CHAPTER - THREE

MATERIAL & METHODS

3.1 The Oraons and their Country

The Oraons are a specific people of the Indian subcontinent, concentrated mainly on the Chotanagpur Plateau in Jharkhand and neighboring districts of Chattisgarh, Orissa and West Bengal. Chotanagpur, popularly known as ‘Jharkhand’ way back from Moghul times, claimed as the homeland of Oraons, along with other communities e.g. Munda, Santal, Ho, Kharia and others. One of the earliest descriptions of the Oraon people and their country gives a vivid picture of them by Hahn and Crooke they reported in 1917:

The Oraons are a cultivating tribe numbering at the present time, 751,983 of whom the greater part inhabit the Ranchi and Palamu districts included in the province of Bengal and some of the tributary states of Orissa with a small number of emigrants in the Assam districts of Jalpaiguri and the Darjeeling Terai where they have gone to work in the tea gardens.

The above description of almost a century ago invites further exploration about the Oraon people and their country and the situation in which they have been living for so many years. The census reports of India enumerate the Oraon people with different names and also classify in different category. In some states they are not enumerated as the tribal people. Moreover, the Oraon people have migrated to various parts on India and the neighbouring countries. Several changes have occurred during their move in space and time and have passed through different situations in course of history. The following sections will be devoted to understand the Oraon people and their country.

69 The term ‘Oraon’ is used throughout thesis as a term for the people. There is no intention to relate the people with Rama or Ravana of the Hindu epic. In administrative circle and among scholars the term ‘Oraon’ is used for the people in question.
Figure 4
District Map of Jharkhand

Table 1. MAJOR TRIBAL POPULATION OF JHARKHAND
(As per census of India 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Tribes</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Literacy %</th>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Tribes</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Literacy %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Asur</td>
<td>10347</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Khond</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Baiga</td>
<td>2508</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Kisan</td>
<td>31568</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Banjara</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Kora</td>
<td>23192</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bataodi</td>
<td>1114</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Korwa</td>
<td>27177</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bedia</td>
<td>83771</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Lohar</td>
<td>185008</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Binjhia</td>
<td>12428</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mahli</td>
<td>121174</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Birhor</td>
<td>7514</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Mal Paharia</td>
<td>115093</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Birija</td>
<td>5365</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Munda</td>
<td>1049767</td>
<td>17.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chero</td>
<td>75540</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Oraon</td>
<td>1390459</td>
<td>25.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chick Baraik</td>
<td>44427</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Parhaiya</td>
<td>20786</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Gond</td>
<td>52614</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Santhal</td>
<td>2410509</td>
<td>28.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Gorait</td>
<td>3957</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Sauria Paharia</td>
<td>31050</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ho</td>
<td>744850</td>
<td>9.92</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Savar</td>
<td>6004</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Karmali</td>
<td>56865</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Bhumij</td>
<td>181329</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Kharia</td>
<td>164022</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>36040</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Khawar</td>
<td>192024</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Tribal Population = 70,87,072

Note: As per Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes order (amendment) Act 2002 Kawar and Kol Tribes have been included in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Jharkhand in January 2003.
Figure 5.

Tribal Population of Jharkhand, 2001

Figure 6.

Percentage of Major Tribal Population of Jharkhand, 2001
3.1.2 General Description

3.1.2.1 Oraon Population

The need for enumeration of the Oraon people is implicated by their search for identity. This recent and crucial phenomenon applies to Oraons\(^{71}\) and the other communities known as ‘tribals’ or ‘adivasis’ in the Indian subcontinent. Cultural identity of the tribals with political overtones involving a demand for separate statehood of Jharkhand\(^{72}\) calls for more serious attention. Jharkhand State already came into existence since November 2000. The concept of identity also implied common elements among various communities as well as their uniqueness. The Oraons can be identified with their distinct features, though there are some problems in enumerating the Oraons. First of all they are known by different names in different parts of the country. Though the people themselves prefer to be called Kuruxar after the name of their language Kurux, in Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh as also in Madhya Pradesh they are called Oraons or Dhangars (labourer or servant); in Sambalpur district of Orissa they are known as Kisan (cultivator), Kora (digger) or Dhangar-Kora.\(^{73}\)

