
Mortuary Practice of Juang: A Case Study.

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ABSTRACT

Death rite of the Juang is called “sudho”. It is seems that the term is a colloquial odia word. The death rites are meant for the welfare of the spirit in the other world as well as welfare of the decease family. The death rite is organized seven to ten days depending upon economic condition of the family. The unusual cases of death are treated with different rites. During these days the decease’s lineage members in general and his own family members, observes certain food taboo. They retrain from eating non-vegetarian dishes and may not anoint their body with turmeric and oil. The Juang believe that the spirit of their ancestor’s live inside their store house. They don’t perform any rites for calling back the shade or spirit of the decease. Well to-do families celebrate it with goat (meram)/pig (butai) sacrifice and a grand feast. Poor families are however; driven by their economic condition, celebrate in a very simple manner. In general three to four animals such as pig, goats, sheep and cocks are sacrificed. After death it is believed that the soul goes to the sphere of Yama (Death God) who responsible for collect soul. With this believe the soul after death is presented by Yama and again sent back to the Juang world through a new birth. These successive births are indicated with the transfer of an ancestral name to the new born, during the name giving ceremony.

KEY WORDS—*Mortuary, Juang, keonjhar, Dhenkanal, purification rites.*

INTRODUCTION

According to their oral history, the Juang has migrated from Keonjhar to Dhenkanal during princely state. Twelve hundred Juang flew away to Dhenkanal during Dharnidhar rebellion in 1891. According to N.K.Bose the Pallahara Juang recognize two groups: (1) the thaniya or “those who dwell in their original home” that is the hills of western Keonjhar, and (2) the

Bhagudiya od “those that have fled”. (Bose 1930: 51) Due to large number of factories and mines around their area, the Juang have come in contact with different tribals and non-tribals, so certain changes in their way of life. The Juang borrowed many customs from neighbours, when they sell fuel wood in the market. For the development of Juang the central and state government have provided many facilities and Juang Development Agency implemented many socio-economic and educational development programmes. “The Juang are largely confined to the present districts of Keonjhar and Dhenkanal”. (Mc.Dougal, C.W. 1963:4). Elwin’s account of his contacts with the keonjhar Juang suggested caution. “The Juang are not easy. It is almost impossible to get about. The people do not want visitors and they do not mind saying so”. (Elwin 1948:3) The universal truth is death, which brings much thought to its tragedy. The Juang practice some ritual connecting to death. Each village has its own cremation ground, But some village has two cremation ground. The village Kodipasa has two cremation ground where the case study has been done. The cremation grounds are in the nearby river or stream. The river has adequate water for bathe for the mourners’ purification rites. The family member of deceased is decided whether they will cremate or buried. Cremate is more prestigious then buried. So the Juang cremate the dead. If somebody died in road accident then the corpse is not brought to the native village, the dead person is cremated near the accident place or buried outside the village. It is believe that, If the villager bring the dead person then the soul of that body may do harm to the villager, that’s why they buried outside the village. But if somebody died in hospital then the corpse is brings to the village for cremate or buried. The Juang study area has extensive impact of development programmes, still the Juang mortuary practices have not decayed.

STUDY AREA:-

The research area is located 12 kilometers in a south –east direction from the district capital Keonjhar. Kodipasa is situated at the edge of the plain which ends at the foot of the Barrasi; a hill forming part of the range of Banspal block. The hill range is covered with dense forest consist mainly of sal (*shorea robusta*). Towards the foot of the hill range, the landscape is enriched by an increased display of trees. The river *Aradai* flows at the west part of the village and several small rivulets from the hills, which dry up during hot season.

AFTER DEATH:-The family member of the decease begins with loud crying. Some of the close neighbor began to come and join with this family member, i.e. death message spread to whole village and members gather there. Messenger is set off the kin-villager who can come and attended the funeral ceremony. The Juangs are not kept the dead body for long time. Within twelve hours they try to complete the funeral ceremony. If the neighbor villagers are not hurry to see the corpse then the villager are buried or cremated. If any head man of the village is dead then the Juang beat drum during funeral procession. For that reason, some villages called the Domo caste people who beat the Drums. The Domo also proceed to the burial ground during funeral procession. He beat the drum till burial place and return with other Juang after bathe and gets his remuneration from the decease family. The Juang have changu drum but during funeral procession they don't beat changu. The changu is beaten only for amusement and for ritual occasion (Puja). But in the village Panasarasa the boys themselves beat the 'Dhol' drum. In Panasarasa they have Dhol drum inside their Majang. In the village there are mainly three persons are known as village head.

