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## ORAON TRIBE OF MUDIDIH VILLAGE OF MATHA HILL: AN EXPLORATION OF THEIR TRADITIONAL PRACTICES, CUSTOMS, AND BELIEFS

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### Abstract:

The Oraon tribe is the largest tribal group of India after the Bhil, Gond, and Santhal. The present study is based on an empirical study among the Oraon tribe of West Bengal. In this article, the researcher aims to explore the Oraons' traditional practices, customs, and their belief system. As we all know, India is the homeland for many tribal people. As per India's last census, which was conducted in 2011, the total tribal population is 8.6% of the total population. The Oraon tribe has a rich oral tradition and culture. Oraons themselves call *Kurukh* or *Kurukhar*. They belong to Proto-Australoid and speak the Kurukh language along with other regional languages, whether they reside in Sadri, Odia, Bengali, Hindi, or others. Oraons are basically a settled agricultural tribe of India. The major Oraon tribe population is concentrated in Jharkhand and their surrounding states like Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Assam. The Oraon tribe has a great tradition and culture centered on totems. All the social organizations and political organizations are centered on the totem. Therefore, the present study tries to explore how the Oraon of Mudidi village of Matha Hill in Purulia district are practicing their traditional customs and beliefs. Here, we tried to use mainly qualitative data, and a few demographic data points were employed for this article. Traditional Anthropological tools were used for primary data collection, like observation, interview, focus group discussion, PRA, purposive sampling, photography, and structured schedule. Secondary data were also used, like books, journals, census, and the internet. Basically, the Oraon tribe of Purulia district is using the Bengali language so gradually that they are forgetting their major social-culture, religious, and political traditional practices. Due to cross-cultural influences, they are losing their traditional practices, and soon they will be on the verge of losing their cultural identity too.

**Keywords:** Oraon, Matha Hill, Tradition, custom, beliefs

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian subcontinent is the land of diverse culture and has the finest geographical landscape, which attracts humans in the Indian subcontinent. As we know that India is the homeland of many indigenous people and has their glorious history for centuries. After British intervention in India, they documented the tribals through the Census from year 1871 to 1941 in different names, like in 1871 as Aborigines, 1881 as Aboriginal, 1891 as Aboriginal, 1901 as Animist, 1921 as Animist, 1931 as Tribal religion, 1941 as Tribes, and after independent Indian Government accepted it in 1951 as a Scheduled Tribe.

According to India's last census, conducted in 2011, the total Scheduled tribal population accounts for 8.6% of the total population. The Oraon Tribe is one of the major tribes of eastern and middle India. They are mostly known as an agricultural community. Oraons belong to proto-Australoid and speak the Kurukh language with their community, and Sadri, Hindi, and Bangla languages are used as per their local languages, whether they speak with other communities residing around them. Oraons are also known as Kurukhar and Dhangar. The present time Oraon population is mostly concentrated in the Jharkhand state and their adjoining states of India, like Chhattisgarh, MP, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, and Assam, and they are also found in other countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. In India, as per the 2011 census, they constitute 3,684,888 people. Oraon has rich cultural customs that encompass their traditional practices from one generation to another. Oraon's social organisation is constituted through totemism, which is the base of their life. Their cultural and political organizations are also based on it. Oraons also pass through many development stages, as do



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other communities. They develop their culture from savagery, Barbarism, to their present Oraon Culture. They also developed their script, “*Tolongsiki*,” for documenting their oral history, folklore, and folktales in their language.

In West Bengal, the total tribal population is 5296953, which is 5.8% of the total population. Oraon tribes are found in Purulia, Bankura, Paschim Medinipur, Darjeeling, and Kolkata. The present study was conducted in Mudidih village at Matha Hill of Purulia district in West Bengal. Purulia is known as the most backward district of West Bengal state, but it constitutes a good number of tribal populations. Purulia constitutes a 540652 ST population of the state, which is 18.54% of the total ST population. The Oraon tribe also played an important role in constituting the tribal population of Purulia. Oraon of Purulia is using Bangla language there for so many things that they have forgotten. The present study tries to explore their traditional practices, customs, and belief systems among the Oraon of Purulia District.

**About Oraon:** The *Oraon* tribe, also known as *Kurukh*, is one of the significant indigenous communities inhabiting mainly the forest areas and rural landscapes of eastern and central India. In the Purulia district, particularly in the Baghmundi community development block, near the Matha Forest area, the Oraon community maintains a close cultural, economic, and spiritual connection with its surrounding environment.

