

Ethnographic Study of Oraon Tribe of Lodhma Village, Jharkhand

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Abstract: The Oraon tribe is one of the major tribe of Jharkhand. They have unique cultural traits and tradition and belong to the Dravidian language family. They are mostly concentrated in districts of Ranchi, Gumla, Lohardaga, Latehar, Palamu, Garhwa, Haxaribagh, Dhanbad, Santhal Pargana and Singhbhum in the state of Jharkhand. They are known by different names such as Kurukh, Dhangars, Kisan, Kora in different states of India. As per the Census-2011, their population in the state is 1,716,618 consisting of male 855,210 male and 861,408 females. The literacy rate among the Oraon tribe is 56.39 percent which is highest in Jharkhand. Due to advancement of communication, modernization, globalization, industrialization, and other factors the Oraon culture is slowly changing. The study concentrates on the influences of modern factors and how the culture and tradition of Oraon tribe is changing.

Key words: Scheduled Tribe, Oraon Tribe, Socio-cultural Change, Adivasi, Ranchi Region

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I. INTRODUCTION

India is multicultural and multiethnic country and a home of various tribal communities. Tribal communities are the integral part of Indian society. At present, India has the second largest tribal population in the world, next to Africa. They are identified as the original inhabitants of our country and are found in almost every state of India. They vary among themselves in respect of dialect, culture, physical features, ideology, and so on. According to Census-2011, the tribal population in India is 10.43 crore, constituting 8.6% of the total population, and the number of individual groups notified as Scheduled tribes is about 705 (Census of India, 2011). The tribal population is spread all over the country but mainly they are concentrated in the eastern, central and western belt covering the nine States of Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. About 12 percent inhabit the North-eastern region, about five percent in the Southern region and about three percent in the Northern States (Xaxa, 2014).

The state of Jharkhand is primarily known as tribal state because it has a large proportion of tribal communities. It is home to tribal population of 8.6 million from 32 tribes, having 8.29 percent of the country's tribal population which comprises over 26 percent of the state population (Census of India, 2011). As per details in the state government's website, the number of individual groups notified as tribal communities is 32. Of these 9 are declared as Primitive tribal groups (Minz & Hansda, 2010).

Out of the thirty-two (32) notified tribes, Santhal is the largest tribe constituting about 34 percent and are mostly concentrated in the Santhal Pargana region, the districts located in the north eastern part of the state. They primarily reside in the district of Giridih, Dumka, Pakur and Sahebganj. Oraon, Munda and Ho, the 2nd, 3rd and the 4th largest tribes constitute 19.6 percent, 14.8 percent and 10.5 percent respectively. The Oraons are concentrated in Lohardaga, Ranchi and Gumla districts. Munda mainly live in the district of Khunti, Ranchi, and West Singhbhum, whereas Ho is mostly concentrated in Kolhan region i.e. (Seraikela Kjarsawam, East and West Singhbhum). These four major tribes constitute more than three fourths of the total tribal population of Jharkhand (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2006).

The nine tribes of Jharkhand fall under primitive tribal Group, they are: Asur, Birhor, Korwa, Savar, Pahariya, Baiga, Mal Pahariya and Souriya Pahariya. Together they account for a population of Just 2.23 lakh as per 2011 census, which is very nominal part of the tribal population. They are relatively more isolated, archaic, vulnerable, deprived and backward compared to other major tribes of Jharkhand.

SHORT HISTORY OF ORAON TRIBE

The Oraon tribe is one of the major tribe of Jharkhand. According to Census-2011, their population in the state is 1,716,618 consisting of male 855,210 male and 861,408 females. As per 2011 Census literacy rate among the Oraon tribe is 56.39 percent which is highest in Jharkhand. According to F. Hahn and W. Crooks

(1917), “they call themselves *Kurux* or *Kurukh*”. It is true because in their own language they are known as *Kurukh*. Some places they are also known by other names too such as *Dhangars* (labourer), *Kisan* (cultivator), *Kora* (digger) and they belong to the Dravidian linguistic group and speak *Kurukh* language (Tirkey, 1989). In late 1999, Narayan Oraon developed *Tolong siki* script for *Kurukh* language and on 14 October 2006 to promote this script ‘Kurukh Literary Society’, was created for the promotion of *Kurukh* language and culture (Singh, 2018).

Prior to Oraons settlement in Chotanagpur, according to the Oraons legends and traditional sources the Konkan is said to be the original home of the Oraons. Many Scholars like E. Dalton (1872), P. Dehon (1906), R. O. Dhan (1967), S. C. Roy (2004), view that because of overpopulation and external pressure they migrated from the west coast of India to northern India travelling through river valleys and reached the Rohtasgarh in Shahabad district of Bihar and settled down there as agriculturists, around 800 BC. The life of Oraons in Rohtasgarh has been peaceful and prosperous. Then again they were forced to immigrate from Rohtasgarh to different parts of Chotanagpur and when they left Rohatasgarh the Oraons split up into two groups. The first group who left the place perhaps were the *Berge* or *Berga* Oraon, who occupy the state of Gangpur. Hahn and Crooke (1917, p. 501) view that *they are a savage, fierce-looking people, probably a mixed race who have lived for centuries isolated from their brethren, and now speak a dialect distinct from theirs*. Other groups of Oraons, known as *Male*, are eventually settled in the Rajmahal hills and are also found in the Plateau of Chotanagapur are usually known as Oraons. Besides these the other groups of Oraons such as *Dhangars*, *Koras* and *Kisans* are also found in different parts of the state like Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra (Dalton, 1872, Hahn & Crooke, 1917, Kujur, 1995, Roy, 2004, Shahdeo, 2012).

THE OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

- analyze the Oraons life-style, as a tribal group of Jharkhand
- find out the socio-economic and religious and cultural practices of Oraon tribe and
- examine the socio-cultural and religious and cultural changes that have occurred among Oraon tribe.

II. METHODOLOGY

According to Angrosino (2007), ethnographers search for predictable patterns in the lived human experiences by carefully observing and participating in the lives of those under study and it may also involve a full immersion of the researcher in the day-do-day lives or culture of those under study. For investigation of the research problem, the researcher found that quantitative experimental design alone is not answer researcher questions: what is tribal society like, how tribal communities live, what are their social organization, cultural practices and rituals like, what socio-cultural changes that have occurred among tribal group. Considering the complexity of problem and questions involved in understanding the different aspects of the study, therefore, the researcher adopted ethnography approach.

Furthermore the researcher also found that this method is useful for gathering certain important kinds of observations; in fact, it allows gathering information about human behaviour that it is impossible to obtain by the more quantitative methods” (Wilson, 1977). And finally, the researcher found that ethnography approach is naturalistic in that it *proposes that the indigenous behaviours and meanings of a people can be understood only through a close analysis of natural settings* (Lindlof, 1995, p. 19). Therefore, the researcher has chosen ethnographic methodological approach to explore the research questions.

THE RESEARCH TOOL

For this study data is collected from both primary and secondary sources. According to Angrosino (2007), there are three tools of data collection in ethnography: observation, interviewing and archival research. For the collection of secondary data the researcher has made use of archival research. The researcher has analyzed the existing materials stored for research, service or other purposes officially and unofficially. For the collection of primary data the researcher has made use of mainly two tools participant observation, in-depth interview.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

The principal method of data collection is used by the researcher is in-depth interviewing. However, it is important that interviewing ought to be used in combination with “participant observation”. Therefore the researcher has used both the tools for data collection. In the first phase of the study the researcher observed the Oraon tribe selected for the study. Then a period of eight months the researcher spent among the Oraon tribe to gain firsthand knowledge of the patterns of behaviour and the change that have occurred among the tribal communities under study. .

IN- DEPTH INTERVIEW

According to Liamputtong & Ezzy, (2005, p. 332) interview *does not use fixed questions, but aims to engage the interview in conversation to elicit the understandings and interpretation*. Interviews are characterized by active involvement in engaging the participant to converse about a particular topic for discussion relevant to the research questions being explored. In-depth interview are often complimentary to participant observation in that the observation provides insight into everyday life and provide insight into articulating and explaining social everyday life. Most of the data is gathered by the researcher from personal interviews.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The data analysis in the ethnographic approach is iterative and unstructured. Reeves, Peller, Godman & Kitto (2013) suggest that there are three methods of data analysis in ethnographic approach: description, analysis and interpretation. Description refers to recounting an event or describing of data, inevitably treating the event or data as fact. Analysis process refers to the bringing order to data, identifying themes, organizing into patterns, categories and basic descriptive units. It involves consideration of words, tone, context, non-verbal, internal consistency, frequency, extensiveness, intensity specificity of responses and big ideas. Finally the interpretation involves attaching meaning and significance to the analysis, explaining descriptive patterns and looking relationships and linkages among descriptive dimensions. As the research study is based upon an ethnographic approach therefore, all three methods are used for data analysis.

SELECTION OF ORAON TRIBE

The Oraon tribe is economically and educationally more advanced as compared to the other tribes of Jharkhand and having adapted to the changes that have come about in the course of time. The Oraon tribe have integrated themselves to a great extent in the mainstream society and civilization, thus bringing about change in their lifestyle and patterns of behaviour. Apart from this, a large number of Oraons have adopted Christianity and modern mode of living. The selection has been made primarily on the basis of degree of modernizing forces operating among these tribes. Thus the Oraon tribe is selected for the present study.

