CHAPTER III
SARNA OF JASPURNAGAR

3.1. Religion of Area

This region exhibits a great inter-mixing of religion of different cultures. In general the Sarna (Sacred Grove) dominate over all form of religion. The Oraon community religion is predominant. Though it has been gradually influenced by the religion of other cultures existing in the region. These cultures are of the great tradition communities living in the region. The dominance of Sarna religion is evident in the religious belief, customs and practices. The communities have number of deities and belief system associated with it. This could be well understood from the perspective of the worldview of the communities in the villages studied.

Redfield (1952:33) characterized worldviews as one in which a) confronter and the confronted tend to be unitary; b) the predominant attitude towards the non-human is one of maintenance of the relationship; c) the universe is thought to "care", to be morally significant. Greetz (1957:426) has observed that worldview as the cognitive, existential aspects of a given culture, combining with ethos and values (the moral and aesthetic aspects), underpins religion "to give to a set of social values what they perhaps need most to be coercive: an appearance of objectivity". Worldview deals with the sum of ideas, which an individual within a group and /or that group have of universe in and around them. It attempts to define those ideas from point of view of the individuals holding them from inside the culture rather than outside (Mendelson, 1972: 576).

In Oraon religion, the surrounding ecosystem is both spatially and vertically incorporated. The deities and spirits are organized in a hierarchical order (Roy, 1928:11-82). The hierarchical categories flow into each other, and their arrangement may change from one event to another. According to the need, more importance may be accorded to one over the other (Ghosh, 1996).

They assign specific function and a place to each category of deity, both in their cosmology as well as in their village ecosystem. It was primarily because the Oraon way of life interacts with the local environment, the fauna and flora, the rocks, stones, pathways, fields, rivers, stream, forest as well as the people of the region in a closely interconnected way. Each sphere of life flows into other almost continuously. There is an underlying logic, but it is determined in a re-
interpreted manner. It shifts from time to time from event to event and from interaction to interaction. The decisions made are based on values of maximization, but more with the complexity of relations evidenced in the totality of the worldview of the *Oraon* (Ghosh, 1996).

In the hierarchy of deities (Roy, 1928) Dharmes is the supreme deity of the *Oraon* religion. The *Oraon* consider him as the creator of the universe and the sun. Earlier it was considered to be nature deity like mountain (BasuMallick, 1992). Later on it took to mean the sun, it is now replaced by the Hindu word Bhagwan that means the supreme God. Dharmes is benevolent and has given the management of the world, into the hands of various tutelary divinities and spirits or devils whom the *Oraon* must propitiate. A sacrifice of white cock is usually made in the name of Dharmes, whenever other spirits or deities of the village are being propitiated or worshipped especially during the principal *Oraon* festival of Sarhul, which is held in the Sarna (Sacred Grove). The supreme god is invoked at the time of severest difficulties.

Second in hierarchy are the ancestral spirits namely *Pach-Balar*. The ancestral spirits are very close to the *Oraon*. After death each person becomes a spirits. Earlier, *Oraon* used to bury the dead. At present they cremate them. They have two ceremonies for the dead i.e. green and dry. After cremation, they collect the bones in a pot and bury them in the yard of their houses. Hence, each plot of land, each house and land under it, is inhabited by the spirits.

In the third layer are deities and spirits of the village, who are regarded as *Deotas* or gods and other as Bhut or Ghosts. Pat or Pat raja, Chala Pachcho or Sarna Bhuria and Devimai belong to this grade. To the later section belong the Darha Desauli, Mahadani, Devi Mai, and Mahadev in some villages. All of them live in sacred groves spread around the villages. Here all the natural resources like hills, caves, water bodies etc are assigned with a deity and are propitiated regularly on an annual basis or at a fixed interval of times as desired by the village community.

In the next layer are certain spirits like Chandi and the spirits of hunting, who are worshipped by the young men and Acherael and Jodh. They are special spirits of women. The Khut Bhut or tutelary spirits follows them, who are the spirits of the original founder of a village. Khut-Bhut (clan spirit) is one of the most important spirits of the *Oraon*. Khut- Bhut essentially means the spirit of the original settlers of the village. Since the original settlers of the village had to clear the jungle and make their huts etc, it involved disturbance of the spirits residing in the jungles
and for that reason the original settlers of the village or their descendants (Bhumihar) had to make periodical sacrifice and worship to these spirits as a means of propitiation. They are protectors of the entire lineage. After the above are the household ghosts, who are often spirits of ancestors.

Next in order are the spirits or mysterious powers residing in certain objects or symbols such as totem and totem-emblems, village emblem, certain musical instruments or swords used for sacrifice etc. Now a day totem is worshipped at the time of marriage. The totem objects are not eaten. In the last are the spirits of the persons met with un-natural deaths, apart from the veil eye, evil mouth etc.

3.2. Spatial arrangement of deities/spirits in Oraon worldview

The deities in Oraon religion are placed both in vertical and horizontal plane on the basis of power and function assigned to them by the society. As seen in the classification of deities in various ranked categories, with the specific ritual process prescribed for the community, the Oraon have provided different role to different deities/spirits.

Dharmes or the supreme god is placed in the sky and has the supreme power to control all the other gods and spirits in the Oraon pantheon. While worshipping Dharmes, Oraon basically faces east direction, which is the direction of the rising sun. They do not have any groves or place allotted for Dharmes in the village ecosystem nor they have any exclusive occasion for offering sacrifice. But they offer sacrifice of a white fowl to him at every important festival like Sarhul, Kadleta etc.

Dharmes’s control over the other spirits is evident from the arrangement and rituals, at the principal festival known as Sarhul. In this first Dharmes is worshipped and sacrifice is offered to him, then later on to other spirits. This arrangement is meant to symbolize their belief that Dharmes will whenever necessary, controls the other spirits and sees that they behave properly. Location of the sun in the sky is presumed to be that he sees all that man and spirits do down on the earth. The Oraon consider that Dharmes punishes offences against customary morality.
Second in hierarchy is the **Pach-Balar** (ancestors spirits). The soul of deceased **Oraon** is considered to enter into community of the **Pach-Balar** spirits on the day when the bones of all the **Oraon** of a clan, who have died in the course of the year, are ceremonially dropped in the stream or deposited in the clan **Khundi** a place with in the house. The place is considered sacred. The **Oraon** believe that after death occurs; a person goes to the world of the dead where he is reunited with his ancestors. The soul of deceased **Oraon** is believed to enter into the community of ancestor-spirits (**Pach-Balar**) on the **Harbora** day i.e. the bone are dropped in the stream at a particular place where the community does it regularly. Hence, each plot of land, each house and the land under it are inhabited by spirits, which affect everyday life of an **Oraon**. Except for the annual ceremony, there is no special religious festival on which offering or sacrifices are made solely to the ancestor-spirits. These spirits are involved at every feast and on every suitable occasion their living relations make offerings to them.

The ancestor spirits are usually remembered when one is seriously ill. A vow is taken to offer a fowl on recovery. The spirits are involved and their living relations make offerings to them during every feast or festival such as **Sarhul**, **Karma**, **Jitia** and **Nawaknani**.