On the basis of the 1971 census figures and other sources, there are 17, 64, 640 Oraons—Bihar (undivided): 876, 218; Madhya Pradesh (undivided): 370, 652; West Bengal: 291, 173; Orissa: 164, 619; Assam: 33, 032; Uttar Pradesh (undivided): 24, 072; Tripura: 3, 426 and Delhi: about 2,000. Some sources also locate them in East Dinajpur (Bangladesh): 50,000 and Nepal: 20,000.\(^{74}\)

While comparing these statistics with 1981 census figures other problems arise. It puts the Oraon population as follows:\(^{75}\) Bihar (undivided): 1, 048, 066; Madhya Pradesh (Undivided): 88, 819; West Bengal: 437, 574; Orissa: 215, 336; Maharashtra: 70, 983; Tripura: 5, 217. Two important factors are startling. First is the sudden decline of the number of Oraons in

Madhya Pradesh. A decline from 3.706 lakhs to just 88 thousand in ten years is unrealistic. During this period no state reorganization or huge migration was reported. Another problem that arose is that Maharashtra did not report the presence of Oraon population in earlier census. Oraons are enumerated under Scheduled Tribe (S.T.) category only in the States of Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tripura. Two important states—Assam and Delhi where thousands of Oraons live, they are not classified under Scheduled Tribe, and so they do not come in the total Oraon population. In Assam, Oraons are classified under Other Backward Communities (OBC) and thus are excluded from the Oraon population.

### Table 2. STATE-WISE ORAON POPULATION IN INDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>In Year 1981</th>
<th>1991</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bihar (Undivided)</td>
<td>876,218</td>
<td>1,048,066</td>
<td>1,214,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh (Undivided)</td>
<td>370,652</td>
<td>88,819</td>
<td>544,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>291,173</td>
<td>437,574</td>
<td>536,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>164,619</td>
<td>215,336</td>
<td>257,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>70,983</td>
<td>96,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>33,032</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>24,072</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>3,426</td>
<td>5,217</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1765,192</strong></td>
<td><strong>1865,995</strong></td>
<td><strong>2650,939</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-spite of problems and difficulties in enumerating the Oraon population, Oraons are one of the five largest tribes of India, in fact fifth after Bhils (9,73,0094), Gond (9,31,9795), Santals (47,79,232) and Meena (28,01,174). According to 1981 census, the Oraons numbered 1,860,995 and in 1991 their number increased to 2,650,000. The enumeration of Oraons according to an NGO is even higher. It does not include Oraons living in Delhi and Assam States.

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78 ibid.pp37,266
79 [www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php](http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php).
Table 3. All India Oraon Population according to Joshua Project after creation of three new States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>1,607,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>727,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>357,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madya Pradesh</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andaman and Nicobar Islands</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>847,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>648,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>107,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>8600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>5,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Population</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,367,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The present Oraon population statistics has been prepared by a Christian NGO named 'Joshua Project'. Joshua Project is a research initiative seeking to highlight the *ethnic people groups* with the fewest followers of Jesus Christ. This project seeks to answer the questions that result from the Great Commission's (Matthew 28:19) call to make disciples among every nation or people group:

- Who are the ethnic people groups of the world?
- Which people groups still needs an initial church-planting movement in their midst?
- What ministry/resources are available to help outreach among the least reached?
Figure 7. Oraon of India\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{80} www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php.
According to the above analysis, out of the total population of 4,367,000 only 19.7% population of Oraons have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and saviour though the first followers are reported from 1850, that is, over 160 years. It implies that the larger population is in need of the light and saving power of the Gospel. There has been an awakening among the Oraons and other indigenous communities to assert their identities. For this it is necessary to explore and reconstruct the history of the Oraons and their relationship to other communities, and hence the relevance of further investigation.
3.1.2.2 Historical Profile of Oraons

3.1.2.1 Origin and Migration

Though the history of the Oraon community may not be called ‘history’ in the technical sense, but they do have history of their own as expressed in myths and legends. Scholars consider the Oraons along with some other communities as autochthons or original settlers of the Indian subcontinent. This seems reasonable, that the Oraons are natives, the children (sons and daughters) of the soil in the fullest sense of the phrase. There is no convincing proof that Oraons may have come to India from outside the peninsula.

