

## Changing Paradigm of Socio-Economic Activities of Oraon Indigenous Tribal Group, Odisha- an Analysis during the Period 1961-2011

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### Abstract

In Odisha sixty two indigenous communities have been registered in recent decades and Oraon is considered as one of them. This typical human race, known as Oraon tribe lives in the remote areas of Jharsuguda, Sundergarh, Kendujhar, Debagarh and Sambalpur districts of Odisha. The Oraon constitutes nearly 3.66% of Orissa's total tribal population. This tribe speaks their own original dialect called kurukh. Oraon lives with others in a village but prefer to build their own wards where houses are connected with narrow lanes. They have typical house structure with mud walls and two sloped roof. Every houses have must have two verandah i.e. one is high at the back and another low at back. This tribe is divided into a number of exogamous totemic groups called clan or killi. Social anthropologists have identified eighteen different totemic groups show highest regard to the totemic animals and objects. There are several forms of marriage though negotiation is preferred. They celebrate birth pollution and cremate dead bodies.

They are mainly agriculturists but they also work in diversified occupations like mining, servicing, quarrying etc. They grow paddy, millets, pulses and some vegetables. Rice beer, mahua liquor are their two favorite drinks. They eat non-vegetarian food which includes meat of goat, pig and fowls. Going through their demography pattern, it is observed that population of Oraon has increased from 129061 to 358112 during the period 1961 to 2011, where 177457 are males and 180655 are female. Literacy rate increased to 9.70% to 67.57% and total workers increased to 61714 to 157772 during that period. Main workers are more in numbers than marginal workers. About their marital status, it is noticed that a total number of 188099 unmarried, 151230 married, 17666 widows and 1117 divorce cases are reported in 2011. But the total number of child had decreased during that period, 57,319 in 1961 to 48556 in 2011.

The Oraon no longer remains untouched in their remote forested abode. To bringing out their all-round developments, differential micro plans are running in their neighbouring districts. In term of road links, housing, livelihood pattern, healthcare and hygiene, certain developmental projects have been undertaken in those areas with major priorities to the spread of education and residential schools for boys and girls.

**KEYWORDS:** Tribes, Odisha, Oraon Tribe, Livelihood.

### Introduction

India is among those countries in the world where a large number of indigenous people have been found. They still prefer to live in jungle, mountain and other remote, difficult

areas in the country. According to latest census of India, 432 numbers of Adivasi people are found across the country.

Oraon tribe is considered as one of these groups for its unique physical features as well as livelihood pattern. The Oraon are one of the main tribal communities in the country and are listed as a Scheduled Tribe in West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Their population in Orissa according to the 1961 census was 12,9061 which increased to 35,8112 by 2011, thus establishing a steady growth rate of Oraon population from past fifty years.

Odisha, having sixty two tribal communities in recent decade which constitute 22.8% of tribal population in the country. Orang tribal group is considered as one of the major tribal communities across the state, mainly concentrated in the districts of Sundergarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, and Keonjhar. The Oraon occupies 3.66% of Odisha's total tribal group. They are mainly agrarian and later they were known as Orang due to dirty food habits. They speak kurkh language, belongs to dravidian language group. The tribe belongs to clan system and in there societies, there are eighteen exogamous clans exiting viz. Tirki, Lakda, Topo, Khalko, Minz etc. names after plants, animal, vegetables and insects.

