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Modernisation and Changing Family and Marriage Patterns among the Chuktia Bhunjia of Odisha

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Abstract: ***Modernisation has brought about considerable changes in the social and cultural life of the tribal communities of India. The Chuktia Bhunjia, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) living in the Sunabeda Plateau of Nuapada district, Odisha, has also witnessed a number of changes in their traditional family and marriage system. The present study has been undertaken to examine the effect of Modernisation on family structure, marriage customs, marital preferences, gender relations and traditional social practices of the Chuktia Bhunjia community. Traditionally, the community had their own peculiar customs and cultural norms which dictated marriage, family ties, kinship and social obligations. But these traditional institutions are slowly being affected by the increasing availability of education, government development programs, communication facilities and interaction with neighboring communities. The study examines the changing attitudes to age at marriage, family size, choice of partner, traditional practices surrounding marriage and the changing roles of men and women within the family. It also deals with the conflict between traditional cultural values and modern aspirations, especially among the younger generation. The study reveals the coexistence of traditional practices and modern influences, which helps to understand how modernization affects family and marriage patterns, but some indigenous customs still retain their cultural value. It emphasizes the need of understanding such changes for the cultural identity of the Chuktia Bhunjia along with the social development in the 21st century.***

Keywords: modernization, family structure, marriage pattern, socio-cultural change, gender relations, Chuktia Bhunjia, Odisha.

I. INTRODUCTION

Modernisation is one of the essential processes of social change that affects the structure, values, institutions, and lifestyle of human societies. It involves change in traditional practices, beliefs, social relations, educational systems, occupations, and institutions of family. Modernisation in the Indian context has greatly affected the lives of tribal people because of education, urbanization, industrialization, technology, government welfare schemes, and interaction with non-tribals. While this development has certainly provided new areas of growth, it has also affected the traditional cultural institutions such as the family and marriage. Marriage and family are two key social institutions that have played a pivotal role in ensuring social organization, culture and identity of communities. Within the realm of tribal societies, such organizations are generally regulated by customs, traditions, kinship relations, and community activities. Traditionally, families have been known for economic collaboration, social security, cultural training and the passing down of native knowledge from one generation to the next. Likewise, marriage is a social institution that creates social ties among families. Chuktia Bhunjia have been categorised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) of Odisha. They mainly live in the Sunabeda Plateau area of Nuapada district. There are many distinctive features in terms of their social structure, culture, religion, and customs that make them different from other groups around them. There have been some unique customs followed by this tribe in regard to their family relations, marriage rites, and kinship. There used to be a strong patriarchal setup in their family structure. Marriage rites and rituals were strongly associated with community customs and religious beliefs. But the impact of modernisation has slowly changed the traditional structure of families and marriages among the Chuktia Bhunjia. Improved education, increased awareness, various development schemes by the government, better modes of transport, communication and interactions with the nearby villages have impacted the social behavior of the community. The younger generation is becoming more educated and aware of the modern ways of living and earning. Thus, there have been changes in the way they think about marriage age, partner selection, family roles, involvement of women in decision-making, and intergenerational relations. In addition, the current education and awareness levels have played a major role in shifting attitudes towards early marriages, gender roles and responsibilities in families. The culture of marriage remains relevant; nevertheless, some aspects are slowly being modified. The rising impact of modernization has led to a generation gap in terms of choice of marriage, traditions and relations within the family.

