



## Majang : The Youth Dormitory of Juang Tribe, its Persistence and Change.

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**Abstract:** The Majang, as an institution of the Juang tribe represents one of the traditional aspects of their culture which is filled with astounded traditional wisdom in the perspective of vernacular architecture. It is a center for all their activities relating to social, economic and cultural spheres. The structural design of Majang and its associated motifs plays a very significant role in guiding the youths to maintain social solidarity and loyalty to their customs and traditions. This present paper explores the dimensions of cultural and architectural importance of youth dormitory and its persistence to the contemporary changing situation of the Juang tribe. It is noteworthy that this particularly vulnerable tribe with special reference to Odisha Province, India has a special role to offer in the context of vernacular architecture. This paper also draws an attention to how effectively they use the available potential resources.

**Keywords:** Majang, Mandaghar(dormitory), Changu(drum),dormitory, change, persistence.

### Introduction:

The Juang with a very few population concentrated in the Gonasika hill range of Keonjhar district of Odisha and categorised under 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribes of India. Tracing their origin from Gonasika hill range confined exclusively to Keonjhar , Dhenkanal , Angul districts of Odisha *Juang* used to wear the leaves of *Sal* trees as their costume and named as Patua (the people with leaf dress) by their neighboring communities. As per 1981 census report out of 30875 total populations 15767 enumerated in Keonjhar, 14573 in Dhenkanal and remaining 835 population found in Cuttack district. The territory inhabited by the Juangs in Keonjhar

district is called *Juangpidha*. Among the hill and plain Juang, the hill Juangs still practicing the uneconomic and primitive agriculture ie shifting cultivation.

Considering Gonasika as their original homeland from where they have originated each Juang village has centrally located dormitory house known as Majang, which serves as community halls and has storage of grains for guests and travellers. Boys in the dormitory show their talents over playing drums and on wood and bamboo. In free time the boys use to make beautifully carved combs out of bamboo and wood, which they gift to their friends and beloved ones.



Map showing the habituation of Juang tribe

### Majang :

Locally known as *Majang*, *Darbar*, *Mandaghar* the youth dormitory of Juang is mono sexual and is meant for the unmarried boys only. Majang has its own uniqueness holding cultural values of Juang and functions as a non-formal educational institute among the community. It serves to the community since their origin with the purpose of non-formal teaching hub in the form of socio cultural norms and values. The genuine artistic talent of the Juangs find expression in construction of their Majang. As per some Museum Anthropologist's point of view now Majang may also called as the Museum of Juang community. The tradition of dormitory among the Juang tribe is in the verge of extinction from some of the areas of Odisha. The community house Majang with its carved wooden pillars, mud walls and beams richly engraved with beautiful animal and human figures

are now have been replaced by simple houses laid with cemented walls.

The Juang dormitory may be considered under several aspects; it is the center of the male social and economic life of the village; it is an organization of the youth of the tribe; it is a school of dancing; it is an expression of the communal art of the people.

The unmarried boys who are the members of the dormitory and sleep there at night are known by the name Kangerki. The unmarried girls are called as Selanki. The group of Kangerki and Selanki called themselves as Bida or Manda. In the past, there was spinsters' dormitory known as Dhangiribasa or Selaninja which is now a days which extinct. It is the place where the men assemble for every important event in their corporate life. Being sacred the place is also deputed where they settle the distribution of area for their yearly



slash and burn cultivation and they take the fire kindle for the first clearing work.

During the stay of the youths in the dormitory they learn many things about their ancestors. While staying in the dormitory the young boys engage themselves in carving out various shapes of birds and animals in order to give them the shape of combs. These combs are gifted by the young boys to their beloved and thus this comb is treated as token of love. These combs are also prepared using bamboo splits. Now days these combs have become a source of meagre income for those Juangs who still make these combs.