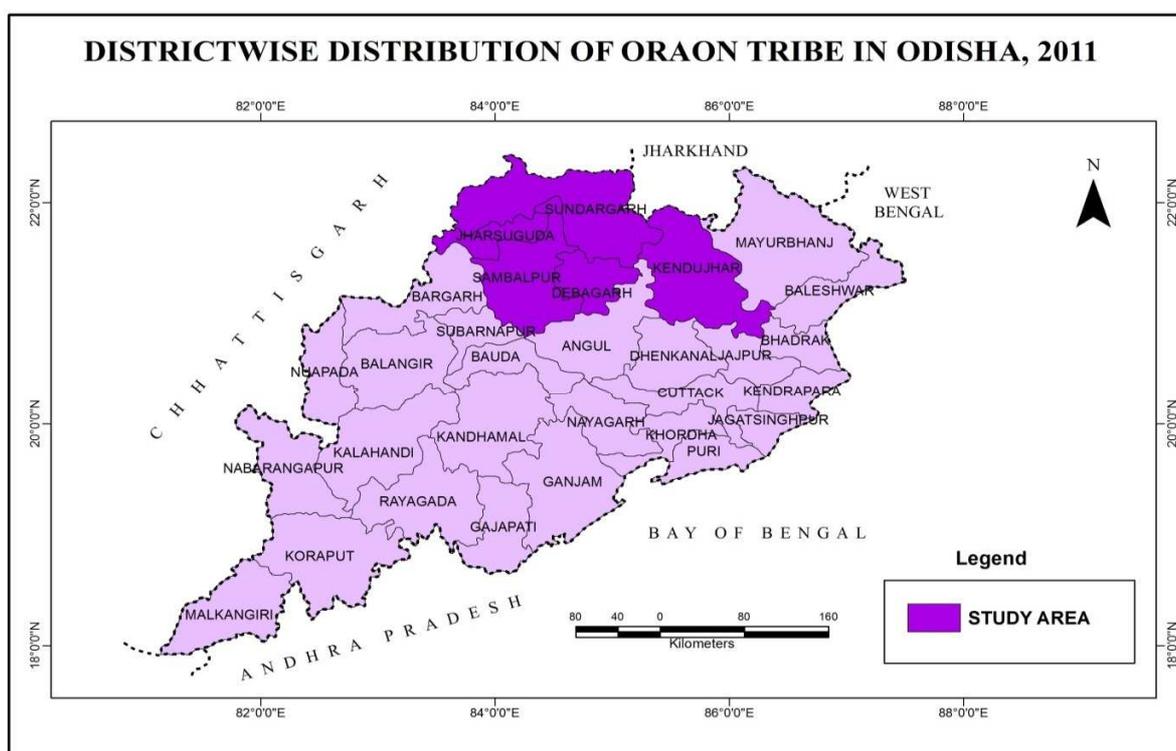


Fig.1 Source: BMC

## Objectives

Throwing light at the existing gaps in the available research findings in the relevant study, the present paper has set the following objectives covering the census period 1961 to 2011.

- To study the changing nature of Oraon population viz. male, female and child population during the period.
- To study the literacy rate as well as nature of workers during the given period.
- To understand the marital status and dependency ration of the Oraon society of Odisha during the observed time span.
- To analysis overall growth rate as well as changing paradigm of Oraon tribal community of Odisha during the mentioned study timing.

### **Materials and Methods**

The entire methodology of the study has been made on the basis of census data, given by SC ST Training and Research Institute, Bhubaneswar and other relevant sources of secondary data sources of Oraon tribal group of Odisha. A structure questionnaire has been prepared and finally statistical analysis and cartographic diagrams have been prepared.

### **History and Origin of Oraon Tribal Group of Odisha**

They originally belongs to deccan plateauland but according to Roy(1915),their original homeland is Chhotonagpur region. Before entering to Chhotonagpur area, this portion was occupied by other backward tribal communities. Here they settle down for a while but could not left the nature of roaming from one place to another under difficult economic pressure in search of suitable cultivable land for their existence. So, some of them migrated to Orissa and rest migrated to Madhya Pradesh.

### **Social Structure, Clan System**

The internal structure of Oraon society divided into five sub tribes, namely Gagra-Oraon, Danka -Oraon, Kharia-Oraon, Khendro-Oraon and MundaOraon which again subdivided into distinctive endogenous clan groups (Rishley,1998). Presently, the Oraon tribes are internally divided into a number of exogamous totemic clans which are known as gotra or verga. There are eighteen clan groups have been identified among Oraon tribes across Odisha i.e. 1.Tirki(mouse) 2. Lakda(tiger) 3. Kerketa(hedge sparrow) 4.Gidhi(vulture) 5.Toppo(fish) 6.Khalkho(a species of fish) 7.Minj(a species of fish) 8.Kachchu(tortoise) 9.Khaka(a kind of grass) 10.Barla(ficus indica) 11. Khes(paddy grain) 12.Kispotta(pig's entrails) 13.Panna(iron) 14.Kujur(creeper) 15.Bandra(monkey) 16.Bakla(grass) 17.Khakha (rarcn) 18.Gidhra(vulture). Each clan contains a number of families, distributed to separate villages to tribal areas.