Bwita or Nagam – Priest of the village. The village Puja dala (ritual sacred container) is kept in his house.

Podhan – Head man of the village. He also assists in puja. The sacred axe ('Bala') is kept in his house.

Dangua – Village messenger. Collect contribute fee and assist in Puja.

In the village Panasarasa all three members are belongs to unmarried boy but in the village Kodipasa they all are old person usually they do not go to burial ground. But if a close relative of that person die then they go to the burial ground. When some relatives' loud lamentation nears the corpse, other goes to bring a bier which they make in bamboo. If the decease had the cot then the villager brings the corpse with that cot but it he don't have then they construct a bier like a ladder. The clothes bedded on the bier which the dead person was used. Then the dead body is kept on the bier. Another cloth is cover to the dead body. Some time the Juang use new clothes but it is not necessary the kin man cover the cloth till neck, the face is visible. The close relatives of the deceased give some coins on his wrist cloth. This

paisa is called as “Gotang Kharicha” “Money which spent on the way”. The coin paisa is stay in wrist cloth when they cremate or buried.

PROCESSION TO THE BURIAL GROUND:-

The relative wait for other villager come to the village. But if they do not come within a stipulated time then they start their procession after sometime. Usually the villager themselves do the funeral procession and decide whether buried or cremate the dead. During procession the head is kept front side upward face. Wood is carried to the burial ground by one or two person from each family with the head load of the villagers from the decease family. All Juang think that this is the village calamity so they help the decease family.

Women are strictly prohibited to go burial ground. Prodhhan, bwita and nayak are not go to the burial ground, but if the close relative died then they go the burial ground. When they proceed to the burial ground at that time they do not cross the road. In Kodipasa the road is divided the village in to two sides. So the east side Juang goes to Dudpani area for burial ground. But west side people go to Near Aradai River for buried or cremate. The Juang hold an axe during procession. After reach at the burial ground they collect wood from the Jungle. If any small children die then his father or that age person brings the dead child to burial ground. Generally 2 to 3 years child is cremated but less than two years child is buried. They do not need bier for small children. One man carries the child to burial ground. After reach at the burial ground two person stay near the corpse and other proceed to Jungle for collection of wood. They collect eight logs and arrange the wood in the middle and the corpse is kept at the top of the wood. Any kin member may light the fire. They do not need kerosene for make the fire lit. They carry straws with fire to make the fire. One of them performs Puja with some turmeric on the ground. He makes Juhar to Dharani penu and dharma deota.

If they want to bury some corpse then they dig a pit according to the corpse size. They dig a rectangle then one kin person bedded a cloth inside the pit and some clothes are kept in head side. No clothes are changed from the corpse; ornaments are not taken off from the dead body. Some kin person kept the dead body inside the pit head towards south and up face direction a cloth is covered by them. The cloth may be new or old. Then the soil is cover by

the people. In case of small child when the person are going to collect wood at that time father of dead child stay there and shake a branch of a tree and make air to the child. The Juang believe that if they quit the child then the evil soul will come to child and the children will disappear from that place. The father performs puja on the pit with vermilion and the child is kept inside and covers the soil. Then on the ground level a water full leaf cut is kept in the middle of the pit. Father of the child or some aged person erect sal branch on the head side. No stone is use during buried or after buried on that day. The less people are joined in the funeral procession of the children.

After bath Juang return to own village. At first they go to the deceased family. The family member kept a leaf plate with full of water a copper coin is kept inside it and some Dub grass kept on it. All people purified by the water thrown on the body. That water is called “Tamba dale”. All axes are kept in deceased family and collected on the day of Sudo.

The members do not entry in their house after return from burial ground. The Juang are polluted after the death in the village. The member sleep in the ‘majang’ till Sudo. The clothes which he was used that’s kept out side of the house. Their clothes are washed on the day of sudo. In tradition Majang has two parts. Outside part is used by the boys and inner side was used during different puja. During pollution period no Juangs are enter in the inner part. If somebody died all puja and festival of the village is postponed. If the date of the puja is fixed earlier then also the villager extended the puja after death of the person. If somebody in the village died then all villager are polluted and during polluted period puja cannot be done otherwise the ancestor will be angry with them. The villagers are prohibited to enter to their sal (sacred grove). Villagers do not enter the bandhu house during pollution period.

