CONCLUSION
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The mountainous and forest regions stretching almost from Maharashtra to Orissa in India was the home of many aboriginal tribes either of Dravidian or Kolarian origin. Of them, the most interesting aboriginal tribe was the Bhuyan inhabiting the Tributary States of Orissa mainly Mayurbhanj, Gangpur, Keonjhar, Bonai, Bamra, Pal Lahera, Ranpur, Baud, Kalahandi, Nilgiri and Dhenkanal. Besides, a few Bhuyan few families inhabited in the states of Talcher, Khandapara, Rairakhole, Sonepur, Patna, Athmallick and Nayagarh. These regions were mostly wild and mountainous, composed of a confused succession of ranges of hills covered with dense forests. When the Aryan conquest swept over the plains, the Bhuyans continued to live in the wild highlands of the inaccessible hill ranges and forests under a insalubrious climate, maintaining their independence, and preserving their indigenous language, animistic religion and age-old tribal customs. Living in this primitive surroundings for centuries together and keeping themselves in isolation, the Bhuyans were unaware of the rapid changes taking place in other neighbouring areas, particularly of the plains, in social and political life of the people.
The origin of the Bhuyans is mysterious. The word ‘Bhuyan’ has been derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Bhu’ or ‘Bhumi’ or ‘Bhuin’ meaning soil or land. They were so called because they claimed themselves to be autochthones or children of the soil or reclaimers or owners of the land. Some of them believed that the first ancestor miraculously sprang out of the ‘Mother Earth’ and hence the tribe was named Bhuyan or Earth born. They had some legends of their own regarding their origin. The abode of the Bhuyans was the wild highlands of the inaccessible hill ranges of the Tributary States of Keonjhar, Bonai and Pal Lahera. The southwest border of Singhbhum forms the northern boundary of this abode, the States of Pal Lahera, Talcher and Dhenkanal the southern boundary, the states of Bonai and Bamra the western boundary and the mountainous region of Keonjhar the eastern boundary.

The Bhuyan tribe had no uniformity in its structure or habit. They were known by different names after their place of habitation and life-style. Usually the Bhuyans had divided themselves in four principal clans, but subsequently their number increased to fifteen.
The Bhuyans were well-built, with a medium height and appearance. They were active, wiry and agile. They were simple, faithful, gentle, polite and hospitable. They were also best known for their fidelity and valour.

The early history of the Bhuyans of Orissa is still shrouded in mystery. Nothing can be stated with certainty about their history. In the remote past Keonjhar was full of dense forests and the Bhuyans were the primitive settlers of Keonjhar. It was said that they had been living in Orissa since the time of Gautam Buddha.

The Bhuyans had developed their own political structure, namely, family, kutumba, Khilli, village, Pir or Bar organisation and then tribe. Each such organisation had its own representative body. The heads of these organisations used to control the affairs in the areas of their own jurisdiction. Even in the states of Keonjhar and Bonai the Bhuyans possessed the right of installing the chiefs. For centuries together they remained independent in respect of their age-old indigenous institutions. They had no code of written laws and statutes. Yet they were law binding people, loyal to the tribal rules, traditions and customs.
Living in a different surroundings, the economic life of the Bhuyans became different from the people of the plains. The Bhuyans claimed themselves as the cultivators and owners the land or soil. They followed shifting cultivation, cutting and burning the forest in the dry season and dibbling the seeds when the rains started. The land or soil was not rich for agriculture. There were no irrigation facilities either so the agricultural produce of the Bhuyans was not at all encouraging. They hardly possessed any agricultural stock of their own. For a considerable time of the year they had to live mainly upon the forest produces, hunting, fishing and so on. They were basically husbandmen and hunters. Their means of subsistence were the fruits and roots and the products of the plain. Gradually they entered into the trade and commerce of the plains. They started to exchange the hill products in the markets or fairs of the Bhuyan hills and plains. Mostly the business was carried on through barter which ultimately resulted in commercial intercourse between the Bhuyan hills and plains.

The Bhuyans used to live under extreme poverty. Behind it lay their religion as the vital cause. Their religious rites, sacrifices
before the deities imposed a great financial burden on them. The
impoverishment was also caused by their feuds, marriage, customs,
sufficient agricultural produces, etc. The economic exploitation by
the moneylenders, the feudal exploitation, by the Rajas, his officials
like 'bethi' and 'begari' added to their impoverishment.

Living in the isolation of the hilly and forest covered tracts, the Bhuyans preserved the primitive features of their society. Most of their villages were perched on hill-tops, close to the agricultural fields. Hence the size of the villages varied from each other. The Kols, Santals and Khonds and others like the Gours lived at the outskirts of the Bhuyan villages. The dormitories like the 'Dhangrabasa' and 'Dhangribasa' were common features of their villages. The Bhuyan families were mostly nuclear and partrilineal. But in some cases joint families were there in their community. There was caste system in the Bhuyan community.

