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Changing Scenario of Oraon Tribes: Pattern of Transformation in Chatra District of Jharkhand, India

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ABSTRACT

The Oraon tribe, a prominent ethnic group in Jharkhand, India, is distinguished by its unique cultural practices, animistic beliefs, forest-based livelihoods, agrarian economy, Kurukh language, vibrant rituals and festivals. These elements form a strong sense of community and are preserved across generations. However, modern influences such as industrialization, modernization, westernization, sanskritization, and socioeconomic changes have significantly impact their social, economic, political, and cultural life. This study explores the effects of these factors on the cultural transformation of the Oraon tribe. The objectives of this paper are (i) to investigate the factors driving cultural transformation within the Oraon tribe, and (ii) to assess the impacts of modernization and industrialization on social structure and traditions. The research was conducted in Charki Tola, Murwe and Basaria village, located in the Simaria Block of Chatra district of Jharkhand, which is home to approximately 79 Oraon households. A qualitative research approach was employed, utilizing primary anthropological methods such as semi structured schedule, observation, interview and case study. The Oraon tribe is undergoing significant changes in their cultural identity due to internal dynamics and external influences, resulting in transformations in their life and cultural heritage. The Oraon tribe is undergoing significant changes in cultural identity due to modern technology and external influences. Social and cultural shifts are apparent as pressures from dominant cultures, state policies, and external perceptions erode their heritage. To preserve their traditions, initiatives should focus on raising

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awareness and educating the community about their languages, values, and traditions, ensuring future generations stay connected to their heritage.

KEYWORDS

- Oraon tribe
- Transformation
- Industrialization
- Westernization
- Sanskritization
- Socio-economic change

INTRODUCTION

India is a multicultural and multiethnic country and a home to various tribal communities. Tribal communities are an integral part of Indian society. Globally, India has the second-largest tribal population after Africa. Tribals, often referred to as the original inhabitants of India, are found across nearly every state in the country. They exhibit diversity in various aspects, including language, culture, physical characteristics, and ideological practices. According to the Census of 2011, the total tribal population in India was recorded at 104.3 million, accounting for 8.6% of the nation's total population. The country recognizes 705 distinct Scheduled tribes.

The geographical distribution of the tribal population in India reveals significant concentrations in certain regions. The eastern, central, and western belts encompass nine key states such as Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and West Bengal. Additionally, approximately 12% of India's tribal population resides in the northeastern states, while 5% are found in the southern states and 3% live in the northern regions.

Jharkhand, one of the prominent tribal states of India, is home to around 8.6 million tribal people, comprising 8.29% of the nation's total tribal population. The population of the tribe of Jharkhand is 26% of the overall population, based on the Census of 2011. Within the state, there are 32 recognized tribal communities, including nine Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), as highlighted by Minz and Hansda (2010). The remaining tribal groups are categorized as major tribal groups and artisan tribes.

Major Tribal Groups in Jharkhand

The major tribal groups in Jharkhand are notable for their demographic prominence and cultural significance. The Santhal tribe, being the largest, represents 34% of the

tribal population of the state. Their primary habitation is in the Santhal Pargana region, encompassing districts like Giridih, Dumka, Pakur, and Sahebganj. The Oraon tribe follows as the second largest group, accounting for 19.6% of the state's tribal population, with key concentrations in the districts of Lohardaga, Ranchi, and Gumla.

The Munda tribe, the third largest, comprises 14.8% of Jharkhand's tribal population. Their primary settlements are located in Khunti, Ranchi, and West Singhbhum districts. The Ho tribe ranks as the fourth largest tribal community, constituting 10.5% of the tribal population, predominantly found in the Kolhan region, which includes the districts of Seraikela Kharsawan, East Singhbhum, and West Singhbhum. Together, these four tribes account for more than three fourths of Jharkhand's total tribal population, according to Bhatt and Bhargava (2006). The tribes of Jharkhand play an integral role in the country's cultural and social fabric, enriching its diverse heritage across the country.

History of Oraon Tribe

The Oraon people are a Dravidian ethnic group primarily found in the Indian states of Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh. In Maharashtra, they are known as Dhangad or Dhangar. Oraon legends and historical accounts suggest their ancestral homeland is Konkan on the western coast of India. They migrated to Northern India around 800 BC due to over population and external pressures. They settled in Rohtasgarh (present day Bihar) and lived as agriculturists for some time. After leaving Rohtasgarh, the Oraon tribe was divided into distinct groups, with one group possibly migrating separately.