**Origin of Oraon:** The origin of the Oraon tribe is still mysterious, so no scholar has clearly explained it. It is believed that the Oraons migrated from the *Indus Valley civilization* to southern India, specifically to the Deccan Peninsula region, and later came to Rohatagarh, Bihar. They then settled in the Chhotanagpur Plateau by 100 CE, in present-day Jharkhand. The British took them into the tea gardens of Assam, West Bengal, and Bangladesh, as well as they also migrated to countries like Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Mauritius during British rule, where they were known as *Hill Coolies*. They were also settled in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for the clearance of the forest by the British rulers.

**Language and Oral Traditions:** Oraon's mother tongue is known as *Kurukh*, which belongs to the Dravidian linguistic family. Therefore, the Oraon themselves tell *Kurukhar*. After coming into contact with different communities during the settlement of the area, they also spoke the regional languages of that particular area, such as Nagpuri, Hindi, Chhattisgarhi, Odia, Bengali, and Nepali, etc. Oraons have a rich cultural heritage that is passed through oral tradition from one generation to another. Their folk song, folk tales, and stories tell their great history.

### Social Organization:

Primarily, Oraon's economy is based on agriculture, and social organization is based on kinship. Oraon's family, marriage, and other activities are controlled by the kin groups. Oraons are divided into several clans, and they are patrilocal as well as patrilineal. They follow the exogamous marriage rules, but they never marry within the same clan. Because in their myths that they were born from the same clan, so their ancestor may be the same once upon a time, therefore they still believe that they are brothers and sisters. Traditionally, the Oraon family was Joint in nature due to the agrarian society, but due to modernization, globalization, and westernization, the joint family changed into the nuclear family. Oraon has different clans like Kachhap, Ekka, Minz, Toppo, Kerketta, Tigga, Tirkey, Linda, Dhan, Panna Kujur, Kiro, Khakha, Khalkho, Khess, Lakra, etc.

**Traditional Occupation:** Oraon livelihood passes through various development stages, such as Savagery, Barbarism, and then the Oraon lifestyle. Oraons have a subsistence economy. Primarily, Oraon engaged themselves in agriculture; apart from it, they also engaged in the collection of minor forest products, hunting, fishing, and other skilled work. Paddy is the main cultivated food, and they also produce various seasonal vegetables and food materials.

### Religion and Beliefs:

Religion is a fundamental issue in academic and intellectual discourse for comprehending society, religion, and human behaviour. Disciplines such as Anthropology, theology, philosophy, and sociology regard religion as an integral component of society, critically examining its presence and offering symbolic interpretations. To attain a comprehensive understanding



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of religion, we must consider the perspectives of others on it. In the realm of intellectual scholarship from India, tribes are delineated ambiguously, identified, and characterized as animist. Subsequently, they were referred to as 'tribal religion' rather than 'animism'.

Oraons are natural worshipers; they worship natural things like the Sun (*Biri*), the Moon (*Chando*), Trees, Mountains, animals, and Hills, etc. Traditionally, Oraon people believe in natural sacred groves, Sarna, and beliefs in the supreme God *Dharmesh* and Goddess *Chala Aayo*. They believe in Animism, which was mentioned by *E.B.Tylor* in his book *Primitive Culture* in 1871. Which is similar to that, and we find a unique culture of shadow entering rituals after the death of a person. Yearly, they perform a ritual ancestor worship which they call *Koha Benja*. They believe in different types of *Naad* and village deities. All the religious festivals and different rituals were performed by the priest *Pahan*. For their assistance, many people were appointed by the society or the Gram Sabha.

After the entrance of British Christian Missionaries in India, they gradually converted a few Sarna Oraons into Christians, and also a few Oraons followed Hinduism because they resided long time with Hindus, through the Sanskritization process. We also saw that Jatra Tana Bhagat came in contact with Vaishnavs; he followed Vaishnavism and then started the Tana Bhagat religion among the Oraons. Traditionally, Oraons follow Sarna Dharma, but now they are divided into three sects according to their belief are Sarnaism, Christianity, and Hinduism etc.

