

Bhuyan and Juang Rebellion During British Rule

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Abstract

On the basis of geography, and tribal demography the Juang and Bhuiyan of Keonjhar District comes under the central zone. The Juang and Bhuiyan of Keonjhar District had been recognized as a primitive tribes and poor economic status. Juang and Bhuyan tribes are originated from a Risi, a mythological hero. From time immemorial the tribes are living in the Keonjhar state which is now Keonjhar district of Orissa. The king followed a policy of non-interference in tribal affairs. The picture changed when British entered into the Keonjhar state and start exploitation on forest resources as well as innocent people by using forced labour. Most of the time Juang and Bhuiya were engaged as unpaid labours (Bethi). If somebody neglected he was punished by the administrative. In the course of time the Juang and Bhuiya begins to realize their importance in the state and such realization made Juang and Bhuiya to start movement against the king of Keonjhar.

There was no revenue or tenancy law in the ex-state and no fixed revenue payable by the hill Juang and Bhuiya before 1868. The rent was increased in every year for the homestead land after the settlement 1867. The discontentment of the Juang and Bhuiya due to the enhancement of rent, extraction of various illegal cess and forced labour took the shape of open rebellion. The Juang and Bhuiya rebelled against the authority under the leadership of Ratna Naik in 1868 and leadership of Dharanidhar Bhuiya in 1891.

Key Words : Juang, Bethi, Pirh

I. Introduction

Significance of Name Keonjhar

Prior to 1128 A.D. Baitarani valley civilization had several cultural zones namely *Bindhatabi, Khiching Mandal, Jamagarta Mandal, Kalinga, Utkal* and *Hariharpur*. In the year 1128 A.D. Jyoti Bhanja the king of the state named the state as *Kendujhar*¹ Since then 39 kings had already ruled over the state. It is said that when Jyoti

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1. The district sometimes is also named kendujhar: for the purpose of this study, Keonjhar will be used except where it is quoted in literature otherwise. The district capital has the same name and sometimes it is referred to as kendujhargarh.

Bhanj was searching for a suitable place for the capital, he saw a tiger and a Jackal fighting with each other in the hill slope of *Indrachhatra* hill, near a stream which, came out of the ground beneath a *Kendu* tree. They were fighting for who will drink the water first. The jackal ultimately defeated the tiger. When the king saw it, he was amazed and considered the place as the best place for his capital and ultimately he constructed the palace there.

Tribes are found throughout the country. Tribes are social group analysed from both socio-cultural point of view. In Orissa, '62' communities have been enlisting as Scheduled Tribes including '13' Primitive Tribal Groups. Keonjhar is a unique district from the anthropological point of view having its two main tribes i.e. Bhuyan and Juang. The name 'Bhuya²n' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Bhumi' means land. They consider themselves to be the children of land. In the Keonjhar district, they are mainly concentrated in Banspal and Telkoi Block. They claim themselves to be the autochthons of the area, which is also known as Bhuyan Pirh after their name. They are divided in to two types, i.e., Paudi Bhuyans (also called as Paburia or Pathuria Bhuyans) and the Plane Bhuyans. Paudi Bhuyans inhabit in the hilly traps of the Keonjhar district and the neighbouring areas of Sundergarh district. Plane Bhuyan mostly live along with other castes of Hindus in the village of plane areas. They also lived in hilly areas, terrains, hilly bottoms, valleys and high lands. Juang is also a Primitive Tribe inhabiting in the Banspal, Telkoi, and Harichandanpur block of Keonjhar District. They claim themselves to be autochthons of the area from where they have migrated to other parts of the state classified in to two sections: Thaniya (who dwell in the original habitation), Bhagudiya (who have moved away to other planes). In their language Juang means Man. They also referred to themselves as Patra Savars (Patra means Leaf). By this they mean that they are the branch of Savar Tribe, whose members is used to dress themselves by leaves. They are popularly called as 'leaf wearing Tribe'.