The village deities and spirits are offered periodical sacrifices by the village priest or **Baiga** on the behalf of the village community. **Sarna Bhuria** or “the old lady of the grove” ranks as the chief among the village deities. She is believed to be residing in the sacred winnowing basket in the house of the **Baiga** to which the sacred knife for cutting the sacrificial fowl is attached. She is propitiated during **Sarhul**. She is most popular of **Oraon** deities and receives sacrifices in a most elaborate manner in the ritual performed during the annual spring festival known as **Sarhul**. Similarly the villagers must offer to **Sarna Bhuria**, the first fruits of his fields. It is believed that these deities are such mighty one, that dogs and birds do not touch the remnant of sacrificial feast at the **Sarna**. The spatial location of this grove is in the vicinity of the village as it is considered to be benevolent deity.

**Pat** is believed to be the master of all the village spirits who protects the village from sickness or any other misfortune. **Darha** is the gatekeeper of the village and protects it from incursion of the spirits from outside. **Mahadani** is another village spirit whom the villagers used to be propitiated with human sacrifice in the past, whenever a famine or drought occurred. These are male deities.
and spirits are considered to be fearsome in nature and are located on the boundaries of villages. Each of these deities is provided with a grove, which is located in a different direction of the village. The other village deities like hills, caves, or water bodies are the natural markers and support providing system, worshipped collectively at regular interval by the village communities.

*Chandi* seat is located in uplands or hill slope. *Chandi* is special deity of Oraon bachelors and is offered sacrifice in the month of *Magh* (Jan-Feb). *Acherael* is a special spirit of woman, who is not represented by any symbol nor have any place of location. She is worshipped to protect the women folk of the *Oraon*. The some villages the *Khut Bhut* is also placed in the groves along with the village deities. They have a wooden pen (a wooden log carved in the shape of a pen) with a nail fixed into it, indicating that he is located there and is controlled by the village deity from harming the villagers. He is a clan spirit and each is entrusted with the propitiation of their respective *Khut Bhut* in the respective *Khut Bhut* lands. Sacrifice of pig is offered to *Khut Bhut* (lineage ghost), as they are protectors of the entire lineage.

After this come the household ghosts which are often spirits of the ancestors. They are believed to be the guardian spirits of each and every household. Even one has to offer sacrifice to these spirits when separated from the parent's family by setting up a separate hearth, storage place etc. They sacrifice a pig, goat and fowl and only the agnate members participate in it.

Weapons and musical instruments, which are considered sacred, are used/played usually during an occasion, whether religious or social. They are anointed with oils and the blood of sacrificial animal at ceremonies.

### 3.3. Sacred Grove of Jaspur

In the *Oraon* religion, the Sacred groves i.e. *Sarna* is the space allocated for the village deities and all the activities related to them are carried out as a collective phenomena. Sacred groves in the Jaspur region are referred to as *Sarna*. In the Chotanagpur region *Sarna* is a form of tribal religion (Basumallick, 1992, Sahai, 1976). *Sarna* constitute an patch of area covered with naturally occurring forest trees considered to be a place left for the spirit of the original habitants of the area referred as *khut bhut* (Sahai, 1976). Sacred grove is a patch of relic vegetation (Gadgil and Vartak, 1976). The prominent trees in *Sarna* are *Sarai* or *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*) along with
other naturally occurring trees in the groves. The community belief is that it's an abode of the village deity who protects the village production system and population from internal and external threats.

3.3.1. Sacred groves of Baghima Village

Baghima village has two Sarna, namely Pat Sarna and Sarhul Sarna. Presently fisheries department has established its office, along with fish spawning and breeding centre, in major portion of Sarhul Sarna. Only a small portion of land in the southern corner of the actual Sarna area is left for the community to conduct the rituals. This has led to a dispute over the legal ownership of the grove and the matter is referred to the court to resolve the matter.

a) Sarhul Sarna

Sarhul Sarna (Patnaik & Pandey, 1998: 321-27) is the residing place of prominent deity named Sarna Bhuria or Chala Pachhao also referred as Mata bai in the village, a female deity. She is considered to be a benevolent deity, who looks after the village production system. The deity is seated under an old Sal tree located in the centre of the grove. A stone is placed under the tree to symbolise the deity. It is located in the Northern direction of the village. The total original area of the Sarhul Sarna was six acres, but lately the fisheries department of the State government has taken away about five acres of land. The present area of Sarhul Sarna is about one acre approximately. The village community celebrates its main festival of the village Sarhul in this grove of the village. Apart from that the villagers perform other rituals and celebrations relating to village agriculture and social system in this grove. Baiga of the village perform the rituals pertaining to the Sarna. There is no restriction or taboo to enter or participate in Sarna on the occasion of the ritual. Apart from this, Sarna is some times used for social ceremonies. The villagers consider the total six acres as the property of the villages and claim right over it, as they have traditionally owned it for generations.

b). Pat Sarna

The second Sarna in the village is Pat Sarna; this is located on the boundary of the village next to the water stream on the pathway leading to the Tikingung village. The Deity of this Sarna is a male deity called Pat Devta, considered to be protector of the village from sickness and other
misfortunes. The deity is of malevolent nature and is considered to control all the other spirits of the village. A red cock is offered every year, in all the village festivals performed by the Baiga. A grey (Kaser) or reddish colour goat is offered to this deity at an interval of three years. The area of this grove is one acre. It has Sal trees along with other species. It is used selectively. The villagers, with a fear not to harm the deity, restrict the gazing and collection of products of the trees from this grove. Here the assembly of the traditional panchayat of the village is held to resolve any kind disputes. The women are prohibited from entering this Sarna.

3.3.2. Sacred groves of Komodo village

Komodo village has only three Sarna named Gudima Sarna (Sarhul Sarna), Pati Sarna and Mahadani.

a). Sarhul Sarna or Gudima Sarna

Sarhul Sarna of this village is considered to be the abode of Gudima or Sarna Bhuria, a female deity. The Gudima is considered to be a benevolent deity and associated with the production system of the village. This grove has an area of one acre. It has number of Sal trees whose height ranges between fifteen to twenty metres. This is located in the eastern direction of the village and is inside the boundary of the village. Here also there is similarity in the belief system as compared to the Baghima village. Baiga of the village performs the rituals pertaining to the Sarna. No taboo or prohibition is associated with this Sarna. In this grove the villagers perform Sarhul and Karma festivals of the village.

b). Pat Sarna

The deity residing in the Pat Sarna is Pat Devta, who is a male deity and is of malevolent nature. He is considered to be the protector of the village from external threats and calamities. This grove is located in the Northeast direction, on the boundary of the village, which next to the hill and barren land adjoining the forest. This grove has number of Sal trees. The rituals are performed under a Sal tree considered to be sacred site with in the grove. A red cock is offered every year, in all the village festivals performed by the Baiga. Animal sacrifice is offered at regular interval of five years to appease the deity. The decision to sacrifice an animal ranging from goat to Buffalo is taken on the advise by the Baiga depending on the intensity of the problem. Women and children are restricted from entering this grove.
c). Mahadani Sarna

Komodo village has a third Sarna referred as Mahadani Sarna. It is the abode of Darha Desauli spirit, who is the protector of the village. According to the villagers, this spirit acts as the guard or gatekeeper of the village, believed to protect from the incursions of spirits from outside. A wooden stake driven into the ground at the Sarna represents Darha spirit. This grove is located in western side of the village, on a hilltop. It has number of Sal trees in it. The sacred site with in the grove has four Trishul and two huge stones indicating the place where the spirit resides. The place where rituals are performed has stones and the rocks anointed with vermilion. A red (Rangua) coloured cock is offered as sacrifice to Darha spirit at the time of Sarhul festival and other collective festivals of the village. This particular spirit is offered a sacrifice of a cock at the time of Sarhul and Kadleta festivals every year and buffalo at an interval of twelve years. On the Asadhi festival day, the villagers worship this spirit to remove all the evil spirits existing with in the village premises. Women and children are restricted from entering this grove.

