

JUANGA:

Location (Major): Keonjhar, Dhenkanal

Language: Juang (Mundari)

Population: 47095



Major Festivals & Rituals: Pus Punei, Amba-Nua, Tirtia, Pirh Puja, Dhan Nua

The Juang is one of the primitive tribal groups of Odisha. The word 'Juang' means "Sons of Man". In the past, they were being called Pattuas for wearing leaves. The community can broadly be divided into two sections, namely the Hill Juang and Plain Juang. The Hill Juang is confined to the hill ranges of Keonjhar and Pallahara, whereas the Plain Juang is distributed among the plains of Dhenkanal and Keonjhar districts. The Hill Juang is still in a primitive stage, subsisting mainly on shifting cultivation, whereas the Juang of the plains have taken to settled agriculture. The Juang claim the Juang Pirh of Keonjhar district as their homeland. Those who live in this area are known as Thaniya (original settlers), while those who have migrated to the plains of Keonjhar and Dhenkanal districts are called Bhagudia (those who have fled away). The Juang believe that they are the first human beings to be born on earth. Their ancestors were born from a Rusi couple (a saint and his spouse) who were living in Rusi Tangar, a hillock near Gonasika in Keonjhar district. The Juang villages are grouped under four pirhs named as Satkhand, Jharkhand, Kathua and Rebena. Each pirh is led by a traditional tribal chief designated as sardar. Another important feature of the Juang society is their traditional youth dormitory, majang or mandaghar. The unmarried boys and girls become members of this institution. Boys and girls together sing, dance and make merry in moonlit nights in front of majang. The majang, a rectangular house standing conspicuously in the centre of the village serves as a community house for the youth, court house for the elders - barabhai, guest house for visitors, cooperative store for storage of common grains place for keeping musical instruments, a venue for communal rituals, cultural centre for dance and music and a museum of Juang art and craft. The other distinguishing features of the Juang are their strong kinship organization dividing them into kutum, kins, and bandhu, affines. Most of the Hill Juang villages have uni-clan composition; village exogamy is the rule. Each Juang village is an autonomous socio-political unit managed by a set of traditional leaders and a corporate body of village elders called bhalabhai or barabhai. The village community owns and manages all the productive and useful natural resources like swiddens, forests, grazing land, and habitation sites etc. which lie within their village boundary.