Their native language is Kurukh, which belongs to the Dravidian language family. The Tolong Siki script for the Kurukh language was developed by Narayan Oraon in 1999. The Kurukh Literary Society was established in 2006 to promote the language and culture.

During British colonial rule, many Oraons migrated to tea gardens in Assam, West Bengal, and Bangladesh. They also migrated to countries like Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad, Tobago, and Mauritius, where they were referred to as Hill Coolies. The Oraon community is recognized as a Scheduled tribe under the reservation system in the Indian constitution.

The name 'Oraon' is an eponym given by neighboring Munda tribes, meaning "to roam." However, the tribe refers to themselves as Kurukh or Kurux in their native language. They are also known by other names such as Dhangar (laborers), Kisan (farmers), and Kora (diggers). According to the 2011 Census, the Oraon population in Jharkhand is approximately 1.7 million, with 855,210 males and 861,408 females. The literacy rate among the Oraons in Jharkhand is 56.39%, which is the highest among the tribal communities in the state. According to Oraon legends and traditional accounts, their ancestral homeland is believed to be Konkan on the western coast of India. Scholars such as E. Dalton (1872), P. Dehon (1906), and R.O. Dhan (1967) suggest that the other group referred to as Maler, eventually settled in the Rajmahal hills and also inhabited the Chotanagpur plateau, commonly identified as Oraon.

OBJECTIVES

The primary aims and objectives of this study are as follows:

- a. To examine the factors contributing to the transformation of the Oraon tribe.
- b. To analyze the impact of modernization and industrialization on the social structures and cultural practices of the Oraons.
- c. To explore the changes in language use among the Oraon community and its implications for their identity.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a comprehensive review of existing literature and an in-depth field study. To collect quantitative and qualitative data, a multi-method approach was employed, comprising structured schedules, observation, interviews, and case studies. Following data collection, the information was tabulated and

classified using statistical methods. The findings are presented in a clear and concise manner.

Study Area

The Oraon tribe is one of the major indigenous communities in Jharkhand, primarily residing in Ranchi, Lohardaga, Gumla, Palamu, and Dhanbad districts. Additionally, smaller populations of Oraon can be found in Chatra and Hazaribag districts. This study focuses on three villages of Simaria block in Chatra district: Basaria, Tutilawa, and Murwe. Basaria and Tutilawa are situated on the Simaria-Hazaribagh road (NH-100), approximately 14 km and 11 km away from the Simaria block headquarters, respectively. Murwe is located on the Simaria-Tandwa road, approximately 5 km away from the Simaria block headquarters. The three villages are part of the following administrative setup:

Basaria and Charkitola (Tutilawa): Part of Hurnali Panchayat in Simaria block, which is a subdivision of Chatra district.

Murwe is Part of Kutti Panchayat.

The demographic profile of the three villages is as follows:

1. **Basaria:** This village is inhabited by 29 Oraon families, 1 Ganjhu family, and 3 washer-man families. According to one of the respondents, 41 year-old Maino Tirky, an assistant teacher at Basaria Primary School, the non-tribal families have been living in the village settled by their ancestors (Oraon).
2. **Tutilawa:** Charki Tola, a subset of Tutilawa, is an exclusively Oraon settlement comprising 14 families. Other Tolas in the village include Bhuiyan Tola, Pandey Tola, Yadav Tola, Kishnu Toli, Kendua, Chatar, Thakur Tola, and Badhai Tola.
3. **Murwe:** This village is inhabited by 32 Oraon families.

Selection of Studied Villages

The three villages were selected for this study due to their unique characteristics and advantages, including:

- a. Geographic proximity to non-tribal communities, enabling interaction and exchange.
- b. Representation of the Oraon community traditional lifestyle, cultural practices, and social norms.

- c. Accessibility and feasibility of conducting fieldwork, ensuring ease of data collection and observation

A review of relevant literature by various authors provides a conceptual framework for the research topic, helping to establish its significance and relevance. It ensures to identify key research trends in cultural change and transformation among the Oraons and other tribes that can contribute meaningfully to the existing knowledge. Several scholars have contributed significantly to the understanding of the oraon's cultural dynamics.