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Here, it becomes pertinent to note that, in this regard, the current study tries to explore the effect of modernization on the changing pattern of family and marriages among the Chuktia Bhunjia of Odisha. In particular, it discusses the traditional family system, marriage practices, changing marriage preferences, marriageable age, gender and generation issues. Therefore, the importance of studying the changing pattern of family and marriage among the Chuktia Bhunjia lies in a sociological context. In other words, this study helps to comprehend how an indigenous society reconciles itself to tradition with modernity in order to preserve its social and cultural identity in the 21st century.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Srinivas M.N. (1966), in his book Social Change in Modern India, has made an analysis of the process of social change in Indian society with special focus on Sanskritization, Westernization and modernization. His writings provide a theoretical framework for studying how traditional practices transform upon their exposure to the larger society A.M. Shah (1973) has explained about the structure of household and changing dynamics of families in his work called “The Household Dimension of the Family in India”. This is a good sociological perspective on how family is organized and changes occur in India. The authors Ota et al. (2020), have provided details about the socio-cultural traits and lifestyle of Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Odisha. Sabar & Midya (2023): Family, Marriage and Kinship. In their study on the Chuktia Bhunjia tribe, Bhubaneswar Sabar and Dipak K. Midya examine the changing social structure of this community in particular concerning family, marriage and kinship. This work analyses the change in the social structure of the tribe due to changes in the mode of earning their living, gender relations and socio-economic condition. The researchers state that the community is finding a balance between custom and modern influences in an attempt to retain their identity. Sabar (2025) – Social and Cultural Transformation Bhubaneswar Sabar (2025) in his research paper "A Tribe in Transition: Understanding Sociocultural Change Among the Chuktia Bhunjia of Odisha, India" studied socio-economic and cultural changes in the community. The author mentions several aspects that play a key role in bringing about social transformation including the state interference, education, and migration and contact with people of other ethnicities. Differences between communities striving to conserve their traditions and those embracing new culture are also discussed. This study becomes a good starting point for the modernisation process, cultural preservation, and sociocultural mobility.

A. Objectives of the Study

1) To study the traditional family structure and marriage system among the Chuktia Bhunjia community.
2) To find out the effect of modernization on the traditional marriage practices.
3) To analyse changes in the age of marriage, preference for marital partners and the selection process.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study employs descriptive and exploratory research methodology to analyze the process of modernization and family and marriage trends of the Chuktia Bhunjia tribe of Nuapada district, Odisha.

IV. AREA OF STUDY

This research study has been carried out amongst the Chuktia Bhunjia tribe who inhabit the area of Sunabeda plateau in Nuapada district of Odisha. This study revolves around Sunabeda, Junapani and Kotrabeda villages, which are still greatly influenced by their traditions, kinship and marriage system.

V. DATA SOURCES

Sources of both primary and secondary data were used for the study.

1) Primary Data: The primary data was collected using structured interviews, personal contacts and observations made within the Chuktia Bhunjia tribe.
2) Secondary Data: The secondary data was collected using books, research papers, journals, government reports and publications on tribal society, family, marriage and modernization.

VI. SAMPLE SIZE

For the research, there was selection of 160 respondents that made up the study sample from the study area. The respondents were grouped into three age categories: those aged between 20-30 years, 31-40 years and those aged 40 years and above.

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VII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data collected were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The frequency and percentage techniques were employed in presenting results of the survey. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were employed in understanding traditional marriage customs, changing family relations, and the effects of modernity.

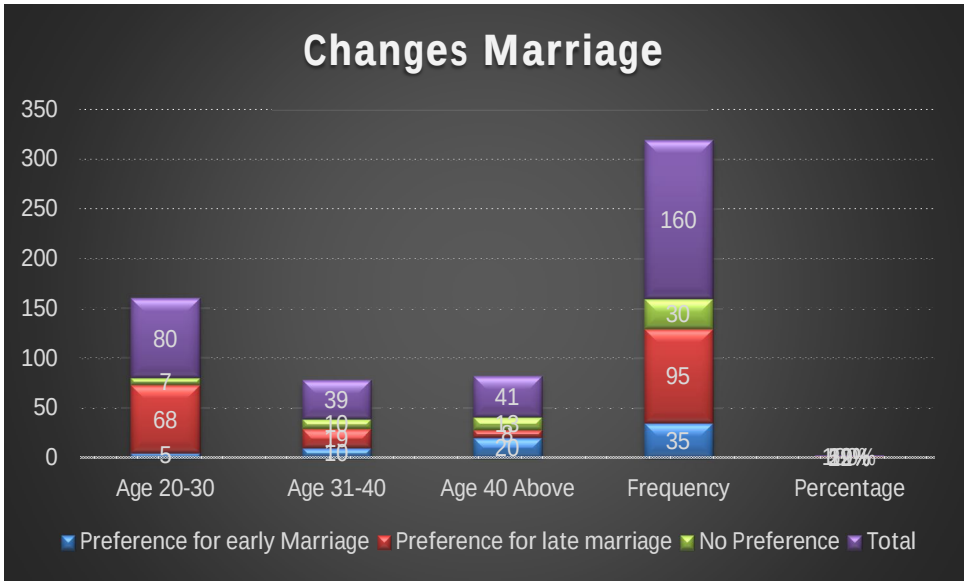
Table No. 1: Family Structure and Household Organisation of Respondents

