

MATERIAL CULTURE OF CHUKTIA BHUNJIA TRIBES OF ODISHA : AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

Bhubaneswar Sabar & Paramatap Pradhan

Abstract: This present paper documents the material culture of Chuktia Bhunjia tribe inhabiting interior to Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary of Odisha, India. Data collected using ethnographic techniques- formal interview and observation- reveal that the material culture of this little-known tribal group is shaped by ecology. Yet, the role of neighboring group especially iron melter (*lohra*) and basketry makers (*Paharia*) cannot be sidelined who supply them material artifacts for diverse use. Each material object they use portrays a distinctiveness whose value and meaning pass back and forth in everyday life of the Chuktia Bhunjia. Each cultural practice they have adopted is negotiated with specific material artifacts and is associated with various form of ritual, beliefs and value including the idea of gender and pollution. The material culture of this tribe is found to revolve around the idea of culture and knowledge, idea of utility and idea of relationship with knowledge. The material being freely available or at minimal rate, it increases their work efficiency and makes them economical. Yet, many forms of their material culture are getting transform because of a number of factors including enculturation, influence of market and state intervention and therefore, affecting their community identity.

Keywords: tangible heritage, traditional knowledge, agricultural implements, basketry, husking tools, hunting implement, fishing traps, pottery, ecology, rituals, cultural identity

Introduction

The study of material culture in anthropology is as old as the discipline. There have been evidences about the material artifacts used by the people in pre-literate societies. Early anthropologists and archeologists used to rely on the material artifacts to understand culture and society in time and space (Wissler 1914; Hutton 1944). But with the introduction of structural-functionalism, espoused by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, the material cultural studies gradually waned and the understanding of society and culture gained currency over the discretely collected material objects in term of their structural relationship with different spheres of human life (Prown, 1982; Sharma, 1983; Miller, 1985). Moreover, when social structures or enduring groups per se were the provinces of enquiry, culture was but an epiphenomenon of social life holding the key to the dynamic of anthropological enquiry as 'man as cultural being'. In such a situation, the overall understanding of material culture remains unchanged and continue to become 'an adjunct to the main arena of social enquiry' (Marwah and Srivastava, 1987; Channa and Mishra 2013; Sharief and Panda 2018).

By definition, material culture represents the tangible part of the human society

Dr. Bhubaneswar Sabar, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology & Tribal Studies; Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University, Baripada, Odisha; Email: bhubansabar@gmail.com; Dr. Paramatap Pradhan, Assistant Professor, School of History; Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur, Odisha; Email: param.3247@gmail.com

(Marwah and Srivastava 1987; Patnaik, 1995), which also includes portable objects, fixed structures and landscape features having connected with ideas, beliefs and values of people's social life. Patnaik (1995) defines material culture as an aspect of social morphology which is amenable to observation and description even when its accompanying social physiology is not known. Material culture is the finished or unfinished (depending on the context) product carved out of the contextually situated materials and resources. It is a corpus of conscience collective and an embodiment of the mentally perceived design. Material objects may be utilitarian and/or having an aesthetic value (p. 59). Lewis. R. Binford (1972) identifies three major functional sub classes of material culture- techno-mic, socio-technic and ideo-technic. Technomic signifies those artefacts having their primary functional context in adapting to the natural environment. The socio-technic artefacts are those material elements which have their primary functional context in the social subsystem of the total cultural system. This subsystem operates as the extra-somatic means of articulating individuals with one another into cohesive groups capable of efficiently maintaining themselves and of manipulating the technology. The ideo-technic elements of material culture are those which have their primary functional context on the ideological component of the social system. They signify and symbolise the ideological rationalization for the social system and further provide the symbolic milieu in which individuals are enculturated (cited in Patnaik 1995: 60). The theoretical polemics concerning cultural or material traits show that material objects, their values, meanings and functions vary from society to society. Archaeologists reconstruct or deconstruct cultural past through specific interpretation of material culture, but anthropologists try to infer meanings from it. From the perspective of structural-functionalists, the social morphology of material traits assume significance particularly in terms of molding people's outward behaviour (Robbins, 1966) and society's adaptation to particular ecology and culture (Forde, 1934; Hodder, 1982; Olsen, 2003; Sarkar 2015).

Functionalists are of the view that material culture operates as an extra-somatic means of articulating individuals with one another into a closely-knit group, maintaining a socially cohesive structure and social formations (Saraswati and Behura, 1966; Miller, 1985). Douglas and Isherwood (1979) opine that people use material culture to map out cultural values and social relationships and provide cues, warnings, and confirmations to individuals negotiating their day-to-day existence. Goods act to elicit and stabilize consensus about cultural categories and about value and therefore make and maintain social relationships through the information system. Therefore, particular complex of institutions emerges out of a particular variety of material culture. Warner (1957) also draws a similar theoretical argument while studying the structure and value system of the Yankee cemetery and argues that cemetery is a confluence of the living and the dead. So, the complex of values, norms and ways of living stands at the base of material culture in many societies,

especially among the tribal societies.