**Traditional fare and festivals:** Oraons celebrate their festivals throughout the year. the Oraons engage themselves in the worship of nature in some way or other. They have been worshipping for generations the tree, stone, water, Sun, land, fire, or rather the so-called Pancha Bhutas that constitute the cosmos. Traditionally, the new year for the 'Oraon' begins from the Hindi month 'Magh' that corresponds to February in the English calendar. here all the festivals they have, mention

Table: traditional Calendar of festivals

Sl. No.	Festival	Description	Month (As per the Hindi Calendar)	Gregorian Calendar
1	Faggu	A festival celebrating a good harvest	Phagun	March – April
2	Khaddi (Sarhul)	Festival of flowers and the arrival of spring	Phalgun & Chaitra	February – April
3	Dhanbuni	Religious festival dedicated to paddy cultivation	Baisakh	April – May
4	Bangari	Festival of plantation and agriculture	Baisakh & Jyeshtha	April – June
5	Hariyari	Agricultural festival marking the rainy season	Asarh	June – July
6	Asari	Plantation festival	Asarh	June – July
7	Karam	Festival of work, plantation, and agriculture	Bhadra	August – September



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8	Sohrai	A festival dedicated to cattle and livestock	Kartik	October – November
9	Bishu Sendra	Festival of hunting and traditional community gathering	Poush	December – January

Source: Secondary Data

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

**Roy S.C. (1915)** worked on the Chhotanagpur Plateau and wrote “*The Oraons of Chhota Nagpur*,” which is one of the first detailed books about the Oraon tribe of Jharkhand. It describes their religion, customs, festivals, laws, and way of life. The book helped preserve Oraon traditions and is still used by researchers today. However, it reflects some old colonial views and focuses more on men’s roles. Despite this, it remains an important source for studying Oraon culture.

**Roy S.C. (1915)** wrote in the book “*Oraons: Religion and Customs*,” by talks about the life, faith, and traditions of the Oraon tribe. It explains how the Oraons believe in nature gods, forest spirits, and their ancestors. They celebrate special festivals like Sarhul and Karam with songs and dances. The book also tells about their marriage rules, family customs, and rituals during birth and death. S.C. Roy shows how the Oraons live close to nature and follow their old customs. This book helps us understand the culture and values of the Oraon community deeply and respectfully.

**Oraon Dr. Jagdeep (2021):** - Studied the elderly folks of the Oraon community from villages under the Kanke and Sadar block of Ranchi district and wrote a research article named “Role of Traditional Community Festivals of the Oraon in Maintenance of Ecological Balance and the Mitigation of the Effect of Global Warming”. The study shows how Oraon’s traditional festivals are not only cultural expressions but also play an important role in sustaining ecological balance and addressing global environmental challenges.

The research highlights that the Oraon community’s traditional festivals are an example of how tradition can contribute to ecological sustainability and offer valuable lessons in mitigating the impacts of global warming.

**Mollick Farhad & Singh J. Narayan (2022):** - say in their article titled “Folk knowledge. Sustainable development and tribal culture. Studied tribal culture and nature, Folk knowledge system, and sustainable resources. Resource management. The article shows the Importance of recognizing and integrating tribal folk knowledge into broader sustainable development Strategies. Societies can enhance their environmental sustainability by valuing and preserving the traditional knowledge and contributing to the well-being of tribal communities.

**Kumari (2018)** at Jharkhand investigates the impact of modernization on the religious customs and traditions of four major tribes in Rourkela: Kisan, Oraon, Kharia, and Munda. Modernization and urbanization have significantly altered traditional practices, leading to a decline in tribal religions, crafts, and agricultural reliance. Many tribals have converted to Christianity or Hinduism, influenced by societal acceptance and external forces. While modernization has eroded cultural heritage, it has also brought benefits like improved education, healthcare, and living conditions. However, there is concern about the long-term loss of tribal identity and uniqueness in the face of modern influences.

**Biswas (2020)** worked in the North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. The study focuses on the Oraon tribe in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, examining the effects of modernization on their cultural practices and continuity. While traditional festivals like Karam and Maghebas persist, modern festivals like Durga Puja are increasingly adopted. Structural changes include shifts in their social and clan systems, the loss of traditional institutions like the Dhumkuria, and the adoption of Hindu





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practices, such as keeping Tulsi plants. Despite these changes, the Oraons strive to preserve their identity, blending traditional and modern elements while fostering peaceful coexistence with neighbouring communities.

**Sinha and Tirkey (2024)** worked at Chota Nagpur and examined the Oraon tribe of Eastern India, primarily residing in Jharkhand's Chhotanagpur plateau and its surrounding areas. Traditionally agricultural, their culture is deeply tied to land, with unique festivals and rituals marking farming cycles. Modern influences, migration to urban areas, and work in tea plantations have altered their socio-economic landscape. Despite adopting Hindu and Christian practices, the Oraons strive to preserve their ethnic identity. Challenges such as land loss, illiteracy, and poverty persist, but improved education and social awareness are fostering gradual change. Preserving their cultural heritage remains a priority amidst modernization pressures.