II. Historical Profile of the Pirh System

A Pirh system of territorial organisation found among the Bhuyan and Juang of Orissa is historically well known. Primarily pirh system is a political system. Keonjhar is a unique district from anthropological point of view. In this district the then king divided the state in to '44' Dandapats for administrative purposes (lower Keonjhar as '27' Dandapats and upper Keonjhar as '17' Dandapats.). So Bhuyan pirh and Juang pirh are the two Dandapats of the upper Keonjhar. So as their areas are identified as pirh areas. The total area of Bhuyan pirhs is 250 sq. miles and Juang pirhs are 206 Sq. miles and grand total of 456 sq. miles.

2. The Bhuyan are tribal neighbours of the Juang. Spelling of names of tribes varies considerably in literature: the Bhuiya also figure as Bhuya, Bhuiya and Bhuiya. In this study, the term Bhuyan will be used except in quotations.

Firstly, Pirh system is described as a political organisation which controls the socio political systems within the pirh areas. It is a three tier system of administration having village (Pradhan) at lower level, pirh organisation (Sardar) in the secondary level and the King in upper level. King is the head of all the pirhs of Bhuyans and Juangs. From the administrative point of view, each pirh is consisting of some number of villages including the Pirh Sardar's village. Each village has a Village headman called as Pradhan, who is coming under the pirh sardar. All the pirh Sardar of each pirh are come under the king, who had also the direct political control of the pirh areas. The chief Sardar of each pirh are appointed by the king.

II.1 Bhuyan Pirh and Juang Pirh during British Rule

During the British rule, the king of the princely state were tricked by the British rulers to behave like a caged animals in the circus show. The British ruler could prove the king to be tyrants and inefficient by widening the gap between the king and their subject by cunningly applying the principle of divide and rule, of course the sole motive was to bring the princely state under their control. The British levied taxes exorbitantly from the tribal people, they had neither feeling of compassion towards the people nor the country.

Though previously discussed that Pirh is a political system of certain territory, so far the then king is divided the pirhs for the suitability of better administration. The Bhuyan pirh is classified in to six pirhs and Juang pirh in to three pirhs. Each Pirh is composed of many villages and a pirh Sardar. The village of the pirh Sardar belongs to the same pirh. The detail analysis of the pirh organization with respect to their pirh villages as well as Sardar's primary villages is analyzed in the following table.

BHUYAN PIRHS			
Sl. No	Name of the Pirhs	Number of villages	Name of the Pirhs Primary Village
1	Charigaon	21	Daanla
2	Panchpada	11	Amuni
3	Atas	19	Suakathi
4	Srikhand	11	Sundra
5	Sarkhand	13	Singhpur
6	Jharkhand/Dhereng	17	Lata
JUANG PIRHS			
1	Jharkhanda	13	Panasanasa
2	Satkhanda	7	Guptaganga
3	Kathua	11	Kundhei

II.2 The King and the Bhuyan- Juang

The Bhuyan-Juang pirh System is studied into two ways i.e. Pre-independence and post-independence period. In pre-independence period, Bhuyan-Juang pirh was under the direct control of Keonjhar Raja (King). The power is distributed to some head man in village level, called as Pradhan, who is responsible for supervising and controlling their socio-political system such as tax collection, administration etc. All the pradhans are under the control of the Sardar, who is the head of the pirh. The Sardar is also under the control of the king of Keonjhar. The system of relationship binds them in a particular order like acquisition of land, achieve of social status and power of identify in their social position. In the historical past they maintain a particular social order on the basis of hierarchy, which presupposed to their livelihood, but after independence introduction of democratic rule and formation of Government change their socio-cultural patterns. The kingship and their traditional administrative system have abolished. Traditionally in the period of Kingship, tribals pay their taxes to the king through pradhan to Sardar and finally comes to the king's court in the form of kinds. They pay taxes as mug, rice, male goat, firewood, honey, forest products, crops etc. But due to the tax system introduced by the government they have to pay money. The change of their tax system form kind to cash heavily pressurise them. Govt has also plotted some land for them for their livelihood.

They practised shifting cultivation for very few months of the year. After that they collect forest products, hunting, making of house and hunting implements. Traditionally 'Bethi system' was introduced by the king; tribals were bound to work for king like thatching of Amalatantra ; a house of kings court, digging of ponds, wells, making of rope for car festival (also treated as a gift), making of boundary for the kings court. The system is gradually declining due to the introduction of the Govt administration. Though the king is now absent but the kingship is continuing till now. They also present ropes for Car festival, forest products to the king.