Early anthropological ethnographies document diversity of material artefacts used by tribal communities in India. The erstwhile Central Province region has produced numbers of anthropological ethnographies on tribals. Russel and Hiralal's *The Tribes and Castes of Central Province of India* (1916) provides an extensive summary of various tribal groups living within the territory. In later periods, numbers of detailed ethnographic studies have been published on individual tribe (Grigson 1938; Elwin 1939, 1947; Singh 1944; Dube 1954; Fuchs 1960). Khariar Zamindari of erstwhile Central Province region, which merged with Orissa estate in 1936 bears different historical conjectures. Spreading over 3852 sq. kms, it provides shelter to few indigenous groups: Kond, Gond, Sabar, Paharia, Bhunjia and Binjhal but no comprehensive anthropological work is found on them except few papers by local scholars of history and literature. The lack of anthropological ethnography is simply because of the fact that this region has not produced any anthropologists yet except a few whose works focus mainly on the problems of the tribal people per se.

With above background, the present paper aims at (a) to documents the material culture of Chuktia Bhunjia (largely pronounced as Chuktia Bhunjia) tribe of Odisha, living interior to Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary bordering Chhattisgarh state, focusing on house structure, dress, ornaments, agriculture, hunting, fishing, basket, utensil, husking tool, measuring tools, and other household uses; and (b) to shed lights on the change in the use of material artefacts and factors responsible for those changes.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted among the Chuktia Bhunjia tribe living interior to the Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary during February 2023 to December 2023 at different times to document their material culture pertaining to house structure, dress, ornaments, agriculture, hunting, fishing, basket, utensil, husking tool, measuring tool, etc. Keeping the objectives of study in mind, this study utilized a qualitative research design, i.e. exploratory, using ethnographic techniques of interview and participant observation that helped to explore the social context under which specific material culture functions to generate social reality. No questionnaire was used for interview rather a number of questions containing preparation, access and use of material artefacts were asked to the respondent households.

People and the Setting

Bhunjia is one of the tribal groups largely distributed in central India. They are divided into two broad social groups: Chinda Bhunjia and Chuktia Bhunjia. In Odisha, they are largely distributed in in Nuapada district. The Chinda Bhunjia -also known as Oriya Bhunjia- is an acculturated section of Bhunjia tribe. The Chuktia Bhunjia inhabit only in Nuapada district of present-day Odisha. They are

identified as one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in the state and exclusively inhabit in Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary (SWL) bordering the state of Chhattisgarh. According to a base line survey by Ota, Mohanty and Mohanty (2020) their total population is 3086 (1593 male and 1493 female from 938 household). They live in 35 villages/hamlets of SWS. With a sex ratio of 937, the literacy rate of Chuktia Bhunjia is estimated 24.54% (29.14% male literacy and 20.00% female literacy). They belong to Dravidian language speaking group (Russel and Hiralal 1916) who speak Bhunjia dialect (mixture of Oriya and Chhattisgarhi) for intra-group communication and local Oriya for inter-group communication. Although they were reported to practice hunting-gathering form of economy, inclusion of their habitat into the protected area forced them to become settled agriculturists. Still collection of minor forest produces (MFPs) constitutes an important source of their livelihood. They are animistic in nature and worship a number of natural phenomena. Majority of their festivals are associated with the agricultural practices and collection and consumption of various wild edibles.

Results

The Chuktia Bhunjia possess a number of household implement, tools and materials required for their everyday life. Some are these materials are self-made, some are purchased from the expert groups and some are bought from local market. The nature and function of material culture used by the Chuktia Bhunjia are described below.

House

The Chuktia Bhunjia houses in a village is self-contained individualist unit scattered in two sides leaving an open space to use as village street. They build their houses in a particular way. Two or more households build their houses taking a wide-open space in a place. The son after marriage, builds his own house separately depending on the space therein live and fence around the kitchen garden and front compound. Structurally, each Chuktia Bhunjia household contains two houses: main house (*Jhikar*) and kitchen room (*Lalbangla*). The main house, made of mud and wood, and thatched with earthen tiles, usually consists of two rooms that are used both for sleeping and storing grains. Some people build *baranda* which is usually used for sleeping. The corners of the houses are used to keep household implements largely axe, spade, jute bag, rope, etc. or often hang on the wall or in the narrow space between slanting roof and the wall. They also make a plinth like structure with the wood to keep the grain bag (*pura*). The lower part of the plinth is also used to keep other things specially leave bags containing of edibles, baskets, spinning fans, and other usable products.

A small hut is built a little way and in front of the living room is their kitchen room. It is traditionally known as *Lalbangla* that derives its name from *lal* means

red and *Bangla* means room (Photo No. 1). So, it is red in color. It is made of mud and thatched with wild grasses like *Singkhar* (*Pennisetum purpureum*) and *Dabkhar* (*Imperata cylindrical*). This is used only for cooking. It consists of two rooms. One is for cooking and another is for worshipping deities. The floor is plastered with mud and cow-dung. The doors of *lalbangla* are made of either bamboo or wild grasses. They often fence the *lalbangla* with two woods are fixed on the ground and a plat wood over to avoid people from touching it and to keep water pots in the daytime or fence is made with earthen platform raised about two to three feet above the ground to keep pots of water. The floor is plastered with mud and cow-dung. The walls are splashed with ochre-coloured soil called *Ratamiat*. In most of the kitchen room, a fenced *baranda* is noticed where they husk grain, grind cereals and clean rice and millets. Thus, generally a husking tool (*Katen*), usually made of trunk of Sal tree (*Shorea robusta*), is found there to husk the grain with *mussel* (a long stick with iron at one end). In the front room, they build hearth for cooking. They often hang one or two wooden lacks to dry fish and grain. They also hang maize, bajra in the roof above the hearth for drying up the millets that are usually used for next cultivation.

