



The Kandha Revolution in Kalahandi

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Numerically, the second most important Scheduled tribe of Kalahandi is the Khond, Kond or Kandha. They are found everywhere in the district and have three main divisions, viz., Kutia, Dangaria and Desia. The Kutia Kandha lives in a house, the floor of which is below the level of the ground around the house. The Dangaria Kandhas are known as Malia Kandhas. They live in high land hills. The Desia Kandhas live in the plain area with other non-tribals. Kui is the mother tongue of the Kandhas but they know Oriya and speak with others in this language. The Kandhas are generally dark in complexion, though, among them, some fair skinned persons are also found. An average male Kandha is about 5 feet 4 inches in height. They are slim but muscular. The females are slim too, but shorter in stature. The Kandhas are generally simple in nature, innocent, truthful and credulous. The common surnames of Kandhas are Pradhan, Mallick, Konhar, Majhi and those worship deities have surnames like Dehury, Jhankar, Jani etc. The Kondhs form numerically the largest group among the 62 tribes of Orissa. Customarily they were once famous for their brutal acts of human sacrifice (Maria sacrifice) to achieve the end products of bumper crops and killing of infants for better yield of turmeric. There are various sections among the Kondhs. Racially the Kondhs relate more closely to the proto-Austroloid stock with considerable Mongoloid admixture. They are divided into two logistic group, Kui and Kuvi. The Kandhas have their loyalty to their erstwhile feudatory chiefs in Orissa and elsewhere. They are treated as valiant warriors and discharged their services very

faithfully to their rulers. They offered their valuable services at the time of freedom movement. To name a few among them are Chakara Bisoyi and Dohra Bisoyi. Their behaviour is pleasant and they are extremely hospitable to guests, giving protection to enemies if they take refuge. They are generally kind and cheerful and are lovers of recreation.

The twenty-seventh Nagavamsi ruler of Kalahandi ex-state was Shri Fateh Narayan Deo, who died in 1854 and was succeeded by his son Udit Pratap Deo. During his reign the Kandhas of Madanpur-Rampur Zamindary rebelled for sometime but was easily quelled by the skillful management of their affairs. The great Kandha leader Chakara Bisoi took shelter in the banks of Tel river, living alternatively in Madanpur Zamindary and then at Jarasingha. The British Commissioner of Nagpur Called upon the Raja of Madanpur to deliver up Chakara Bisoi. The Raja of Madanpur declared that he was ignorant of Chakara Bisoi's presence in his estate. Meanwhile another Kandha head Rendo Majhi taken the charges of the rebel in 1853 and was arrested during a Meriah sacrifice. In December 1855, Lt. Macneil the agent of the British took Rendo Majhi in chain along with him with a view to warn the Kandhas by this deterrent example. The Kandhas could not tolerate the humiliation of their chief and on 10th December 1855 they attacked the camp of Lt. Macneil, the agent in the hill tracts of Orissa at Orladhoni in the Madanpur estate. This proved the presence of Chakara Bisoi in the estate.



The Orladhoni incident was not forgotten by C.F.Cockburn who succeeded Samuells as Superintendent of the tributary Mahals in 1856. He ordered an enquiry with regard to the conduct of the Raja of Madanpur. The report of Lt. Elliot, who made the enquiry was delayed due to the outbreak of the revolt of 1857. Lt. Elliot held that Chakara Bisoi and his associates were encouraged by the Raja of Madanpur. The Raja was removed from the management of the estate and detained under the surveillance of his chief Udit Pratap Deo, the Raja of Kalahandi. Udit Pratap Deo ruled for 23 years and died in 1881 and was adopted Raghu Keshari Deo as his son but he was a minor of 4 years after succession. So, the administration was conducted by the eldest Rani, Asha Kumari Devi. For improvement of agriculture in the state, Udit Pratap Deo brought Kultha cultivators to Kalahandi from Sambalpur. The Kulthas exploited the poor and simple minded Kandhas and deprived them of the best of their lands. This created harassment and discontentment to the Kandhas. They decided to take revenge to the Kulthas and were in search of a chance.

It was during the weak rule of Asha Kumari Devi that the great Kandha rebellion took place in May 1882 from Asurgarh-Narla region. Large number of Kulthas were killed in cold blood and the rising was suppressed with the help of the British troops. Seven Kandha leaders were tried and given capital punishment. As a result of the Kandha rising, the British government took the direct management of the state till the 24th of January 1894 when Raghu Keshari Deo attained majority and obtained the throne.

In Kalahandi, the Kandhas occupied a privileged position in the sense that - "It was the custom until recently for the Raja of Kalahandi to sit on the lap of a Kandha on the occasion while he received the oaths of fidelity." It is also said that the Raja was accustomed to marry a Kandha girl as one of his wives though he did not allow

her to live in the palace. These custom probably interpreted as a recognition that the Rajas of Kalahandi delivered their rights from the Kandhas.

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