3.3.3. Sacred Grove of Ghamhariya village

Gadha Ghamhariya village has four Sarna and their names are as follows, Pat Sarna, Layte Sarna, Gudima Sarna (also known as school Sarna), Manohar Sarna where as Ghamhariya village has two Sarna, namely Sarhul Sarna, and Mahadani Sarna.

a). Sarhul Sarna

This Sarna is the abode of a female deity referred as Sarna Bhuria. The nature of this deity is benevolent and is associated with the production system of the village. The size of this grove is two acres and it is located on the outskirts of the village. Sarhul festival is celebrated in this grove. It has mainly Sal trees along with other trees like Mahua (Maduca indica), Pepal (Ficus religosa), Behra (Terminalia tomentosa) etc. There is no restriction on any person entering and collecting the products of the trees in the grove.
b). Pat Sarna

The deity of this Sarna is a male deity called as Pat Devta. He is considered to be protector of the village from the sickness and other misfortunes. The deity is of malevolent nature and is considered to control all the other spirits of the village. A red cock is offered every year, in all the village festivals performed by the Baiga. It is located in the middle of the Gadha Ghamhanya village and has six Sal trees and four Mango trees. To perform the rituals, a platform is constructed in this Sarna. Karma festival and dance on the occasion of Karma festival is celebrated in this grove. Generally women are not allowed to enter this Sarna.

c). Layte Sarna

This Sarna is located in the east of Gadha Ghamhanya village. It is the abode of Darha Desauli spirit, who is a male and is of malevolent nature. According to the villagers, this spirit acts as the guard or gatekeeper of the village, which it is believed to protect from the incursions of spirits from outside. A wooden stake driven into the ground at the Sarna represents Darha spirit. It has an area of one acre. It has about sixty to sixty-five trees, mostly Sal trees. In this Sarna, villagers of Ghamhariya celebrate Kadleta festival.

d). Manohar Sarna

This Sarna is located in the west of the village, and has an area of two acres. This Sarna has trees, flower plants and shrubs. This Sarna is sources of flowers for the ritual activities of the village, which are exclusively used in rituals performed in the other Sarna of the village. The villagers are prohibited from using the flowers from this Sarna for household worship. The flowers of this Sarna are used for rituals in Sarhul Sarna, Mahadani Sarna, and Pat Sarna.

e). Gudima Sarna of Ghamhariya village

In this Sarna, the deity is Gudima or Sarna Bhuria, a female deity of benevolent nature, and is associated with the production system of the village. This Sarna is located in west of Ghamhariya village on an area of half-acre land. This Sarna has about twenty to twenty-five Sal trees. The government has constructed a Primary School for the village on a portion of it; therefore it is also called as school Sarna.
Mahadani Sarna

The spirit living in Mahadani Sarna is Darha Desauli or Dulhadev and is considered to protect the villagers from the external problems. This Sarna is located in the east of the village on an area of four hectares. It has about hundreds Sal trees and of different age class; some being two hundred years old. The other species found in the Sarna are Saja, Jamun, Hara, Chironji, Putal, Kathal, Bans, Karanj, Behara, Kachnar. A wooden stake driven into the ground at the Sarna represents Darha spirit. Here also they worship under a Pepal tree, the worship place had a club shape iron erected and small stone idol placed there. It has a white flag with trishul mark on it. Near the place of worship is a rock structure in the shape of sitting horse with chopped head. According to a myth there was fight between the god Churipar residing in this particular Sarna and Tanginath of other grove, and Tanginath copped of the head of the horse of Churipar.

Generally, if the villagers are facing any problem of external threat from pest attack or epidemic diseases or natural calamities, or drought; then the spirit is requested to protect the village from the impending problem. In return the villagers offer sacrifice of cock or goat or buffalo. The type of animal to be sacrificed depends on the gravity of the problem and the availability of the animal. Once the problem is resolved then the villagers collect money and procure the needed material for the rituals. On a decided day they assemble in the grove under the direction of the Baiga of the village and perform the rituals. People avoid visiting Sarna at the time of night for fear of being possessed by the spirit. The women are not allowed to participate in the rituals taking place in Sarna.

In 1994 Jaspur forest department under Employment Assurance scheme (EAS) has done conservation work of this Sarna, during which they have constructed a platform for carrying out rituals.
Myth of Mahadani Sarna in Ghambhariya village

According to the villagers of Ghambhariya, Dulhadev lives in Mahadani Sarna of the village. He is always riding a horse. According to the myth, in ancient time a marriage procession has come to the village. The bridegroom was riding a horse. For some reason the procession halted in the grove and the bridegroom died and took a form of a spirit and started living in this Sarna. Then onward this Sarna is called Mahadani Sarna. The spirit of this Sarna is always riding a horse, who in night comes out of his place of residence and goes round the village and protects the village from unwarranted visitors like wandering spirits and evil powers who can harm the villagers and their property. While he travels on his horse, though he is invisible, villagers can hear the sound of a horse running around the village.

When ever the villagers faces any misfortune, then they approach spirit of the Mahadani Sarna and offers sacrifice of a he-goat and Handia (local rice beer) to make the spirit happy, so that he eliminates the adversary. Similarly if any household has a missing person or cattle, then the head of the household requests the grove deity to get back the person or cattle safe and sound. Once the problem is solved, the spirit is offered sacrifice of a Goat. According to the villagers Dulhadev locates the lost person or cattle riding on his horse back, and bring them back to their residence. Prior to solemnising any marriage, the house in which the marriage is to be held offers small dress to the Dulhadev of the grove. And after the marriage is solemnised, it is essential for the bride and bridegroom to visit the grove and worship the grove spirit and take his blessing before starting of their wedded life. The belief among the community of the village is that if they do not observe this practice, the spirit of the grove (Dulhadev) himself will take the sacrifice of the couple.
3.3.4. Sacred grove of Echkela village

Echkela village has four Sarna namely Sarhul Sarna, Phool Sarna, Mahadani Sarna and Kadamara Sarna.

a). Sarhul Sarna

The deity of this Sarna is the Sarna Bhuria or Chala Pachao, a female deity and is located at a distance of half a kilometre from the Echkela village in the north direction of the village. The nature of this deity is benevolent and is associated with the production system of the village. The total area of this Sarna is two acres. In this Sarna the villagers celebrate the Sarhul festival of the village. No taboos are associated with this Sarna, collection of fallen twigs, fruits and other material is allowed. Women can also go in this Sarna.