SELECTION OF VILLAGE

The researcher decided to carry out research close to the town in which researcher has spent 15 years. The researcher is quite familiar with the local area, customs, language, beliefs, values and way of life of tribal people. While growing up in this area the researcher has visited surrounding villages at least 2 or 3 times a month. The researcher therefore felt that research findings would be more accurate and offer greater insights of understanding more than any other area.

The researcher began the selection process by visiting a number of villages. During a two week period the researcher visited 20 villages. Through readings of ethnographic materials and consultation with professor the researcher understood that the villages would have to be small enough to carry out ethnographic research. It would have to also be large enough to be fairly representative of two selected tribes for study. The selected villages would also have to be heterogeneous communities in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, cultural practices etc. The researcher also determined to find a village with the least urban influence so as to isolate as much as possible the influence of mass media.

Through different sources and personal visit to the area the researcher gathered information about Lodhma village and after much thought the researcher decided that this village could be suitable for field study.

The researcher selected Lodhma village due to following reason:

1. The villages come under Namkum block of Ranchi district, Jharkhand and is located within a distance of 15 km from the sub-district headquarter Namkum and 27 km away from the district headquarter Ranchi.
2. The village having more than 70 percent of tribal population. The Lodhma village has 1,130 (73.98 percent) tribal population.
3. Mostly Oraons stay in Lodhma village but there are few Schedule castes and other caste also stays in the village.
4. The village having approximately 150 to 200 selected tribal households.
5. The Lodhma village has heterogeneous communities in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, cultural practices etc.
6. The Lodhma village comes under community development block (CD Block).
7. Location of the village 7-10 kilometers off of a main highway or bus route.

The research is confined to Lodhma village in Namkum block of Ranchi district in the state of Jharkhand.

THE STUDY AREA

The present study is based on the Oraon village in district of Ranchi in Jharkhand. Ranchi, Capital of Jharkhand state, is situated on the southern part of the Chota Nagpur plateau. Ranchi district is one of the units comprising the south Chotanagpur division and forms the central part of it. As per Census 2011 data, total population of Ranchi district is 2,914,253 out of this males constitute 1,494,937 (51.3 percent) and females constitute 1,419,316 (48.7 percent) of the total population. The percentage of population living in rural and urban area is 56.86 percent and 43.14 percent respectively and the average literacy rate of this district is 76.06 percent of which male and female literacy is 84.26 percent and 67.44 percent respectively (Census 2011). With regards to sex Ratio in Ranchi, it stood at 949 per 1000 male of 2011 census data.

Administratively the district is divided into 1311 Revenue villages, 18 blocks and 305 *panchayats*. The district of Ranchi is divided into Ranchi and Bundu subdivisions and 18 community development blocks. Ranchi subdivision is further divided into 14 blocks and Bundu subdivision consists of 4 blocks. Among the 24 districts, Ranchi ranks first in terms of population and third in terms of area in the state of Jharkhand (<http://www.Jharkhand.gov.in>).

The data for the study was drawn from the Lodhma village where the field work was carried out during November-March, 2019-2020 and January-March 2021 using tools of observation and personal interviews. Further, census data and previous works carried out in the area and among the people were also considered.

VILLAGE LOCATION AND PEOPLE

The Lodhma village is predominantly an Oraon village located five kilometers south-west and adjacent to the Khoja toli Armoured Regiment Ground in Namkum and 13 kilometers away from Jharkhand's capital, Ranchi. The village is surrounded on the north by Tumbaguttu village on the south by the Bangla Toli, on the east by Barka Toli and on the west by Bagicha Toli. The total geographical area of Lodhma village is 242.09 hectares, total 224 families residing in village and total population of this village is 1130 of which 573 (50.71 percent) are males while 557 (49.29 percent) are females (2011 Census). As per 2011 Census literacy rate of Lodhma village is 73.82 percent of which male literacy stands at 83.96 percent while female literacy rate is 63.96 percent and total population of tribes constitutes 73.98 percent.

Lodhma is a small village and it comes under Chandaghasi Gram Panchayat. It is developing rapidly as new ring road and an over-bridge is under construction in the area. There are no important centers of commerce and industry in the vicinity of Lodhma village. The village is dominated by Oraon tribe and other tribes and castes are limited in number. A large number of Oraons of Lodhma villages have abandoned their original beliefs of *Sarna* and have accepted Christianity. Among Christian Oraons, there are some Roman Catholic Oraons and others Protestant Oraons. But there are still good number of *Sarna* Oraons who beliefs of *Sarna* religion. Besides, Oraon tribe other caste namely, Teli, Kurmi, Lohra, Ahir, Brahmin also inhabit in this village. While interview Francis Ekka (65), a Christian Oraon of Lodhma village, told the researcher on the basis of what he had heard from his grand-father about the early Christian movement in Chotanagpur, summarized it in the following words:

The Christian Missionaries came to the rescue of the Adivasi when they were suffering at the hands of the Zamindars, moneylenders, as well as with Ojha or witch doctor. The people were so dejected, dissatisfied and distracted from their condition they were ready to follow any one who protected them from their misery and suffering. It was only this motive which led them to accept Christianity. In fact, in the beginning they hardly knew about Christian religion. As time passed some people thought to continue with their new religion when they had accepted it once, while the other section of the people could not and reverted to their Sarna religion. That is why in this village you will find both Christian Oraon as well as Sarna Oraon. It is a kind of multi-ethnic village.

VILLAGE SETTLEMENT AND HOUSE TYPE

The Oraon tribes, like other tribal communities also live in groups. Such groups of houses are named *Padda*, '*Gaon*' '*Tola*' or Village. During a visit to the Lodhma village the researcher observed that the village is situated in main upland and agricultural fields are in low land. The houses are huddled together in a disorderly fashion and there are many paths leading to the village and out of it. The main village street is of cement-concrete road and it is 10 to 12 feet wide, but in some places the space is reduced to 7 to 8 feet due to encroachment. There is arrangement for drainage in the main streets therefore the village streets appears clean and neat. The main village street is linked to the new ring road which is under construction in the area. Other internal streets within the village are not concrete but it appears neat and clean due to the sandy nature of the soil.

In the main village street as well as within the village there are few small shops such as stationery shop, grocery shop, provision shop, fertilizer and seed shop etc. Villagers buy their day to day necessities from these shops. For weekly market people of Lodhma villager go to Namkum *Bazaar* which is held on every

Thursday and Sunday. Apart from weekly market villagers also go to Sidrol *Bazaar* which is held on Tuesday and it is not far from the village.

Most of the Oraon houses in the village are made of a mixture of bricks and cement walls, supported by wooden beams and have roof covered with tiled roofs or asbestos. Only few Oraon houses are constructed out of mud and roof is covered with tiles (khapra). Besides these houses, some Oraon also have house built from brick or concrete (*pucca* house). Almost all Oraon houses have verandas and minimum three or four rooms, separate cattle-shed where they rear goats, buffaloes, cows, pigs and fowls. In every Oraon houses, there is a courtyard (*Aangan*) and it is the center of social activity such as guests and visitors are seated and many life-cycle rituals are performed. Some of the Oraons have small 'Bari' in which they grow vegetables. Surrounding area of the houses are neat and clean because most Oraon women invest a lot of time sweeping and plastering the courtyard with cow dung and water once or twice a week every morning.

During an interview, Faguan Ekka (68) one of the informants told the researcher that:

Earlier all Oraon houses were made of mud walls, supported by wooden beams and had roof covered with khapada (tiles) made by local potters. Gradually these houses are replaced by concrete houses, the walls and roof of which are made of permanent materials such as bricks and cement and asbestos. These houses have only been constructed in recent years with money some Oraon men have made by working as construction workers, factory workers, or government offices. Only few houses are now made of mud, as you can see it by yourself. This is what has changed significantly in this village.

LANGUAGE

During the research, it was found that Sadari (Nagpuri) and Hindi are the most used languages of all the persons in Lodhma village. It is interesting to note that *Kurukh* is the language of the Oraon tribe, but Sadari and Hindi are used more than their own language among the Oraons in Lodhma village. From the field visits it was quite evident that it is not the *Kurukh* language but Hindi and Sadari languages are mostly used among the Oraons of Lodhma village.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Traditionally, Oraon men used to wear a loin-cloth wrapped round his waist with the two ends hanging free in front and in the back known as *Karia*. The upper part of the body they used to cover with a cotton sheet known as *gamcha*, *pechauris*, *barkhi*. As for the dress of Oraon women, traditionally they used to wear the *paria* or *khanria*, a piece of cloth about four cubits long and two feet wide. No special garment was worn to cover the upper part of the body (Dalton, 1872, Sachchidananda, 1964). The researcher observed during the field visits that all Oraon men and women wear modern dresses; men wear short and long trousers, shirts, T-shirts and banyans and women wear sari with petticoat and blouse. Many of the young women and teenage girls also wear *salwar* suit. Like Munda women the Oraon women are also adorn themselves with various ornaments. They wear ornaments in neck, nose, ear, wrist, feet and fingers. Generally, the ornaments are made of brass, bronze, nickel, beads, thread, silver and gold.