Family Structure	Age 20-30	Age 31-40	Age 40 Above	Frequency	Percentage
Joint Family	10	15	20	45	28%
Nuclear Family	47	25	13	85	53%
Extend Family	16	12	2	30	19%
Total	73	52	35	160	100%

Sources Field Survey

The above table shows the family structure of 160 Chuktia Bhunjia respondents of three different age groups, i.e. 20 – 30 years, 31 – 40 years and 40 years and above. The results showed that 85 (53%) of the respondents were from nuclear families. Out of these, 47 respondents belong to the age group of 20-30 years, 25 in the age group of 31-40 years and 13 are in the age group of 40 years and above. Thus, nuclear families are increasingly becoming more common in the Chuktia Bhunjia community, particularly among the younger generation. Conversely, 45 (28 per cent) respondents are from joint families. Of them, 10 respondents are in the age group 20-30 years, 15 respondents are in the age group 31-40 years, and 20 respondents are in the age group 40 years and above. This means that the joint family system is comparatively more common in the older generation, as they are more inclined toward traditional family relationships, collective responsibilities and customary living arrangements. 30 respondents (19%) are members of extended families; these are 16 respondents from the 20–30 years age group, 12 from the 31–40 years age group and only 2 from the 40 years and above age group. The increase in nuclear families is due to development in education, employment opportunities, changing economic conditions and greater interaction with neighboring non-tribal communities. The younger generations are increasingly accepting of diverse family forms and contemporary living arrangements, which could influence their choice to reside in a distinct household.

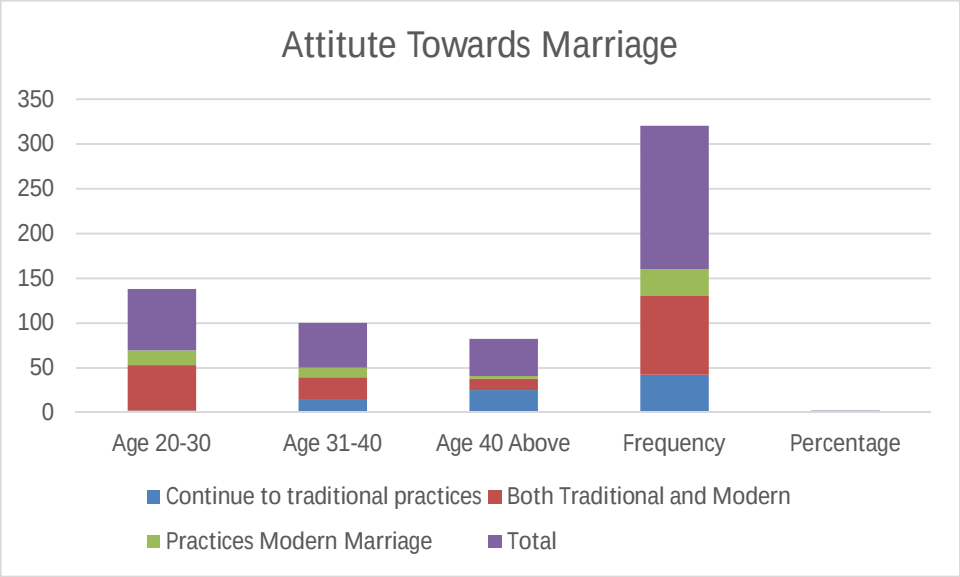
Table No. 2: Changes in Marriage Age and Marital Preferences by Respondents (N=160



