



## The Role of Weekly Market among the Paudibhuyans of Keonjhar District Odisha

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**Abstract:** The present article is on the role of weekly market among the Paudi Bhuyans of Keonjhar district of Odisha. The need to exchange goods and services is the fundamental function of any society. The exchange of services and goods can be traced from prehistoric times. The market plays the most essential role to sustain the community growth and functionality. The market not only provides the exchange of essential commodities but also an opportunity to produce various artistic manifestations which are marketable and unique to the community. The present study focuses on the organisational pattern of the weekly markets where all the shops were studied to understand the items sold, to understand the market operations which were done to exchange the goods or services, to understand the impact of weekly markets on the tribal economy and the effects of products that were being sold in the market. On the basis of this study, certain measures or approaches like government intervention, proper management of the products under sale or being put on sale, will help in an effective and efficient marketing system in the tribal areas.

**Keywords:** Weekly market, Tribal Economics, Marketing, Globalisation.

**Received :** 17 July 2022

**Revised :** 20 August 2022

**Accepted :** 29 August 2022

**Published :** 23 December 2022

### TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Bhowmick, A. (2022). The Role of Weekly Market among the Paudibhuyans of Keonjhar District Odisha, *Society and Culture Development in India*, 2: 2, pp. 239-246. <https://doi.org/10.47509/SCDI.2022.v02i02.01>

## Introduction

In most of the rural areas of India there are markets which are periodically operational (Behra 2008). They are monthly, bi monthly or weekly. The weekly market is more frequently encountered in comparison to monthly and bi monthly markets. In Banspal block of Keonjhar district there are a few places where weekly markets are in operation among which the Kanjipani weekly market was studied to understand its impact on Paudi Bhuyans residing around the market area. A periodical market may be said as a public gathering of buyers and sellers at an appointed place, and at regular intervals, for the purpose of trading, recreation and doing business under

specified conditions. Such markets are held all over the world; but in a developing country like India they play a significant role in the rural-urban economy, particularly in the backward areas. Keonjhar, being a backward region in Odisha, these markets become much more important for the tribal people living in this area.

In these weekly markets the rural and urban products are bought and sold. The market operations include the barter and other monetary exchange systems. There are also certain socio-cultural aspects which affect the market mechanism in one way or the other. The weekly markets provide some essential commodities such as salt, cloth, vessels, etc. The sale of products brought from urban areas like fancy articles, cosmetics, mill made cloth, etc. are gradually changing the taste of the tribals. The rural-urban cultural interaction in the weekly markets is also changing the standard of living of the villagers of this district. Forest is the common thread in all aspects of tribal life, with specific reference to marriage, livelihood and death. Tribals have a symbiotic and peaceful coexistence with nature.

A sizeable tribal population is still dependent upon the forest and its products. They construct their dwellings with the help of forest-based materials like wood, leaves and grasses. Tribal communities have their own ways of life, cultural identities and customary modes of living. They generally live in remote hill areas in isolation far away from the civilised life. They utilise the forests for meeting their day-to-day needs. They mostly worship their deity whom they identify with their landscape and nature. As a result, they have been socially, economically and politically left behind. This resulted in leading a miserable life in the form of poverty, malnutrition, ignorance and exploitation.

The forest produce can be broadly divided into two categories viz. Major and Minor Forest Produce. Timber yielding trees, ornamental trees and trees used for paper pulp come under the category of Major Forest Produce. The roots, shoots, leaves, fruits, flowers, vegetables, herbs, gum, honey, wax, lac, etc. have been categorised as Minor Forest Produce. The **Non-Timber Forest Product** (NTFP) can also be divided into different categories based on their origin/use. They are medicinal plants, gums and resins, dyes, fibre and flosses, plants yielding edible roots, shoots, flowers, fruits, seeds, etc., honey and wax, fodder and grasses, sal leaves for plate and cup making, lac, etc. The collection and sale of Non-Timber Forest Produce is still the main economic activity for the majority of Paudi Bhuyans. They collect NTFP items from the forest in different seasons in different ways to earn their livelihood. They also depend upon the forest for the collection of medicinal herbs. They hunt small animals, birds, etc., both for domestic use (to satisfy their personal need) and also for sale. These people have also been collecting fuel wood,

and graze their cattle in the forest.