b). Phool Sarna

This Sarna is located in the north west of the village at a distance of half a kilometre from the village. This Sarna has Sal trees of twenty meters height and along with other flower bearing trees and plants, used in the various rituals conducted in the different Sarna of the village. In this Sarna no ritual is performed. The only use of this Sarna is that the flowers for the rituals in different Sarna are collected exclusively from this grove. If the trees stop flowering, the Baiga of the village offers worship to the deity in this Sarna to make the trees in the grove bear flowers. After which the flowers once again start blossoming on the trees.

c). Kadamara Sarna

This Sarna is the abode of Darha Desauli spirit, who is a male and is of malevolent nature. According to the villagers, this spirits acts as the guard or gatekeeper of the village, which is believed to protect from the incursions of spirits from outside. A wooden stake driven into the ground at the Sarna represents Darha spirit. This Sarna is located in northwest of the village at a distance of one and half kilometres from the village. It has an area of one acre and is surrounded by agriculture field from all sides. An old stone wheel is lying in the grove, which the villagers believe is the wheel of the chariot of the spirit who lost it, while fighting the battle with Tanginath (a spirit). This grove has Sal trees twenty-five meters high and girth of three meters. It
has platform for rituals. The platform in the grove is used for the ritual performances. The ritual in this *Sarna* is performed on special occasions when the villagers are facing drought or attack of disease, calamity etc. Then villagers request the spirit of *Kadamara Sarna* to protect village from calamities and to bring rain so that the agriculture could be carried out and food problem of the area could be solved. They promise to offer a sacrifice of an animal mostly goat or buffaloes. The word *Kadamara* according to the villagers means sacrifice of buffalo. The nature of offering made to the spirit of the grove is directly proportional to the intensity of the problem. If the problem is of minor type the rituals have offering of coconuts etc and may be sacrifice of a cock. If the problem is of great magnitude then the offering of buffalo is a must.

d). Mahadani Sarna

This *Sarna* is located at a distance of one kilometre from the village in an area of two acres. It is located in the west direction from the village. This *Sarna* has male spirit residing in it, *Mahadani Devta*, who protects the village from external threat. Whenever the village faces any kind of external threat, they approach the spirit in this *Sarna* and request him to protect the village from the impending external threat; in return they will offer him with *sacrifice* of an animal. The *Baiga* is the mediator between the villagers and the spirit of the *Sarna*. Once the request is fulfilled then the villagers collect money and decide a day to offer the sacrifice. On that day they go to the *Sarna* and offer the sacrifice. After the sacrifice they prepare the food and eat all the food in the grove itself and nothing is brought home. Women are prohibited to enter this grove. The responsibility of the protection of the village is with the deity of this grove.

Therefore, Echkela village has four *Sarna*; each is of specific importance to the village. It is totally ingrained into the culture and life of the villagers. It is believed that if anybody breaks the norms of the village and does not plead pardon to the *Sarna* deity; then the deity of the grove punishes him by destroying his entire lineage. Therefore whenever anybody does wrong and he feels guilty, he goes to the *Sarna* and pleads to the deity of the grove to pardon him for the mistake of breaking the norms of the society. This fear of wrath of the deity if any one breaks the rule and norms of the society, provides the strength to sustain the rule and norms of the society.
From the above, it has been noted that each of the study villages has minimum of three groves within the village boundary. These groves can be classified on the following basis. Each sacred grove has certain principal deity residing in it, may be male or female. Community has assigned certain strength and power to these deities on the basis of productive or protective functions provided by these deities to the society. Location of these sacred groves in the village ecosystem is governed by the malevolent or benevolent nature of the deities as well as the function they provide to the community. It is generally found that in the study area that the location of the sacred groves is in all direction except the south, which according to the villagers is an inauspicious direction.

3.4. Sarna in Oraon Worldview

The village deities and spirits, who rank third in Oraon pantheon arrangement, are placed in sacred groves referred as Sarna. In Oraon worldview Sarna are arranged in two concentric zones. In the inner circle is the Sarhul Sarna, which is mostly located near the village settlements. This grove has principal village deity assigned with power to control all other spirits. This grove provides productive and benevolent benefits to the community. This signifies healthy relationship developed among the human, nature and supernatural power for productive and benevolent functions. The attributes and functions of Sarna Bhuria clearly indicate that she is in origin a nature deity, representing the earth or spirits of vegetation and symbolised as mother earth.

In the outer circle are Sarna belonging to the village deities or spirits namely Pat and Mahadani or Darha Desuali referring these Sarna as Kadamara or Mahadani etc. Which have deities/spirits providing protective functions and are of malevolent nature, are located on the boundary of the village. These deities/spirits are of male gender. Their protective role assigned to them to be allocated the spaces on the boundary of the village. Similarly the nature of ferocity of the deities/spirits makes them to be separated from human, but to be properly propitiated through rituals.

The two concentric zones identified for sacred groves exhibit the relationship developed between two different natures of deities and human. One benevolent and productive in nature is placed near the human settlement, while other malevolent in nature, is placed at the boundary and acts as protector for others.
3.5. Festivals or Rituals Associated with Sacred Groves

The community seeks to ensure safety and prosperity to the village-community as a whole at each stage in the annual cycle of its economic pursuits of the villages such as agriculture, food gathering, hunting and fishing. All the activities associated with the economic pursuit of the villages are celebrated collectively. The community celebrates its rejoicing and its sense of renewed social solidarity with feasting, drinking and dancing. Therefore there are series of festivals associated with various livelihoods activities of the village system spread through out the one-year annual economic cycle of the village community.

Few festivals are associated with collection of Non Timber Forest produces (NTFP) or food gathering activities (Roy 1928:190). In the villages of Jaspur region, the villagers celebrate two festivals associated with food gathering activities namely Pahgu or Holi and Sarhul. There is one festival associated with the hunting activities of the village system that is Jeth sikhar. The festival for the cattle owned by the villagers called as Sohorai.

Agriculture being the predominant activity of the villages, number of festivals is associated with the different stages of agriculture activities of the villages. Though, Sarhul festival was considered to be mainly associated with food gathering in the past (Roy 1928: 190), is at present predominantly being celebrated as a festival associated with the agriculture. The other festivals associated with agriculture are Hariyari, Kadleta, Kharihani and Nawakhani. Some other important festivals of the villages are Asadhi, Karma, Jitia.

In all the festivals of economic pursuit, rituals are performed in sacred groves of the village. Some performances are held in grove and in some cases after the rituals are performed in the prescribed place, the next day the deities/spirits of groves are offered sacrifice, in the grove. Sarhul festival is the main festival of the village celebrated, every year in the month of Baisak (March-April). This festival ceremony is held in the Sarhul Sarna of the village. In the month of Kuaar (August) Karma festival is celebrated, where the unmarried girls of the village keep fast and worship in Sarna. Where the girls seeks blessing from the Gudima of Sarna for a suitable husband. After rituals they dance and sing in the Akhara of the village.
On the other occasion, it is basically need-based approach applied to visit Sarna i.e. as per issues and problem faced by the village people seek resort to the Sarna deity to overcome and solve their problems. In the rituals held in Sarna only the male members participate. Very young children are prohibited from participating in these rituals as they are considered to be susceptible to be caught by the deity or spirits residing in the grove and harmed.