TATTOOING

Tattooing was an age-old tradition among the Oraons and women were all tattooed in childhood with three lines on their brow and two on each temple. It was performed when the Oraon girl is seven or eight years of age and as they grow up they get more on the arms and back (Dalton, 1872). Among the Oraons there is a popular saying about Tattoo: *on death, all the jewels are taken away, but tattooing will remain with you ever after death*. Today, however, this traditional practice seems to be dwindling and rarely practiced now a day among the Oraons. During the field work, the researcher did not find any Oraon women who had tattoo on their forehead and when the researcher enquired about the traditional tattoo practice, one of the informants Meena Ekka (57) said:

Now a days we do not make tattoos any more, it was only an older generation who tattooed. I remember my mother had tattoos on her face. I don't have and I have not tattooed my children too. Earlier it was a part of our traditional practice to get tattoos but now we do not consider it as our tradition anymore. Moreover the younger generations don't like it and they regard tattoos as something primitive, uncultured and embarrassing.

YOUTH DORMITORY (DHUMKURIA)

Bachelor's dormitory among the Oraons, is called *Dhumkuria*. Roy (2004, p. 129) has given a detailed report about the presence of Bachelor's dormitory, among the Oraons. He pointed out that the function of youth dormitories as *an effective economic organization, ... a useful seminary for training youth in their social and other duties, and a institution for magico-religious duties*. In the past, *Dhumkuria* was one of the most important and significant social institution of Oraon tribe. It was a place where the Oraon youth, usually those who have entered into adolescence (boys and girls) age become member of the *Dhumkuria*. The boy's

dormitories were called *Jonkherpa* and dormitory for girls' was known as *Pelerpa*. It was a non-formal training centre of youth in the art of singing, dancing, drumming, and handicrafts and in their socio-religious customs and practices (Daltion, 1872, Sachchidananda, 1964, Raj & Nayak, 2017). Today the traditional youth dormitories are almost disappeared among the Oraon tribe. During an interview, Joel Ekka (70) one of the informants lamenting on the loss of *Dhumkuria* tradition told the researcher that:

In the olden days, all the Oraon villages had Dhumkuria, in which all the unmarried village boys and girls used to sleep and spend most of their time in their respective dormitory. Eldest among the boys used to supervise and control the Dhumkuria. The purpose of the Dhumkuria was to provide the village youth an opportunity to come together and to learn about the culture, socio-religious customs, practices and other important aspects of life. Today we don't have such kind of any institution through which we can teach our young generation, our culture, values, socio-religious customs and practices. As a result, a lot of young people and children do not know and are not able to learn our culture, values, socio-religious customs and practices. I know many young people in the village who do not know the folk songs, dance, language, festivals, etc.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Like other tribal women of Jharkhand, Oraon women also enjoy comparatively more freedom than non-tribal women. The Oraon women have a relatively higher status within their own community. Their status is almost equal to that of Oraon men and they have decision making power at home and outside. They move freely in and outside her village without fear and accompanied by a male member. The Oraon women have greater freedom to choose their studies, profession, and life-partners in their life and have access to divorce and to remarriage as widows and divorcees. They also freely participate in all the social, economic, religious and cultural activities of their community (Roy, 2004).

Like other tribes, the aspect of community living is very strong among the Oraon tribe hence men and women mix freely with one another. Especially during the social festivals, and religious celebrations they freely sing, dance, joke, feast and drink even the rice-beer with men folk. Roy (2004, p. 60) observed that *on occasion of their periodical socio-religious ceremonies, Oraon young men and women usually spend two, three, or more consecutive nights in dancing and singing and indulge in very little sleep.*

However, her role in the religious activities is limited. Although the Oraon women help in preparations for the religious events, they cannot participate in the religious functions. They do not take part in the village sacrifices and cannot worship household ancestral spirit in the inner room. Further, in the political sphere women are restricted to participate in the village meetings (Lakra, 2007).

HOUSEHOLD ARTICLES

In the past, Oraons used clay pots for cooking of various sizes and shape locally it was known as *kattu*, *Nanda* and *Debi* and to stir iron spoon (*Karchul*) or wooden spoon (*Dui*) were used. For eating purpose brass-plates such as *thari*, *chhipni*, and to drink water and wash the hand and feet *dubhas* and *lotus* were used. Besides these they also used leaf-cups and leaf-plates made by Oraon women with leaves of the *sal* tree and bamboo splinters. To store water earthen water pots and wooden plank called *Ari*, *Bhanda* and *Gharsanri* were used. To sleep and to sit on, they used *Pitri* (mats), made of date-palm leaves, Cot and *Kandoo* made of wooden block. Other important household articles such as bamboo baskets of various shapes and sizes, agriculture tools, musical instruments, hunting and fishing nets were also found in the Oraon house (Sachchidananda, 1964, Kujur, 1989, Roy, 2004).

Today all Oraons use aluminum, brass, steel, glass and plastic utensils. To sleep now-a-days they use plastic mats, wooden bed and *palang*. Traditional mats made of *khajur* (date tree) leaves are also used, but very few family uses now. Plastic chairs, wooden chairs and *pirha* are found in most of the households. Besides these, the agricultural implements like plough, leveler, yoke, spade, sickle, load- carrier, bamboo basket, etc., and different types of fishing nets and traps are also used by them in their daily life. Among other items, cycle, television, radio, and at least one mobile phone is possessed by all the Oraon families.

FOOD AND DRINK

From the interviews and observations, the researcher learnt that most of the villagers take two meals daily with the addition of breakfast in the morning. This practice is also most common among the Oraon families in Lodhma village. The main food of Oraons is rice, *dal* and green vegetable. Meat, fish and eggs are limited to two or three times a month usually on special occasions. People eat their food seated on mats or *pirha*. The vegetables, meat and fish are cooked with very little oil and spices.

In addition to food, rice-beer called *hanria* is popular among the Oraons. It is part of their culture and tradition as it is believed that it is taught by God (*Dharmes*) himself. According to Oraon myth of creation after the rain of fire only two children, *bhaiya-bahin*, (brother-sister) survived. God built them a house, brought them up and imparted to them knowledge about many things necessary for their life. They were also taught how to

cultivate different crops. They were happy to see their crops growing healthy and green. But soon they were disappointed to see their crops getting sick and dying. So they were greatly troubled and inquired from God how to protect them. Then God taught them the rite of performing a sacrifice for the protection and well being of the crops. In this context of sacrifice God taught them how to brew rice-beer because it is needed for libation during the offering of sacrifice. Therefore the purpose of brew rice-beer is religious one, i.e. pouring libation (Turkey, 1989 & Lakra, 2007).

Each family brews its own *hanria*. It is served in every social life, festive occasion and also in the religious ceremonies. It is true that without *hanria* no important activity or function can be accomplished in the Oraon community. But it is also fact that excessive or regular *hanria* consumption has ruined many Oraon families. During the interview Faguan Ekka (68) one of the informants said:

Drinking has become problem for our village. Several families including Oraon families are destroyed because of excessive consumption of hanria and liquor (chullu). Many families sell hanria in the village and along the roadside as the easiest way to make money. It is one of the most important concerns of our village and we need to understand the issue and find solutions for it as soon as possible. In the past, we tried at our level to prevent and control of making and selling of hanria in our families and village but nothing has changed. Even so many community awareness programmes have been conducted by various non-government organizations in our village but, still many people sell and consume hanria to varying degrees. It has really become problem for so many families in our village.

IMPORTANT PUBLIC PLACES

There is a Government *Rajkiyakrit Prathmik Vidyalaya* in the village. It is a primary school and it consists of grades from 1 to 5. There are 35 children in the school and it is co-educational school. There are only two teachers for instructional purpose and Hindi is the medium of instruction in the school. The school has *pucca* boundary wall and has electric connection. The source of drinking water in the school is hand pumps and separate toilet facilities for boys and girls are available. The school provides mid-day meal.

Though, there is only government run primary school in the village, there are many government schools, private schools and even senior secondary schools available within 2-5 km around Lodhma village. During the interview the school teacher, Manju Bala Mahato (48) said:

There are many schools around the Lodhma village and children of this village go to different schools. Many Oraon families send their children to government schools but there are also some well to do Oraon families who send their children to private schools. But it is very sad to see many children drop-out when they reach up to higher level of education. I visit families and I know only few oraon children who are lucky enough to complete their higher level of education.

When the researcher asked reason for this problem, then she said: *The main problem here is not poor socio-economic conditions of the family or inaccessibility of the school or college but the problem is that many Oraon parents are not well educated or they themselves have not gone to college, hence they are not able to place a high value on education achievement. Thus, they don't encourage and support their children for further education. Further, there is lack of learning environment and opportunities in the village. Above all there is lot of work to do at home like farming work, household work, look after the cattle, take care of the younger siblings, etc. There is hardly time left for the children to study. These are the reasons I think many children are not able to achieve higher education.*

There is also an *Anganwadi* center in the village. It is situated in the entrance of the village, just beside the government primary school. It provides pre-school education and food and primary healthcare to children less than six years of age and their mothers. During the field visit, the researcher observed that the walls of the center are adorned with paintings of animals, flowers and cartoon characters. But it lacks basic infrastructure facilities like drinking water facility, toilets, electricity, play equipments, drug kits, and tools for non-formal pre-school education etc. During a visit, Sonamati Tigga (55), who is in charge of *Anganwadi* center told the researcher, that:

I think the government is spending lot of money for painting and decorating the Anganwadi centers that is something good, but they should also invest more money to improve the basic facilities of the centers. Several Anganwadi centers are facing staff shortage, inadequate funds for nutrition meal, non-availability of education tools and play equipments etc. I think the government should pay more attention to these problems that is more important than anything else.