After return from burial ground the Juang take food. Then the entire villagers gather in a Majang for meeting. In that meeting they all decide when they will make sudo. In the evening in kodipasa after death of a person one person from each family went to burial ground and cremate the corpse. They all father for meeting in a majang. The date of sudo was fixed there. The boys group has taken the responsible to inform the bandhu and Kutumb villages. They decided who will go where at the end of the meeting they went to drink mohuli which is sponsor by the decease family.

The boys who are going to inform the bandhu of the decease are holding some rice and vegetable for own food. The boys could not enter the bandhu house and they would not take the food of bandhu house. At first they go to Majang and from their call the bandhu and inform him about the death, they discuss everything in the Majang. After that they cook and eat there and return to the own village. Usually the Juangs are lives by selling wood in Keonjhar market and doing wage labour. If somebody died in the family members don't go for work till sudo. After death of a person all villagers are polluted, those who are attend the funeral procession they are most polluted. They are observing some ritual till sudo. They would not use oil, soap during bathe. They do not comb they do not eat meat fish and egg but they eat onion and garlic. They eat boiled curry where oil is not added. Those who had gone to burial ground would not touch to podhan, bwita and dangua.

NEXT DAY RITUAL:-

A different clan person has gone to burial ground during death of other clan. Son of Bwita or prodhan attended the funeral procession then they are prohibited to enter their house. So he eats outside the house and sleep in Majang. If he will sleep in his own house the village god will do harm to him. He observes the pollution period strictly because his mother is a Bwita & villages gods is get ritual by his mother.

Naming:- The children are given name of dead person of the village. But the Juang are not giving the name of his father and grandfather. If somebody died due to thunder then the Juang think God himself has called him back so that name is not given to any children of the village. But on the day of puja the juang offer some food to the dead person by calling their name.

Ritual:- The next day some Juang proceed to burial ground to put out the burn place of the dead body. Early in the morning four to five Juang go to burial ground and collect some wood and cremated the rest and after finish burning they put out the fire. Then throw the ashes into the river. Decease wife go with some food and kept the food on the way to buried ground. Every day she offers some food till sudo. She keeps the food on a leaf cup on her

head and goes by weeping and kept on the way under a tree. If a lactating child dies than its mother go with breast milk by weeping and keep on the way to burial ground.

FIXATION OF THE RITUAL DAY:-

The date is fixed by the villager at the presence of deceased family member. The Juang are not observing the sudo on Saturday and Sunday. They fixed the day except Saturday and Sunday. Early in the morning the women of every house hold clean their own house by smearing with cow dung. After clean the house nobody is allowed to entering to the house before rituals. After cleaning the house the women go to pond with (Atia) mat and clothes. Every Juang family washes their clothes and mat on the day of Sudo. “The purification ceremony also ritually cleanses the ghost of the decease, who becomes an ancestor. Ancestors are believed to reside at the cremation ground, but on ritual occasions when offerings are made, they come to the houses of their close agnates and occupy the storage compartment” (PP-334 McDougal,C.W. 1963). Some relative gather in the deceased house. The male member of the deceased family make bold by other Juang villager. The Juang have no special barber & washmen like Hindu family. So they themselves cut the hair and women wash the clothes and mats. The ashes are not thrown outside the house from that day they keep the ashes and on Sudo day the female threw an earthen pot with ashes at the end of the village. The son and son-in-law of the deceased are make bold hair. But other person can also do bold if he wish. At 11A.M. all villager as well as outsider (Bandhu & Kutumb) gather to move burial ground. Some people hold some rice, paddy, cake, rice food with a small container or with leaf plate. All of the old person clean that place by sprinkling water from the stream.

The deceased close agnatic relative draw an image with mud representing the dead person head towards east. A small piece of deceased skull is found and tied with thread seven times. The thread is mixed with turmeric before. A Jamu (*syzygium cumini*) branch is erect on the middle of that image. The skull thread is tied with Jamu branch seven times. Then he offer turmeric powder, rice grain to the deceased. A cake is kept on the right hand of the image. An earthen pot is kept left side of the image. Rice (food staffs) is kept right side of the image. An axe, small bowl, a glass kept left side of the image. Some rice grain is kept on middle of the image. Then he detaches the bone from Jamu branch and thrown into the stream. They pray

and say “you have separated from us”. You stay here from now on and we will stay in the village. You would not come to us. After hands the party moves to bathing place. Nobody return to that place after finish the ritual work because all Juang are afraid of the dead soul. When they return from the burial ground the Juang wash their dresses which they wear. So all person took bath in the stream. His another relative agnatic collect a crab and he himself also took bathe at the end of bath by holding a leg of a crab and a copper coin he sprinkle some water to everybody for purification.