S.C. Roy (1928) puts light on religion and customs of the Oraon tribe in detail. He examined religious beliefs and customs of the Oraons, without any prejudice and passion. He has critically analysed how much of such beliefs and customs belong to the original Oraon traditions and how much borrow from the Mundas and Hindu. L.P. Vidyarthi and B. K. Rai (1976) described the transformation occurring within various tribal organizations in India, including social, political, economic and religious organizations. Their work also dedicates a chapter on cultural change, 'Cultural Change in Tribes of India'. K.N. Sahay (2021) has discussed the influence of Hinduism on the Oraon tribes in the lens of M.N. Srinivas's concept of sanskritization.

Sahay (2021), in his book 'Dynamics and Dimensions of Tribal Societies', emphasizes how tribal cultures undergo changes due to contact with neighbouring Hindus communities. S.K. Chatterjee (2010) focuses on language shifts among the Oraon and other tribes in his article 'Tribal Language'. Mukul Bara (2023) elaborates different aspects of life of Oraon of Jharkhand in his ethnographic study. V.K. Srivastava (2010) has been focused on Hinduisation of tribal communities in his working paper "Socio-economic Characteristics of Tribal Communities That Call Themselves Hindu". Urmila Kumari (2024) explains the impact of industrialization, urbanization and modernization on art and culture of the Oraon community.

OBSERVATION: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

A comprehensive demographic profile was compiled through door-to-door surveys and interviews, using a semi-structured schedule to gather information on population size, education, marriage, occupation, family structure, and clan membership. The subsequent tables illustrate the characteristics pertaining to the demographic profile outlined above.

Table 1: Age Sex Composition

Village	Age Group										Total		G. Total
	0-5		6-10		11-17		18-40		41+		M	F	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
Charki Tola	4	10	3	6	10	13	29	20	11	8	57	47	104
Murwe	9	5	7	8	16	16	38	37	8	6	78	72	150
Basaria	8	8	10	8	8	9	46	44	16	15	88	85	173
Total	21	23	20	23	34	28	113	101	35	29	223	204	427
%	4.92	5.39	4.68	5.39	7.96	6.56	26.46	23.65	8.20	6.79	59.22	47.78	100

Table 1, reveals the demographic characteristics of field area. There are the two villages and a Tola studied in Simaria block of chatra district. The total no. of families lived in these villages and Tola are 79, having total population 427 (223 males and 204 females). There are 14 families lived in Charkitola, 33 families in Basaria and 32 families in village Murwe. There are 4.92% male and 5.39%

females in age group of 0-5, while 4.68% male and 5.39% females are in the age group of 6-10. Further, 7.96% male and 6.56% females are in age groups of 11-17. Similarly, 26.46% male and 25.65% females are in the 18-40 age group. In contrast, 8.2% males and 6.79% females fall into the age group of 41 and above. This table also reveals that the male population is little more than the female population.

Table 2: Marital Status

Village	Unmarried		Married		Divorced/ Separated		Widow/ Widower		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Charki Tola	30	22	22	22	-	-	3	5	57	47
Murwe	48	38	30	30	-	-	4	-	79	72
Basaria	46	40	38	38	1	-	7	3	88	85
Total	124	100	90	90	1	-	14	8	223	204
%	29.04	23.42	21.08	21.08	0.23	-	3.28	1.87	52.22	47.78

Table 2, reflects the marital status of the field area. There are 29.04% male and 23.42% female unmarried. One male is separated as his wife left him. There are 21.08% male and same

member of females are married in different age group. There are 3.28% widow and 1.87% widower also observed in the field area

Table 3: Educational Status

Village	Illiterate		Primary		Middle		Secondary		Higher Secondary		Graduate		Post Graduate		Total		G. Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Charki Tola	9	22	15	12	13	8	5	-	9	5	5	-	1	-	57	47	104
Murwe	20	23	21	14	9	13	6	5	9	5	13	12	-	-	78	72	150
Basaria	18	25	19	18	11	9	8	6	22	17	8	8	2	2	88	85	173
Total	47	70	55	44	33	30	19	11	40	27	26	20	3	2	223	204	427
%	11.01	16.39	12.88	10.30	7.72	7.04	4.45	2.58	9.37	6.32	6.09	4.68	0.70	0.47	52.22	47.78	100

Table 3, demonstrates the educational status of the area. There are 11.01% male and 16.39% females of different age groups are illiterate. At primary level, there are 12.88% male and 10.30% of females are educated. Similarly, 7.72% male and 7.04% female at middle

school level, 4.45% male and 2.58% female at secondary level, 9.37% male and 6.32% female at higher secondary level, 6.05% male and 4.68% female at graduate level and only 0.7%. male and 0.47% female have been found educated at the postgraduate level.