**Ghosh (2021)** worked on Impact of Industry-Led Displacement on Indigenous People: A Case Study of the Oraon Tribe of India. Industrialization led displacement of tribal groups in India has been a major phenomenon in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, after displacement, the tribal groups are forced to adapt to and adjust to the largely non-tribal setup. The present paper aspires to explore the economic changes brought about by industrialization and the cultural consequences of these changes on the indigenous people. This study, conducted in Odisha's Rourkela, is based on a case study of the Oraon tribe, which was displaced in the course of the installation of Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) during the 1960s. The findings of the study indicated towards food security and a higher standard of living after industrialization. However, income inequality was conspicuous. Although there was an improvement in the educational status of women, urbanization had a largely negative effect on the participation of women in productive activities. Another interesting finding of the study was a positive relation between socio-economic status and trends of revivalism.

### 3. OBJECTIVES:

- To record and analyze the present situation of their Social, Cultural practices, and beliefs of the Oraon tribe in Mudidih village.
- To explore the cultural significance of these practices and their role in shaping the Oraon community's identity.
- To identify the challenges faced by the Oraon community in preserving their traditional practices and the impact of modernization and external influences on their cultural heritage.

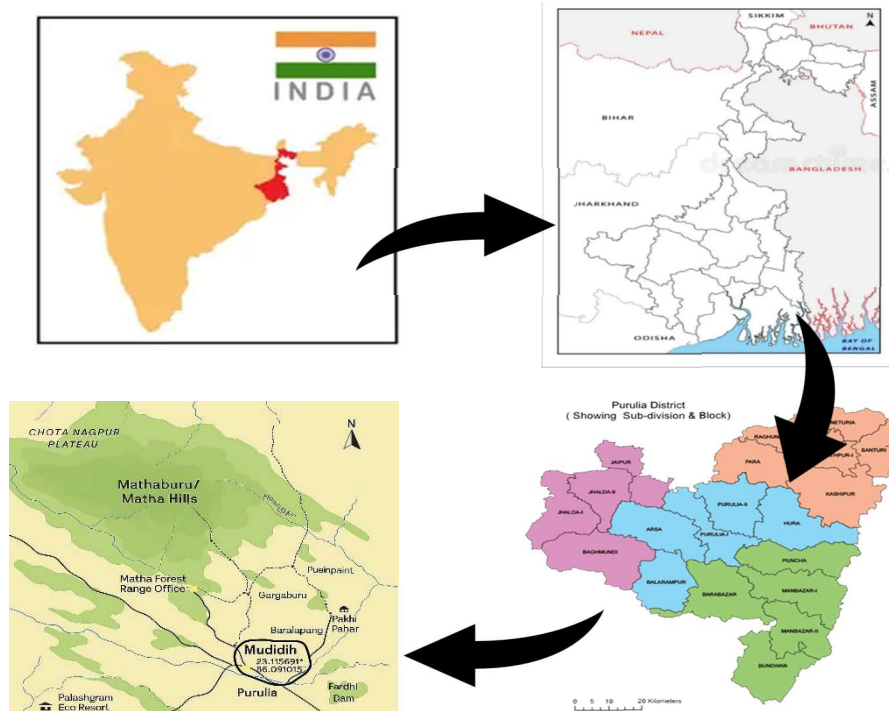
### 4. RESEARCH METHOD:

Research work was carried out to know the traditional practices, customs, and belief system of the Oraon tribe. Empirical data collected through intensive field work among the Oraon tribe of Mudidih village, Matha Hill, in Purulia District, West Bengal. Primary data was collected by using traditional anthropological tools, including observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, PRA, Purposive sampling, and secondary data from articles, censuses, books, and the internet. Here, qualitative data, with a few quantitative data applied for the data analysis.

- Study Area:** The Oraon settlement in the Mudidih village, which is situated near the Matha Buru or Matha Hills in the Baghmundi CD Block of Purulia district, is selected for the present research.



## Map of the Study area



Source: Internet

### ii. Boundaries of the village: -

Geographically, it is situated at Latitude - 23.115691°, Longitude: - 86.091015°. Mudidih village has a large area of farmland on its southeast side. Dhanudih village is to the southwest of Mudidih, and Matha village is to the west. Pakhi Pahar is located to the northeast, while Matha Buru Hill is on the northwest side of Mudidih village.