The peculiar characteristic attached to *lalbangla* is that no outsider (people other than Chuktia Bhunjia) can touch it. In such case, they immediately set the *lalbangla* fire and construct a new one. It is because they believe that outsiders are pollutants and may defile their deities worshipped inside it and may harm to family members. They throw the cooked food. After a purificatory rite, they construct a new *Lalbangla* and until then they cook their food in the courtyard. It plays crucial roles in their socio-cultural and economic life and thus considered as a sacred place. The son after marriage builds his own household separately depending on the space therein. If more than two brothers build their houses in a closed place, they also build their kitchen room separately.



Figure-1.: *Lalbangla* of the Chuktia Bhunjia

Ornaments

The Chuktia Bhunjia use a number of ornaments (Photo No.2) in their everyday life as mentioned below.

Bandha: (Coin Necklace): It is coin made necklace wear by Chuktia Bhunjia women. Girls possess the knowledge of preparing this necklace. Wearing of this necklace is compulsory for every Chuktia Bhunjia girl and woman during festive occasions as it signifies their cultural identity.

Panhanchi (Armlet): *Panhanchi* is the ethnic name of armlet used by Chuktia Bhunjia women. It is a decorative ornament made of alloy with a spring effect. The local goldsmith custom designs it by heat and hammer technique. Bhunjia women wear it during different occasions like wedding, festivals and dancing.



Figure-2.: Ornament

Agricultural Implements:

The Chuktia Bhunjia use a number of implements in their agricultural activity as described below ((**Photo No. 3**))

Nangar (plough): It is a cervical shape wooden implement preferably of *Bamur* (*Acacia arabica Willd.*) or *Sagun* (*Tectona grandis L.*). The bottom part is longitudinally attached along the centre line to a long wood, which is attached to

a yoke (*juad* or *jahada*). Yoke is usually made of *sargi* wood. Bullocks are tied in yoke and instructed to pull the plough share. A chisel-like blade (*kasna*) is attached to bottom shaft of the plough that loosen the soil after being drawn by the oxen. In the top of the plough share, a handle of same wood is fixed to hold at the time of tilling the soil. The handle is called *nagar koet*. The rope used to tie the bullock in the yoke is called *nangla daarā*.



Figure-3.: Agricultural Implements:
Left: Plough; Centre: sickle, spade, etc.; right: Scraper

Behenga/ Bhar (carrying pole): The Chuktia Bhunjia use carrier pole, locally called *behenga* or *bhar* or *suir* to carry loads more easily. It consists of a stout pole of bamboo or *sagun* (*Tectona grandis* L.) about six feet long. It contains two sharp ends called *shuli*. The pole is placed across the shoulder while the load is divided into two equal parts and hung from both ends of the pole either on ropes or in baskets. The net of the ropes in which the baskets or *dalas* are hanged is called *sikka*. If the load is heavy for one man, it is carried by two. They place the load in a rope netting, hang it in the centre of the carrier pole and walking one behind the other by carrying the load on the shoulders. It is not used by women.

Kural (Soil scraper): It is a chisel shaped flatten wood, usually of *sargi* (*Shorea robusta*), which is used to plain the agricultural land. At the two end of the wood, two notches are made that are attached to a long straight wood usually of *sagun* (*tectona grindis*) which is tied to the yoke. It is drawn by bullock.

Kapar (Leveller): It is a straight flatten wood usually of *Sagun* (*Tectona grandis* L.) or *Sargi* (*Shorea robusta* Gaertn.), used to plain the soil during showing of paddies or transplanting paddies. Its' structure and function is same as *kural*.

Axe (*Tangia*): It is an iron handled holed-head blade with cutting edge of three or four inches. It is fixed to a cylindrical shaped wooden handle called *dhet*. It is largely used in cutting tree, chopping wood, etc. It is seen that any person going to forest or agricultural field always carries an axe with them.

Tabal: It also looks like axe but the blade, made of iron, is thinner than the axe. It is used to scrape the stems of big trees, bamboo or halving small twigs. Its' use is also noticed to sacrifice the hen and goat during rituals and festivals. The smaller one of this type is called *tabli*.

Rapha (spade): It is made of iron, fixed with a wooden handle, and is used for making bunds, ridges, furrows, shallow trenches, water cannels; for sowing seeds and planting tree saplings; removing weeds and crop residues; and for digging or moving

soil. It is also used to clean the grass and to keep the soil onto the *dala* to be thrown out of the field. Its handle is made up of wood and the working area is made up of iron with rectangular shape of about 0.20×0.16 m.

Kuad (digging hoe): It is a small iron spike implement used to dig soft soil. A cylindrical wood is stuck into its hollow end split at the top. Its use is noticed during vegetable cultivation largely to dig small hole to put the seed inside soil. It is also used to soften the soil when the vegetable plants grow a feet height.

Gaiti (peak axe): It is also made of iron but longer and heavier than *kued*. It contains two working ends. One part longer and thicker than the others which is thinner and shorter. A hole exists between the two ends to fix with a long and strong cylindrical shaped wood called *dhet*. It is used to dig stony and coarse soil.

Sabal (Crowbar): It is made of iron, about 70 cm, and is used to dig holes. It is cylindrical in shape and its working portion (*jivi*) is flat and sharp. The smaller one is called *sabli*. Its use is noticed in marriage ritual beginning with digging hole for *madua* (marriage spot) construction to the end. It is also used during the mortuary ritual by the affine to purify the deceased clan members.