For example, the villagers of Baghima village told about various situations in which the people seek resort in the deity of groves. If somebody in the village is very poor, he visits the Sarhul Sarna and narrates her/his problems and prays to the deity to solve it. According to villagers, deity solves their problem. According to the villagers of Baghima village, two persons are there in the village, whom the Sarna deity has blessed and they never have shortage of food, though they do not do any work. The name of these two persons are Sitaram Oroan of age thirty-five years and Jitaram Oraon of thirty-nine years of age. The vessel meant for storing rice in their house fulfils their requirement of food grains. Whenever they need rice they take out from the clay vessel and by the deities blessing that much rice is again filled in the vessel. Thus their pots are never empty and are always filled with rice. Such beliefs of the villagers provide the sources for invincible faith the villagers have in the Sarna deity.

a) Sarhul festival

Sarhul festival is celebrated in each and every village in region, in their respective Sarhul Sarna. The Sarhul festival is held in the month of Chait i.e. March or April, i.e. the first month of the Hindu calendar. This festival is celebrated as a marriage day of sun (Dharmes) and earth (Sarna Bhuria) symbolizing the productivity aspect of the marriage of sun with the earth to bring prosperity on earth by good agriculture crops.

It is also a thanks giving rituals for the previous year as well as welcoming of the new agriculture season. Until this festival is celebrated in the village no one gathers or use new fruits or starts agriculture activities. In past, it was decided on the basis of natural indicators like flowering of Sal trees. The flower of Sal trees plays an important role in the ceremony of Sarhul festival, which is generally held after blossom of flowers in the Sal trees.
As Roy (1928:193-94) stated "the month of Chait (March-April) ushers in the spring with its varieties of blossoming of plants and trees and newly sprouting edible leaves and tubers. Of these, the Sal blossoms form the most striking feature of blossoming nature in the land of the Oraon. And so the Oraons hold a religious festival in spring in their sacred grove or Sarna, in which Sal Blossoms form an essential elements and which is popularly known as the Sarhul or the feast of Sal Blossoms, but which in their own language name as the Khaddi and also Khekelbenja or the marriage of earth”.

The Sal tree plays a major role in the life of the communities as well as in their various ritual celebrations. Once the Sal trees are in full Blossom, Baiga in consultation with the elders (traditional Patel, clan elders and other communities members) of the village fixes an appropriate date to celebrate the Sarhul festival. Hindu community resident of the village like Brahmín and Rajput, are allowed to enter the Sarna as well as participate in the rituals. The Kotwar gives the information about the date of Sarhul to each house in the village.

After fixing the date and day of celebration for Sarhul festival, a fixed amount of money is collected from all the households. In this they exclude the houses of Christians. Sometime instead of money, a fixed amount of rice i.e. one wooden paila (two and half kilograms) is collected from each household. The grains collected are sold in the market. The price realised by selling the grains in the market is used for purchasing the material required for the ritual of Sarhul. The material consist of four to five earthen pots, coconuts, Roli (red vermilion), turmeric, winnowing fan, knife, Dhotis, clothes for Baiga and Panbhar, Janau (thread worn by the Hindus), havan material, fruits and five different coloured cock. If goat or pig is also to be sacrificed then money is collected for the same and animals are purchased as per specification of Baiga. The Kumhar of the village supplies the earthen pots and members of Ghasi community play the music on the day of Sarhul festival. The Lohar makes the Trishul, in which a Lemon is pierced and placed at the time of ceremony in the Sarna. He also provides the new knife needed for sacrifice. They all are paid for all the material and their services in celebration of the Sarhul festival.

Meanwhile the wife of Baiga and Panbhar go to each and every household to collect a small handful of paddy. This is offered to the Sarna Bhuria and later the sanctified rice is distributed to head of every household of the village to mix with the seeds kept apart for sowing in the forthcoming agriculture season, so that there is surplus production of the grains in the coming year.
The celebration of the *Sarhul* festival is held for three days. The *Baiga* keeps fast for three days, which includes the day of *Sarhul*. A day before the *Sarhul* the small flag that is with the *Baiga*, called as *chandi jhanda*, is planted on his house’s gate. On the day of *Sarhul*, *Baiga* gets up early in the morning and taking along with him *Panbhar* and other village elders to the pond or water body of the village. Here they take bath. After bath he and others returns to his house and enter into the room where the sacred *winnowing* fan (*Sup*) and sacred knife is kept. These two are used in the rituals of *Sarhul* festival. He worships them and requests the deity of *Sarna* i.e. *Chala Paccaho* to sit on the *Sup*.

In the meantime, wife of *Baiga* along with other women of the village go to the water body and take bath. After returning from the there, the ceremonial marriage of the *Baiga* along with his wife is performed to symbolise the marriage of sun (*Dharmes*) and earth (*Sarna Bhuria*). After this *Baiga*, *Panbhar* and other villagers, taking along the winnowing fan, knife and the materials required for the rituals go to the *Sarna*. In Baghima village at the time of worship in *Sarna*, a person from *Dhangar* households will go to the *Sarna* early, and cleans the place where rituals is to be conducted. On reaching the grove, *Panbhar* and *Kotwar* again clean the place near the sacred site for worship and sacrifice. *Baiga* performs rituals in the *Sarna* along with the male member of the villages; all the villagers come to *Sarna* bringing coconuts.

Echkela and Ghamhariya have exclusive grove (*Phool Sarna* and *Manohar Sarna*), meant for the flowers required in rituals of *Sarhul* and other such ceremonies of the village. While in Baghima and Komodo, the flowers are collected from the forest. The *Panbhar* collect large amount of *Sal* flowers, which is offered to the deities and then distributed to the villagers, as *Prasad* of the deity, which villagers take home and keep it in the house. It is believed that it brings prosperity in the coming year.

The *Baiga* performs the rituals by tying unbleached thread or *Janeu* to the *Sarna* tree in three or *five* rounds. The *Panbhar* along with the village youth clean the grass of about a foot width and twelve feet in length area called as *Akhara*, commencing from the eastern side of the tree and leading in straight line toward the northern side. This space is used for sacrifice of five different coloured cock to respective deities of village. At an interval of two to three feet distance rice is kept to feed the sacrificial cocks. If goat and pig are to be offered similar space of size three by two feet is cleaned for each of them toward south west of the place cleaned for fowl sacrifice.
At first four different coloured cock are sacrificed. Rangua or Lal (Red) cock, to Pat Devta, Surkh (Crimson) is offered to Mahadani, Kala or Mala (Black) is offered to Darha Desuali and Bhura (brown) are also sacrificed to Sarna Bhuria. Before sacrificing the cocks they are washed and made to eat the rice kept in the Akhara. Then each deity or spirit is hailed to accept the sacrifice. The head of all the fowls are not wholly cut but partly served from the neck. In the last safed (white) cock is offered to Dharmes (sun god), the supreme deity of the village. If no white fowl is available, then white egg of hen is offered. This sacrifice is offered at the southern most end of sacrificial Akhara. The reason for offering sacrifice at the southern most end of the Akhara is that Dharmes controls all the deities and spirits of the village, and if any mischief done by any of them will be controlled by him. Similarly sacrifice is offered in the last is to Dharmes to over come for the any humanly mistake in the process of sacrifice.