The king followed a policy of non-interference in tribal affairs. The picture changed when British entered into the Keonjhar state and start exploitation on forest resources as well as innocent people by using forced labour. Most of the time Juang and Bhuiya were engaged as unpaid labours (Bethi). If somebody neglected he was punished by the administrative. In the course of time the Juang and Bhuiya begins to realize their importance in the state and such realization made Juang and Bhuiya to start movement against the king of Keonjhar. The discontentment of the Juang and Bhuiya due to the

enhancement of rent, extraction of various illegal cess and forced labour took the shape of open rebellion.

11.3 Extraction of various Illegal Cess and Forced Labour

The Government agent of Keonjhar report on the Juang settlement date – 6th June. 1884 regarding the following total number of villages having less and more then 20 houses in different 'Juang Pirhs'. The Bhuyan and Juang were giving a village tax where there is less then 20 households but if there is more then 20 households the villagers were charged double taxes for that village that's why joint family were prevalent during that time.

3.4. Villages More and Less than 20 Houses

Name of the Pirhs	Total No. of villages	No of village less than 20 houses	No of village more than 20 houses
Jhar Khand	13	8	5
Sata Khanda	7	6	1
Kathua	11	10	1
TOTAL	31	24	7

The *Pirh* villagers supply the following things as described below.

11.4 King's Free Labour

Every year in the month of Falguna (Feb-Mar) we will make the maintenance of the roof of the boundary surroundings of the King's palace for that reason we will collect all material which we need. This is known as 'Kanto'. Whenever the Chief, any member of the King's family, Superintendent, Assistant Dewan, their manager, lawyer of King and other lawyer of different place is on tour to Juang 'Pirh' or if any guest of the state passes through Juang 'Pirh'. sardar shall in company with the 'Pradhan' make arrangement of his luggage's to be carried by the tenant who will get food expenses ('Khoraki' expenses). He shall on such occasion make Leaf shed constructed or collected fire wood, straw and leaf plates without any charges and shall supply (grocery materials) 'Rasad' at market rates. This '*Bethi*' is known as "Gomha".

Whenever the King and other King's persons travel from the Keonjhar State the 'Pradhan' shall supply free labour for his Luggage's to be carried by the tenant who will get Khoraki expenses. On the occasions of marriage, death and investiture of the thread 'Pradhan' construct necessary leaf huts and provide firewood and leaf plates at 'Nijagarh' for which every coolie (labour) will get 'Kharaki' expenses. If

on the occasion of the marriage the procession halts in any Dandpat, Pradhan supply 'Rasad' (grocery) at market rates and provide fuel, leaf-plats and straw and construct leaf-huts through the tenant without cost.

Baladev Jew *Bethi*

This *Bethi* is known as "Ratha". We all Juangs with 'Naik', 'Pradhan' will supply two ropes for Chariot. If the ropes required for the Chariot of 'Thakur' of village I shall supply these required from our 'Dondpat' or village and shall get 'Kharaki'. Sal and Simli logs of inferior description were supply through the tenant carried from a distance of below ten miles, free of charges. Car festival is an ancient institution and dragged through the tenant of proper caste free of charges.

***Bethi* Rule**

A stick fixed the *bethi* day. *Bethi* is decided in the evening before the appointed day. The village Dongua or Piada kept a stick in front of his house. Dangua was telling him that tomorrow is your turn of *bethi* and the next day, he was going for *bethi* with that stick. Dandua, Piada & Naik, beat those who were neglecting their duties.

marriage cess

During the kings (Dhanurjay) marriage in 1886 the marriage cess was levied on the occasion of the Maharaja's marriage, which was second marriage "Mela pancha" exhibition cess was levied by the Maharaja on the occasion of his visit to Calcutta for witnessing the international exhibition of 1884. (Das, 1964:88)

From the Jharkhand Pirh

- a- 120 bundles of broom per annum from each of the 130 villages.
- b- From *Nalpanga* village only 60 pieces of rope per annum each 22 cubits in length.
- c- From *Budhighar* village only 50 bundles load of charcoal per annum.