### Demographic data of the Mudidih Village:

There are a total of 255 People living in Mudidih village, 134 of them are men and 121 of them are women.

Table 4.1: Age-wise distribution of population

AGE GROUP	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
1 - 10	28	18	46
11 -20	15	24	39
21 - 30	35	22	57
31 - 40	23	19	42

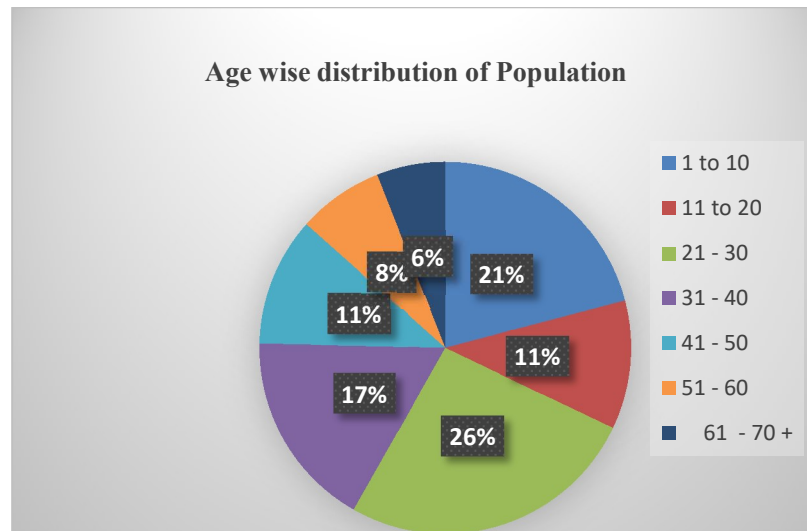


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41 - 50	15	11	26
,51 - 60	10	17	27
61 – 70 <sup>+</sup>	8	10	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>255</b>

Source: Fieldwork Data



- iii. **Households:** - Mudidih village has a total of 62 houses. These include 17 kuchha houses, 26 semi-pucca houses, and 19 Pucca houses. Additionally, there are 31 government houses.

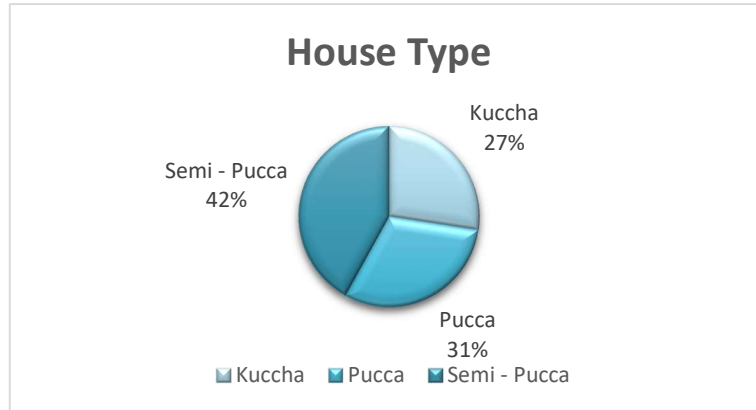
Table 4.2. Household distribution as per house type

House Type	No. of Houses	Percentage
<b>Kuccha</b>	17	27%
<b>Pucca</b>	19	31%
<b>Semi - Pucca</b>	26	42%
<b>Total</b>	62	100%

Source: Fieldwork Data



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## 5. MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

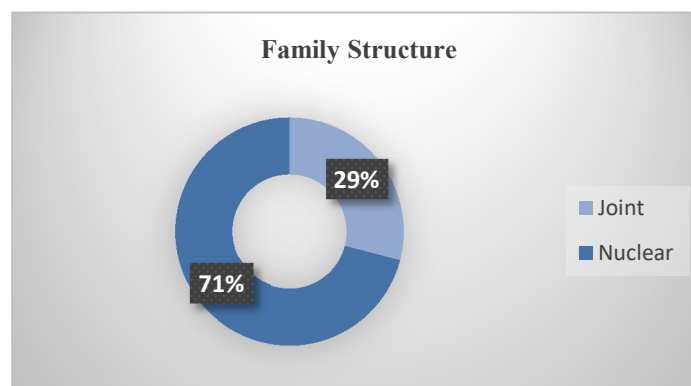
### 5.1 SOCIAL ORGANISATION:

**Family Structure:** Mudidih village does not have a big population. We find that their traditional family system is gradually decreasing due to external pressures, like development, modernization, industrialization, and globalization, etc. This village consists total of 62 families, of which 44 are nuclear, accounting for 71%, while the remaining 18 are joint families, comprising 29% of the total families.