Hasia (Sickle): It is a C-shaped or curved iron implement usually bought from local market or often asked to ironsmith residing in their neighbor villages. Its C-shaped structure eases out the harvesting operation. The cutting or shearing area is made of iron and handle is made up of wood. It is largely used for cutting grass (*khadad*), climber (*dir*), paddy, cereals, millets, pulses. Its cost ranges from Rs. 100-150.

Karri (Daw): It is a knife-shaped iron implement usually used for splicing small stick or bamboo, carving up the carcasses of animals slain in the chase. Although it is purchased from the nearby market, it constitutes as an integral part of their economic life.

Morga (digging stick) It is an important tool for the Chuktia Bhunjia in pursuit of their economic activities. It is made of a long straight wood preferably *dhawra* (*Anogeissus latifolia* Wall) species by fixing *kunta* (an iron scraper) at one end. It is used to dig out the edible rhizomes and tubers. The wooden part is known as *dtheta* which is cylindrical in shape. The iron blade fixed at the end is called *morga* (Photo No. 4).



Figure-4.: *Morga*

Ankund (bamboo hook) It is a straight and narrow bamboo pole used to collect fruits like *Āam* (*Mengifera indica* L.), *Munga* (*Moringa pterygosperma* Gaertn.), *Tetel* (*Tamarindus indica* L.), etc. At one end of this pole, another stick is tied with an angle of 30 degree in a rope to make a hook-like structure. Its use is normally noticed when people unable to climb up the tree branches or when they collect fruit from any tall trees.

Barsula (wood scraper): It is an iron made scraper especially used to level the wood at the time of preparing a plough, door, or any wooden implements. It is attached to a cylindrical stem that act as its' handle. The edge part is sharp mean to scrape the wood.

Bindhan (Chisel): It is also made of iron and is fixed with a small wood on the top. It is largely used to make hole on the wood particularly during plough making, house construction or door making.

Baskets

Churki: A shallow open bamboo basket of medium size (Photo No. 5 (a). It is purchased from the Paharia people. It is used to keep small quantity of grains for day-to-day use. If they go to village shop to exchange small quantity of grains, especially of paddy, they take the grains with this basket. It is also used to take out grains from the grain-bin.

Tukni: It is a hallow-shaped bamboo basket usually of 1½ feet depth with 3 feet diameters. It is made of fine weft of bamboo passing over inch broad warps check wise (Photo No. 5 (b). It is purchased from the Paharia people and is largely used to carry grains from one place to another. People also use it to keep grains, pulses, cereals or millets of daily uses. People also keep small sized *theka*, locally called *tukni*, to keep small quantity of grains. Immediately after purchase, it is plastered with cow-dung and properly sun-dried with a believe a that by doing this, the basket lasts for longer.

Ferri/Parri: It is a small bamboo basket with a capacity to accommodate a kilogram of grains ((Photo No. 5 (c). It is largely used to keep small quantity of pulses. The small children are found to go to the village shop taking few paddy or other cereals to exchange and purchase the edibles in this basket.

Sup (winnowing fan): It is a bamboo made square plate with raised edged at three sides and made up of bamboo. The Chuktia Bhunjia do not prepare it rather purchase from the Paharia living inside the wildlife sanctuary (Photo No. 5 (d). Paharia is expert in basketry making who sell varieties of bamboo made implement by going village to village. It is used to clean the grain before consumption and also winnowing the grains after thrashing. The winnowing woman holds the scoop with both hands and fans the grains in such a manner that the lighter husks and false grains gather at one side of the scoop, while small grains of sand, being heavier, collect at

another corner which is held slightly lower. They sift the grains from the chaff in a short time. Pulses especially are first winnowed, then grinded in *jata* (traditional grinding stone) to remove the husk and are winnowed again before preparation.



Figure-5.: Traditional Baskets- (a) Churki, (b) Tukni, (c) changri, (d) sup

Jhawa: It is a round-shaped bamboo baskets, purchased from Paharia, that is used to collect forest produces. It is often used to strain water while cooking rice for a large gathering. People also use it for carrying the paddy seedling (*palha*) to the transplanting field. It is tied with ropes made of jutes (*sika*) in two side to carry the seedling in a carrying stick (*bhar*). The female members use it to carry things on their head. The bigger one is called *Chhetna*.

Parla: It is a flat basket made of bamboo usually of 4 ½ feet diameter with ½ inch depth. It is used to dry the halved edible fruits. It is also sometime used to dry the pulp of arrow root before storing in the basket. Its use is noticed during the pre-puberty marriage and marriage ceremony largely to bring soil from the shrine of village deity to initiate the ceremony; and also, to hold the bride and groom at the time of anointing oil.

Hunting Implements

The Chuktia Bhunjia of the Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary also possess few implements for hunting purpose as given below.

Dhun (bow): This implement is made of dhawra (*Anogeissus latifolia* Wall.) or a string of bamboo generally of five to six feet length. While making the string care is taken that two stop is left at either side. The string is attached to the stave by bits of rope, usually of *Siali* (*Bauhinia vahlia*) that pass over the stops.

Kan (Arrow): The Chuktia Bhunjia make their arrow with *dhawra* plant (*Anogeissus latifolia* Wall.). A notch is cut in the shaft-butt and sinew is bound over the notch. Sometime they attach feather of any bird straight along the shaft. The Chuktia Bhunjia usually use two types of arrows: *bita* and *murki*. The former type, used for shooting birds, is around two and half feet length. A strong round wood is attached with the side meant to strike the bird. The later type is similar to the former but only difference that its shooting side is attached with iron.