Table 4: Occupational Status

Village	Students		Farming		Labour		Service		Others (Kids, Driver, Business, Aanganwa etc.)		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Charki tola	17	13	16	10	8	2	3	2	13	20	57	47
Murwe	29	32	13	20	8	-	6	1	22	19	78	72
Basaria	29	26	26	23	3	1	10	3	20	32	88	85
Total	75	71	55	53	19	3	19	6	55	71	223	204
%	17.56	16.63	12.88	12.41	4.45	0.70	4.45	1.41	12.88	16.63	52.22	47.78

Table 4, illustrates the occupational status of the villages. 17.56% male and 16.63% females are studying at different level in different age group. 12.88% male

and 12.41% female, almost equally, are engaged in agriculture. 4.45% male and 0.7% female are employed in government institutions, most of the men are serving

in Jharkhand Police, while women are working as Para teacher, Anganwadi sevika and engaged in women self-help groups. Some of the villagers are engaged in other occupation such as males are engaged as Driver or Khalasi and Business.

Table 5: Number of Families Based on Clan (Gotra)

Clan	No. of Families	Percentage %
Xakxo	12	15.19
Kujur	18	22.78
Lakra	3	3.80
Tigga	8	10.13
Kispotta	5	6.33
Toppo	12	15.19
Panna	13	16.46
Tirki	2	2.53
Linda	2	2.53
Non-Tribe	4	5.06
Total	79	100

The *Kujur* is the largest clan group in these three villages, comprising 22.78% families, whereas only 2.53% families belong to *Tirki* and *Linda* clan. Non-tribe accounts for 4 families, representing 5.06% of the total families. For better understanding table 5 may be consulted.

Table 6: Types of Family

Types of Family	No. of Families	Percentage %
Nuclear Family	61	77.22
Joint Family	18	22.78
Total	79	100

It is clear from Table 6, that out of total number of 79 families, there are 77.22% of families are predominant nuclear families. Joint families make up 22.78% of the total number of families. This suggests a trend towards smaller, nuclear family structures in the studied of Oraon population.

DISCUSSION

The findings are obtained from the analysis of the above table, case studies and review of literature, are as follows:

Village Settlement and House Type

The Oraon tribes, like other tribal communities, live in group settlements, referred to as *Gaon*,

Tola, or Villages. During the researcher's visit to Charki Tola, Murwe and Basaria villages, it was observed that all three villages are situated on upland area, with agricultural fields located in the low lying area.

The houses within the villages are clustered together in a seemingly disorganized manner, with multiple pathways leading in and out of the villages. Each village features a main street constructed from cement and concrete, approximately 10-12 feet wide, while internal pathways are narrower (6-8) feet and not concrete. Although a systematic drainage system is lacking, the roads are neat and clean. Furthermore, the main street is connected to national highways.

The majority of houses of Oraon in the villages are constructed from mud, wooden beam and bamboos, with rooftops covered with tiles (*khapra*). In addition to these traditional houses, a few modern houses made of bricks, cement, and concrete can also be seen.

Typically, Oraon houses feature a veranda and at least three rooms, along with a courtyard (*Aangan*). A separate cattle shed is used for rearing goats, cows, oxen and hen, and nearly a small garden (*Bari*) where vegetables are grown. The surrounding areas of the houses are well maintained and clean.

During an interview, three respondents Vijay Oraon (55) from Charki Tola, Basudev Oraon (56) from Murwe and Tajo Devi (80) from Basaria village, shared with the researcher that they lack of sufficient financial resources to construct concrete pucca houses. Mud and other natural materials required for building traditional houses are readily available in the surrounding areas. As a result, they prefer to live in mud houses, which they find more comfortable during both winter and summer seasons compared to concrete pucca houses.