Table 5.1.1: Family Structure

Total Number of Families	Types of Family	Frequency
62	Joint	18
	Nuclear	44

Source: Fieldwork Data







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**Kinship:** In Mudidih village, kinship plays a vital role. In a tribal society clan plays an important role in regulating Kinship, and Kinship regulates the total social organisation. Clans as well as kinship ties established the role and behaviours with their kith and kin. Among 61 families, we find that there are Kachhap-07, Toppo-09, Lakra-07, Tirkey-11, and Khalkho-20 clans of the family head. Still, they are following the kinship norms, but a few changes occur. They follow kinship usage, avoidance, joking, and teknonymy. But nowadays, teknonymy is decreasing its value.

**Marriage:** They marry from their neighbouring district of West Bengal as well as from Jharkhand. They follow the patrilineal and exogamous marriage system. They also follow clan exogamy, but the marriage rituals differ significantly. They forgot their traditional marriage rituals, and partially, they forgot the customs too. However, they still follow the same ritual practice as tradition dictates, albeit with a different name. Hinduism impacted their marriage system.

Table 5.1.2: Marital status of the village.

AGE GROUPS	UM		MA		WD		TOTAL
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
0 -10	28	18	0	0	0	0	46
11-20	14	16	1	8	0	0	39
21- 30	14	7	21	15	0	0	57
31 – 40	2	1	20	17	1	1	42
41 – 50	1	0	14	9	0	2	26
51 - 60	0	1	8	12	2	4	27
61 -70+	0	0	7	7	1	3	18
TOTAL	59	43	71	68	4	10	255

Source: Fieldwork data

**UM- Unmarried, MA- Married, WD- Widow/ Widower, M- Male, F- Female**

As per the above table, here find that the marital status of the Mudidih village. We find that a total of 102 are unmarried persons, where 59 are male and 43 are female, which is 40 % of the total population of the village. In this village, 139 persons are married, where 71 are male members and 68 where female, which is 54.5 % of the total population. Here we find 14 widowed persons whom 10 are widows and 4 are widowers, which is 5.5% of the total population. A high proportion of the population is youth and young adults, and marriage is found to be common in the age range of 21-40 years. We find that the widowhood increases after the age of 50, especially among women. The male and female ratio is Male: Female ratio = 134: 121 = 1.11: 1.



## 5.2 EDUCATIONAL STATUS:

Education is the basis of the development of any society. Like other societies, Oraon of Mudidih village do not have enough resources for education, but the people are getting an education according to their caliber. Oraon Traditional Education Center was a Youth dormitory (Dhumkuria) that had a certain age for entrance and exit, too. Boys as well as Girls had separate provisions, which were known as *Jonkh edpa* and *Pello edpa*. Dhumkuria was the cultural education where they got the socio-cultural, political, economic, and religious ground along with more collective activity.

But modern education, which is formal education, definitely changes their life economically. After getting the primary data then we find that the total educational status of this village.

**Table 5.2.1: Educational Status of the Village**

AGE GROUPS	NL		PP		L		M		S		HS		HE		TOTAL
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
<b>0 -10</b>	11	7	8	5	6	4	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>46</b>
<b>11-20</b>	1	1	2	4	3	5	4	6	3	5	1	2	1	1	<b>39</b>
<b>21- 30</b>	1	0	2	1	4	2	7	6	11	7	6	5	4	2	<b>58</b>
<b>31 – 40</b>	1	1	2	2	3	3	5	4	7	6	4	3	1	0	<b>42</b>
<b>41 – 50</b>	2	1	2	2	3	2	4	3	3	2	0	1	0	0	<b>25</b>
<b>51 - 60</b>	2	3	2	3	3	4	2	3	1	2	0	2	1	0	<b>28</b>
<b>61 -70+</b>	2	3	2	2	2	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>17</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	20	16	20	19	24	23	26	25	26	22	11	13	7	3	<b>255</b>

Source: Primary Data from the fieldwork.