If the goat or pig is to be offered to the deity, then sacrifice is performed with the sacred knife possessed by the Baiga. The pig is hacked to death by few villagers. The Baiga himself sacrifices the goat. Panbhar assist Baiga in sacrificing rituals. After the animal sacrifices roli and turmeric is applied to the Sarna tree and coconut is offered to it. Sal flowers are offered to the village deities.

Then the Yadav family bring milk and Ghasi household person brings fuel wood and sal leaves. The salt is bought from the house of Mukhiya (Patel or headman) of the village. Meanwhile few men dress up the slain coloured cocks and white cock separately. The coloured cocks mixed in rice collected from different households is prepared as Tahari. While white fowl is mixed with little rice packed in Sal leaves and roasted in fire. The goat or pig sacrificed is cooked separately. Milk is used to make sweet Tahari mixed with rice.

The Baiga takes up a small amount of cooked Tahari and roasted meat and offers the same to the four spirits by name Darha Desauli, Pat devta, Chala Pacchao and Dulhadev. After this Baiga with the help of Panbhar distributes the Tahari as Prasad (sanctified food) to all the male members present in the grove. Then he takes out for himself and Panbhar and all eat it and nothing is taken back to village. After this the Tahari made of four different colour fowls and milk are distributed to every one. Women are prohibited to eat the food made of the fowls. They consider that if women eat or enter the grove, the deity of grove may get angry and harm them.
Those who want to eat food prepared from goat or pig sit separately. But all get the Tahari made of fowls, as it forms the essential sacrificial meal.

The men of other castes such as Brahmins, Lohar, Yadav and Ghasi etc are offered Sidha (uncooked food materials) so that they can prepare separately for themselves as per their norms.

In the village, at Baiga’s house food is prepared for the women of the village. It consists of cooked rice and baked cakes made of urid. When Baiga with others return to the village, then the women eat the food.

Baiga goes to every house and blesses the women members and fixes a twig of Sal flower in the roof of the house to bring prosperity and happiness in it. In this manner he proceeds to every house and perform the same chore. Later he returns to his home and goes to the sacred room and places the winnowing fan and knife in the room. After this villagers are asked to meet every one by forgetting the past difference and decide to work collectively for the well being of the village and community. They pledge to protect the values and norms of the community on this day. The Baiga uses the remaining amount of the money collected for the rituals and the material purchased for the rituals belong to the Baiga.

The house made liquor called Handia plays an important role through out the celebration of Sarhul festivals. Few pots of Handia are prepared with utmost cleanness, which is offered to the deities and spirits and later on consumed by all villagers.

Now day’s element of Great tradition deities finds place in the ritual process of the villages in this region. Mahadev and Parvati are worshiped in most of the ceremonies. Sarhul is celebrated to worship the Sarna goddess, called as Matabai.

After the ritual ceremony is over, all the villagers of all ages and sex assemble in Ankara or centre of the village to sing and dance all night. This celebration is carried out for three days. After the celebration of Sarhul is over, the villagers start preparation of fields for forth-coming agriculture season.
b) Rituals held in other groves

In Pat Sarna rituals and sacrifice is offered to the deity at regular interval through out the year. At the time of Sarhul festival a Rangua or Lal (Red) cock is sacrificed for Pat Devta. At the time of Kadleta festival in month of Sawan (August-September), the Baiga sacrifices a cock to the Pat Devta. Similarly, a day after Nawakhani festival, the village Baiga sacrifices a red cock in the name of Pat Devta in Pat Sarna.

The sacrifice to Darha Desauli of Kadamara Sarna is offered at an interval of three to twelve years. A buffalo is sacrificed to the spirit. Goat is offered at an interval of three years and a black cock is offered in Sarhul festival every year. The old stake is replaced with the new one and liver of the sacrificed animal is nailed on the stake and the spirit is asked to rest in peace till the next sacrifice is offered to him.

In Mahadani Sarna, sacrifice of buffalo is offered at an interval twelve years and a goat is offered at an interval of three years. During this time the wooden stakes is replaced with new one. After sacrifice of the animal, the liver of the animal is removed and nailed on the wooden stake pegged in the Sarna. When the animal is sacrificed, the spirit is told remain quite till the next sacrifice, when it will be again offered sacrifice of animal meat. The meat is distributed equally among the families of village.

3.6 Festivals of food gathering and Hunting

In the villages of Jaspur region, two festivals associated with food gathering activities namely Pahgu or Holi and Sarhul are celebrated. The Phagu festival is held in the month of Phagun (February- March). It is a festival of celebration of ending of the year. A day before Phagu, the branch of Arandi tree (Castor oil) is brought by the young men and planted in the centre of the village. Two branches of Semar tree (Salmaliamalabarica) are also kept along with it. Around it dry wood and paddy straw is placed. The Baiga of the village performs ritual and fire is set. After this handia is distributed. Drinking, dancing, and singing go on for the whole day. After this festival the mahua (Madhuca indica) flowers is collected and dried. After celebration of Sarhul festival, other forest produce like Sal flowers, Sal fruits and Tendu leaves collection takes place.
After *Phagu* festival, hunting festival is celebrated. There is one festival associated with the hunting activities of the village system that is *Jeth sikhar*. In this, they go collectively to the surrounding forest and do hunting in the month of *Jeth* i.e. June. It is more associated with agriculture well being. If there is failure in hunt it is considered that forth-coming agriculture season will be bad for the village community. Therefore, all attempts are made to see that there is no failure in the hunting expedition.

### 3.7 Rituals for Agriculture Practices among Oraon community

The entire agriculture activities like preparation of agriculture fields, sowing, greening of the fields, ripening of the crops, harvesting and eating of the first produce are associated with celebration by the villagers of the area. These villages celebrate Numbers of festivals, principle ones are *Danda Relenga, Hariyari, Kadleta and Nawakhani*.

The agriculture season begins, immediately after the celebration of *Sarhul* festivals. At first they perform rituals at the field, which depends and varies from family to family. It is entirely a family affair. Initially they perform *Muthi Chodana* worship, prior to planting of new crop of paddy. The *Muthi Chodana pujan*, is the first step for starting the agriculture activities. This is done prior to coming of the monsoon, so that the fields are ready before the first shower of rain.