### **Settlement Pattern and Household Articles**

Oraon tribes live in mixed villages but they build separate wards along the village lanes. Almost all houses have more than one living room and vary according to family size. Most identical feature of Oraon houses are, it has two specific verandahs i.e. one is low at front and other is high at back. Now-a-days advanced Oraon tend to build spacious

houses with fire-proof roofs of maria tiles in place of small houses with wild-grass thatched roofs. The household articles include steel chair, modern table,cots, still almirah, numerous size of plates and pots made of brass and ball metal etc. for advance Oraon. But backward Oraon still tends to use earthenware and aluminum pots for cooking food, bamboo baskets etc.

### **Marriage System**

There are several marriage forms have been noticed in the society though negotiation marriage system is most preferable in the society. Bride price, date and all the rituals have been fixed by both the sides. Marriage takes place during the daytime and also celebrated with dance, music, festive meals with plenty of rice beer. Cross cousin marriage is also preferred in their society.

Birth and death pollution have been observed over their community. After the birth pollution, a feast is organized to celebrate the birth and all the family members and friends are invited. They mainly cremate the dead bodied but some of the cases they buried the dead bodies.

### **Religion and Festival**

This community believes in many gods and goddesses. Major deity of this community is Dharani. Apart from this, they also believe in number of super natural powers. Some of the important celebrations among them, are Naega(against the misfortune befall on anybody), Phagu(New Year celebration),Sasul(a celebration before eating new fruits), Bisu-Sikar(hunting in summer),Jeth Jatra, Jitua and karma. Brahmanism and Christianity do effects on their religious belief due to certain extent.

Oraon celebrates the Kartika Purnima, during that time young boys and girls make marry. They also celebrate many Hindu festivals but Diwali and Nua Khai are widely celebrated among this tribal group.

### **Language and Culture**

Oraon speaks their own language known as Kurukh, belongs to Dravidian language group. Oraon, those who live bordering areas of Bihar usually speak Sadri. This local language is the mixture of hindi and other tribal dialects of Chhotonagpur plateau area.

Oraon has their own traditional dress i.e. for women, this is known as khanria and men it is kareya. These are locally made by yarn and woven by a weaving caste named Gavda.Rice is main food supplemented by gruel prepared by some millet. Rice beer and mahua liquar are two favorite drinks and widely consumed amongst them. They eat non-vegetarian dishes included of goat meat, pig and fowls.

### **Economy**

They are mainly agriculturist. But now-a-days diversified occupational structure has been seen into them. They also started working in mining, quarrying, servicing and brick

making industries. Oraon grow paddy, millets, pulses and vegetables. They also prepare rice beer and mahua liquar for their consumption.

### Findings and Analysis

Going through their demography pattern, it is observed that-

Population of Oraon tribe has been increased from 1,29,061 to 3,58,112 during the period 1961 to 2011, where 63,761 are males and 1,77,457 are females. There are several reasons found behind increasing level of Oraon population i.e. in India, the state as well as central governments have made incessant efforts in the direction of tribal welfare. The government has given special attention to their educational and economic development. Tribal research institute has been established in Bhubaneswar and many sub branches have also been established in scheduled areas of the state. Efforts are being made to expand educational and working facilities in tribe prone districts.

But one striking feature has been notice in population structure of this group that is total number of children population has decreased during the entire study period. Which are 57,319 in 1961 and 48,556 in 2011.