Gulel (catapult): It is meant to hunt birds and is made of wood. A big size notch is deliberately made and a thick rubber is tied with the notch. A pebble is placed over the rubber and tightly pull backward. Once it is loosen, the pebble strike against the target birds.

In early days, they, as shared by old people, were using iron spare (*barchi*) but today it is not reported because of restriction by the forest officials. Whenever they go to forest for collection, they occasionally go with bow and arrow with them.

Fishing traps

The Chuktia Bhunjia also use a numbers of fishing traps to catch fishes in different seasons. The important traps are as below.

Jhakna: It is made of single piece of bamboo by slitting up into a large number of strips which is at last open out into a mouth eight inches wide. That is, it has a wide bottom tapering sharp towards the top with holes in the upper side. It is about five to six feet length and two feet wide at the large open end and gradually narrowing. As the tail of the trap is simply the original stump of bamboo, it is fully fixed and not openable. The fishes enter into the trap when water drive the fish down the trap (Photo No. 6).

Chudia: It is a bamboo scoop, two and half feet long, leading into a pocket extending another one and a half feet. The lower part is narrower. It is placed in a field at some point where the water escape and catches crabs and little fishes. Sometime they make scoop of long size.

Mer: It is similar to the Churia but beautifully constructed trap of four to eight feet long and one and half feet high. The bamboo slats are very fine and set close together. Entrance to the trap is made by a series of small doors with spiral staircases going inwards and upwards with bamboo points. Fishes caught in the trap are taken out from a small hole at the top left-hand corner.

Thapa: It is a circular plunge trap, three feet wide at the bottom. A small circular hole is made on the top to put hand inside. It is pushed down through water on to a

shoal of fish, and a few of them may be caught and can be removed from the hole on the top. It is also sometime used to hide poultry at night or chicks on day time.

Thapi: It is a small square-shaped implement made of bamboo strips and plastic, usually of 2 to 3 feet length and 1.5 feet width. Two medium bamboo strips are used in which plastic net are tied in four corners. It is usually used to catch small fishes in the river stream.

Dhuti: It is a small rectangular basket made of bamboo strip and is plaited check wise. It is 12 inches long at the bottom and the aperture at the top is 3.5 inches. It has a single strip handle and is used to bring fish home from the stream or pond.

Saki jal: This fishing net, prepared out of nylon thread, is a round shaped with lead balls or pebbles tied at rectangular intervals along the periphery. This net is held at the centre by the fishermen, swung over the head and then thrown into the water. Falling down it opens and covers a certain area of river or pond. A string is pulled, the end of which is kept in hand when throwing the net. The net closes at the periphery, enclosing all fishes covered by the net. It is used in shallow water.

Dandar: It is also a rectangular shaped fishing net made up of nylon and two bamboo sticks. Its use requires the cooperation of several men. The bigger the net, more men are required. The net is spread in deep water against the current. One end is held right at the river bank while the other is slowly drawn across the river till it reaches its widest expanse. Then it is gradually drawn back in a wide circle. Care is taken that fish caught in the net do not escape to the bottom of the river. It is then pulled out of the river and fishes are caught.

Garri and Garra: These implements are hooks, made of iron, and are used by the children to catch fishes. These are bought from the local market at minimum cost. It is tied with a bamboo stick for use. The small hook is called *garri* and the bigger hook is called *garra*.



Figure-6.: Fishing Trap (left and Centre: *Jhakna*; Right: *Dhuti*)

Storages

Grain bin (*Pura*): It is a cylindrical-shaped bin made up of paddy straw largely to store paddies, millets and pulses like *mung* and *udhith* (black gram). For this, they first make a long thread-liked structure of about forty to fifty feet which is locally called *biat*. It is properly sun-dried to keep for longer. Once it is made, they keep it in closed circular way. Paddy straws are then scattered over the circle. It follows

putting of the sun-dried paddies over it. Then the *biat* are rounded tightly pulling upward to make a circular bag like structure. A target amounts of paddies are then put into it. The *biat* are surrounded over it again to complete the bin. The bins are then air-tight by striking against a stick especially made for this purpose. The stick is called *murgi dang*.

Patardala: *Patar* for Bhunjia means leave and *dala* is a bag like structure. So, it is a leave bag which they prepare specially to store wild edibles largely *tetel* (*Azardicheta indica*), dried mango (*amul*), dried mahul (*madhuca india*), etc.

Grinding tools

Sil (adze stone): It is a flatten stone of square structure, usually purchased from the market, is used to paste spices and making chutney. Spiece are grinded against a separate stone called *Ladha*, a round-shaped stone (Photo 7 (a), (b) & (c)).

Jata (grinding stone): It is a circular disc, containing two pieces, usually purchased from market. The bottom of the upper stone is thicker and heavier. A wooden stick (*khuti*) is fixed at a corner of upper disc that is hold to rotate the disc at the time of grinding the cereals and pulses. The small wooden pin is also attached to the bottom disc to balance the upper disc at the time of grinding the grains. A hole of few inches wide is present at the centre of the upper stone to put the grain inside (Photo 7 (d)).