For the rituals the farmers takes a hand full of old seed of paddy, *Agarbathi* (essence smoke sticks), coconut, and flowers; and goes to the field along with the plough and the bullocks. The ritual is performed by reciting the name of *Mahadev* and *Paravati* and in the process they put a hand full of paddy seeds in field and request the deities that "today I am beginning my agricultural season by preparing agriculture fields, whose protection is in your hands for which you will be propitiated at the time *Nawakhani* (offering of new grains) festivals, therefore it your total responsibility to ensure by the safety and security of the field and its crops". Next, a hand full of paddy seed is put into the field and the farmer recites prayer to the mother earth that "I am putting seeds of paddy in your womb, whose protection and projection or growth is in your hands. Hence, please allow me to split your wombs to put the seeds into it".
After performing the rituals for starting agriculture works, the field is ploughed and the loams are broken into finer particles of soil and levelled by a leveller (Patta). All the field preparation work is done in the month of May and June, prior to beginning of rainy season. By the time the rain comes, the prepared fields are ready for paddy cultivation. First in a small patch of field, the paddy is sowed to germinate. After it is fifteen days old, it is transplanted in the entire field. For the transplantation the lineage and clan groups contribute the labour.

a) Danda Relenga

The Oraon populations' rituals are mostly connected with the production aspect of crops and have different speculative mechanisms to foretell the production in future. Danda Regnala is a festival performed at the household level. This festival is celebrated in the month of Ashards (June-July). The belief is that this ritual helps the villagers in judging the outcome of the crop to be sowed in the coming season. The material used for this festival include an egg of hen, Haldi (Turmeric), limestone, a branch of Tendu (Drospyrros melanoxylon) tree split into two and broken in to eight pieces of length 30-40 cm, and a Bhelwa tree branch, which is split from the middle like a fork with one end remain jointed. A square is made which is made of Roli (red colour powder) and Haldi (Turmeric powder). After this, limestone (white colour) is used making a circle joins all four corner of the square. The shape is not always prescribed or defined. Thereafter ritual is carried out by the Baiga of the village.

After the ritual is over, the prediction of production of crop in coming season is done. For this, the split branch of Tendu is made into four pieces each, the outer surface is rough and inner side flat. This is thrown in the circle made for ritual. If half of the sticks fall with the rough surface upward and other half with the inner portion upward, then the production will be normal. If more than half of the rough surface faces upwards, then the production is considered to be more than the normal and is considered to be auspicious sign for the coming season. In contrast to it, if more than half of inner surface is upwards then it is expected that production will be less and is considered inauspicious. After the ritual these sticks are thrown into fields of paddy and deities of the village are worshipped and other Hindu deities like Mahadev and Parvati are worshiped to protect their field and crops from evil spirits and natural calamities like unwanted rain and diseases.
A difference exists between the *Danda Rengla* described by Roy (1928) then it was performed individually, during the *Karma* and before the paddy in the barn. The procedure as described by him is that in *Danda Rengla*, the specialist is called to the house for the ceremony; a place in the courtyard is cleaned, swept and pasted with the cow dung. He takes his seat in the middle and draws a figure more or less in the form of egg, then along circumference seven small half-circle to represent the seven parts into which the world is divided. The big circle represents, the rainbow of god’s of granary. As they have only three-circle world in their language for the series of colour they use only three colours to represent the rainbow. They use the red dust of the burnt mud of their hearth; the white floor or the yeast is used in making *handia* (rice beer) and powdered charcoal.

In the centre, the *Baiga* puts a handful of rice on which he places an egg and twigs of *Bhelwa* (*Semecarpus anacardium*) tree, one end of which is split up and a small piece of the wood fixed in it. Sitting then with face towards the east, he draws two intersecting lines representing the *panchayat* of the village in a sup (winnowing pan) containing some rice. He then puts on the eggs and the twig of the *Bhelwa* and goes on singing the stories of genesis.

**b) Hariyari Festival**

*Hariyari* is an ancient festival celebrated before carrying out the transplantation of paddy. No transplantations of paddy are done prior to performance of this ritual. This is performed in the month of *Asardh* (*June-July*). If any one wants to carry out the transplantation before the collective ritual is celebrated, then he calls *Baiga* who offers rice and beverage as libation to mother Earth and prays for plenty of rain and a bounty full crop. This is called as *Bangari*. It is then followed by transplantation of five seedlings by the *Baiga*. Only then, the usual transplantation operation takes place.

*Hariyali* festival is celebrated, when the entire region looks green due to the plants of paddy, when they reach certain height and ready to be transplanted. This is a collective ritual, celebrated at the village level. When paddy germinates the *Baiga* holds talks with the villagers to fix a day for the celebration of *Hariyali*. The *Kotwar* belonging *Ghasi* community of the village goes to each household and informs about the date of the *Hariyali* festival. Some fixed amount of money is collected from every household for purchasing ritual materials and cocks required for the ritual.
On the **Hariyali** day, Men of the village along with village head man, **Baiga, Panbhar, Kotwar** go to the outskirts of the village in the east direction to the upland, where the festival is held annually. A member of **Dhangar** community cleans the place and **plasters** it with cow dung paste. The place of sacrifice is cleaned and prepared. A small quantity of rice is placed on the ground for the number of animals or birds are to be sacrificed. While sacrificing the cocks **Baiga** faces towards east and requests the deities and spirits to protect the crops from sickness, pest attack, and to protect the cattle and humans from any impending trouble expected to the villagers. The birds are offered to the respective deities as done at the time of **Sarhul** festival. The **Baiga** asks deities to accept the sacrifice. The acceptance is understood by the behaviour of the sacrificial animal. If the animal eats the rice kept in the sacrificial place, then it is understood that the deity or spirit has accepted the **sacrifice** and the animal is sacrificed.

When all the fowls are sacrificed, a little blood is dropped next to the rice kept near the sacred site. Other members clean the birds and animal and make preparation for cooking the sanctified food (**Tahari**). The liver of the sacrificial animal and birds are removed and cooked separately. A bit of it is offered to the deities and spirits with a libation of **Handia**. The **Tahari** is distributed to all the members present on the occasion. After this the place is cleaned and wastes is put into a pit and closed. Women are not allowed to participate or take the sanctified food prepared for the occasion.

c) **Kadleta**

This festival is performed after the formation of rice grains and is ready for harvesting. This is generally performed in the month of **Bhado** (August-September). This festival is performed to protect the crops from the evil eyes and evil spirits. In this festival sacrifices are offered to the village deities by the **Baiga** of the village for the protection of the village crops from evil eyes and evils spirits. The ritual follows the same pattern of performance taken place in **Hariyali** festival. On this day the young men of the village collect saplings of **Bhelwa** (*Semecarpus anacardium*) and **Tendu** (*Drospyos melanoxylon*). They are distributed to all the households. Each household plants a sapling of these branches in their respective fields.
d) Nawakhani

The agriculture season ends with harvesting and thrashing of the paddy. The produce is collected in the storehouse and after offering the new grains to the village deity on Nawakhani festival the paddy is brought into use for eating. Once the crop ripens it is cut and brought to Khalihan (thrashing ground). Most of the time it is a common place, and some time the Sarhul Sarna is also use for thrashing of paddy. In Khalihan, paddy is thrashed and rice is taken out. This festival is aimed at offering the first produce from the crop to the deities of the village and ancestors who have protected the crop from disease and calamities. Otherwise they will be angry and in future will not protect their crop, but harm the village and its crops. In the rituals the new grains are offered to the deities requesting them to keep looking after their crops in future in similar manner.

This festival is celebrated in the month of kartik (November), and is celebrated at household level. No specific date is fixed for celebration of the festival. Matabai (old lady of the grove) and ancestor spirits are first to whom rice is offered. During Nawakhani they sacrifice a black hen to the ancestor spirits. The hen had to be killed with the blow of hand. Great rejoicing and drinking of handia and mutual feasting follow this offering of the crop to god.