Another significant public place of the village is *Sarna Sthal (Sacred Grove)*. It is located just outside of the village. It is a place of worship for Oraons and it consist of multiple trees mostly *sal*, *mahua*, *pipal* and other trees. It is believed that the groves is a patch of forest left uncut by the original founders of the village and in this particular patch of forest their God and goddess resides (Solanky, 2017). Most of the annual rituals and ceremonies are performed by the Oraons at this *Sarna*. The rituals are mainly performed for the well being of

the villagers, animal and crops. Cutting of trees, killing the birds, animals and plucking leaves are usually forbidden from *Sarna*. During an interview, Kishun Oraon (60) said:

For us sal (shorea robusta) grove or the sarna sthal is sacred because it is the abode of the sacred grove, Chala pachcho or Sarna Burhia. Without the sal, sarna hold no significance for us and in this sacred place, at the time of annual Sarhul or Khaddi festival, all the spirits including the Sarna Burhia are venerated and coloured fowls are offered to them by the village priest (pahan) in the name of the Oraon community for the well being of villagers, animals and crops.

Further, he also added, that: *Sarna usually exist in community land and it is an open space. At present, due to population explosion and to prevent outsiders from encroaching land in future, in many places villagers have started constructing boundary walls around the Sarna. The state government has also taken an initiative to protect Sarna by constructing boundary walls under a scheme known as Gherabandi. This scheme is carried out by the welfare department after the gram sabha's approval. Some people of our village are eager to have a wall, but others are not in favor therefore nothing has happened till now.*

The other important public place in Lodhma village is *Akhara*. It is an open space located at the centre of the village under tamarind tree. It is used for public events, social gatherings, festivals and entertainment. It is place mostly for youth, both men and women who assemble every evening to sing and dance and enjoy themselves on festive occasions (Daltion, 1872, Roy, 2004). While visiting *Akhara* during the field work, Francis Ekka (65), one of the informants told the researcher that:

Earlier the Akhara used to be an open ground but today we have a stage. This stage has been made recently with the contribution of villagers. Earlier whole village used to sing and dance together during the village festivals, but now we have divided ourselves into different small groups. So during any festival one group sing and dance on the stage and the other groups sit and watch and wait for their turn. Though there is a kind of order and discipline but personally I don't like this kind of arrangement. Our culture is to sing and dance together including men, women and children.

The next important place in the village is *Masan* (Graveyard). There are two *Masans* in the village, one for *Sarna Oraon* and the other for *Christian Oraons*. Both *Masans* are located around 0.5 km outskirts of the village. Both *Masans* have no boundary wall, therefore, stray animals move freely around the graveyard. Both *Masans* are neat and clean and surrounded by bushes and trees. There is also a temple and church in the village.

There is no health care facility in the Lodhma village. The nearest hospital, Namkum Community Health Center is located 8 km away from the village. If the villagers have health problems either they have to go to private hospital or Namkum Block hospital for their treatment. Due to a lack of healthcare system many villagers go to village doctors, they are known as *Ojha* or traditional healers. During the field visit one of the informants, Suman Ekka (56) who is *Sahiyya* (ASHA) worker told the researcher that:

*Now-a-days villagers care about their health and most villagers prefer to go to hospital when they are sick. But because there is absence of hospital in the village and everyone cannot afford to go to the private hospital or nearest Namkum Community Health Center, most villagers follow herbal or traditional healing practices. There are few villagers who still believe in superstition, and if anything happens to them or in their family, the first person they go to the *Ojha* or traditional healers. I have told them many times in the village meeting not to go to *Ojha* but still they go to *Ojha*. I think they have complete faith and belief in them.*

In addition, there are twelve Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the village. It is a voluntary associations of women established for the purpose of meeting their local financial needs.

SOCIO-CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

FAMILY

Oraons have generally a nuclear family at times children continue to stay with their parents even after marriage. Normally a separate house is made for married children adjacent to the family house. The division of labour among the Oraon in Lodhma village can be easily seen. Men in Oraon tribe are engaged in digging, fencing, cutting timber, ploughing, construction of dwellings and other buildings. The women, on the other hand, take charge of children, keep house and its surroundings clean, fetch water, firewood, prepare meals, and feed the animals (Sachchidananda, 1964, Roy, 2004).

CLAN ORGANIZATION

The Oraons are divided into number of clans or *Gotras*. The names taken for clan usually include animals, birds, fish, plants, trees, minerals, etc., as totems. According to Roy (2004) there are about sixty eight totemic clans among the Oraons. Usually totems are sacred for the Oraons therefore they do not eat, kill or destroy them. However, the Oraons do not believe that they are actually descended from the totem. Instead they believe that the members of a particular clan are descended from common totemic ancestor and thus are related to each other. This is the reason why they do not get married within the same clan which is considered as incest

by them and therefore, they practice inter-clan marriages (Tirkey, 1999, Tirkey, 2002, Roy, 2004, Lakra, 2007). Some of the clans that are found in Lodhma village are Tirkey, Ekka, Lakra, Minz, Tigga, etc.

LIFE-CYCLE

Life-Cycle rituals mark a change in status from one life stage to another or passing of one phase of life and entry into another. The Oraons acknowledge the presence of God in each social stages of their life. Therefore, all the important event of their life-Cycle is covered with different socio-religious ceremonies and rituals.

CHILD BIRTH AND RELATED CEREMONY BIRTH CEREMONY

Like other tribes of Jharkhand, Oraon tribe also considers every child as a gift of God, irrespective of gender bias. The birth of a child in the family understood as taking the place of one of the ancestors and he or she is generally considered an asset to the family (Tirkey, 2012). Even before the child is born every precaution is taken to protect the life the mother and child. When a woman is pregnant for the first time, woman's father or uncle is invited to the house of her husband and a pig is sacrificed and prayers are offered to the ancestor spirits and to other mischievous spirits so that they should not trouble and harm her. This ceremony is known as the *Joda Kamna* and it is meant to protect the woman and the child (Kujur, 1989, Roy, 1972).

Earlier, the delivery used to take place at home, assisted by a *Kusrains* or midwife. Soon after the birth of the child, *Kusrain* cuts the umbilical cord with a knife and the placenta, the umbilical cord, together with old winnowing basket, are buried under the floor of the house or under the courtyard. On the same day or within two- three days, the father of the child goes to the *Pahan* with red fowl, some *arua* rice and a copper coin, asking him to offer a sacrifice to the *gaon deoti* (village deities) for the welfare of the child. Among the Oraons, the birth pollution is observed for four or five days after a child is born. During this time not the mother or the child alone, but the whole house is considered unclean. The other members of the village do not take food in that house, until the purificatory ceremony is performed (Roy, 1972).

THE PURIFICATION CEREMONY (CHATI)

Generally on the fifth or sixth day after delivery, purification ceremony is performed. It is believed among the Oraons that the period of impurity following child birth is the dangerous period, as it is during this period; both mother and child are more liable to evil spirits attacks than at any other time. According to them the smell of the blood-discharges attracts evil spirits. To guard the mother and child against the attacks of these spirits an axe or a sickle, or other weapons made of iron, are placed by the bed-side close to the mother's head. Iron, so the Oraons believes, is feared by evil spirits. During this period, the relatives always keep a watch where the mother and her new-born baby are secluded in the lying in room.

On the purification ceremony the houses are cleaned and all clothes used by the members of the family during the days of impurity are washed. The mat used by the baby and mother in the lying in room is washed by the *Kusrain* or midwife. On this day mother goes to the village-spring or well for a ritual bath. There she puts with her fingers three marks of vermilion mixed with oil and turmeric. This is done to please the *dari* (spring) spirit. It is only after this bath she is allowed to touch any article of the house or allowed to enter other's houses. On this ceremony the child's head is also shaved either by the grandfather or the barber, followed by a ritual bath. The house is purified by sprinkling water with the help of *tulsi* (*Osimum Sanctum*) leaves. After this community feast is followed where food and rice-beer are offered in abundance to the relatives and neighbors. Then they sing and dance together (Roy, 1972).

NAME –GIVING CEREMONY (NAME-PINJNA)

The Name-Pinjna or name-giving ceremony is generally conducted on the tenth day after the *Chati*. On this day the child is given an official name. Until the name-giving ceremony, the child is named according to the day on which he or she was born. For example, if a male child is born on a Monday he is called Somra; if a female then she is called Sumri, and so on. The name-giving ceremony among the Oraons is very important because until the name-giving ceremony a new born baby is a stranger to the community and does not belong to the tribe. It is only after the name-giving ceremony he or she becomes the full member of the community, clan, and tribe.

Usually the child is named after the ancestors who are believed to reborn as one of the ancestors. The name for the child is sought by rice-and-water divination. The Oraons are very particular about the God's approval for selecting the ancestor name of a child because they believe whose name is finally given to the child becomes the guardian and protector of the child (Lakra, 2006). At the end of the name giving ceremony the *Danda Katta* or *Palkansna* ceremony is also performed in order to get God's blessing on the child.