Social Structure and Institution

Family

The Oraon tribe typically follows a nuclear family pattern. But during the survey, it was found that Charki Tola has 9 joint families and only 5 nuclear families. Similarly, in Murwe village, all 32 families are nuclear families, while in Basaria there are 24 nuclear families and only 9 joint families. Thus, out of a total of 79 families in the three villages, only 22.78% are joint families. However, it's not uncommon

for married children to remain living with their parents. In such cases, a separate dwelling is often constructed for the married children, usually adjacent to the family home. On the basis of power, all families represent patriarchal families.

Clan

In all tribal societies, the system of *Clan* or *Gotra* is also found. The Oraons are also divided into a number of *Clans* or *Gotras*. In the villages studied, the clans are named after animals, birds, fish, plants, trees, minerals, etc., which are related to their totems. Totems are considered sacred, and therefore, it is forbidden to eat, kill, or destroy them. Out of the 79 families in the three villages, 2.88% are of 'Kujur' gotra, while 16.46% families are of 'Panna' gotra, and 15.19% each are of 'Khalkho' and 'Toppo' gotras. The least common gotras are 'Linda' and 'Tirki', with only 2.53% families each. Additionally, out of the 79 families, 5.06% are non-tribal families.

Economic Organization

Traditionally, the Oraon community has been dependent on agriculture, fishing, hunting, and collecting forest products like kendu, mahua-fruits and flowers for their livelihood. Currently, the three villages represent a stable, agriculture based economy. The vanishing forests and the prohibition on hunting have reduced their importance to merely symbolic. According to Raghu Oraon (age 52), the head of the Oraon community in Murwe village, and Balku Oraon (age 68), the head of the Oraon community in Basaria village, there were three types of 'Akhet' (traditional festivals) celebrated in Oraon Tribes: 1. Fagu Sendra, Falgun (Feb-March), 2. Vishu Sendra, Chait (April-May), 3. Jeth Sendra, Jeth (May-June).

These festivals were an integral part of their cultural heritage and daily life. Although their significance has diminished over time, they are still celebrated according to their rituals. All religious rites are performed by Pahan in Fagu Sendra. Agriculture is now the primary occupation of the Oraon community. Paddy is the main crop, but they have started cultivating vegetables like cauliflower, cabbage, tomatoes, bell peppers, peas, onions, and garlic to generate cash income. Vidyarhi L. P., Rai B. K. (1976) observed that emergence of a commercial aptitude is directly reflected in their produce like potatoes, green vegetables,

etc. Tribals have developed new potato and vegetable varieties to cope with the rising demand of industrial and urban centers in their neighbourhood. They use a combination of traditional tools like plough, bullocks, and spade, as well as modern equipment like tractors and pumps, for agricultural work. The three villages lack modern irrigation facilities and rely on traditional sources like wells and ponds for irrigation. But these dry up in the summers.

Some people also work as labourers. Prakash Oraon, 33 years old, who works as a mason, told that since basic needs are not fulfilled by agriculture, people around him work as a labourer. Out of total 427, only 5.15% people work as labourers. As educational opportunities increased, their aspirations for government employment intensified. Total 5.86% of people are in government jobs. Some of them are teachers, and mostly of them are in Jharkhand Police, one or two are in the army. Women are contributing in Anganwadi, educational institutions and health services. Thus, some positive changes are also visible. Kajal Panna, age 24 years, a post graduate in anthropology who lives in Basaria, tells that *with the expansion of education, the number of graduates is increasing and they are preparing for various competitive examinations after studies. She herself is also preparing for NET.* Thus, many good changes are visible in their economic life.

Political Organization

The Oraon's traditional system of governance is known as Padha Panchyat System. This system was divided into three tiers: 1. Gram Panchayat (Village Council), 2. Padha Panchayat (Cluster Council) and 3. Inter-Padha Panchyat (Inter-Cluster Council). The Gram Panchyat consisted of key members:

1. **Mahto:** The hereditary head of the Panchyat, responsible for administrative duty.
2. **Pahan:** The village priest, responsible for performing religious rites and rituals.
3. **Bhandari:** The messenger.
4. **Panbhara:** The presiding officer, responsible for arranging meetings and meal on the day of the meeting.
5. **Kotwar:** The village ambassador, responsible for conveying messages from the *Padha Raja* to village and neighboring village.