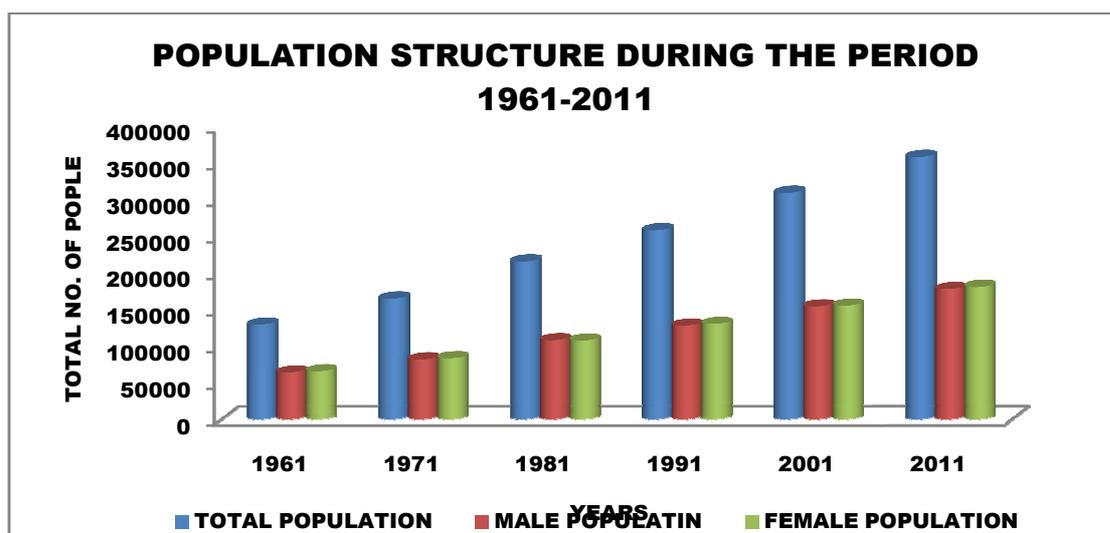


Fig.2 Source: Demographic profile of scheduled tribes in Odisha, 2010-2011

Table 1: Sex Ratio among Oraon Tribes

PARAMETERS	CENSUS YEAR					
	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Sex Ratio	1024	1022	996	1017	1007	1081

Source: Demographic profile of scheduled tribes in Odisha, 2010-2011

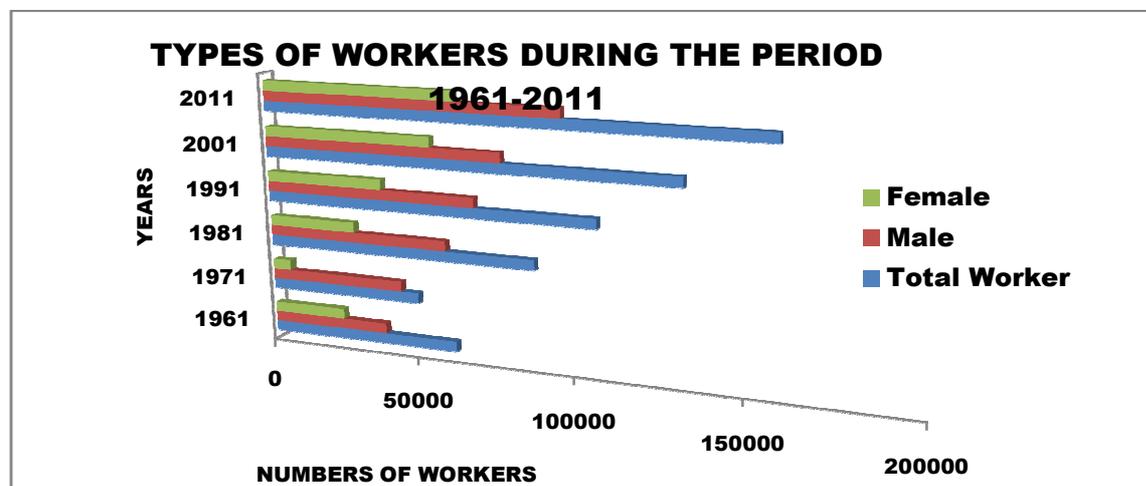
**Table 2:Dependency Ratio among Oraon Tribes**

PARAMETERS	CENSUS YEAR					
	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Dependency Ratio	1.47:1	1.47:1	0.89:1	0.68:1	0.89:1	0.66:1

Source: Demographic profile of scheduled tribes in Odisha, 2010-2011

The numbers of workers belonging to the tribe have been increased over the years. For the economic up gradation of the tribal people, the government has enforced rules regarding land ownership and utilization of land across tribal belts in Odisha. Thousands of millions have been spent for the development of cottage industries in scheduled areas across the state. Several community projects have been established everywhere and special multi-purpose tribal blocks have been created. Grain shops have been opened to provide better quality seeds. Shifting cultivation replaced by subsistence agriculture and tribal families has been permanently placed on suitable land areas. It is also noticed that male workers are more in numbers than their female counterparts during entire study period. Main workers are also increasing day by day than marginal workers.

