fried rice called *Khai*. On the *Gamha Punai* day the cattle were given full rest for the whole day and at night the women lighted lamps in the cattle shed.415

414. Ibid.
Bar and Nua-Khai Festival

The Bar and Nua-Khai Festival (new rice eating ceremony) was observed in the months of September-October to make the reaping and eating of the new rice innocuous.416 On the festival day as fixed at the Darbar, the Dehuri bathed in the morning and made offerings of rice, water, molasses and frankincenses to the Gai-sri and Boram. Then he proceeded in company with other villagers to the gorā (upland paddy field) of the village and cut a few sheaves gorā paddy from the field.417 Then each cultivator went to his own field and offered arua rice, water, molasses and frankincense to Dharam Deota and cut a few sheaves of upland paddy and kept suspended from the roof at home. Subsequently, they all reaped their gorā crops.418 After two or three days the Dehuri went to the Darbar and sacrificed one or two fowls to Boram and cooked the meat and ate it alone. Thereafter, he boiled new gorā rice given by the villagers in a new earthen vessel and offered the jau first to Gai-sri and then to his ancestor spirits. After this, every Paurī prepared jau and offered to his ancestor spirits in the Bhitar (inner tabernacle) of his

418. Ibid., PP.248-249.
house. The Plains Bhuyans also observed the same ceremonies as the *Pauri* Bhuyans. But in stead of sacrificing fowls or animals, they offered milk, *ghee* and sweets to *Dharam* or *Boram* and *Basuki Thakurani*.419

**Kath Jatra**

The *Kath Jatra* ceremony was held in the months of January-February. This festival was celebrated before the burning of dried trees and bushes in the forest clearings. Like many other Bhuyan festivals it was not celebrated on a definite day of the year.420 The villagers fixed up a date for holding the ritual. On the appointed day the *Dehuri* installed two pieces of *sal* logs, one dry and the other green, at the *Darbar*. He cleaned a patch of land with cowdung and water and offered husked-rice, molasses and milk to the *Gai-sri*.421 He then made offerings to *Boram* and sacrificed a fowl. The rice grains and the meat were cooked and eaten there. It was believed unless this festival was celebrated the Bhuyans did not eat fried *Mohua* flowers.422

421. Ibid.
422. Ibid.
Gilor Jatra

After the celebration of the Katha Jatra festival, the Gilor Jatra was held in the month of March to mark the eating of Gilor flowers which were collected in plenty from the forest to serve as one of their supplementary diet.\(^423\) As collection of Gilor blossoms were done mostly by the women, this was the only ritual for which they fixed up a day and make necessary arrangements to celebrate it. The Mahataris (married women) who were neither pregnant nor during menstruation collected a handful of paddy from every house and gave it to the wife of the Dehuri. The Dehuri's wife husked it and with incense, milk, molasses, proceeded to the forest accompanied by other women of the village.\(^424\) Reaching there the Dehuri's wife worshipped a Gilor plant with offerings of milk and molasses and all returned to the village with a Gilor branch. The branch was installed on the ground at the Darbar and marked with paintings. There the Gilor branch was worshipped with offerings of milk, molasses and Mohua flowers. Seven women carried the plant to the stream for immersion after which all the women enjoyed rice

\(^424\) Ibid.
and *dal* cooked near the stream. After this ceremony the *Pauri* Bhuyans might collect and eat *Gilor* blossoms.\(^{425}\)

**Pirh Jatal Puja**

The *Pirh Jatal Puja* was observed by a group of villages. It was held in the month of August. Delegates from the villages of the area participated in the *puja*. The *Pauri* Bhuyans of *Koira* area celebrated it in *Koira* village and a *Dehuri* called *Pirh Jatal Dehuri* performed the religious rites.\(^{426}\) He selected a day for the observance of the *Puja* and sent message to the villages through an office bearer called *Gadhai*. The participating villages collect subscription and purchased a male goat for the ritual. The persons intending to attend the ceremony collected rice and curry for their food.\(^{427}\) On the appointed day the delegates assembled at the place of worship with their goats. The *Pirh Jatal Dehuri* worshipped the tutelary deity of the area and other local hill deities (*Pat*) and offered sacrifices. Rice and meat were cooked on the spot and the participants enjoyed a hearty feast. After this festival the Bhuyans could observe *Gamha* in individual villages and ate maize.\(^{428}\)

