

# Impact of Modernization and Continuity of Oraons of North 24 Parganas, W.B, India: An Anthropological Study

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**Abstract:** Oraons of two localities of North 24 Parganas of West Bengal in India has selected for the study. The Oraons of these areas came from Chatonagpur Plateau of Jharkhand and Bihar. They immigrated to these two localities for various works such as Railway construction, Jungle cutting, etc. by the moneylenders and Landholders and companies. Most probably they came 100 to 150 years ago. During that long time an abundant number of urban cultural traits entire their life. For that ground, a few changes have occurred in their lifestyle. The study was carried out to see how the changes and modifications occur in their Song, festivals and, the myth.

**Keywords:** Oraon, Festival, Song, Dance , Modernization, changes

## INTRODUCTION

The Chotonagpur area of Bihar and it is one of the tribal inhabited lands of eastern India. Agriculture is the most important occupation of the Oraon. Agricultural works are done both by men and women. The most important crop is rice. They are mostly an agricultural community. An Oraon village traditionally consists of 20 to 200 houses. The five characteristics generally had been seen of an Oraon village -*akhra* (a place where young men and women collect to dance in the evening where important matters concerning the village are settled), *bathan* (a place where the cattle are tethered to rest and where people sit and gossip), *sarnd* (the sacred groove), *khali* (threshing ground), and *tusa* (spring). The house is generally is built of the mud of tile or thatch. (Srivastava,prassad, Gupta and Lal, 1971).

Denver (2012) stated that Oraon villages are independent but organized into a loosely related confederacy, called a *parha* for this mutual protection each village sends it headman as its representative to a governing body called *parha panch*. The panchayet a local body of the elders is the arbiter of disputes in the village. The fourteen clans of the Oraon are Bandi, Bek, Ekka, Gari, Kerketta, Khalkho, Kispotta, Kujur, Lakra, Minz, Tirkey, Toppo, and Runda. Oraon commonly uses the clan name as the surname. The Oraon family is patrilineal marriage among the tribe is monogamous. The Oraon strictly follow village and clan exogamy. ( that is they marry only outside their village and clan.). Child marriage is not practiced, but widow marriage is prevalent.

According to Bhatt.S.C and Bhargava Gopal.k (2006), Oraons are ethnically Dravidian and speak Khurukh dialect of Dravidian linguistic family. Oroans also speak Sadani , Hindi and other language. Dharmesh is their supreme ancestors. The Oraons mainly celebrate festivals like Karma, khaddi, Sohrai, Maghe, Fagu etc. The karma festival is celebrated in September especially an Bhado Ekadashi. A branch of karam tree is bought by the unmarried girl with the help of unmarried boys of the village, who are under fasting. The khaddi festival is celebrated in the month of March-April. This festival is celebrated at 'Sarna'place, where fowls are sacrificed by Pahan (priest). Sohrai is celebrated in November on the occasion of Diwali festivals. The cattle are washed and worshiped. Lighting is made at night and people take food and drinks. On this occasion, villagers celebrate Sohrai Jatra. Maghe festival is related to agriculture, which is celebrated in the month of Magh. This festival is celebrated in the form of the start of the New Year and the end of the old year. Fagu is celebrated as the festival of spring in

## **Impact of Modernization and Continuity of Oraons of North 24 Parganas, W.B, India: An Anthropological Study**

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the month of Fulgun (Feb-March). This festival is celebrated for two days. The Oraons go to the forest for games on this occasion and make merry at night to eat and drink with dancing and singing.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Oraons are people who observe or celebrate various festivals irrespective of their life situation. He described that most festivals are seasonal involve the whole village community and are attached densely to agricultural activities. As such they reflect that exists between the tribe, nature and their religious beliefs and practices. He also mentioned in a very recent study that the festivals of Oraon community can be divided into five categories: Hunting festival, Forest festival, Agricultural Festival, Cattle festival, and Socio-religious gathering (Xalxo, 2007)

Singh (1982) stated that the agriculturist tribe Oraons of Chotonagpur has the major festivals connected agricultural operations. At each stage of agricultural operations propitiate their gods and deity to seek their favor as their economy is mainly dependent on agriculture. In the month of *Baisakh* they sow the seeds and celebrate a festival named 'Dhanbhuni' when seeds of paddy germinate and push-out into new shoots, they worshiped 'Hariri'; at the time of transplantation of paddy seedlings. Bangari is celebrated in Asarh; when the rice grain in the month of Bhadra.

The religious feasts and festivals of the Oraons of Chotonagpur in central India are also of importance as an entertaining and joy making part of their religious customs. Oraons seek to ensure safety and prosperity to the village community as a whole at each new stage in the animal cycle of its people's economic pursuits and the feasting and rejoining and social reunion that mark their successful termination. These pursuits are mainly (1) food gathering (2) Hunting festivals connected with cattle and agriculture. Every festival includes appropriate dances, songs, and stories that reflect the mythology of the people. The story attached to the festival explains the beliefs and practices to be adopted by a certain person or a group as also the importance of the sacred performance and the festivals. (Stanley. and Jaya, 1996:53-54).

### **METHODOLOGY**

For the study, several social science methods and techniques have applied. Methodology refers to a theory concerning the entire research proposal including the forms of thought of the research aims and objectives of the research, application of the research methods. "methodology" is also often used in a narrow sense to refer to the methods, techniques or tools for the collection and processing data. But in broader sense methods and techniques are one of the components of methodology. Finally, the methodology may be called to designate all the components and procedures employed in the analysis data, however, collected to arrive at conclusion. (Jha, 2007).