From Satkhanda pirh

- (a) From *Gonasika* village only 12 head loads of cane per year 12 bundle loads of *Gonasika* earth.
- (b) From *Guptaganga* and *Baitarani* village 12 bundle loads of charcoal per annum.
- (c) From *Mouzas* (village) *Kadalibadi*, *Jantani* and *Raidiha* 360 pieces of 'Siali' fibber or bark per village per year (150 sikas per bundle per village per year). From

the Mouza *Sakilapada* 365 bundles of fuel wood per year for the use of 'Dadhibaman Thakurs' (God). Also supply ropes for this Thakurs (God) *ratha* car and thatches for its outhouses.

From Kathua Pirh

The villages in the Pirh are not liable to make any supply of produces. They are liable and are specified in the lease of each village, for weekly supply of fuel wood and charcoal. The whole 11 villages are also made responsible for the following supply and labour.

- a- All villages and roads of sail table per village per year.
- b- Bundle of Sal pegs per year per village as pick things peg for horses.
- c- To supply labour annually of *Parban* and *Sibaratri* ceremony of the 'Tarini Devi' and 'Mukteswar Mohadev'.
- d- To make beads huts for carpenters working at the *Nijigarh* Rath car.
- e- It was not found practicable to specify the number of days that each man should be employed in thatching houses. So the number and position of the rooms for the thatching of which or for the thatching of surrounding walls of the palace, each village have been given in each lease. Village of more than 70 houses have to thatch 4 (Bakharas) compartments and a specified begin of enclosure walls, village less than 70 houses to thatch 2 room and specified length of enclosure wall.

Regarding the supply of goats the Juangs agreed on the following:

Jharkhand Pirh

- i. 11 villages shall supply two goats each per annum.
- ii. 2 villages shall supply a goat per annum.

Satkhand Pirh

- i. 6 villages shall supply two goats each per annum.
- ii. One village supplies one goat per annum.

Kathua Pirh

10 villages shall supply one goat each per annum. One village shall supply two goats per annum. The term of the lease was conceded to the Juang 'Pradhan' at the pressure of Government agent and king.

Consequences of the Movement

The two rebellions of Ratna Naik and Dharanidhar Bhuiyan brought some changes. The British ruler suppressed both the revolt forcefully; Ratna with six persons hanged in front of Cuttack Jail. When they come to know Bhuiyan and Juang are exploited and oppressed by the king they made some changes on appointing British agent. They suspended the manager Fakir Mohan and engaged Durga das Mukharjee as settlement officer. Dharanidhar got 7 year imprisonment but the people of Keonjhar relaxed from the exploitation