426. Ibid., P.131.
427. Ibid., PP.131-132.
428. Ibid., P.132.
Language

The language spoken by the Bhuyans of Orissa were either Mundari or the language of Santals, or Dravidian, such as the language of the Gonds and Oraons, or Oriya, which was a sort of lingua franca among the hill tribes. In due course of time the Bhuyans of Bonai State had lost all traces of their original Dravidian language, and speak Oriya. R.V. Russell and R.B. Hira Lal were of the opinion that the Bhuyans had entirely forgotten their own language and spoke Hindi, Oriya and Bengali as the dominant vernacular of their Hindu neighbours. It did not appear that the Bhuyans of Orissa ever possessed a language of their own. They spoke a dialect of Oriya which was strangely distorted. Their vocabulary was very limited and their conversation usually consisted of exclamations and questions.

Superstitious Beliefs - Myths, Magic, Sorcery and Witchcraft

The origin of the superstitious beliefs of the tribal people could be traced to one factor, the fear of the environment. Man was

afraid when he felt insecure, helpless and powerless. And for his very existence he had to struggle against the physical and economic environment.\textsuperscript{433} The primitive man had a tendency to look at nature as animated, having the power of affecting man for better or worse, usually for the worst.\textsuperscript{434} So there emerged among the early people like the Bhuyans all such beliefs. In this connection A.J. Balfour opined that these ideas were of latter development and the primitive man knew nothing of 'invariable sequences' or 'universal causation.'\textsuperscript{435}

To begin with, the society of the Bhuyans abounded in various myths. Myth, as Edward B. Tylor suggests, was primitive ethnology expressed in poetic form.\textsuperscript{436} It could be considered as primitive philosophy or metaphysical thought.\textsuperscript{437} Regarding the origin of myth, Alfred C. Lyall writes that no people ever observed a custom because a mythical being was said to have acted in a certain way. But, on the contrary, all people had invented myths to explain as to

why they observed certain customs.\textsuperscript{438} The tribal people in general and the Bhuyans in particular had many queer myths and their imaginations were fed with various fantasies. That was because of their living in rugged mountains and dark forests.\textsuperscript{439} As such, they had to depend, for their very living, mostly on the power of nature and the Supreme Being. When they faced natural calamities and the like, they considered these natural phenomena to be the manifestations of spirits, representing the essentials of life such as sunshine, rain and food crops.\textsuperscript{440} So a myth developed among the Bhuyans to ask for rain, good crops and good health in their prayer.

The Bhuyans believed in the testing of omen for founding a new settlement. After bath the \textit{Dehuri} put a handful of \textit{arua} rice on the selected spot. He covered the rice with an earthen vessel cautiously so that the pile of rice was not disturbed. If on scrutiny he found that the insects or ant had eaten up or the pile was disturbed or the rice were scattered then it is considered inauspicious for founding new settlement there and was at once

\textsuperscript{439} OHRJ, Vol.XXXIII, Nos.3-4, PP.129-130., Nihar Ranjan Patnaik's 'Studies in Superstitions Beliefs. Myths, Witchcraft, Sorcery and Sacrifices of the 19th Century, Orissa'.
\textsuperscript{440} Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, \textit{Tribalism in India}, New Delhi, 1978, P.7.
rejected as the disturbed position of rice was the sign of misfortune and calamities. So also in case of founding a new house they believed in omen. If the auspicious post called *Subha Khunta* which formed the one of the posts to support the roof was blown away or uprooted or disturbed except through natural decay, the site must be changed immediately as this inauspicious signs might bring misfortune to the family.