**NL- Non- Non-Literate, PP- Primary Pass, L -Literate, M- Middle, S- Secondary, HS- Higher Secondary, HE- Higher Education**

Formal education situation, we can find as per the above table we find that the youth education is stronger. The elderly people of this village are mostly non-literate or low-literate. The non-literate population of this village is 36, constituting 14.12%. The number of primary pass individuals is 39, representing 15.29%. The count of just literate persons is 47, accounting for 18.43%. The middle pass population is 51, which is 20.00%. The secondary level has 48 individuals, equating to 18.82%. The higher secondary level includes 24 individuals, or 9.41%, while higher education encompasses 10 individuals, amounting to 3.92%.

Here we couldn't find the traditional knowledge centre Youth dormitory (*Dhumkuria*) is not found in the village; therefore, they are not getting the traditional education or informal education from the society.



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They are not talking in their language there, for they are getting the formal education in Bengali, so they are not using their language; they are fluent in Bangla. But Govt. of West Bengal has given recognition to Kurukh as the second official language to preserve the tribal culture of Oraon.

### 5.3 OCCUPATION:

The Oraon community in Mudidih village currently only partially adheres to its traditional cultural customs. After, the emergence of modernization and the proliferation of formal education, many began to gradually distance themselves from their traditional vocations and practices. Conventional livelihoods, including agriculture, forestry, and indigenous craftsmanship, have been predominantly forsaken in favor of contemporary occupations or urban employment. This shift has contributed to a slow erosion of cultural identity, as younger generations, influenced by modern values and aspirations, no longer engage with the rituals, beliefs, and occupational roles that once defined their community life.

Here trying to see the engagements of the Male as well as female occupation or livelihood separately.

#### Male Occupation: -

The economic condition of males in Mudidih village, Baghmundi, Purulia, is not very strong. Most of the men work as day labour, about 35 men, which means they do hard work for daily wages. Around 12 men work as agricultural labourers, helping on other people's farms, and only 4 men do their farming. Some men have other small jobs. There is 1 welder, 1 mason (construction worker), and 3 give tuition. A few people have better jobs. Some work in the forest department, and 4 men are government employees, 1 is a veterinary doctor, 2 are teachers, 1 works in a restaurant, and 1 works in a private company (Cement Factory). There are also 2 self-employed people and 4 drivers. 3 men get pensions from the government. About 8 men go outside the village to work as migrant labourers because there are not enough jobs in the village. Usually, they also migrated to Chennai, Tata, Kolkata, and Durgapur. Most people depend on a daily wage and farming, and only a few have stable jobs.

**Table 5.3.1: Male members engaged in a different economic activity.**

Different Work	Number of persons engaged
Day labour	35
Agriculture	4
Agricultural labour	12
Welding	1
Worked in the forest department	4
Self Employed	2
Veterinary Doctor	1
Govt employees	4
Driver	4
Working in a Restaurant	1
Private Employees	1
Pension holder	3
Teacher	2
Tuition Teaching	3
Mason	1
Migrated Labour	8
Total	86

Source: Fieldwork Data



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## WOMAN OCCUPATION: -

There are large numbers of housewives in the Families. The economic condition of women is simple and based on small jobs and government help. Women make 6 women Mat (Chatai), 2 women Mahula wine, 2 women *Hadiya* (Rice Bear) to earn money, and 4 women work as agricultural labourers. There is 1 tailor in the village.

A few women get support from the government. 2 women get a handicap pension, and 10 women get an old-age pension. 31 women receive money from the Laxmi Bhandar scheme, which helps them with their daily needs. Also, there are 2 ASHA workers who help in health services. Most women depend on small work and government support to run their families.

Table 5.3.2: Women's occupations at Mudidih village

Type Of Work	Number Of Persons Engaged
Chatai Making	6
Mahua Leachure Making	2
Handiya Making	2
Agricultural Labour	4
Handicap Pension	2
Tailoring	1
Asha Worker	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

Source: field data

TABLE 5.3.3: FEMALE LIVELIHOOD TYPE CLASSIFICATION

Category	Work Types	Count	%
Traditional Craft	Chatai Making, Tailoring	7	36.80%
Alcohol-Related	Mahua Liquor Making, Hadiya Making	4	21.00%
Wage Labour	Agricultural Labour	4	21.00%



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Welfare Based	Handicap Pension, ASHA Worker	4	21.00%
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As per the above table, we see that traditional craft is 36.80% and the alcohol-related 21% wage labour is 21% and the welfare-based 21 % female are engaged in their work.

### Government assistance:

A few members of Mudidih village find the government's economic assistance, like 10 women who are getting old pension and 31 women who are getting *Laxmi Bhandar*.

