

Location (Major): Rayagada, Kandhaamal, Kalahandi, Koraput

Language: Kui & Kuvi (Dravidian)

Population: 1627486 (as per 2011 census report)

Major festival & Rituals: Ghanta Parab, Chait Parab, Meria / Kedu,  
Dakina, Mandiarani, Korubiha, Dussera



The Kandha is numerically the largest tribe of Odisha distributed in various pockets of southern Odisha forming several endogamous territorial sections, namely, Kutia, Dongria, Desia, Sitha, Nanguli, Jhamia, Pengo, Jharia, Malua etc. with the suffix Kandha. Territorial and exogamous clan groups called Kuda or Bons form each section. They organize themselves into territorial clan groups further subdivided into four functional groups called punja, namely, mondal, bismajhi, jani and pujari. The Kandha villages have linear settlement pattern. Jarkhiri, the altar of their earth goddess, Dharni Penu, lies at the centre of the village street. They have the institution of youth dormitory is called in various names, such as, Dhangda-Dhangdi Basa, Dhangda-Dhangdi-Ghar, Dhanger, Idu etc. The girls' dormitory is one of the interesting institutions to which young boys of the same village cannot enter. Young men from affinal clan villages attend the dormitory late in the evening and leave before dawn. They acquire mates by negotiation, service and bride capture. Levirate and sororate practices are permitted. Bride price is paid in cash and kinds. They follow both burial and cremation practices. Death pollution continues for ten days and purificatory rites are performed on the eleventh day. Dharni Penu- the earth goddess is their supreme deity. Jatrakudithe

village deity, Gungi Penu- the stream deity, Bhima Penu - the mountain god, Lai Penu- the forest god, Sita Penu - the deity of wealth, Birna Penu - the rain god etc. are propitiated by them. They also worship ancestral spirits, ghosts and other benevolent and malevolent spirits and firmly believe in the efficacy of black and white magic. Their mangico-religious activities are conducted by various specialists designated as Jani, Lamba and Pujari, Dishari (the Austro loger), Beju, Bejuni and Kalisi. Sacrifice of buffalo, goats, pigs, pigeons, chicks, cocks etc. is indispensable in Kandha rituals. Their traditional village functionaries are Saanta, Mondal, Jani, Bismajhi and Barik. At the regional level they have Mutha organization headed by Mandal, Majhi or Patro.