Economic development of the Paudi Bhuyans mostly depends upon the efficient use of forest products. The tribal economy and the forests are closely interrelated. Forest dwellers generally undertake shifting cultivation, and collection of Non-timber Forest Product (NTFP). Traditionally, tribals have enjoyed the right over collection of minor forest produce. This tradition also indicates the symbiotic relationship since pre-historic times. In the beginning the Paudi Bhuyans used to collect the NTFP only for their self-consumption. Subsequently they may have started giving NTFP to the neighboring non-tribal communities in lieu of other things which initiated the barter system of economic transaction. When the Paudi Bhuyans came to know through the local traders about the commercial value of some of the items of NTFP, they began the collection of NTFP not only to meet their domestic requirements but also to earn an income by selling of NTFP to the local traders. In this way the NTFP attracted the attention of the tribals.

The American Marketing Association has defined marketing as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organisational objectives (AMA's definition of marketing 1985). Subsequently, it has been defined as an activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (AMA's definition of marketing 2013; <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/>).

## Objectives

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Keeping the above perspective in mind, the present study tries

- to study the organisational pattern of Kanjipani weekly market;
- to make an intensive study on the market operations of the weekly market;
- to analyse the impact of weekly market on the Paudi Bhuyans economy; and
- to suggest new approaches for the effective and efficient marketing system in the tribal areas.

## Methodology

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The study was conducted to explore the economic functions of the weekly market held in Keonjhar district. The study primarily focused on the people's wants, the way in which they satisfied their wants, the different types of shops that were present in the market, how goods were exchanged in the market and in what way

the social forces acted upon the economic functions. In addition, it was also an enquiry into what people did when they came to the market, whom they met, how many times they visited, what distance they travelled in order to reach the market and whether the infrastructure of the village made any significant change in the life of the people around the market. The methodology adopted for the present study includes schedules, case study, interview, focused group interviews and observation of different aspects of market.

### Organisation of Weekly Market

The weekly market is set up near the Kanjipani police station. At about 6 am all the traders, shop owners start putting up their stalls. There are a total of 56 stalls in the market place that are classified in two broad categories. The divisions can be made on the basis of the nature of construction of the shop, that is, a semi-permanent structure or without any structure at all. The semi-permanent structure is built upon a fixed base that is made up of concrete and the platform is raised above the surface to support the upper structure. Generally, the upper structure is constructed mostly by bamboo and occasionally with iron pipes. All shops used plastic sheets as roofing and for covering of the structure. Mostly the semi-permanent structures were raised by merchants whose articles were costlier and more prone to damage by sunlight and rain, such as clothing articles, grocery items or ornaments. They are generally placed within the raised semi-permanent structures. For items like vegetables, fish and smaller commodities, shops were seldom seen with any kind of structure.

**Table 1: Major Items Sold in the Market**

<i>Shops</i>	<i>Percentage % (of shops)</i>
Clothes	32.2 (18)
Grocery	7.2 (4)
Ornaments	10.7 (6)
Food Items (Vegetables, Fish, Snacks)	21.4 (12)
Utensils and Kitchen appliances	14.3 (8)
Hardware	8.9 (5)
Electronics	5.3(3)
Total	100% (56)

The table above shows that maximum items sold were clothes. Food items were next in order of sale. Utensils and kitchen implements were stocked in appreciable quantity and so were the ornaments.

## Price Mechanism

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The market operations include the study of the barter and monetary exchange systems. The Paudi Bhuyans' economy is definitely influenced from the general Odishan economy and thus the same exchange mechanism is followed except in some of the cases, where the barter is more preferred over the monetary exchange system. Thus, Paudi Bhuyans' price mechanism can be termed as mixed pricing system that has been guided with the general rule of feasibility. The Paudi Bhuyans shift from one pricing system that is from monetary exchange (where the goods are exchanged for money) to barter system (where the goods are exchanged for similar goods). The guiding principal of exchange is solely as per their needs. They are largely in need of rice, which is their staple food. More or less eighty percent of their daily food is rice. This means if we measure the amount of food consumed by Paudi Bhuyans on any day, it will contain eighty per cent of rice (bhata) or rice products and the remaining twenty per cent may be products like pulses, vegetables, etc. Therefore, the primary need of the Paudi Bhuyans is rice and barter exchange is commonly practiced.

## Operations in a Weekly Market

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In a weekly market, a Paudi Bhuyan is a buyer, and not a seller. His main aim is to procure certain necessities such as salt, cloth, kerosene, tobacco, agricultural equipments and the like which are not locally available. For buying these commodities he has to part with certain portion of his produce either home-grown or collected from the forest. Since the infrastructure of the whole Keonjhar district is very feeble, the distance factor and the roads for transportation have set strict limits on the proper marketing of commodities in the weekly markets. Generally, these are agriculture produces like some paddy, minor millets, pulses and oil seeds grown by the villagers and forest produce such as mahua flower, mahua seed and tamarind which have both bulk and weight. These are also supplemented with NTFP. In all the weekly markets, traders enjoy good opportunity to examine their profit. There are also certain socio-cultural aspects which affect the market mechanism in one way or the other. The rural-urban cultural interaction in the weekly markets is also changing the standard of living as rural people are becoming aware of the prevailing prices and modern weights and measures. As a buyer also, the Paudi Bhuyan's position is weak. He has no idea of prevailing prices of the commodities. The merchants know very well that the tribal has no other alternative than to buy from the existing traders and at the same time the tribal also realises that he has little choice.