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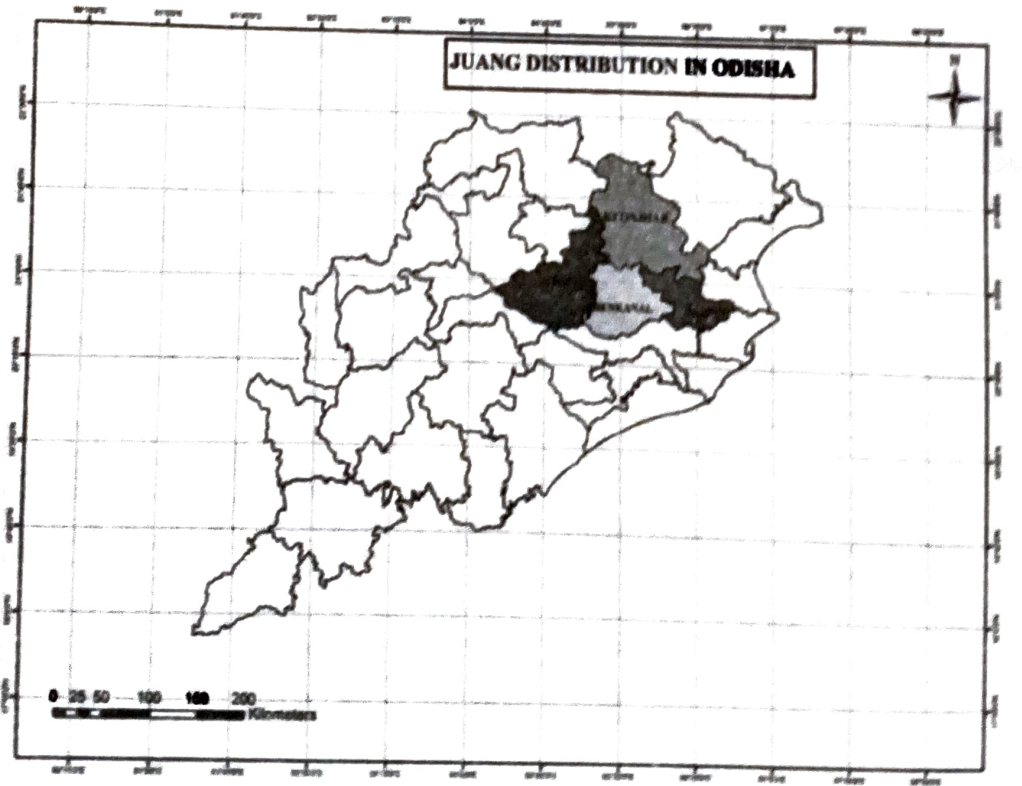
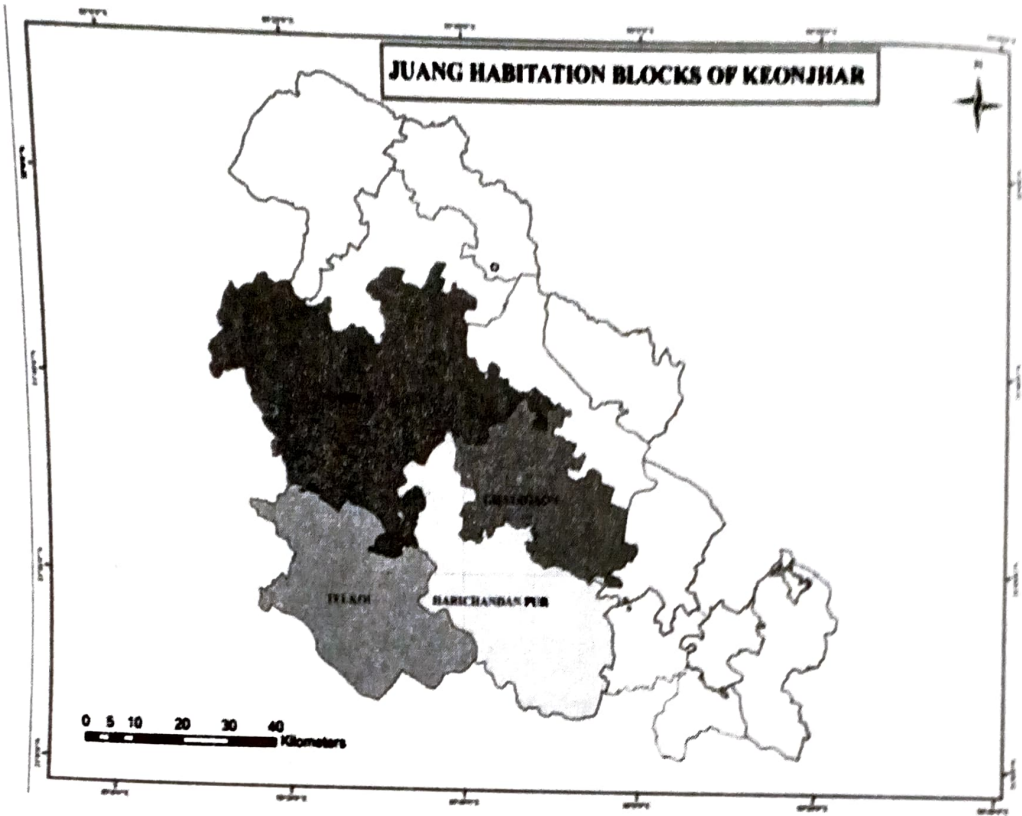
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Basanti Juang stitching leaf plates



Juang dance in kansa village



Golapo Juang harvesting "Ramtila" with her husband