Danda Katta or *Palkansna* Ceremony is an exclusively Oraon ritual offered to God (*Dharmes*) alone. The Oraons believe that *Dharmes* himself supposed to have taught the first couple (*bhaiya and bahin*) how to offer this sacrifice. This ceremony is usually presided by any Oraon male acquainted with the ritual. It is offered in order to ward off the evil eye and evil mouth and harmful effects of the wicked spirits or wicked people.

MARRIAGE

The Oraons like Mundas believe that one becomes a full member of the community, family, clan or tribe only after the marriage. They believe that marriage unites not only two persons as husband and wife, but also two families (clans) and two villages. Thus marriage among the Oraons is not a private affair but is a public and community celebration. It establishes a bond between husband and wife, between two families, two villages and their ancestors and God. Further, the creation account of Oraons testifies the fact that marriage has been divinely instituted by God. Therefore, marriage for the Oraons is primarily God's act and he is the one who is instrumental to bring man and woman together to co-operate with Him in His creative activity by producing offspring (Tirkey, 2012).

The Oraons marriage is generally monogamous and follows clan exogamy, but tribe endogamy and practice adult marriage rule. In no way the Oraons favour child marriage. Marrying outside the tribe and between the same clan is not only strictly prohibited but violently objected. But these days this code is relaxed and there is not much legal and social pressure when someone marries outside the tribe. When an Oraon girl or boy marries an outside the tribe village *Punch* imposes a nominal fine on the parents of the girl or boy and perform a purificatory ceremony in their house and then they are accepted as a member of the tribe. When an Oraon boy or a girl reaches the age of marriage, generally parents arrange the marriage through the intermediary known as *Agua*. In such marriage, though the parents play an important role but the girl and boy are given freedom to finalize the marriage (Prasad, 1961, Roy, 1972, Vidyarthi & Rai, 1976).

Oraons marriage involves stages of preparation. There is a long process of preparation among the Oraons before the actual marriage ceremony takes place. It would be desirable to discuss some official and important ceremonies of marriage preparation before the actual marriage ceremony.

PREPARATORY CEREMONIES OF THE MARRIAGE

The first stage is known as *Dekha-Dekhi* (Seeing each other). In this stage the *Agua* (go- between) plays an important role. Usually among the Oraons it is the boy's family who takes initiative to look for a girl with the help of the *Agua*. Then the *Agua* looks for a suitable girl. When he finds one then he makes enquiries regarding the her age, beauty, character, maturity, working efficiency, family background, the socio-economical status, the name of the family and clan. He then communicates this information to the boy's parents. When the boy's parents consider her eligible, then the *Agua* makes a marriage proposal to the girl's parents on behalf of the boy's parents (Lakra, 2007, Ekka, 2016).

After the *Dekha-Dekhi* (Seeing each other) *Lota Pani* (Betrothal) ceremony is performed. In this ceremony boy and girl publicly express their consent to one another. In one of the special visits the parents of the boy, some relatives and *agua* visit the girl's house. This visit is known as *Pello Pahi*. '*Pello*' means in Oraon language is 'girl' and '*Pahi*' means 'ceremonial visit'. Thus, *Pello Pahi* is ceremonial visitation to the girl by boy's party. During this visit the *dali-dhiba* (bride-price) is fixed. The *dali-dhiba* is settled by symbolic dialogue about the girl. The boy's party says '*you have a heifer, we have come to buy it. What price will you take for it?*' Girl's party may ask any price for it, just for the sake of a dialogue. It may include hundred, thousand or lakh rupees. But finally bargaining come down to normal price of Rs. five. Actually here no price is involved. Like other tribes of Jharkhand, the term *dali-dhiba* means a bride-gift which is given by the boy's party to the girl's party as a symbol of appreciation and gratitude rather than a price for the girl (Tirkey, 1998, Lakra, 2007).

On the eve of marriage similar ceremony is performed in the boy's house and it is known as *Konha Pahi* or *Barka Gotiya*. With this ceremony, preliminary marriage proposal comes to an end.

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

On an appointed day of marriage, the bridegroom, his parents, relatives, and villagers go in procession to the bride's village. This procession is called *barat*. The *baratis* are often accompanied by music and drums. They also bring along with them the *dali-dhiba*, bridal dress, *kanrsa bhanda* (new earthen pitcher) and other ceremony articles. The *kanrsa bhanda* contain *arua* rice, turmeric, tender grass, mustard seeds, paddy stalks, mango leaves, etc. The woman who carries the *kanrsa bhanda* actually leads the procession. The bridegroom carries a sword or a knife. This sword or knife is meant to scare away evil spirits.

When the *barat* approaches the bride's village, the girl's party, in the same way comes out in procession to meet and welcome the *barat*. One man from girl's party carries a lighted torch made of a sickle wrapped round at its blade with cloth and placed on a plate containing oil. Both the parties for a while sing and

dance together then they move to the house of the bride. As a gesture of welcome and blessing the bride's mother and other village women sprinkle water first on the bridegroom and then on *baratis* with mango twig. Then one or two men from the bride's side carry the bridegroom on their arms and take him inside the bride's house and rest of the *baratis* are taken to their resting place called *dera*. After some time the bride and bridegroom are carried by their relatives in their arms and are brought to the *marwa* in the courtyard and are then made to stand on a curry-stone (*silot*) under which two *sal* leaf-plates (*patri*), three or five bundles of thatching grass are placed and a yoke. The bridegroom stands behind the bride clasping the left heel of the bride with his left toes and the groom's hands rest on the shoulders of the bride. Then a short instruction is given to them by the relative or a *panch*: "*Phalna and Phalni, reflect well a marriage means a bond for lifelong. There is still time to say 'yes' or 'no'. If 'no', go away; if 'yes' then give the (sindur) vermilion mark mutually*" (Campion, 2012, p. 77). While standing in the same position the bride and the bridegroom put the *sindur* mark on each other with the help of younger brother or sister of the bride or the bridegroom. As soon as the *sindur* marks is exchanged the crowd shouts with joy: "*Juri manja*" which means marriage is over and then crowd throw the *arowa chawal* (white rice) on them. In some places water is sprinkled over the couple with the mango twig as a sign of blessing. A new cotton blanket (*barki*) is used for a few moments as curtain to screen the bride and bridegroom at the ceremony of the *sindur* mark on the foreheads of the bride and the bridegroom so that this sacred rite many not be affected by the evil eye and evil spirits. The celebration of the marriage usually performed early in the morning. After the marriage ceremony the newly couple enter into a room and people continue singing and dancing (Roy, 1972, Tirkey, 1989, Campion, 2012).

After the festive meal the new couple is again brought to the *marwa*. They sit down at the centre of the *marwa* for the *Chuman* or *Sabha*. This is the time for giving gifts to the newly married couple and to congratulate and bless them. Two plates are placed before the bride and bridegroom in which one plate contains some *arwa* rice and the other plate contains some beaten rice and a piece of *gur* (jiggery). At this time the parents, relatives and the villagers come forward one by one and take up some *arua* rice in their hands and then throw the *arua* rice over his head. They do the same for bridegroom. Then they offer their gifts to the couple. These gifts may be some money, clothing, or other house articles. Every type of gift and amount of money received are announced with the sound of drum. When *Chuman* or *Sabha* ceremony is over the bride is handed over to the bridegroom and the *barat* is given farewell. This is called *bida*. At this time the elder brother of the bride carries her and takes her out from the house and carries her up to the village boundary. Then he hands her over to the bridegroom and bride's parents, villagers, relatives and friends return their home (Kujur, 1989, Tirkey, 1998).

When the newly couple and *barat* party arrive at the groom's house, some female member of the family and villagers come forward to receive the new couple, this custom is called *Parichan*. On this occasion, the bridegroom stands by the side of the bride, and their feet are washed by some women member of the family. Then, they are taken inside the house. Firstly, the newly couple are not allowed to enter the house and door is shut against them by the bridegroom's younger sister and others but after some agitation and some money is given to them by the bride, then they are allowed to enter the house. After this a drink of rice-beer is offered to her and at this time she is handed over a broom and winnow, (symbolizing authority in the house) with a short instruction: *Kenter chalki sopna china*. (This is your house, look after it well). At the bridegroom's house also *chuman* ceremony is performed in similar manner as at the bride's house (Sahay, 1976).

After two or three days later the parents of the bride along with relatives and villagers visit the bridegroom's house to take back the bride to her parents' house. On their arrival they are welcomed with rice-beer followed by meal. The bride is then taken back to her parent's house along with bridegroom. The bridegroom, on his arrival at the house of his father-in-law, uproots the *marwa* and the couple is feasted. Generally they stay for a day or two and then return home. Then both the families return to their daily routine life.