Sources: Field Survey

Above figure represents the shifting trends in case of marriage age preference among 160 respondents of Chuktia Bhunjia community from three different age categories – 20-30 years, 31-40 years, and 40 years and above. It is seen that 95 respondents (59%) support the idea of marriage at a later age, which suggests an increased preference for a comparatively mature marriage age. Out of these 95 respondents, 68 are in the 20-30 years age group, 19 are in the 31-40 age group, and 8 are in the 40 years and above age group. In contrast, 35 (22%) respondents were in support of early marriage. of these, 5 individuals belong to the age bracket of 20-30 years old, 10 individuals belong to the age bracket of 31-40 years old, and 20 individuals belong to the age bracket of 40 years old and above. Further, 30 (19%) of the respondents had no specific preference regarding the age of marriage. The results show that the respondents prefer to marry late, especially those in the age group of 20-30 years. This might be linked with higher levels of education, awareness, aspirations for jobs, and shifts in society's attitude. It shows the effect of modernization on the traditional marriage practices of the Chuktia Bhunjia community. The Chuktia Bhunjia community prefers late marriage mainly due to interaction with non-tribal communities and the growing educational development among the younger generation. The younger members have come in contact with the neighboring non-tribal groups and have imbibed different social values, marriage practices and modern lifestyles. Education has also raised their awareness about the importance of finishing studies, being financially independent and building a stable career before marriage. In addition, younger generations are adopting a more modern attitude toward marriage and family responsibilities. Educated young people prefer to marry later in life, rather than take a marriage as a major responsibility at an early age as in traditional practice. Their contact with other communities, educational institutions and modern social environments has helped to change perceptions of the appropriate age for marriage.

Changing Attitudes towards Traditional Marriage Practices (N=160)



Sources: Field Survey

The above table depicts the changing attitude toward traditional marriage practices of 160 Chuktia Bhunjia respondents belonging to three age groups, i.e. 20-30 years, 31-40 years and 40 years and above. The findings show that the majority, 88 respondents (55%), would like to adhere to both traditional and modern marriage practices. Among them, 51 respondents are in the age group of 20–30 years, 24 respondents are in the age group of 31–40 years, and 13 respondents are in the age group of 40 years and above. This means that many of the respondents, especially the younger generations, are embracing modern marriage practices while still adhering to a substantial number of traditional customs and rituals. Also, 42 respondents (26%) favor keeping the traditional marriage practices. Out of these, 2 respondents are in the age group of 20-30 years, 15 respondents are in the age group of 31-40 years, and 25 respondents are in the age group of 40 years and above. This means traditional marriage customs are relatively important among older generations with more attachment to customary beliefs, rituals and cultural values. In contrast, 30 respondents (19%) prefer modern marriage practices. Out of which 16 respondents are in the age group of 20-30 years, 11 are in the age group of 31-40 years and only 3 are in the age group of 40 years and above. This implies that the younger respondents are more likely to adopt modern marriage practices due to educational development, interaction with non-tribal communities, exposure to modern lifestyles and changing social values.

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The change in attitude is due to the impact of education, communication facilities and growing interaction with neighboring non-tribal societies. The younger generation is learning about different marriage systems and social customs, and this is slowly influencing their traditional views.

