

## BHUIYAS OF KEONJHAR DISTRICT OF ODISHA: A SEARCH OF CHALCOLITHIC CULTURAL TRAITS

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### **Introduction**

India is a mosaic of indigenous people that are present throughout the Indian Territory harbouring various ecological niches. These indigenous people of India and especially the Eastern India have different cultural traits. Two groups of indigenous people having exactly identical cultural traits as a whole are rare and are continuously changing with time. But distinct pockets of ecological niche harbour certain groups of indigenous people from whom we can find the ancient cultural traits that may originate in the pre historic age. Some of these traits still continue in the present day with very slight modifications that can be easily overlooked in the present global scenario. The present study focuses on the Bhuiya tribe in the Knuar village of the Keonjhar District in Odisha that exhibits some of the cultural traits that are very ancient and can be traced for their origin in the prehistoric period. These traits are mainly materialistic in nature and are studied in the Ethnoarcheological domain.

### **Objectives of the study**

- To give an account of the various material cultural traits of Bhuiya community of Eastern India.
- An attempt to throw light on the aspects of the material culture that reflects the subsistence pattern of the people of both the Neo-Chalcolithic and contemporary periods.
- To understand the factors behind the continuation or variability of material culture traits and the way of life from the Neo-Chalcolithic past to the contemporary period.

### **Materials and Method**

The archaeological data will be collected from the secondary source by reviewing the presently available text, journals, proceedings or other literary sources. The empirical data will be collected from the field. For the purpose of the reconstruction of the lost culture, the Ethnoarchaeological method will be taken into account. Standard methods of the ethnography will be taken into consideration. The method and techniques that will be used for the collection of data are interview, observation, case study,

schedule/Census method. To get the basic information about the indigenous people residing in the area of study, census data will be taken on each household through standard census method. For the purpose of reconstruction of the archaeological findings, the socio cultural profile and the socioeconomic traits will be collected by interviewing the subjects. For both of these structured and unstructured schedules will be used. Possible case studies will be made to identify the various factors that are present within a social unit as an integrated whole. Direct and participant observations method will be followed for collecting data on the ethnographic correlation for the particular trait. Proper attention will be given on the material culture of the indigenous people concerned.

In addition to the above mentioned methods, other visual aids are also to be taken into consideration. Photographs and drawings produce detailed information regarding specific items of enquiry. For analysis, of data necessary information will be collected through review of existing literature; books, journals, government records, etc.

#### **Research Findings**

The present study has provided empirical data on the continuum of archaeological traits from the different archaeological sites of the study area with the cultural traits of the contemporary indigenous people. From the review, it can be concluded that chalcolithic is a term used for a cultural phase in our country, which has emerged after the Neolithic phase. This is a stage when use of copper and

bronze is found contemporaneously but large scale stone tools were still manufactured and used. This combination of metal and stone tools in the cultural phase has given rise to the term Chalcolithic. The term "Neo-Chalcolithic" may have referred to a technological or economic phase or in a broader perspective of subsistence pattern related to the first appearance of metallurgy or the progression from the last Neolithic societies to the first Metal Age communities. A new occupation of metal smithy evolved besides agriculture.

The study has been done to understand the settlement pattern of Bhuiya tribe residing in the Knuar village with a view to find the continuity of this cultural trait from the Neo-Chalcolithic cultural period and has significant similarities in the process of site selection for the habitation. The range of the materials utilized from the construction of the house to the materials used in day to day activities was thoroughly studied to find the affinities and variability that exists between the cultural traits of indigenous people and the Neo-Chalcolithic ancestors of the Eastern India. The present study is important in the sense that the people live in the area with same ecological setting of the past. So, the influence of the environment with the material culture and the behaviour of the people may be reconstructed.

#### **Conclusion**

The Bhuiyas are one of the dominant tribes of Keonjhar. They are distributed in different adjoining areas of the Chalcolithic sites of Keonjhar. They follow indigenous technology in

respect of settlement pattern, economic activity, pottery, domestic utensils and also sometimes in ritual practices. The material culture of Bhuiyas has close resemblance to the Chalcolithic people though the raw material is different. The designs of the bangles yielded from the sites are also preferred by them. The place of settlement is also the same. So, the close resemblance of the material culture of Bhuiyas may highlight the fossilised behaviour of the past Chalcolithic people in the area.

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