The head of the *Padha Panchyat* is called *Padha Diwan*. All disputes and problems were short out at the village Panchyat level. In cases where disputes or issues couldn't be resolved at the local level, they were escalated to the *Padha Panchayat*. If the *Padha Panchayat* was too unable to resolve the matter, it was then referred to the *Inter-Padha Panchyat*.

The *Padha Raja* and *Deewan* were prohibited from interfering in any cases without the explicit permission of the *Mahto*. In instances where guilt was established, penalties were imposed, ranging from monetary fines for minor offences to more severe punishments, such as expulsion or social boycott etc.

But the modern Panchayati system is weakening the power of its traditional political institutions. Although at the local level people solve their small problems in traditional Panchayats, but at the larger level the importance of *Padha* like institutions is decreasing, as told by Murwe resident Ruju Oraon, 52 years old, the headman of the Oraon community. Children of the present generation are unaware of *Padha* institutions. Governmental administrative system and modern Panchayati system disrupted the traditional administrative system or governance system of Oraon at great extent. Consequently, the traditional political system has largely been dismantled in these villages. Ember and Ember, Peregrine (2021) suggested that perhaps the most striking type of political change in recent years is the spread of participatory forms of government "democracy".

Religious Belief and Practices

The Oraons follow the Sarna religion. Sarnaism centers on nature worship and a monotheistic belief in *Dharmes*, the supreme God, revered as the creator, sustainer, and ruler of the universe. Prayers and sacrifices are offered to seek *Dharmes* blessings during important occasions. The Oraons also honor ancestral (*pachbalar*) and other spirits (*nad*). The highest divinity recognized by the Oraon is *Dharmes* or the supreme being, the creator of the universe, who is placed in a class, apart. Similarly the spirits of dead ancestors known as '*Pachbalar*' (plural of '*Pachbal*') are placed by the Oraon in a separate class themselves (Roy, S.C., 1928). Benevolent spirits are venerated by priests (*Pahans*), while sorcerers address malevolent

ones. These practices aim to ensure well-being, prosperity, and harmony with *Dharmes*, ancestors, spirits, nature, and humanity.

Worship involves natural objects like rice, *sal leaves*, *rice beer*, and sacrificial animals. Without written scriptures or designated worship places, traditions and myths are passed orally, and any natural environment serves as a sacred space, reflecting their deep connection to nature. The Oraons believe ancestral spirits (*pachbalar*) reside in the family's inner shrine and remain connected to their descendants, ensuring their welfare, unity, and prosperity. These spirits are invoked during festivals like *sarhul*, *karma*, and *nawakhani*, with offerings and prayers led by the family head. They are seen as protectors who bless the family, children, homes, and cattle, maintaining harmony and shielding them from harm.

In the village, spirits are located in various areas and have different levels of importance. The most significant is *Chal Pachcho* (old lady of the grove), who resides in a *sal* tree grove and receives sacrifices. Other important spirits include *Pat*, the protector of the village; *Darha*, the guardian spirit; *Chandi*, related to war and hunting; and female spirits like *Achrael* and *Joda*, which protect female children. *Baranda* guards individual households, and *Goensali Nad* protects cattle. These spirits are generally considered benevolent, while malevolent spirits such as *Churrael* and others are feared and not typically offered sacrifices. The Oraon community religious rituals are intricately linked with their economic activities. Saheb Oraon a *panbhora* (Assistant of *Pahan*) of the Oraon village elaborates that their religious rituals are deeply intertwined with various stages of the agricultural cycle. These rituals are performed both individually and collectively to honour their ancestor's spirits to ensure a bountiful harvest and to maintain harmony with nature. He explains that they perform individual rituals offering *mahua* and *rice beer* to their ancestor spirits before sowing paddy seeds at the first stage. At the second stage, during transplantation of paddy crops *Pahan* is invited to the fields, where he sacrifices a red rooster and offers *rice* and *mahua beer* to the Mother Earth and pray various spirits and deities for good rain and plentiful agricultural production. After that he plants five paddy sprout in paddy field, then women start the usual transplantation. This ritual is

called Hariari, celebrated collectively and it conclude with community feast and drinking of rice beer. This festival is taken place in June-July. The final agricultural ritual takes place during the harvesting of crops in November-December. At this stage, the Oraon community comes together to celebrate the successful harvest and to express their gratitude to their ancestor spirits and deities. This collective ritual involves the sacrifices of red rooster and offering of mahua and rice beer in mander. This celebration of harvesting is also known as *Nawakhani*. A community feast and drinking of rice beer organized on this occasion.