**5.4 RELIGIOUS BELIEFS:** - When we talk about social institutions, we are referring to the structured and enduring systems within a society that influence human behaviour, relationships, and societal norms. These include institutions such as the family, marriage, education, social class, civil society, conflicts of interest, the monetary system, the labour market, power dynamics, mass media, and religious organizations. Among these, religion holds a particularly influential position in shaping various aspects of cultural life. It significantly impacts customs, festivals, rituals, music, festivities, and collective identity. Religion not only governs the spiritual life of individuals but also plays a central role in the social cohesion and value systems of communities. As such, religion can be seen as a vital component of the broader social institution that deeply interweaves with cultural expression and societal structure.

In the context of the Oraon community of Mudidih Village, we observe a clear transformation in their religious identity and practices. Traditionally, the Oraons were followers of Sarnaism, an indigenous religion deeply rooted in nature worship, ancestral reverence, and tribal customs. However, in recent times, a significant portion of the community has adopted Hinduism, thereby distancing themselves from their original Sarna faith. This shift reflects broader processes of religious assimilation and cultural change that are not uncommon among tribal groups facing pressures of integration, modernization, or social mobility.

A prominent symbol of this transition in Mudidih Village is the Radha Gobinda Temple, which serves as a major religious centre for the community. In the year 2019 -20, they established the Ranadh Gobind temple by Satrugan Oraon. This temple was maintained by the Mudidih 16 Aana committee, whose head is Durgacharan Mahato. It is here that Hindu rituals, prayers, and festivals are now actively observed. In contrast, the Sarna Sthal, the traditional sacred grove that once served as the heart of religious and communal life, still physically exists but is no longer actively used or maintained for traditional rituals. Its presence is now more symbolic than functional, marking a cultural memory rather than a living tradition. This shift illustrates not only a change in religious affiliation but also a broader transformation in identity, cultural practices, and the social fabric of the community. Radha Gobind Kirtan was held from 7 April 2025 to 14 April 2025. During this period first day Kalash yatra was organized, and every day Gandha divas were followed. The Bhagwat path and katha are also done by the priests of the Radha Gobind temple.

As Hindus, they also follow the Hindu gods and goddesses for worship, like Durga, Kali, Radha-Krishna, Mansa Puja, Shiv Puja, Rath yatra, Tusu Parab, etc.





Table 5.4.1: The festival and puja celebrated by Oraons

HINDI MONTHS	FESTIVALS/PUJAS
FALGUN - CHAITRA	Fagu, Sarhul
BAISHAKH- JAYSHTHA	Dhanbuni, Bipadtarani Pujo, Kirtan
ASHADHA- SHRAVAN	Ratha Yatra, Shiv Pujo
BHADRA- ASHWIN	Karam, Jitiya, Mansa Puja, Durga Puja
KARTIK - AGAHAN	Kali Puja, Soharai,, Agan Sankranti
POUSH - MAGH	Tusu Parab, Magh Parab

Source: Field data

## 6. CONCLUSION:

Mudidih village is an Oraon tribal dominated village, under the Baghmundi Village, under the foothill of the Matha Forest in Purulia District of West Bengal. Oraons of this place migrated from the Ranchi District of Jharkhand and settled down here. The major population near them is Mahto and other Hindu communities. They are far from their motherland. Therefore, they are gradually forgetting their cultural custom and belief systems that are found among them. Now they forget their language, Kurukh, and speak the Bengali language. *"If you want to destroy a nation, don't destroy its history, but destroy its language, because without language, history is dumb. If you want to invade it, then capture their language, because invaders are recognized by their languages."* By M.R. Malik. This quotation is very significant to the Oraon tribes of Mudidih village.

As per the above finding and discussion, it seems the Oraon of the Mudidih village significantly adopted Hinduism, and due to modernization, they shifted themselves from Sarnaism to Hinduism and ditched their traditional cultural practices, customs, and heritage. Very soon, they will lose their tribal identity. The educated people of that village are not much interested in preserving their culture. Only Sagar Chandre Oraon and Sahdeb Oraon, a few young stars, tried but did not get the support from the Oraon community, but altered the ways the community expresses identity, maintains cohesion, and engages with tradition. The rise of the Radha Gobinda Temple and the diminishing role of the Sarna Sthal signify a shift in communal focus and values. Primarily a relic of history rather than an active place of worship, it highlights the overarching trends of cultural absorption, modernity, and religious reconfiguration faced by Oraon people of Mudidih.

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