About their marital status, it is found that total number of 1, 88,099 never married, 1,51,230 married, 17,666 widows and 117 divorce cases are reported in 2011. Widows remarriage are accepted in the society. Divorce on the ground of adultery, laziness and bad temper is allowed with the approval of the village panchayat. Marriage within own totemic group and from other community are discouraged.



**Fig.3**Source: Demographic profile of scheduled tribes in Odisha, 2010-2011

It is noticed that several primary and secondary schools have been established in tribal areas where there is a provision for free education. Thousands of scholarships have been granted for special status for tribal people in medical, engineering and technical colleges. Posts have been reserved for them in public services. Efforts have been made to provide housing facilities in some scheduled areas. Hospitals have been opened which provide free medicines, check epidemics and cure all types of diseases. New roads have been

constructed and old roads have been improved in tribal areas to increase accessibility in remote areas.

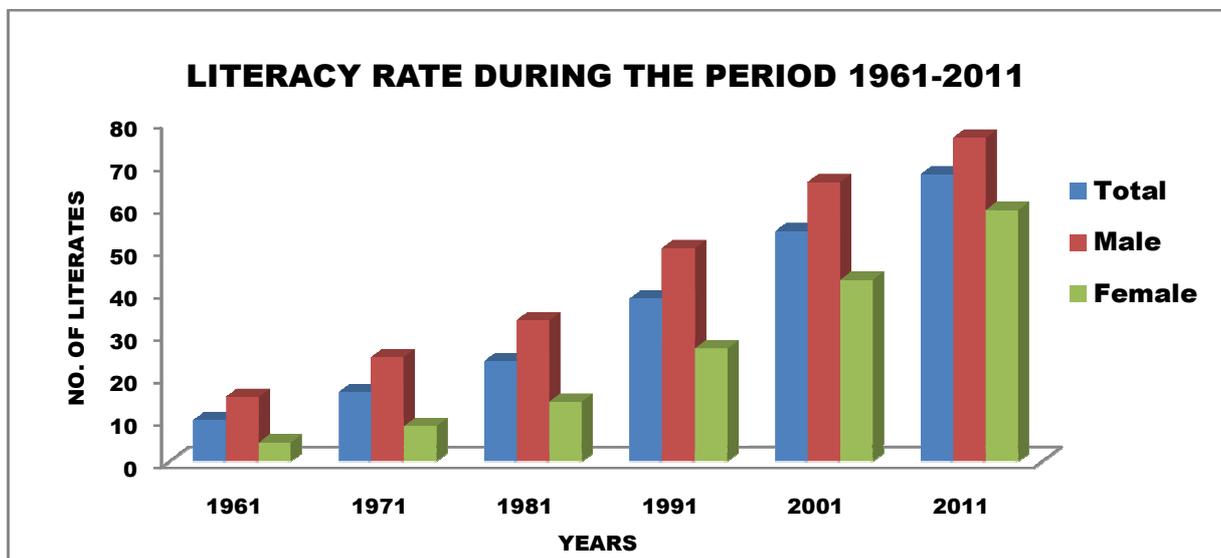


Fig.4 Source: Demographic profile of scheduled tribes in Odisha, 2010-2011

### Conclusion

Despite an increase in absolute number of population, there is also identical change in the earning pattern of people in the region. They continue to remain as primitive, subsistence agriculturists even though the government and NGOs have announced several plans and projects in the region to change the livelihoods and living conditions of this community. Throwing light to their social structure until now, there is no noticeable change in total production, livelihood patterns and other infrastructural facilities.

There is lacking of minimum basic amenities such as water supplies, education, drinking water, housing facilities etc. Though the aim is to increase the living standard of the people in the region, but the present condition shows the lack of political will and seriousness towards their development. The government should be sincere in implementing, monitoring and executing these plans in a time bound manner in order to save and improve the lives of these people in the region.

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