The outside traders have a detrimental attitude towards the Paudi Bhuyans being ignorant about the weights and measures, prevailing market prices and other market information. As the number of shopkeepers is always small, anyone who displays his commodities for sale enjoys a monopolist like profit. The absence of good competition among the sellers brings in a good opportunity to earn high profit in the weekly market. The illiteracy, ignorance and the urgent requirement of the villagers give full scope to the trader's greed and profitability. There is no middle man between buyer and seller. The sale on credit is very limited in the markets. The weekly markets on the one hand break the monotony of the village life in a social and cultural atmosphere, and on the other hand they give an opportunity to the villagers to sell their produce and purchase the necessary commodities.

The sociological view of market carries two elements to signify the social character of market situation: (a) the individual actor is decisively influenced by social ties, and (b) his/her dependence on social ties is necessary in order to accomplish a given economic goal. Hence, the tribal market system is a social construction that tends to amalgamate barter, exchange, reciprocity and redistribution in order to bring about a universal change (Polyani et al. 1959). Subsequently, the growth and development of society justifies that the expansion of market is an ongoing process; because, for some, the market has never exclusively dealt with business transaction alone but encouraged social communication. They tend to rationalise and legalise the dispositional and social nature of market economy as a congenial process that enhances human interaction and strengthens man-market relationship. For them, market envisages to be more ethno-bounded than merely restricted to business transaction.

### **Conclusion and Remedial Measures**

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The study clearly indicates that there is a scope for development of tribal market in its existing form. In the non-industrialised tribal belt, the tribal market emerges as an important institution for cash generation and economic transaction. These socio-economic institutions contribute considerable amount of revenue to the State exchequer. The Government has taken special measures to improve these market-sites. However, such developmental schemes should be formulated considering the local psyche and necessity of each market. In the local agriculture-based economy, the tribal market is the only outlet for the agricultural surplus and other locally produced goods. These local products are taken out of the region by outside wholesale buyers who exploit the producers to a great extent. Such exploitation also



leads to pauperisation and class formation in the hinterland societies. The outside traders take advantage of the ignorance of the producer towards the prices as well as absence of storing facilities at the markets to exploit the local producers. Therefore, the local producers-sellers of agricultural items have to dispose off their goods on the very day they bring them to the market at low rates.

The outside sellers also charge high rate for their commodities. There is scope for minimising exploitation of the local people by establishing information centers interlinked to a market intelligence network at every rural market. Cold storage facilities for perishable goods would also reduce outside exploitation. Auction facilities with minimum bid price for various commodities for the local produce is necessary at the market site to prevent haggling by the wholesale buyers. These measures would also encourage the local producers to increase their productivity in the hinterland and there is likely to be an increase in the volume of market supplies. Periodic tribal markets are regularly visited by large number of people from a vast hinterland. This offers several advantages added to the mobile service units from various departments (e.g. medical, agriculture, veterinary, industry, education, etc.) which can extend services in the rural areas more widely and effectively.

The market committee is a democratic and secular body constituted by the hinterland people of a market. It is an effective mechanism evolved by the local people to take control over a market which they consider as their own. A market committee also performs varied types of function in a locality. Market related developmental work can be successfully undertaken with the co-operation of a market committee (Polyani et al. 1959). Considering its importance, a market committee may be provided legal status in the Panchayati Raj system to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. The efficient marketing system in a tribal market does not merely link buyers and sellers to interact on trade-ties but also stimulates regional solidarity in a multiethnic area.

Periodic tribal markets in the context of Keonjhar, and for that matter in the whole of Eastern India, are an institution of great social, cultural and economic importance. Since historical times, these have served regional populations in the hills and plains of the region. The study has made it clear that even at the present moment of fast economic change and urban industrial development of the tribal market continues to be a thriving institution. There is no scope for thinking that tribal market would disappear as a consequence of modernisation and economic development of the rural areas. It is for the policy framers and planners to recognise the inherent vitality, efficiency and effectiveness of this age-old institution and augment it further for desirable rural development.

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