The Bhuyans suffered from malaria, stomach trouble, headache, cough and cold. They attributed the illness to supernatural causes. They believed that certain ghosts and spirits inflicted sickness if they were offended. So for the treatment they had to appease these spirits by giving offerings. As the Bhuyans ascribed illness to external agencies, necessary steps were taken to appease the latter for recovery of the diseased. If illness was caused due to the visitation of some deity the help of the *Dehuri* (village priest) was sought immediately and he offered libations and sacrifices and prayed the offending spirit to remove illness. In case the *Pat* (Hill) spirits were offended, a vow was made to sacrifice a goat or a

fowl after the sufferer was cured. In order to satisfy the angry ancestral spirits the Bhuyans offer jau and liquor in the Bhitar for quick recovery.\footnote{Adibasi, Vol.XIX, Nos.1-4, April 1979-January 1980, 'Hand Book on the Pauri Bhuinya', P.17.}

The Bhuyans of Orissa believed in magic and sorcery. Certain painful experiences in their day to day life diseases, deaths and the like led them to believe in the existence of the invisible spirits. It was believed that this spirit could be appeased by the chanting of some formulas which amounted to the practice of some techniques for canalizing the power for good and evil. This practice was called magic or sorcery.\footnote{L.P. Vidyarthi and B.K. Rai, The Tribal Culture of India, Delhi, 1977, P.236.} The Bhuyans believed in the presence of some impersonal powers and forces which were inherent in certain men or even in certain words and numbers. The ways and means adopted to control these impersonal powers and to press them into service for the enrichment of life constituted the Bhuyan magic. This was called white magic.\footnote{S.C. Ray, op. cit., P.254.} The persons killed by the tiger or bear were believed by the Bhuyans malevolent spirits. Especially the tiger spirits (Baghia Bhuta) created great havoc and killed human beings.
in the guise of tiger. In case of death of a man by a tiger the *Raulia* was called on to perform special rites in the burial ground while burying the deceased. Idol of the tiger and the dead were made of earth and the *Raulia* appeased them by killing an uncastrated goat called *Boka*. The head of both the idols and those along with the head of the killed animal were thrown into the stream. This prevented further attack of *Baghia Bhuta*.447 The Bhuyans believed that in case of death of a pregnant woman the dead mother was unable to become witch without union with her child. In such a case they removed the dead child from dead mother's womb and burnt them on opposite banks of a stream the idea was that no spirit could cross a stream and special rites were performed.448

Certain persons were believed to have possessed an innate evil influence which emanated from their eyes. It caused harm to a person towards whom it was directed. Thus, the sight of certain individuals in the morning before an individual started his work or journey or other undertaking was calculated to bring ill luck.449

Some people acquired the *Najar* (evil-eye) through training under a

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448. Feudatory States Gazetteers, P.49.
Pangni or witch. When such a person saw another eating some delicious food and muttered to herself "Oh, how nice it would be if I could have had such delicacies for myself;" the person eating food was sure to suffer from illness. Thus, when a Bhuyan child suffered from flatulence or diarrhoea, the ailment was generally attributed to the Najar (evil-eye). In order to neutralise the bad effects of such a najar the services of a Raulia were requisitioned and the sought to cure the patient through the spells or the coercive magic of words.450 The Gunias only cured snake bites and some other wounds through spells combined with blowing on the patient with their mouth and making passes on him with their hands.451 The Raulia first employed different tests* whether any particular disease had been caused by a witch or by some evil spirit. After the evil spirit causing illness was detected by any of these divinations the Raulia performed different rituals to propitiate it and offered sacrifices to it. Whenever necessary, he applied medicinal herbs to cure the patient.452 The medicinal herbs that the Raulia used to protect the

451. Ibid., P.258.
children as well as the adults from the evil eyes and the evil attention of mischievous spirits were gathered from the native jungle on the last day of the lunar month of Asvin (September-October). The application of soot between the eyebrows of a child to ward off the evil eye was also in vogue.453

The Bhuyans, as the most prolific and numerous tribe, were widely distributed in different areas of the State of Orissa during the British Rule representing varying socio-cultural stages of development. Until recent times, there was no organisation or forum which brought different sections of the tribe together for some common purpose. Only myths, age old traditions and common cultural heritage helped immensely in binding different sections of the tribe together and bringing about awareness in them, an awareness that they were branched off from a common stock.