DIVORCE AND WIDO REMARRIAGE (SAGAI)

Like other tribes of Jharkhand, the Oraon tribe permits both the widow remarriage as well as the widower if they are willing. It is a common practice among the Oraons. As per rule the widow of the deceased brother becomes the wife of the younger brother if he wants to marry her. But if he or she does not want to marry each other he or she is free to marry anyone else. Once a widow marries someone outside the family of her deceased husband she loses her rights from her first husband's house. But if she does not marry she stays at the house of her deceased husband till her death with all the rights. The widow remarriage is usually performed without much ceremony and festivity. Divorce is not looked upon as something good or desirable among the Oraons because marriage is considered as a life-long union between the couple. Both husband and wife can ask for divorce and it is granted by the *panches* (village council). Some common grounds for divorce among Oraons are infertility, neglect of duties, conjugal infidelity, cruelty, quarrelsome behavior, witch-craft, sorcery, etc. In

all, if any reason that may prove to be sufficient to the village council may result in divorce. Among the Oraons divorce is locally known as *chhuta chutti* (Sachchidananda, 1964, Roy, 1972, Singh, 1993).

FUNERAL RITES

When an Oraon person dies a natural death, immediately information is sent to the relatives and friends living at a long distance. The dead body is then taken out into the courtyard of the house, it is bathed and vermilion mixed in oil is anointed on the forehead and it is dressed well and covered with a piece of new cloth. After that the corpse is kept on the mat or cot and placed near the entrance of the house. Then, the villagers and relatives come according to their time and convenience and pay homage to the dead body. Meanwhile some of the male relatives and villagers go to the *Masan* (graveyard) to dig the grave and others construct a bier using bamboo wood and ropes to carry the dead body. The members of the bereaved family usually do not cook food until corpse remains unburied.

When all the relatives and friends who were invited for the funeral have arrived then the corpse is laid on bier and is then covered with a white cloth. Then the bier is lifted up on the shoulders of four men and then funeral procession proceeds to the graveyard. Some boiled rice, oil, rice beer, coins and some personal belongings of the deceased person are also taken to the graveyard for the deceased person. After reaching the graveyard, the people carrying the bier walk around the grave three times from right to left. Before lowering the body in the grave, the Pahan or the relatives of the deceased anoints on the head, put the boiled rice and rice-beer and also coins into the mouth of the dead person saying: *Onda, onna. Akku eman ambkae. Akku nighae daharen irkae. Hurmi rog pap hoarki alal* (Take, eat. Now you have given us up. Now you have seen your way. Go, taking [with you] all our sickness and sins) (Roy, 1972, p. 126). Then some of the personal belonging of the deceased person such as, tobacco box, clothes, mat on which he or she used to sleep, etc. are placed in the grave along with the body, the head north and the feet on the south. The relatives then first throw a few handfuls of earth into the grave and then the others. At last the gravedigger fill the grave completely with left over earth and at the head of the grave, stone is placed to mark the grave. An earthen pot filled with water and three tooth-brushes (*datum*) made of twigs of the *sal* tree also placed at the head end of the grave. Then while returning home, they take bath in the stream and apply turmeric powder and oil in their hands by way of ceremonial purification.

About a week or ten days after the death in the house of the deceased, *Gammi* or *Kaman* ceremony is observed. On this day one of the elderly man sacrifices a pig or a reddish chicken and offer a libation of rice beer to the ancestor spirits of the family of the deceased. While performing this, the sacrificer says, *Falna* (name) *gotra-gahi pachcho-pachchgi khekhelkia radar, isinhu sange nanke* (ye ancestors of such and such (names) clan, who are in the nether world, do ye also take this person (deceased) into your company (Roy, 1972, p. 129). On this occasion, the *Danda Katta* or *Palkansna* ceremony is also performed. It is only after the *Gammi* ceremony; *Ekh Mankhna* (Taking back the shade) ceremony is performed.

Ekh Mankhna is the ceremony by which the shadow or soul of the departed person is brought back home and it resides in the house till he joins the company of the *pachbalar* (the ancestor spirits) at the time of *konha benja* (grand wedding) day or *Harbora* (bone drowning) day. On the day of the *Ekh Mankhna* ceremony, a grey colour chicken is taken inside the room where the deceased person breathed his or her last. The chicken is fed with *usna* rice (parboiled rice) and then sacrificed and its blood is dropped in a corner of the house. After that ash is spread at the entrance of the room and a *lota* (brass jug) filled with fresh water and over it a leaf-cup with oil and a wick which is lighted is placed. The man who performs this ceremony remains inside the room. When everything is ready, some women go out on the way towards the cemetery, carrying with them a ploughshare, a sickle, three twigs of *sal* tree, some straw, a few pieces of burning charcoal and a brass pot containing water and some rice and water in a leaf-cup. About half way to the cemetery with the help of three twigs of the *sal* tree and the straw on the ground they form of a hut. After that this straw-hut is set fire with the burning charcoal. When straw-hut is burning, the women shout three times saying, *Bara, falna* (name) *nighae kumba ola laggi* (come thou, so and so (naming the deceased), thy hut is burning) (Roy, 1972, p. 130). Then they return home in complete silence, striking the sickle against the ploughshare at regular intervals. When they arrive at the deceased's house they call out to the man who is waiting inside, *Balin tishgarchia* (open the door). The man asks *Nim ne hekdar? Nim apan kekdar, ki biran hekdar?* (Who are you? Are you our own or strangers?) The women reply, *Apan* (your own people). The man again asks, *Dukh radar ki such radar?* (Do you come in sorrow or in rejoicing?) The women reply, *Sukh radam*. (In rejoicing) (Roy, 1972, pp.130-131). Now the door is opened and all enter the house and then examine the flame of the lamp. If the flame is seen wavering, it is believed, that shade has come back to the house. If the flame doesn't wave the *Ekh Mankhna* ceremony is repeated. When the flame wavers and it is inferred that the shade has come back, then the ashes on the floor are examined for the foot print of any animals or reptiles. If such traces are found, it is believed that some spirit or witch has caused the death. But if no such trace is found, it is believed that it was a natural death. According to Oraon belief once the soul of the deceased entered the inner room it remains there and it receives

the homage and the sacrifices from the living members of the family. It remains there until the second burial or the great wedding.

The second burial or the great wedding (*Koha Benja*) is usually performed in the month of December or January after the harvest season gets over. Before that the bones for the second burial are collected from the graveyard by digging up the grave after about a year, and then a few pieces of bone from three different parts of skeleton are submitted to a kind of slight cremation after that fire is extinguished and an offering is made of rice cooked with turmeric. Then these bones are stored in new earthen pot and taken home and hung up for the night under the eaves of the roof at the back of the house. In some places they don't dig the grave, but on the eve of the second burial, a little earth is taken from the grave and put into the earthen pot. In some other places they do neither of the above two things, instead, they make an effigy of the deceased with *dubila* grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), and place this effigy in the earthen pot.

On the appointed day the bones of all those who have died in the course of the year are taken down from eaves of their roof and carried in procession by the female members of each family with song, dance and drumming. The women also carry with them some rice and *urid* pulse boiled together (*khichri*) and pieces of bread made of rice-flour. Finally when they reach *clan pit*, the men take the pot with bones, from the women and put the bones at the *clan pit* and smash the earthen pot into pieces. Each clan has a separate *clan pit* and a slab of stone planted or embedded by the side of the each *clan pit*. These stones are known as *pulkhi* (memorial clan stones) stone. The women then wash the *puli* stone and anoint it with vermilion diluted in oil. Then the *pahan* sprinkles turmeric water over the *pulki* stone. Rice and pulse boiled together, and pieces of bread made of rice-flour are put near the *pulki* stone. After that all who participated in the ceremony go to take a bath in a stream and return to their respective villages. With this ceremony, the funeral rites to the dead become complete and the dead are believed to be fully incorporated into the community of the ancestors (Kujur, 1989, Roy, 2004, Xalxo, 2007).

RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICES

The Oraons are followers of *Sarna* religion. *Sarnaism* or *Sarna* defines the indigenous religions of the tribals of the Jharkhand, such as the Santal, Oraon, Munda, Ho and the others, where *Sarna* means sacred grove. They have the monotheistic belief in God. The Oraons religious beliefs and practices are centre around one supreme God, known as *Dharmes* and his blessings they invoke before all important occasions. Apart from the faith in the *Dharmes*, Oraons believe in ancestral spirits and numerous other benevolent and malevolent spirits. The benevolent spirits and ancestral spirits are venerated by the priest (*Pahan*) and the Oraons, but the malevolent spirits are exorcise through the help of sorcerer. In all these religious worship and practices, the well-being of the Oraons as well as happiness and prosperity of life in terms of abundance of cattle, crops and progeny are always sought and also seek to establish a harmonious relationship with their *Dharmes*, ancestors, spirits, nature and man (Xalxo, 2007). For the worship, the means and symbols are taken from everyday life and the objects easily available in nature such as *arua* rice (parboiled rice), *sup* (winnowing basket), leaf of *sal* tree, *hanria* (rice beer), water, *bhelwa* twigs, *lota* (brass jug), *gagar* (earthen pot), fowl, goat, egg, etc.

The Oraons don't have their own religious Scriptures in a written form. Their Scriptures are based on the oral traditions of the religious myths, such as the Creation Story, Karma Story, Asur Kahani and passed from generation to generation. They also don't have any special place of worship, make no statue, or images/pictures whatsoever of their God or their ancestral spirits. In fact, any natural environment could be used as a place of worship according to the need of the occasion (Lakra, 2007, Xalxo, 2007).