The staple food of the Bhuyans was rice. Besides rice, edible roots and tubers, vegetables and mushrooms and other forest produce, namely, jackfruit, mango, flesh of forest animals and
fishing supplemented their food. They were very much fond of liquor to get relief from fatigue after strenuous field work and as a substitute for food and kept themselves fit for all hard work. The dress of the Bhuyans was the simplest one. The Bhuyan clothing was usually very scanty, consisting of merely of a small strip of cloth called Kopni between the legs, fastened front and back to a string round the waist. The women wore a short of coarse cotton sari, but never used it to veil their faces. The women got their body tattooed for ornamentation. The Bhuyans of both the sexes used different types of ornaments.

The main amusements of the Bhuyans were hunting, dancing and singing. They were very much fond of musical performance and dancing. They were very proficient in basketry and in making of leaf-mats, leaf-plates and cups. It was all due to their rude lifestyle, inhospitable surroundings and extreme poverty.

The Bhuyans had great respect for their social customs. Birth, marriage and death - the three great incidents of their life - were observed with special ceremonies and solemnities. The
marriage in Bhuyan community was endogamous so far as the tribe as a whole was concerned and exogamous so far as the village was concerned. They considered the bride as a commercial speculation for which they purchased on payment of bride-price. Widow marriage called 'Randi Bibha' or Sanga was allowed in the Bhuyan society. Divorce was also permitted among them. Polyandry and polygamy were known in their society, but in rare cases. Adultery was found in the community.

Fear of the environment had made the Bhuyans extremely superstitious. They viewed that any unusual occurrence in the nature or the events of life were caused by the deities or other supernatural powers. Therefore, they had to appease these deities and powers by making offerings and sacrifices. Further, the Bhuyans used to practise many peculiar superstitious customs. They had a strong belief in magic, sorcery and shamanism and witchcraft. The witch detector called Raulia played a vital role in it. They believed that the Raulia is the key person to cajole the evil spirits.
Religion played an important role in the Bhuyan society. The Bhuyan Pantheon was thronged with a vast company of gods and goddesses, spirits, pats glorified ancestors and other unseen beings. They believed that many of their deities were malicious, bent upon causing mischief and hence a menace to the Bhuyan community. They inspired only fear and horror. Therefore, offerings and sacrifices became the very foundation of the Bhuyan religion. The Bhuyans believed that the offerings of arua rice, milk, frankincense and molasses and the sacrifices of fowl, goat, etc. were the means of appeasing the deities. There were mainly four sets of deities namely, Tribal God, Nature God, Village God and Man God, in the Bhuyan Pantheon. Some of them were aboriginal and some were borrowed from the Hindus. Dharam Deota, the Sun God and his concert Basuki Mata or Basu Mata or Dharitri Mata, the Earth Goddess, were the chief deities of the Bhuyans. Of all the deities, the Bhuyans gave the highest position in its Pantheon. Superstitiously they used to believe that crops would be abundant if offerings could be made with due solemnities to Basuki Mata (Earth Goddess). Besides they used to make offering to Earth Goddess and the Sun God on all occasions, as they were
believed to be always beneficent. Priesthood formed an essential feature of the Bhuyan religion. And the Dehuri or Deori acted as the sacerdotal head of the Bhuyan villages. All the activities of the Bhuyan society were more or less conducted through their religion. Their social traditions and laws, customs and rites were institutionalised through the language of their religion.

Freedom was the very life-beath of the Bhuyans. Being brought up on the lap of the nature they developed a strong urge for it. When these freedom-loving tribal like the Bhuyans were pressed under injustice and tyranny, they raised the standard of revolt against the alien power. Two such glorious rebellions of the Bhuyans were seen in the Feudatory State of Keonjhar under their celebrated leaders Ratna Naik and Dharanidhar Naik. Political unrest in Keonjhar State, undue interference by the British officials in the succession affairs of the State after the death of Gadadhar Bhanja in 1861, unsuitability of the British laws and regulations, economic sufferings of the Bhuyans, feudal exploitation of the Raja and his officials and intervention in their social customs by the British combined together to bring about these rebellions by the Bhuyan
tribals against the British Raj. The Ratna Rising of Keonjhar in 1867-68 and the Dharanidhar Rising of Keonjhar in 1891-93 were suppressed ruthlessly by the employment of adequate troops. But the way the Bhuyans under their celebrated leaders fought for their independence had elicited the admiration of all.

Thus, the great socio-cultural heritage and the political awareness of the Bhuyans formed a sensational chapter in the history and culture of Orissa during the British Rule.