VIII. FINDINGS

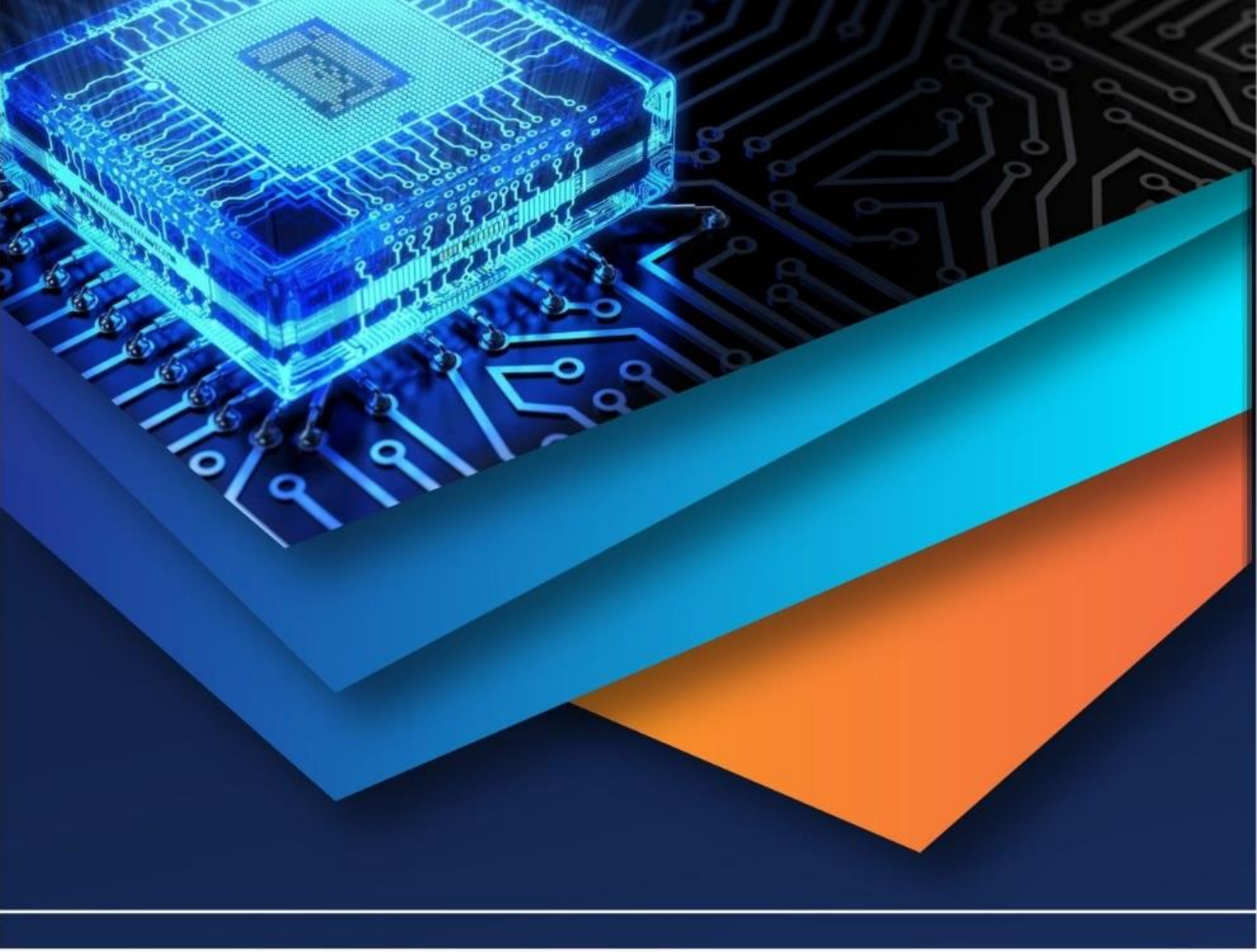
As found in the study, the process of modernization has gradually affected the traditional family structure and pattern of marriages of the Chuktia Bhunjia community of Nuapada district of Odisha. In terms of family structure, 53% of respondents live in nuclear families, 28% live in joint families, and 19% live in extended families. Nuclear families are more prevalent among the younger age group (20-30 years), while joint families are comparatively more prevalent among respondents who are 40 years or above. Thus, there is a clear trend that is changing the traditional family structures from joint and extended families to nuclear families. Likewise, there is a change in the pattern of marriage in the community in terms of late marriage, preferred by 59%, early marriage by 22% and no preference about marriage by 19%. The growing trend of late marriage can be seen among younger respondents and is due to education, interactions with other groups and modern social values. In addition, the study has emphasized changes in perception towards traditional marriage practices from one generation to another. Around 55 percent of the respondents like the mixture of traditional and modern marriage practices, while 26 percent of the respondents like the continuation of the traditional marriage practices and 19 percent prefer modern marriage practices. The younger generation is found to accept the modern marriage practices, while the older generation is more attached to the traditional practices and rituals. This is because of changes in education, interaction with the neighboring non-tribal population, change in lifestyle and awareness level of the people. But the traditional marriage practices and culture still hold their value among the community members.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

Moreover, this research has been highlighting the difference in the attitude of the different generations regarding the traditional marriage practices. 55 per cent of the total respondents approve the combination of the traditional and modern practices of marriage, while 26 percent of the respondents appreciate the continuation of the traditional marriage practices and 19 percent prefer the modern marriage practices. It is found that the younger generation prefers the modern marriage practices, whereas the older generation is fond of the traditional marriage practices and rituals. This is because there has been change in the education, interaction with the neighboring communities who are not tribal, the lifestyle of the people and their awareness level.

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