When they come they had three axes but they return to village with two axes. One axe is kept near the cremation ground. On the way back one of his close agnatic collect a “rani twig” form a rani tree. On the way they peel the bark of that twig and kept it for ritual use. At the end the all party return to the deceased’s house. In front of the house podhan and bwita also gather there. They all sit in a meeting. They discuss why the person is dead for that reason they call the older person of that family. He/she sit middle of the meeting place. That person answer to the other people at the end they come to conclude that the age was that much so it dead. They also discuss whether somebody has dead due to the black magic or somebody has done black magic to him. The bandhu & kutumb, outsider or villager drink handia (country liquor) on that day early in the morning from nearby village so they discuss a lot.

THE FINAL PURIFICATION RITE:

Since the day the final purification rite is performed at the deceased house by an unmarried boy belonging to the village of the deceased sister’s son. The relative of the decease family select a classificatory sister son in the village. Who will make purification rite is called “Goble” will take bath in deceased house an earthen pot. He prepares a hearth inside the house with three stones near the door of the deceased house. Some rice is boiled by goble in a pot. Water of that pot is poured inside the temporary hearth and the rice kept on the seven sal leaves inside the house.

A cock is brought to Goble; thrash its head with his hand inside the deceased house. Blood of the cock is spilt inside & outside the house. A finger of that cock is detached by Goble and a feather is retouch from that cock some mustard oil is kept near the door. Than after a finger

of that cock is hold by Goble. A copper coin in kept on a leaf up outside the house. Earlier the Rani twig is kept outside the house near the door. All the party who had gone to burial ground is purified. Every individual first hold some rice then touch the mustard oil then he touch the finger of cock then the heath of the cock then he kept the rice outside the door. Small pieces of rani twig hold by each individual than goble touch the copper water and spray to all the polluted persons.

There is another ritual observed inside the country yard. Again a cock head is thrashed by Goble and the blood is drop nearby. Some water is kept in a sal leaves cup and a copper coin is kept inside it. Some mustard oil is poured near it. Bandhu and male & female villager first touch the blood, then touch the oil then touch the water & sprinkle on body. Every villager collected this water and sprinkles the water inside the house. Even Bwita's son also collect & sprinkle the water inside the house and purity the whole village. The Juang get their Jati (caste) after purification. Then the decease family distributes some rice to the bandhu and kutumb. If the deceased has some relative then they brings some rice (10 to 20 pai rice), goat, sheep, pig and cock during sudo. Some time it is depends upon the financial condition of relatives. Other bandhu also brings gift to help the deceased family. These who are carrying corpse to the burial ground they get seven times more to the general person. This rice is compensating for (kutumba, bandhu) but the family does not give ten leaf cups for because ten numbers is auspicious member.

The deceased family gave four leafs cup rice and a cock to an unmarried boy for a simple rite performs in front of the majang. Bwita come from own house with a full of water with container inside some holy basil leaf. Some sal leaves, turmeric powder and cow dung. Podhan join with a Bwita and they instruct the boy who sacrifice the cock. Bwita and Podhan give instruction to make the rite under karato tree (*plumeria rubra*) in front of Majang. The unmarried boy at first smears the soil with cow dung. The boy first put Turmeric powder round. Then he holds the cock and put some turmeric on head. Then he offers the rice to cock. If the cock eats the rice then they feel that the god has executed the rice. Then the boy sacrifices the cock and put the head middle of the rice. At the end he sprinkle water on the body of cock and make Jhuaro to east side because he sit face towards east. Then the boy keeps the rice inside the majang. The axe also kept inside the majang. Buita again brings

water full pot copper was inside it and gave to the body. The boy pours some water on the big log which is inside the Majang. He sprinkles some water inside the majang. Then the surplus water is carried by podhan and bwita. They purify their own house by sprinkle the water inside the home.