**Architecture and designs:**

The place of the Majang/Darbar/Mandaghar in the social life of the village is emphasized by its construction. It is a big comfortable house open all along one side, with a high

Verandha. As per the elderly member's statements a small room adjoining to the verandah of backside enclosed for goats for sacrifice. the making of Majang is a communal work assigned according to age, capability and experiences on the basis of division of labour along the sex line.

While conducting fieldwork out of the six villages the author found the Guptaganga Village as the prime and only place to study the historical background and genuine architectural design of Mjang the youth dormitory of the Juangs. Apart from 11 numbers of supporting pillars at the central point of the house, there is an intensively carved wooden pillar, representing the deity as well as the communal unity of the community . The central pillars carved with Drum, measuring pot and other floral designs makes the dormitory culturally and artistically more attractive.



Photo courtesy: Photo section, IGRMS



**A view of Majang, Tribal habitat, IGRMS,**

The decorative wooden beams of the roof are also carved with elephants, other animals figurines, hunting and dancing scenes of male and female were dully coated with black natural colour for its longevity.

**Associated Myth behind the Origin of Majang:**

According to the Juang mythology *Bhima* and *Kanchumi* (a sage and his wife) had twelve sons and twelve daughters who lived in a single house. As the children grew up, **Rusi**

thought it indecent to sleep with the grown up children in one house. To avoid this disturbance **Rusi** made a plan and made a separate house named *Majang(dormitory)*. And to engage them he made a musical instrument called *Changu* and thus invented the *Changu* dance. The children, every night started dancing with Changu till they were exhausted, and slept quietly in their own house. The Juang origin myth portrays Changu as a key factor leading to the rise of a culturally important social institution-*Majang*. It is believed that the reverberation of Changu in the hills of Gonasika represents the supremacy of the *Kangerki* (unmarried male) in the dormitory while beating it.



Photo courtesy: Photo section, IGRMS, Bhopal

The artefacts displayed inside the dormitory itself speak of its primitiveness and uniqueness. Among the stored and displayed objects the unique circular single membrane drums which are known as Changu plays a vital role in the dormitory. Usually all the musical instruments such as changu,

baida (cylindrical double membrane drum) kept inside the majang where these are hanged from the sambar horns posted in the walls which is a unique feature of Majang. Before the changu and the drums are played these are slightly exposed to dormitory sacred fire in order to tighten the hide. Juangs are also



known for their changu dance which is performed by both male and female in the front of the Majang(dormitory) and in every year round festival . The Juangs have retained the age old technique of producing fire which shows their primitiveness and the respect to the techniques learned from their ancestors.

**Socio-cultural significance of Majang:**

Believed as sacred and connected with the deities, this place is kept as sacred at the centre of the village with the antlers fitted in the walls which narrates the

story of bravery to the youths of their community.

After attaining adolescence the young boys get full membership in the *Majang*(dormitory)& have to perform some rituals during *Aam Nua Parab*(new mango eating festival).During three phases of this ritual, worshiping of Changu by the young boys in dormitory is a significant part. And on the first beat of *drum* the boys start running around the Majang

by making seven rounds to confirm their membership. **Inside view of Majang, Guptaganga village**



**Discussion:**

Customs like burning the sacred fire day and night throughout the year in *Majang* has gradually lost its importance which according to their belief marks their origin and inherit the customs and traditions with associated dormitory songs and dances. As per their sayings making of Majang brings harmony and strength in community participation. The

associated dances and songs that an important characteristic features of the Juang dormitory life reflect the geography of the culture, the values of the culture, and the history of the culture, are losing its importance because of Government interventions. The Majang, as an institution of the Juang tribe represents one of the traditional aspects of their culture which is filled with astounded traditional wisdom in the



perspective of vernacular architecture. It is a centre for all their activities relating to social, economic and cultural spheres. The structural design of Majang and its associated motifs plays a very significant role in guiding the youths to maintain social solidarity and loyalty to their customs and traditions.

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