Some of the following important field methods and techniques have been applied in the study. To set the data from the study area those techniques were applied which always uses by research scholars in social sciences including Anthropology. To collect information on festivals the 'interview, case study, observation method were applied.

### **DISCUSSION AND RESULT**

1. The typical five characteristics of the Oraon tribe were not seen in the present study area. 'Bathan' and 'Akhra' are absent. Similarly, no separate ground for the girls in dancing was detected which were seen in traditional Oraon society. No dance-oriented ground has seen in the villages. There is no evidence of chief weapons like bow and the spear slightly curved throwing clubs detected; as said by Dixon in 1916. Metalworking and pottery making are not observed. Dixon (1916) wrote in his review paper that the 'Oraons' are divided into sixty or more exogamic clans, named after animals and plants. Though the present

## Impact of Modernization and Continuity of Oraons of North 24 Parganas, W.B, India: An Anthropological Study

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research detected only eight clans and these are named after animals and plants as at was the traditional clan. It is very interesting to note that the villagers of the study area are not yet been concerned with the concept of clan-ancestor and *phratry* groupings; as said by previous scholars although the study has shown the descent has followed to the male line. So, therefore the totem of the present study has no quiet strict forces relating taboo to the members of a clan has been observed.

2. The Oraons of the present study areas cremates their dead. It is taboo cremate a dead body while the crops are still in the fields traditionally but at present as such practice has not been observed. No dead body is temporarily buried and is cremated after the harvest is over. Presently they cremate the dead through burning ghaat as like Hindu. The traditional *Dhumkuria* institution is not seen here. The data from the field support that the villagers are not concerned with the concept of Dharmes but they believe supreme power name Sun or *Surjahi*. It is a Sadani language, means Sun (English) and in Bengali word 'Surja'.
3. Oraon has no written documents of myth and tales. Tradition and Everything is been handed down from generation to generation orally. As a result, the villagers have a lot of freedom to improvise and make the new story alive. It is observed that the purity and essence of the newborn story remain unchanged, but the freedom of the narrator in improvising the story brings changes in the storyline only. The stories have handed down in various modes of the communication system. But the notable fact that the printed documents of myth related stories has now been found. An important fact has investigated that they represent themselves as a reverent of Lord Rama. Thus, important modifications and changes have been recognized and that they separated themselves from the monkey in their traditional beliefs due to agriculture because a monkey could not cultivate the land.
4. The present study deciphered that the villagers of 'Urban Oraon' celebrate two major parts of festival i.e. Ideal type and Modern type. The 'Ideal type' refers to the traditional festivals and the 'Modern festivals' means which are borrowed from the larger society. The traditional or ideal type festivals are Kharian, Dangri, Veloafari, Sahrul, Sohrai, Murgipaithya, Maghe basi, and Karam, these are the basic local terminology. The Modern festival refers to the worship of Durga puja, Kali Puja, Jagadhatri Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Sitala, and Sarawasti. The study also intends to draw that the festivals may be divided into three categories i.e. 1) Family 2) Clan and 3) Community: it is based on the structural-functional approaches. It was observed that the traditional festivals namely Veloafari, Lakshmi Puja are accepted to the villagers as 'Family' festivals. They practice family festivals to maintain the structural & functional continuity into the family level; as seen as other societies. For these reasons, they have tried to include 'Lakshmi Puja' (Hindu goddess of fortune and prosperity) in their family level. Maghebasi puja is a 'Clan festival'. "Karam" is the elegant, greatest and popular festival and it has regarded unanimously as a 'Community' festival to them. Therefore, the case of every category of the festivals of 'Urban Oraon' are found to worship consequently with two nature of festivals (i.e. Ideal & Modern type). The present study has detected that in every Oraon courtyard a "Tulsi - Pots" has kept. In Oraon tradition basically "tulsi-pot" was not kept. It is the new ritualistic approach which is now carrying by 'Oraons' of urban localities.
5. Tulsi plant (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*) is regarded as very sacred to 'Oraon' Community. It is believed to be the abode of Lord Vishnu. Tulsi is always used in the worship of Vishnu. Hindus keep tulsi pots in front of their homes. After taking a bath, the plant is offered water (Joshi & Dinkar, 2006 P-9). In the opinion of the villagers, the 'parab' means the celebration of festivals where all the people of 'Oraon' clans meet together and everyone takes responsibility with the share of monetary support. The 'parab' is celebrated through the scheduled time table. They said 'Karam', Maythan, Maa puja are regarded as 'Parab'. They think that "Karam" as highly as Durga Puja and it is accepted as a 'National festival. Family festivals are usually worshiped in their own house. Clan festivals are celebrated only among the members of the same clan. It has been

## Impact of Modernization and Continuity of Oraons of North 24 Parganas, W.B, India: An Anthropological Study

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observed that the 'Oraons' invite the local people. The study states that -1) traditional structural -continuity is controlled by the light of modernity. 2) It is more significant than people of the present study do not obliterate their traditional entity or genuineness. 3) They try to make a relation between migrated "Urban Oraon" and 'Oraons' origin of nativity or cradle house 4) a peaceful or amicable co-operation with larger people (other ethnic groups) of their neighbors is seen. 5) The solicitation for the new young generation that traditional cultural reality is more important to a beautiful Oraon life itself as well as modern.

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## Impact of Modernization and Continuity of Oraons of North 24 Parganas, W.B, India: An Anthropological Study

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**Citation: Chinmay Biswas.** *“Impact of Modernization and Continuity of Oraons of North 24 Parganas, W.B, India: An Anthropological Study”.* American Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, vol 6, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1-5.

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