(a) Sil



(b) Sil and Ora



(c) Sil



(d) Jata

Figure-7.: (a) *Sil*, (b) *Sil* with *Ora*, (c) *Sil* (d) *Jata*

Husking Tools

Dhenki (husking tool): It is made of wood preferably of Sargi (*Shorea robustas*) or Sagun (*Tectona grindis*) (Photo No. 8 a). It is fixed in a corner of a room called

parchi or *bhadi* to make it accessible to everyone. It has a fulcrum supporting a weight. One end of the wood is attached with a lever in which an iron ring is fixed to bottom tip to pound the grains and rice flour. The place where the lever pounds the grains is fixed with a wooden made hallow to pour the grains or flour. The other end is operated by the women in their legs.

Kuten and *Musel* (pestle): It is a heavy log of wood, having a round hole of about six inches thick, which is let into the floor of *Lalbangla*. Being fixed in kitchen room, they consider it as sacred. The grains, largely paddies, are pounded here by striking against a stick of around three feet, called *musel*. The lower tip of the *musel* is fixed with a round iron ring that strike and pound the grains. In some villages, a detachable pestle is also found that are largely used to prepare the bitten rice (*chihira*). The structure remains same but a notch is made to allow the pounding woman to sit properly. The pounding woman sits before the hole filled with grains, stretching out both legs during pounding (Photo No. 8 b).



(a) Dhenki



(b) Kuten and Musel

Figure-8.: (a) Dhenki, (b) Musel

Cooking Vessels/Utensils

Chulha (Hearth): It is a mud structure in the shape of a horse shoe, about of foot in height. So, I could not see its inside because of restriction but as narrated by the people, it is customary for each and every Chuktia Bhunjia to keep the hearth in a corner of *Lalbangla*.

Hani (Mud Pottery): It is an oval shaped clay vessel, purchased in local market or from the potters who wonder from village to village. It is used to keep water. In early days, it was also used to prepare food. At present, it has been replaced by aluminum vessels but the foods offer to their tutelary deities are cooked in the mud vessel like this.

Telen: It is a flatten pottery made of clay. It is usually purchased from potter. It is used to cover the *hani* and is sometimes placed before the deities to offer require things. Earlier people used to prepare rice cake with this clay but now replaced by tawa.

Ganj: It is made of aluminium, of round shaped, and is purchased from the local market. It is used to store water for cooking. Now a day, people are also started

cooking in this pot and thus gradually replacing the mud pot.

Mathia: It is a clay water vessel that is purchased from the potters, who wander village to village selling this pottery. However, its use has been replaced by the aluminum made water vessel, the Chuktia Bhunjia continue to use it for being less costly than the aluminum one or brass one. When the Chuktia Bhunjia women fetch water from pond or tube well, they carry the Mathia on their heads. As a head protection, they use a strip of cloth roll known as *Bihān*.

Garia: It is brass water vessel, generally bought from the market. Its uses are frequently noticed. Yet, the aluminum water pot has been replacing this vessel as found to use by many Chuktia Bhunjia families across sanctuary area. When the Chuktia Bhunjia women fetch water from pond or tube well they carry the Garia on their heads. As a head protection, they use a strip of cloth roll known as *Bihān*.

Gadu (jug): It is a brass pot, usually bought from the market. It is used to give water to peoples for washing hand and legs. Its significance is noticed during each ritual and festival by the Chuktia Bhunjia. When the village deities, during Sunadei jatra, visit to any house, they wash their feet with water taken in the brass jug. Similarly, they keep this jug at ritual places.

Thali: It is a flatten brass plate used to serve meal. Every household keep this utensil one or two for cultural purpose but these days they prefer to eat food in the steel plate. It is also purchased from the market.

Besides, the Chuktia Bhunjia also use other kinds of vessels and utensils in their everyday life. For example, some of the households were found to keep bottle guard that was once used to take water to the agricultural field or to the forest. Almost all household have small round-shaped bawls (*gina*) or flatten bawls (*tasni* or *thalki*) to eat curry or dal. The use of aluminium ladles is also used by every family to stir porridge.

Measuring Tools

Maan: This container is made of bamboo and is purchased from the *Paharias* living interior to the sanctuary. It is a round-shaped item having thick circumference all around. A *Maān* of paddy is equivalent to approximately 6 kgs of paddy. These days, people are also using *Maan* made of iron and purchased from the local market (Photo No. 9 (a)).

Ada: It is round-shaped tin container, bigger than *sula* used to measure paddies, rice and other food grains. It accommodates approximately 1kg 300 grams of paddies or rice. In certain village, this container is called *Sera* (Photo No. 9 (b)).

Gidha: It is a small-size tin container found in certain households (Photo No. 9 (c)). Although its use is so limited, sometimes people require it for repaying grains taken as loan. A *Gidha* of grains or rice is equivalent to 350 grams of grains. It is purchased from local market or often the ironsmith go village to village to sell this

along with other measuring pots described below.

Sula: It is a medium size tin container, doubled to *gidha*, that is used to measure grains especially pulses and cereals of small quantity. A *Sula* of grains is equivalent to 700 grams of grains. It is purchased from local market or ironsmith.

