

A Study on the Economic Condition of Oraon of Sundargarh District, Odisha in Post-Colonial Period

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Abstract

Here there is an attempt to review the Oraon tribal life of Sundargarh in the context of economic improvement and economic changes. In a society there are changes in social life and it is more so in a progressive society because of continuous actions and reactions of different forces and factors both internal and external. However with accelerating impact of urbanizations and Industrialization, agricultural economy slowly undergoing transformation. Constitutional provisions, plan and programme, rise of local leadership, expansion of modern urbanism and Industrializations have serious impact on traditional pattern of livelihoods. Due to spread of education and ideas from outside world, there is remarkable change in their outlook, world view value, attitude system and above all in the very philosophy of life.

Key Words: Economic condition, Oraon, Sundargarh, Odisha

Introduction

The tribal Culture blooms in the isolated highlands and forest of India. The study of tribes has assumed new significance in understanding to the social setup which influence more than anything in the historical process. Each tribe has typical problems of its own, due to its socio-economic situation, environment, historical experiences and extent of political articulation and more importantly due to modernization. The tribal people in India are living generally in the hills and forest. The land is a part of spiritual heritage to the tribal people in addition to economic activities. The forest continues an equally important source of livelihood to them.¹

The Oraon tribe is one of the major tribes in western Odisha. During post independent period, the perpetual

exploitation of the unscrupulous traders, middlemen and recently the industrial and mining activities in the area have pushed them to margins.² Oraon tribe trace their origin to some places in Southern India from where they migrated to Chhotanagpur plateau covering the border districts of Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. In Odisha, mostly they are settled in Sambalpur and Sundargarh district.

The Oraon tribe in Odisha are living generally in the forest and hills. Traditionally the Oraon tribes mainly depend on agriculture and forest farms for their ritual and economic livelihood. They used to utilize the forest based minor products on their needs. The item like mats, wooden stools, basket, cups and plates used by Oraon households are made from forest products.³ During traditional Society the size, of population was small,

availability of land per person was sufficient for sustaining and forest was near to their villages able to fulfil villagers needs.

Impacts of modernisation and urbanization have brought a new change in more or less all localities of Rourkela. For the period of the last 60 years and especially through the plan periods, the speed of mining and establishment of manufacturing industries, as well as the exploitation of power and forest resources has been greatly accelerated. People are getting civilized day by day and their life style is changing with time.

The Oraon tribe still follow their old practice of ploughing their fields and cultivating their lands. This shows that still people in these place are backward in this aspect and have not adopted the modern technologies in agriculture.⁴ The reason behind the fact that modern technology is not being used among the Oraon tribes, they have lack of knowledge about the use of technologies, pesticides, irrigation facilities and machines in agriculture. They mostly depend on the traditional methods.

The spread of developed means of transport and communication and growth and diffusion of community and commercialized service have increased mobility and interaction among Oraon tribe in Sundargarh District. Apart from the government, the role of Christian missionaries, the non tribal, the N.G.O has been important in their transformation. However, still majority of them are depending on Agriculture as a primary source of livelihood. Their agriculture is not yet modernized, they are still practicing traditional method.⁵ Their main crop is paddy and people are still practice

traditional method of paddy cultivation. They are very conscious about their old paddy crops.

During the British period the villagers were mostly depending on forest resources for their livelihoods. They used to collect various forest based products and fuel woods from nearby forest. Apart from forest resources they used to do some cultivation in forest land. Mostly it was a system of mono cropping. Their economy was subsistence in nature. They were struggling to feed them. In course of time slowly this forest got degraded because of lots of reasons. With time the situation has changed and the life of Oraon tribe under gone many changes. Oraon have accepted many new cultural elements from the neighboring caste and tribes in course of their prolonged contact with them compared to other tribes of Odisha Oraon have advanced with the time. The Oraon have influenced by the Urban living condition. Among many integrative traits, the language, religion and custom, kingship and marriage customs were observed to have undergone change. Intervention of British people, introduction of modern education, introduce Christian religion, invention of non-tribals, rise of population, rise of Industrialization influence the life and traditional pattern of livelihoods.

After independence the study area witnessed lots of change. In 1958, set up of Rourkela steel plant (RSP) in Rourkela city was very important incident for the local village. And small scale industries were established in periphery area of Rourkela city. The emergency of lots of Industry destroyed the forest resources on which the villagers were depending. However, it paved the way for other

alternative livelihood opportunities for the local skilled and unskilled labours. Setup of the Rourkela steel plant city and well road communication have widened the scope for the villagers to go out in search of livelihoods.

In the contemporary days the villagers have received lots of option for their livelihoods. The emergence of sponge industries have given a scope for moving out of village. The introduction of Mahatma Gandhi National rural Employment Scheme (MNGRES) has also brought some hope in the minds of poor tribals. The introduction of other development projects like anthodia scheme, BPL rice and many other have widened their scope of livelihoods. It has reduced the rate of migration in the village. The villagers who used to go out of state for the search of job have back. At present their world of migration is mostly confined to their block and locality.

However, still majority of them are depending on agriculture as primary source of livelihood. They are still practicing the traditional methods. Their main crops is paddy and people are still practicing traditional methods of paddy cultivation. They are very conscious about their old paddy crops. They are not much influenced by the High Yielding variety (HYV) seeds and chemical fertilizer. So, much change has not occurred in the case of agricultural production. Although, farming is now the chief source of livelihood for most of the households in study area, the agricultural has not given them a sense of security. The main reasons

includes the small size of their land holdings, low productivity, inefficient agricultural methods, lack of irrigation facilities they could not cultivate, They depend only rain water for cultivation. The agricultural or forest products whatever are collected by tribals and produced by the businessmen at a very cheap rate. As a result, they fail to acquire sufficient necessities of life of return of the products they sell.⁶

Discussion

The Oraon tribe is one of the major tribes in Odisha. The Oraon tribe mainly depend on agriculture and forest economy for their livelihood. Now their economic has been transformed. The life of Oraon tribe has undergone many changes. Degradation of forest resources due to Industrialization have forced the villagers to look for alternative sources of livelihoods. In study area it was observed that not even a single house hold is completely depending on forest resources for their livelihood. Many of the Oraons in the studied areas were either service holders or self employed. Many of them were working in service sectors and their children were studying with the aim of getting govt. jobs. Introduction of various development programmes by government and emergence of new Industries in locality have given alternative source of livelihood for the villagers. Some tradition patterns are still flow at present time but lots of changes comes in livelihood pattern of Oraon tribal people. Oraon tribe are still use leaves cups and plates in their family function.

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