After some time podhan and bwita gather in front of the deceased courtyard. A mahuli bottle is brought by the deceased family. All gathered people make a round shape focused deceased son sit face towards west and bwita & podhan sit in front of them face towards east. They start to offer mahuli to their ancestor headed by bwita for the first time they offer to Dharam Devota and Basuki Mata. So they poured the mahuli on the soil. Then 2nd times they offer to the Dharma Devota and bless the children of deceased family pour the mahuli head of the children by their own hand. After that some paddy was kept with a bamboo container in front of Bwita and Podhan. A knife is kept inside the container. Bwita and Podhan give this container to the deceased family. This means that the boy or the deceased family can harvest paddy from their own farm. Then the surplus mahuli drunken by the Bwita, Podhan and other member are present there.

At last they kill the cock which is bring by the Bandhu villager. The deceased family also offers a goat or a pig to the bandhu. All the bandhu cook separately in the courtyards and eat there then return to their own house. The villager who has got invitation they have joined in the feast. In the night deceased close relative (husband/wife) offer some mahuli to the deceased inside the house near the hearth. During offer the membe say that you have left from this house. I am staying with my children. We will spent happy and peaceful life from now on so take this mahuli and give us happy life. “Among the Juang household, the cost incurred at the time of death rituals, during the period of field research varied between 500 to 3000 Rs.”(pp-145 Ottiger,N. 2005). The next day the deceased family offers one khandi rice and a pig or goat to the villager. The villagers cook this rice in Majang or in the courtyards of the deceased. Those who had gone to the burial ground only three persons family get share of the cooked food & meat. The meat is share row among them. During Sudo one has spent approximately two quintal rice, a goat, a pig and Rs.400/- approximately. So the Juang are not getting this much money at a time so at that time they are going to Gouda family and other rich people who are nearby to them. They rent or mortgage their land to the rich people.

Most of the death case the Juang are renting, mortgaging or selling their land to other people. Whereas the other people are also wait for this opportunity and take advantage of this Sudo. At that time the deceased family agreed with less money because this family is needed of money suddenly.

CONCLUSION:-

The Juang have a very strong belief in their religion and super natural powers. According to their traditional belief system, the death of the Juang occurs due to two reasons, the willingness of their supreme god Dharam Deota (Sun God) and by the wrath of the evil spirit. In order to relieve from the disease and to avoid death, the Juang depends on the (bwita) village priest and the spirit doctor (Ojha). The young Juang those who are working in town areas, takes help of modern medical facilities but they have not totally rejected their traditional way of treatment. The status of the woman in the Juang society is very different from the neighboring tribes. The special role of the Juang woman is notice that the priest was also woman. The woman activities during different stages of funerals ceremony was participate actively in this ceremony.

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Figure 1 After Ritual Juang Drinks Handia



Figure 2 Decease Family Provide Rice for feast

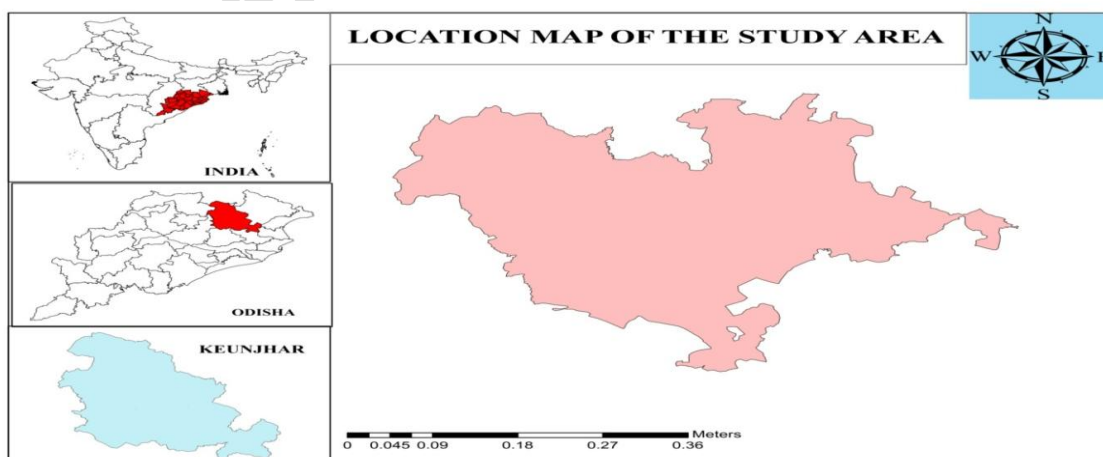


Figure 3 Map of Study Area