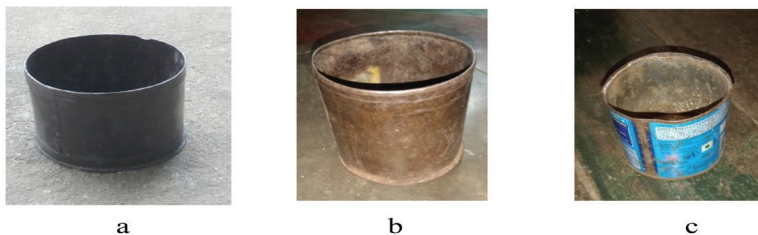


Figure-9.: Measuring Pots (a): *Maan*, (b) *Ada*, (c) *Gidha*

Other Common Household Belongings

Combs

Although, the combs used by the Chuktia Bhunjia is found to have been replaced by plastic combs, a very few households possess wooden combs of different kinds. The comb made with a flat tapering piece of wood is called *Ukhen mara pania* which is largely used to kill lice. Besides, a double-edged fine-tooth comb, they also use roughly carved comb with four to eight thick teeth on one end and other tapering into a handle about three inches long to comb hair of any type.

Bahari (Broom):

In every household, broom (*bahāri*) made of *kata badhun* grass (*Aristida setacea* Retz.) is well noticed (Photo No. 10). Women themselves prepare the broom by loosely binding the upper third. It is used to sweep floor of house and the space in front of their house. They also make broom out of *Chakoda* plant (*Cassia tora* L.) that are specifically used to clean the cow-shed or village lane. The broom made of *Kata badhun* (*Aristida setacea* Retz.) is sometimes offered to the deities for curing the scabies and other skin diseases.



Figure-10.: Broom

Peedha: It is a wooden plinth generally used to sit at the time of eating food by the male member. It consists of a square block of wood with four stumps as legs (Photo No. 11 (a)). Female generally are restricted to sit over the *peedha*. Its' use is noticed during the marriage ceremony, especially at the time of welcoming the groom to marriage spot by the bride party. The groom is asked to put his right leg over the *peedha* after which the maternal aunt (*aata*) of the bride washes the feet of the groom with water followed by pouring little turmeric mixed rice over him.

Jhapi: It is a round-shaped basket made of bamboo strip having a separate opening on the top. It is around 16 inches diameters and stand 14 inches from the ground. An iron chain is fixed on the upper opening portion and a hook on the other for locking purpose (Photo No. 11 (b)). It is used to keep cloth. It has a cultural significance for them. The utensils and materials used in *Sunadei jatra* are stored in this basket. Although this type of basket has been replaced with wooden box or aluminum trunk, a very few households are reported to have kept it for being brought by their grandmother at the time of their marriage.

Panki: It is a non-foldable iron blade, with a cutting edge, usually used to cut the vegetables and fishes. It is attached with a wooden platform that is held down by the foot while cutting the vegetables using both hands. It is purchased from the blacksmith (Photo No. 11 (c)).

Chalni (Sieve): It is an iron made circular tool with small thin hole on its base (Photo No. 11 (d)). It is used to clean the coarse cereals and also filter the dust after husking the pulse and cereal.



Figure-11.: Household Belongings

Chhatel/Mayer (Rain Hood or Leaf umbrella): In early days, the Chuktia Bhunjia were using *Chhatul* to protect them from rain. They used to prepare this. Although, it has been replaced by the umbrella available at market, it is often noticed to have been in use among them particularly during seedling and transplantation of paddies. I came across its' use in Sunabeda and Sanbihali villages. Structurally, it is a flat conical hat with a broad rim. Its diameter is three to five feet. The inner frame is made first. Thin long bamboo slivers are interlaced at the 60-degree angle into a loosely plaited wickerwork which is covered with two or three layers of *Sial* leave (*Bauhinia vahlii* W & A). Then outer frame of identical shape and pattern is fitted on the inner frame with the layers of leaves in between. The rims of both frames are then plaited together to keep the leaves in place.

Joti (carrying or hanging rope): It is available in almost every Chuktia Bhunjia household. It is made of jute. The older generation people are found to make this implement out of processed jute to carry the utensil to the agricultural field or to hang the utensil, especially of mud milk vessel, to protect from cat or any other important edibles (Photo No. 12 a).

Champ (Mat): It is made of a grass available near to river, locally called *gandhla* (*Anthistiria ciliate*). The female member in almost all household possess knowledge about its preparation. Since the Chuktia Bhunjia are customarily tabooed from using cot, each family prepare mat to sleep on the floor (Photo No. 12 b).

(a) *Joti*(b) *Champ*Figure-12.: (a) *Joti*, (b) *Champ* (Mat)

Discussion and Conclusion

The description of various material culture and artifacts possessed by the Chuktia Bhunjia of the Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary reveals that ecology and ecological resources constitute important part in the production of material artifacts. Each material culture is having different role to play in their life. A majority of material

objects are prepared by themselves specifically house, agricultural implements, fishing traps, household materials, bird trapping, etc. that shows their traditional knowledge base as observed by Sharief and Panda (2018) in their study among the Jarwa of Andaman Island and Ota (2015) among the Lanjia Soara of Odisha. The neighboring groups specially *Lohra* (iron melter) and *Paharia* (basket maker) do provide the agricultural tool like iron chisel to fixed on the bottom of plough and bamboo basket to the Chuktia Bhunjia respectively. So, there is a co-existence among the populations living in the sanctuary region in term of making their material culture a complete entity.