3.8 Festivals associated with livestock

Sohorai is the festival celebrated for worshiping of the cattle's owned by the villages. It is generally a remembrance of the services rendered by the cattle in agriculture production and by providing milks to the village households. It is held in the month of Kartik (October-November). On the occasion, every household give bath to their cattle by taking them to the water body in the village. Then they are decorated by anointing of horns with oil mixed in turmeric. After this they are taken to the grove and worshiped. The village deities are requested to keep them healthy, so that they keep providing the services to the human community. After the ritual is over, they are brought to the house and offered feeds mixed with floor of wheat and remnant of pulses to eat.
3.9 Other important festivals of the villages

a) Ashari pujan

Aschasri pujan is held in the month of Ashad (June) on the Purnima or full moon day of the month, essentially for the protection of the village from the epidemics and natural calamities. A week before the Purnima, money is collected from every household, to purchase ritual material, to be used in the worship. Then the ritual items like chicken, coconut, roli, limestone and other hawan (sacrificial) objects are purchased. In the night of full moon day (Purnima), when all the villagers slept, at around mid-night, Ojha, Baiga and the aged men of the village undertake the worship for the security of the village. The Baiga of the village performs this ritual; if by any chance Baiga is not present for the occasion then any elder person of the village or Mati Ojha (medicine man) will play the role of Baiga and performs the needed rituals.

The ritual begins with the group going round the village. In the process they hit with a stick on each door of the house in the village without uttering a single word. On reaching the cross road or corner of the village, they break an egg and offer a coconut, perform puja with roli and limestone and move to the next cross road or corner of the village. They repeat this procedure at all cross road of the village. After conducting worship at all the crossroad of the village, they go to the place where they conduct the ritual annually. Here they perform the ritual by offering the coconuts and other ritual material to the deity. The food items offered to the deity, are eaten there itself and nothing is brought back to the village.

In Komodo village, the place where Asadhi festival is celebrated is located at a distance of half a kilometres from the Pat Sarna on the hilltop and it at the boundary of the village. When the people return to their respective homes after the ritual, they believe that any evil spirit following them will be stopped by the Pat Sarna deity who is the protector of the village.

After the ritual is over and when the group start journey back to the village, no one say's words like "let us go". This due to the fact that the villagers believe that if any one says these words the evil and harmful spirits will follows that person and harm him, which only Baiga or Mati Ojha identify and can cure it. For that they have to perform a ritual, for which the entire cost is to be born by the affected person.
b). Karam Festival

The Karam is celebrated in the month of Kuan or Ashwin (September or October). This festival is held on the full moon day. The unmarried girls of the village basically celebrate this festival. The girls keep fast on the day of the Karam. The boys of the village go to the nearby forest, and select branches of Karam (Adina cardifolia) tree, which are straight and have not been damaged in any way by worms or other pests and leaves are all perfect and fresh. The branches are not allowed to touch the ground.

In the meantime, girls of the village collect white flowers and stand on the boundary of the village to join the group of boys who have gone to bring the branches of the Karam tree. On the arrival of the boys, they take the branches, and together return to the village singing and dancing. The branches of the Karam tree are taken to centre of the village or as in the case of Gadha Ghamhariya village planted in the Sarna.

Baiga of the village arrives and performs rituals. He worships the village deities and requests them to bless the girls and boys of the village. The girls thereafter worship the trees and pray to be blessed with able husbands. Then they break their fast by eating the offering made to the deity and also of the food prepared for the occasion.

Then, they take a small branch from the tree and go to houses singing and dancing at each house. Then the entire village goes to the Sarna and offers flowers to the village deity for the well-being of the village and return to their respective houses. In night, both the girls and bachelors of the village join at the centre of village or Akhara place and dance for the entire night.

c) Jitia Festival

This festival is celebrated in the month of Badra (Aug-Sep) on Tij Krishna pakhsa (third day of receding moon). The women of the village celebrate the Jitia festival for long life of their husbands. On the day of the festival, the women keep fast from early morning till late night without having water or any food. After performing ritual and offering the food prepared for the occasion to Paravati, the consort of lord Shiva, a Hindu deity, they break their fast and eat food offered to the goddess. Thereafter they do Jagaran i.e. keep awake the whole night singing.
songs. The belief is that if the woman keeps fast and falls asleep, her worship is affected and the lifespan of her husband is lessened. The remedy for this is that the woman has to take the Kalas (Pot) along with one coconut and an egg with her husband and worship in Sarna to rectify her mistake. After performing this ritual it is believed that the actual age of her husband will be restored back.

3.10. Functionaries Dealing with Supernatural Powers

The head of each Oraon family or lineage (Khunt) is responsible for the propitiation of the spirits or deities of its family or lineage respectively. Baiga is considered to be the priest and religious head of the village. He is considered the ultimate religious head of the village. The Baiga has the right over the Sarna and conducts rituals in Sarna. In his absence some time the Mati Ojha (Medicine man) of the village can performs the rituals. He is believed to ensure cordial relations between the villagers and the supernatural powers.

The post of Baiga is hereditary, but if due to any factor, the post of the Baiga has fallen vacant, and then it filled through an elaborate ceremonial procedure. In this, every villager belonging to tribal communities has right to get selected as Baiga. The procedure has randomisation element, where the deity herself selects a person as Baiga of the village. There after the post is passed on hereditarily. He performs the sacrifices to propitiate the deities and spirits of the village who reside in the sacred groves. He is consulted in every religious matter and the villagers always take his guidance in different matters. From religious point of view, every village is organized separately and is an independent unit. Sometimes two villages have a common sacred grove or priest but such cases are rare.

The Mati Ojha is a black magician who plays the role of witch finder, witch doctor, spirit-finder and exorcizer. The village priest or the most senior man in the family or clan can undertake the propitiation of different supernatural powers and prayers. They know how to do it through observation though sometimes there are chance variations in the way of propitiation and prayer from one village or other.
Only Elder men of the village participate in the performance of ritual in sacred groves. The women are prohibited from participating in the rituals held in the sacred groves. The young boys are restricted from participating in the rituals. They can do so only after marriage or when one becomes a father. Then only they can participate in religious activities and acquire the knowledge. So age and sex are significant criteria, which determine the religious participation and religious activities of sacred grove.

Oraon believe in the propitiation and worship of a host of supernatural power related to sacred groves, which are supposed to be benevolent while others, those are malevolent and propitiated out of fear. The supernatural powers of sacred groves have local significance.

Oraon’s also offer sacrifice of animals like buffalos to the supernatural beings. They also make various magical observations during festivals and on occasions of risk or any sort of supernatural or natural danger that may threaten the individual, the family or the village community.

The sacred groves, the place of khunt, kadleta, danr, devithan, and the place of path, and kundi or phulki stones were some of the important sacred centres of the Oraon and are the places of practically all their religious activities. Besides these fixed centres there are also temporary representations of sacred centres having no fixed place but are located only at the time of need viz. during the performance of a Khalihampauja, Bangari, Katni dewarpuja sacrifice to ancestor spirits or such other religious ceremonies.