To an Oraon, *Dharmes* is the supreme God, who is the creator, sustainer and controller of the universe and ancestors and spirits. According to Roy (1972, p. 17), *The Oraon regards him as anterior to all, the Author and Preserver, Controller and Punisher of men, gods and spirits-of all that exists in the visible and the invisible universe*. They approach Him by way of offering sacrifices and worship. Apart from *Dharmes*, Oraons also believe in the ancestral spirits (*pachbalar*) and various types of benevolent and malevolent spirits. They believe these spirits influence their life in diverse ways and play a significant role in their lives. Therefore, the Oraons remember and venerate their ancestors on important occasions and pacify various benevolent and malevolent spirits according to the need. They do not worship these spirits but venerate them. They are known as *nad* (spirits). Oraons believe that spirits are a creation of God and they sense their presence almost everywhere, in homes, villages, fields, rivers, mountains, *saran*, road, etc. They are good or bad in so far as people maintain relations with them as enjoined by God.

The ancestral spirits (*pachbalar*) usually reside in the inner shrine of the family. According to the Oraon believe ancestral spirits are still regarded as forming one family or clan with their living descendant and they are concerned for the welfare of their living members of the family. According to Lakra (2006, p. 40), *the ancestor spirits are more powerful and perfect than the living members of the family. Therefore they are able to help the family and keep them united in peace and harmony by giving them good health and prosperity*. During the every festival such as Sarhul, Karma, Phagu, Nawakhani, etc. the ancestor spirits are invoked and offerings

are made to them by the head of the family. For example, while offering sacrifice and prayer to the ancestor spirits, the head of the family during the feast of Nawakhani pray:

In the land of the living and the dead watch over us, cast a glance of love and kindness upon our body and soul, upon our children and our homes; Keep them and us free from every harm and misfortune; fill our cattle with every kind of blessings; keep well under control everything in the land of the living and the dead (Lakra, 2006, p. 42).

The ancestor spirits are usually remembered when the family members are seriously sick and when there is no sign of improvement the relatives complain to the ancestor spirits of their indifference and pray to them:

Unerneath this earth you ancestor spirits dwell, [as] overhead dwells Dharmes. Do you see us or not? Do remove our illness. Do you not understand? How long will you torment us? (Roy, 1972, p. 21)

Apart from the ancestor spirits, there are other spirits who are found in the various parts of the village. They are located in different areas within the village boundaries. They are known according to their location and among these some are important and others are not so important. *Chal Pachcho* (old lady of the grove) ranks as the chief among the village deities or spirits. She is also known as *Sarna Burhia* and inhabits in the grove of *sal* trees (*Shorea robusta*) or *Sarna*. Periodical sacrifices are offered to her by the *Pahan* (village priest) on behalf of the village community. Other important spirits are *Pat*, *Darha Deswali*, *Chandi*, *Achrael*, *Joda*, *Baranda*, *Khunt-Bhut*, *Goensali Nad* etc. *Pat* is master of all the village spirits who protects the village from sickness and other misfortunes. *Pat* has its seat on a hill, bush or tree on the outskirts of the village. *Darha* is the most dreaded of the village spirits and it acts as the guardian of the village. *Chandi* is the spirits of war and hunting, and is believed to bring success in hunting. *Achrael* and *Joda* are the female spirits and they too receive sacrifices for the well being of all the female children of the family. *Baranda* is household spirits and is the guardian of each individual family or household. *Goensali Nad* is the spirit of the cattle of each Oraon family. The Oraons consider and recognize all these spirits as benevolent or good spirits. Beside these spirits there are other spirits such as *Churael*, *Chordewan*, *Baghaut*, *Jid*, *Pugri*, *Mua* etc. are all malevolent or bad spirits and most of them are not offered sacrifices (Xaxa, 1992, Xalxo, 2007, Roy, 2004).

SUPERSTITIONS BELIEVE AND PRACTICES

The superstitious believe and practices are widely prevalent among the Oraon community. It includes beliefs in witches (*daains*), evil eye and the evil mouth (*Najar-gujar*), evil spirits (*Nad*), *Churael*, etc. When the Oraons experience various kinds of misfortunes, sickness, death, accidents and other untoward events in their life and which could not explained by them easily, then they easily attribute these misfortunes to some evil spirits, witches, evil eye and evil mouth, etc. In order to counteract evil spirits and activities of the witches, Oraons make use of *sokha*, *bhagat*, *Ojha*, and *deonra* (sorcerer). Oraons believe that these people possess magic powers and they can counteract the evil spirits and the anti-social activities of witches (Roy, 2004, Lakra, 2006).

FESTIVALS

Like other tribes of Jharkhand, Oraons feasts and festivals are also related to land and agriculture and it is bound up with social and religious observances. Most of the festivals of Oraons are seasonal, connected with agricultural operations and are celebrated by the whole village community (Xalxo, 2007). Brief descriptions of the major festivals observed by the Oraons are given below:

PHAGU (HUNTING FESTIVAL)

Phagu is celebrated in the month of February-March. It marks the end of the old year and the dawn of the New Year. The day earlier, the Sarna Oraon collects branches of the *erendi* or castor-oil (*Palma Christi*) and the *semar* (*Bombax malabaricum*). Next morning these branches are planted in open space and around that dry leaves and some straw are kept. Then the village priest (*pahan*) worships God and offer sacrifice, then sets fire to the branches. While the branches burn in full flame, he cuts the the *erendi* or castor-oil with an axe. Then the young boys who gathered around there, immediately light up their torches (*otho*) from the bonfire and throw the burning torches at nearby fruit trees, saying *be loaded with good fruits*. When fire is almost extinguished then they go back to their home and have festival meal. Hunting season commences at this time. There are three hunting festivals celebrated by the Oraons at different times of the year. They are known by specific name such as the *Phagu Sendra* (Feb-March), the *Bisu Sendra* (April-May) and the *Jeth-Sikar* (May) (Roy, 1972).

KHADDI (SARHUL)

Sarhul is observed in the month of *chait* (March-April) when the *sal* trees are in full blossom. The Oraons in their own language name this festival as *Khaddi* and also *Khekel-benja* means 'Marriage of the Earth'. It implies to a symbolic marriage of *Dharems* (God) with *Khekel* (earth). This is done to insure fertility

of mother earth (Ekka, 1960). It is celebrated by the Oraons with the aim of securing good rain, good harvest and prosperity during the whole agricultural year. On *Sarhul* day, the villagers gather around the *Sarna*, the sacred grove, and on behalf of the whole community *pahan* offers a propitiatory sacrifice to *Chala Pachcho* or (old lady) who resides in a *Sarna* tree. Besides *Chala Pachch*, during this festival other spirits are also propitiated like *Darha Deswali*, *Chandi*, *Dharmes* and *garha-dhora Chatur siman*, signifying all the other spirits haunting streams and rocks and odd nooks and corners of the village and its environs. Then sacrificed fowls are cooked with *arwa* rice, and distributed to each person present there.

BANGARI (GREEN FESTIVAL)

Bangari or *Hariari* is celebrated when the tender paddy seedlings are ready for transplantation. It is celebrated in the beginning of *Asarh* (June-July) and is observed both individually as well as collectively. Individual sacrifice usually takes place only after the collective one. For the individual celebration the ancestral spirits and *Khunt* (clan) spirits are propitiated. For the collective celebration the village elders appoint a day and on the fixed day they invite the *pahan* at the paddy field and he offers rice-beverage as libation to mother-earth, offers a sacrifice to various spirits and prays for good rain and bumper crop. After that he plants five paddy seedlings at the paddy field. Then the usual transplantation operation takes place by women. Both feasts conclude with community feast and drinking of rice beer (Oraon, 2021).

KADLOTA

The *Kadlota* means making the field muddy for transplantation. It is celebrated in the month of *Bhado* (August-September) when the *don* or low land crops and millets are ready for harvest. In order to ward off the 'evil eye' and 'evil mouth' (*Najar-gujar*), and the evil attentions of mischievous spirits, the Oraons celebrate the *Kadlota* festival. On this day the sacrifices and libations are offered and similar prayer is offered as in the *Hariari*. The only prayer added during this feast is: *May the crops ripen and come out well; and may we reap a full harvest and may nothing untoward happen*. During this feast the *Danda Katta* ceremony is also performed by every Oraons. Generally it is offered for the protection of the crops and for a good yield (Roy, 1972).

KARMA

This festival derives its name from the *karma* tree (*Nauclea parvifolia*). Oraons believe that *Karam tree* is sacred to the *Karam deity* who is supposed to have in its power to give a good or bad autumn harvest (Grignard, 1924, p. 362). The *Karma* festival is celebrated in the month of *Bhado* (August-September) and is associated with harvest, which is symbolized through a *Karam* tree. During this festival branches are cut from the *karam* tree and ceremonially planted in the middle of the village *akhra*. Then branches are decorated with garlands, flowers (Tirkey, 2013).