The house and house structure constitute important aspect of Chuktia Bhunjia's material culture having close connection with the nature and customary culture. The customary structure and behaviour associated with the house especially about the *Lalbangla* does not always constitute as an isolated entity rather always molds people's behavior with regard to their food collection, consumption, social interaction and therefore is grounded with their purity-pollution philosophy. Similar cultural attachment with the house and house pattern is also noted by other scholars in different regions (Daniel 2010; Tribhuwan 2005; Durand 2016). The artifacts being locally prepared and easily available, the existing material artifacts not only increases their traditional knowledge-based work efficiency and production but also make them economical as reported in other studies (Sarkar et al. 2015; Das et al. 2022). However, with the passage of time, the tribals and non-tribal groups living in Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary are also changing their gaze as the Chuktia Bhunjia. So those group who are earlier supplying, for example basketry by the Paharia, are now facing the forest rule and hardly access to bamboo for basket making. It has resulted the manufacture and supply of baskets to the people as required and therefore has compelled others to use basket of either aluminum and plastic easily available in local market. So, the change in the material culture among the Chuktia Bhunjia is also gradually widening the social relationship between people living in the sanctuary area.

It is reported that many of the material objects used by the Chuktia Bhunjia are having ritual and symbolic significances. Therefore, those resources that are used to make the specific objects are exploited following prescribed rituals often shaped by gender position in which women during their puberty and monthly menstruation and member of the deceased families are not allowed to collect those resources until the purification ritual is performed. So, the material culture of Chuktia Bhunjia is having the notion of 'purity and pollution' and continue to maintain the sacredness of the objects. It is reported that females are not allowed to touch the yoke before marriage. On the day of marriage, the marriage priest (*Lagania*) keeps a yoke in marriage spot (*Madua*) and the bride is asked to stand over it. The groom stands back to her after which the *Lagania* pour turmeric mixed water over them signifying purification of the couple before they are allowed to lead their family

life. The cultural representation of material objects used by the Chuktia Bhunjia are overtly visible, yet the internal character it holds expresses a different meaning of the society, i.e., secularization of material culture which is intimately connected with ideas, beliefs, and values of social life.

The use of different material artifacts by the Chuktia Bhunjia shows that each object is directly or indirectly associated with their economic and social life. Their cultural practices are negotiated by the presence of specific material artifacts as revealed from their uses in marriage practice, mortuary rituals, village rituals and festivals, etc. The material objects of Chuktia Bhunjia are found to have three dimensions- idea of culture, idea of utility and idea of relationship. The first one indicates their local knowledge in the production of artifacts. The second one emphasizes their use value but shaped by knowledge they possess and third one makes a boundary between the first two dimensions. It can also be argued that some of the material artifacts especially *Sabal* (crowbar), broom, *jhapi* and *peedha* that are largely used as active medium to communicate with the deities in specific ritual practice, are having epitome to reflect and reinforce utopian idea of their culture and symbolic meaning towards maintaining their community identity. So, the explicit meaning attached to each material object by the Chuktia Bhunjia offers a complex relationship between people and objects.

The present generation of Chuktia Bhunjia is undergoing the process of acculturation due to internal and external forces. Internally, economic transformation and externally planned change, modernization-led migration and influence of outsiders have led to change in the lifestyles and habits so as the use of material cultural artefacts. Now the Chuktia Bhunjia are noticed to wear colored dress and a variety of ornaments. In early days, it was a custom among them that no woman should wear color dress, blouse and petticoat. But now a day, such restriction is relaxed as many women are found to wear those dresses. The use of ornaments has undergone tremendous change. Traditional ornaments usually made of coin and beads are still used but the use of ear-rings, finger rings made of silver and necklaces made of gold are noticed to have been used by the younger generation that are attributed to the development of road communication making the petty traders to come to the villages located in the sanctuary area. So, the introduction of market economy in the Chuktia Bhunjia area has influenced people to use the conventionalism. Earlier, people had to travel a lot, around 30-40 kms to reach market, but the introduction of market in Sunabeda during 2006 has been catering all sorts of needs of the local people including Chuktia Bhunjia.

The cumulative actions of several interventions, especially the forest policy and state driven welfare scheme, are also observed to influence the material conditions of the Chuktia Bhunjia in the matter of infrastructure particularly house pattern. Interesting to note that the post-declaration of Sunabeda forest as wildlife sanctuary restricted people to exploit the timbers and other forest resources as a result the

house which they used to build with the wood are now replaced with brick, except the *Lalbangla* that is constructed only with mud and wood with cultural submission. Many of Chuktia Bhunjia households are now assisted by the government under Indira Awas Yojana and Biju Pucca Ghara Yojana (a state sponsored housing scheme) to construct pucca cement houses. Their traditional household implements especially utensil are being replaced by steel, aluminum, bronze, and plastic utensils which they obtain from the local market. It shows their economic development and affordability to purchase the market products. The gradual restriction on hunting by the forest official also suppressed the hunting implements and people now hardly use bow and arrow for the purpose. A very few of them also possess bicycles, motor-cycles, plastic furniture etc. The recent initiative by the CBDA towards encouraging people to cultivate cash crops especially cultivation of strawberry and millet has helped the Chuktia Bhunjia to accumulate money so as the change in material culture suitable to the mode of economic production.

To conclude, each material culture of the Chuktia Bhunjia is locally produced and is revolved around the ecological resources. Each material artifact has its own distinctiveness whose value and meaning passes back and forth in everyday life of people of this society. A number of objects are having ritualistic value and are interconnected with the idea of cultural practices, festivals, and economic livelihood. These are also connected with ideas of knowledge, values, knowledge, gender and therefore are maintained with great religiosity. Nevertheless, along with the changing livelihood pattern, coupled with acculturation and state intervention to integration of tribal into dominant culture, a few of their material cultures are getting replaced with materials artifacts available at market and therefore affecting their community identity.

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