It is clear from the field visit that at present all Oraons follow their traditional *Sarna* religion, worship their supreme deity '*Dharmash*' and other god and goddess, but due to close interaction with Hindus, they have now started worshipping Hindu god-goddess and celebrating their festivals as well. They celebrate Holi, Ramnavmi, Durga puja, and Deepawali. They also worship Lord Shiva and celebrate all Hindu festivals by neighbouring Hindus. They accepted the concept that their cattle are *Lakshmi*, like Hindus. According to Pahan, Rambadan Oraon, 58 years, village Murwe, "*We all are Sanatani, We believe in Sanatan Dharma only. Although our customs, rituals and traditions are somewhat different, many of them are similar*". They celebrate all of their festivals every year and believe in supernatural powers, black magic and white magic according to their tradition, but their attitude towards Hinduism is positive. This attitude is reflected from the fact that an Oraon on enquiry about his religious affiliation says that he is a Hindu. The majority, if not all responses, will be similar (Sahay K. N., 2021).

Linguistic Characteristics and their Culture

Linguistically and culturally, the Oraons are known for their folk songs, folk dances, and amazing traditions and rituals. Kurukh is their spoken language, which belongs to the Dravidian language group.

But during the field visit, it was found that most of the children and young people of new generation have forgotten their language. Perhaps the primary reason for this trend is that Hindi is the medium of education. Consequently, people tend to communicate in Hindi even at home. Due to their Close proximity to non-tribal communities, they

have become more comfortable with other local language such as Sadri (a mixed dialect of Magahi, Khortha, and Nagpuri). There is no literary life among the Oraons, and in spite of their number they as well as Kandhs and the Maler people who speak Malto are gradually merging with the Aryan-speaking peoples, by accepting their languages (Chaterji, S. K., 2010). Sumit Panna (21), a third-semester undergraduate student, told the researcher that his mother, an assistant teacher, cannot speak Kurukh, despite being able to understand it somewhat. He wanders, 'How can we learn if our own parents are unable to speak it?' The decline of the Kurukh language has far reaching consequences for the cultural heritage of its community. Alarming, the younger generation is gradually shifting its preference from traditional musical instruments, folk song, and folk-dance forms to modern musical instruments, Nagpuri and Bhojpuri dance during festive celebrations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this study, it can be suggested that preserving the unique and rich cultural heritage of the Oraon tribe is essential. Along with development and progress, it is necessary to protect their traditions, customs, language, and cultural heritage. If these fundamental traditions, customs, language, and cultural heritage are not preserved, there is a risk of losing them. However, efforts are being made to teach the Kurukh language in Basaria village. Sohani Panna, (20 year) a student of semester 5 informed that a book on the Kurukh language, written in the Devanagari script, has been distributed in the village to teach the language.

The transmission of traditional knowledge, art and culture to younger generation should be encouraged through cultural centers, festivals, and educational initiatives. Research and documentation of the Oraon tribe's cultural heritage, including their oral traditions, rituals, and customary laws can be helpful to preserve their indigenous culture. Training and skill development programs in areas such as eco-tourism, handicrafts, and small scale industries can help to reduce dependence on traditional livelihoods.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the above thoughts that the Oraon tribe wandered here and there and finally settled in Chhotanagpur, where they engaged in agriculture. They enriched their cultural heritage while living here. Their simple life, religion, deities, traditions, customs, and practices were all part of their cultural heritage.

However, in the present day, due to close contact with non-tribal communities, the spread of education, with special reference to Hindi medium, modernization, industrialization, and advanced means of communication, changes have occurred in various aspects of their life. The Oraon people's traditional livelihoods, based on farming, forestry, and handicrafts, have been significantly affected. Factors like urbanization, industrialization, globalization, and modernization have led to changes in their social-cultural life and economic activities, including wage labour, cash cropping, and migration. This has resulted in shifts in land use, resource management, and the overall socio-economic structure of the Oraon community. Thus several transformations observed in Oraon tribes of the study area. Though most of these changes are positive, some may pose a threat to their cultural heritage.

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