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

According to Roy (2004) the economic activities of the Oraons centre round agriculture. But very often they supplement their agricultural activities with hunting, fishing, and forest collection such as roots, tubers, leaves, fruits, flowers, and honey from the forests. Sachidananda (1979) states agriculture continues to be the important occupation of Oraon and other economic activity consist of petty business, fishing, cattle rearing, and forest collection. According to Kujur (1989) agriculture is the backbone of the Oraon economy. Collections of forest produce, trade and commerce and transport, industry, mining, etc. do supplement the main occupation of cultivation. Further (Nulkar & Muthumani, 2013) have found that the Oraons are an agricultural community and they cultivate their own land. Other occupations such as hunting, fishing, cattle-rearing and crafts are subsidiary to agriculture. Based upon the above scholarly discussion it is obvious that agriculture continues to be the essential occupation of Oraons. But they do not pursue any single activity for their sustenance rather they combine many activities with agriculture to supplement their food requirements and maintenance thus, the Oraons depend on a number of sources for livelihood.

In the village under study, agriculture is the most important occupation of Oraon tribe. Each family owns a small piece of land for its support and survival. The majority Oraon populations in Lodhma village cultivate their own land and most of the agricultural activities are undertaken by the members of the family. Majority of the Oraon households consume rice two or three time therefore *dhan* (paddy) is the main crop of Oraon tribe. For the paddy cultivation mostly they rely on monsoon rains and wherever dugout well and ponds are available they also grow *marua*, sweet potato, pulses, millets, wheat and seasonal vegetables. Earlier Oraons used to cultivate for subsistence only not to profit but now-a-days cultivation has become source of income for many Oraon families. Majority of Oraons still use ox-ploughs and also variety of traditional agricultural tools for cultivation. However, in the recent times the application of modern tools for cultivation have grown among the Oraons and they using a number of modern agriculture tools such as chemical fertilizers, high yielding varieties of seeds, tractors, pump sets, threshers etc.

Though, agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for the Oraons of Lodhma village, very often it is not sufficient to sustain the family for whole year. Hence, majority of them look for other alternate occupations. Many Oraons of Lodhma village go to nearby cities like Ranchi, Khunti or Namkum districts during the non agricultural season and work as daily-wage laborers, agricultural laborers, construction laborers, and others also engage themselves in factories and industries.

The other occupations pursued by the Oraons inhabit in Lodhma village are small business. Though, traditionally Oraons were not traders or business people. As of now few Oraons have opened small tea stall, provision shops, small poultry farm, *dhaba*, motorcycle and cycle repair shop, etc. Apart from this, some Oraons also work as skilled workers such as electrician, mason and tailor. Furthermore, many Oraons raises livestock such as goat, pig, cow, buffalo, fowls, ducks etc. and sell them in the weekly market for some income.

Hunting is not practiced as an occupation among the Oraons living in Lodhma village. In the beginning stage of their settlement in the Chotanagpur region hunting must have been their primary activity. Today just to commemorate this old tradition they celebrate *Phagu Sendra* held in the month of March every year (Roy, 2004). It is just reduced to a ceremony. In addition to the *Phagu Sendra*, the Oraon women celebrate another hunting festival known as *Jani shikar* (women' hunting). It is held in the beginning of the rainy season once every 12 years. On this day women dress up like men and assemble at the *akhra*, blessed by the *pahan*, and then set out for hunting. It is observed to commemorate their victory against the Mughals (Campion, 2012). This hunting festival is also just ritual than actual hunting. Fishing is also no more principal economy for Oraons. But some Oraons of Lodhma village are engaged in fishing. They catch fishes, crabs and snails from the rivers, ponds, and flooded fields during the monsoons and sell them to the market for money. During the interview the researcher also came to from one of the informants that there are all together 13 Oraons in Lodhma village who are working in government jobs.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

At the village level Oraons political administrative system is known as *padda panch*. It is also refers to village *panchayat* or village council. It does not only constitute of four representatives or four officials, such as *Mahto* (village head), *Pahan* (village priest), *Pujar*, (helper of village priest), and *Gorait* (Messenger) but is open to all adult male members of an Oraon village. The posts of the office bearers are hereditary but in some areas, the *Pahan* and his helper and *Mahto* (secular head) are selected in supernatural way. For the selection, a man with light shadow is selected from the village as it is believed among the Oraons that spirit possesses man with light shadow. Then the *Pahan* recites: *In East, West, North, South, in my whole area, Sarna Mai, relieve me of my duties and find a new person to take responsibility*. The man with light shadow holding a winnowing basket starts moving and shivering. He then walks towards the house of man who supposes to be the next *Pahan*. Same process is followed for the selection of *Mahto* (Shah, 2010).

Mahto is the head of a village therefore he presides over the *padda panchayat*. But he does not enjoy any special privileges or any rights; he is just like a chief among the equals. The procedure followed by the *padda panchayat* in the village is as follows; first the aggrieved person verbally complains to the *Mahto* and village *Pahan*. Then the *Mahto* in consultation with the village-elders fixes date, time and place, usually at the village *akhra* for hearing the case. Then the *Gorait* summons the disputing parties before the assembly. The *Pahan* or the *Mahto* informs the defendant of the facts of the complaint against him and hears his answer, and if necessary takes evidence. The *Mahto* delivers the judgment on the same day after hearing both the parties. If the accused is found guilty, he is asked to pay fine in cash or kind, but in serious cases, one can be excommunicated from the community. Generally, dispute regarding partition of property, offences against customary laws, especially marriage laws and taboos, theft, assaults, quarrels and cases of witchcraft are submitted to the *padda panchayat* for its decision (Tirkey, 1989, Tirkey, 1999, Roy, 2004). Besides these, the *padda panchayat* also look after the cases concerning law and order, socio-religious and economic affairs of the village. These problems are solved on the basis of customary laws and practices.

Beyond the village level, like Mundas, the Oraons also developed an inter-village organization known as *Parha* or *Parha Panchayat* (village federation). A *Parha* or federation of villages is a territorial unit consisting of a number of adjoining villages. The number varies from place to place. It may consist of seven, nine, twelve, twenty one, thirty two, forty, or even eighty four villages. Each regional group has a particular territory where it owns and defends its rights in agricultural land, village sites, forest tracts, grazing lands, water supplies, fishing ponds and so on (Trivedi, 1970).

All the villages in a *parha* are subject to the authority of the *parha panchayat*. One of the villages in a *parha* is called the *raja* village (*Parha* king), another *dewan* village (Prime minister), third the *panrey* village (clerk), fourth the *kotwar* village (bailiff) and the remaining villages are the *praja* village. The *raja* village is the head village of the *parha* and the headman of this village presides at the meetings of the *parha panchayat*. Each village of the *Parha* has its own *fag* or images of animals, such as, tigers, horse or oxen, etc. and each *parha* had its exclusive right to display at formal gatherings. The selection of the chiefs of traditional institutions

differs from place to place, in some *Parhas*, the mode of selection is done on the basis of hereditary, in other places, supernatural way as the process is described above and some places seeking everyone's consent on the day of annual hunting expedition. There is no fixity of tenure. They continue to hold the office as long as they could enjoy the confidence of the people.

The procedure followed by the *Parha Panchayat* as follows: on the headman's submitting of a complaint to the *parha* Raja or *dewan*, the *kotwar* of the *parha* is ordered by the *raja* to inform the different villages of the *parha*, that on a particular day the *parha panch* will meet in the village where the cause of complain or dispute has arisen. On the appointed day, some representatives from each villagers of *parha* assemble at the *Hadri* (under tree). The same procedure is followed as in the case of a trial by the village council, described above. The final verdict of the gathering is pronounced by the *Parha Raja*. The judgment is final and binding on all the parties and there is no appeal against this judgment.

The *parha* federations were initially devised for mutual co-operation, protection and participation in combined social activities. The *parha panchayat* also dealt with issues which village *panchayat* failed to resolve such as disputes over village boundaries, disputes between village and village, dispute over inheritance, land rights of widows and minors, actions against crimes, breach of marriage laws and other social laws. Even today, in some areas *parha panchayat* still exist but it is not so powerful and confined only to social matters. The main reasons for change in its functioning is the introduction of new administrative setup specially, the establishment of Panchayat Raj institutions (Sachchidananda, 1964, Roy, 2004, Toppo, 2017).

As per constitution of India and Panchyati Raj Act, Lodhma village is now administrated by Sarpanch (head of Village) who is elected representative of village. At present Indu Tirkey is Sarpanch of Lodhma village. In addition to this there is also a traditional administrative system and the head of this administrative system is called Mahto. At present Sandeep Munda is Mahto of Lodhma village. He obtained this title by virtue of being the original founder of a new community.

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is clear that the Oraon tribe has been nomadic and migrated one place to another place and finally settled in Chhotanagpur. Day by day they have developed their culture and traditions. The simple ways of living, warm hospitality, their belief system, their gods and goddesses, strong community bonds and their festivals and celebrations are some of the traits that mark the Oraon tribe as rich and well established culture traditions. The spread of education, communication, technology, modernization, globalization, industrialization, and other factors have helped them to adaptation about new way of life. This could be reflected in their method of agriculture, food habits, language, dress pattern, belief system, political organization, economic activities, and socio- cultural organization and so on.

The Oraons have very unique and rich socio-culture traditions and practices. This special uniqueness is important from the preservation point of view as they are the true heritage components which need to be protected. They are important as well as necessary for maintaining the identity of the tribes and for the survival of their rich culture. So the significance of the study arose from the fact that tribal rich socio-culture traditions need to be preserved. These are our indigenous cultures and traditions and form tribal identity. If one does not take the effort to preserve and promote them then gradually it will be lost.

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