Regarding the migration of communities, different theories have been formulated by scholars, gravity model (Kant and Zipf), intervening opportunities (Stouffers), ‘Push’ and ‘Pull’ (Lee), human investment theory (Sjaastad), ‘better-opportunities’ or ‘bright city light’ (Findley), ‘risk minimization’ (Stark) and ‘household survival’ (Simons), which though differ in detail, are mostly concerned with the central concept of the realization of economic opportunities. It is observed that in Pre-industrial societies, the migration is induced by other factors also. This necessitates an analysis of emergent socio-economic and political situations to reconstruct the history of migration of Oraons.

On the origin and Migration of Oraons in South Asia, scholars have different opinions. Of two views of origin, the first view, based on anthropological data, contends that the cradle of Oraons was somewhere along Konkan coast in the Deccan long before the Christian era. The hypothesis put forward by Dalton, Roy, Gierson, Gait and others is based on the physical and linguistic characteristics of Oraons which are considered Dravidian. This anthropological type has been described with following characteristics:

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In the Dravidian type the form of head usually inclines to be dolichocephalic, but all other characters present a marked contrast to the Aryans. The nose is thick and broad and the formula expressing its proportionate dimensions is higher than in any known race, except the Negro. The facial angle is comparatively low; the lips are thick; the face wide and fleshly; the features coarse and irregular…the figure is squat, and the limbs steady. The colour of the skin varies from very dark brown to shade closely approaching black…The typical Dravidian…has a nose as broad in proportion to its length as the Negro.\(^{85}\)

As suggested by first Kurux grammarian Ferdinand Hahn, Grierson opines that Kurux belongs to the Dravidian family of language that comprises all the principal languages of Southern India, viz. Tamil, Malayalam, Kanarese and Telugu and minor ones such as Kotadu, Tulu, Toda and Kota.\(^{86}\)

Yet another hypothesis put forward by Mahali Libin Tirkey, an Oraon himself, is that the Oraons lived in the Indus valley at least some 3,500 years ago.\(^{87}\) On the basis of evidence found in Harappa and Mohan-jo-daro this line of argument claims that the makers of Indus civilization were the Dravidian people.

Taking two hypotheses it may be argued that Oraons lived on the Rohtas plateau in the 7th century B.C.E.\(^{88}\) That time was a time of comparative peace from the external aggression and the Oraons established their reign and fortified themselves at Rohtasgarh.\(^{89}\) An Oraon legend narrates how they were dislodged from the fort by a trick during their Sarhul (Xaddi) festival. Thus, the displacement from Rohtas marks the beginning and shaping of definite Oraon history.

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\(^{87}\) Mahali Libin Tirkey cited in B. Tirkey. *op.cit.* p.7

\(^{88}\) B.C.E. = Before Common Era. This phrase adopted in more recent times replaces the earlier phrases B.C.\((Before\ Christ)\) as (Common Era) replaces the earlier term A.D.\((Anno\ Domini-\ Year\ of\ the\ Lord)\). B.C.E and C.E will be henceforth used as more acceptable terms.

\(^{89}\) Rohtasgarh is in the Shahabad district of Bihar. For its details see S.C.Roy *op.cit.* p.24 and the photograph in continuing page.
### 3.1.1.2 Oraons’ Settlement in Chotanagpur

It is not clear again when exactly the Oraons lost their battle of Rohtasgarh. However, it is clear that they were overcome by stronger and craftier people than themselves. Around 100 BCE when they came to Chotanagpur, it was already occupied by Mundas. Oraon tradition suggests that they took shelter with the Mundas (other numerous tribes) when they came to Chotanagpur. In course of time the Mundas retreated further east and to the south (Bundu-Tamar of present Ranchi district). The Oraons occupied the north-western and the central plateau corresponding today to the Palamau, Gumla, Lohardaga district and the western part of Ranchi district in the state of Jharkhand. As their number increased, the tribals, both Oraons and Mundas along with Kharias, penetrated further into adjoining areas which now form parts of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal. It is certain that Oraons lived in Chotanagpur for more than 2000 years and this region was focused for further analysis.

### 3.1.1.3 Geographical Environment

From the preceding discussion on the demographic and historical profile of the Oraon community it is clear that the core area of Oraons is the present districts of Lohardaga, Gumla, Palamau and western part of Ranchi district in Jharkhand. Subsequently they penetrated in the adjoining areas and lived side by side with other indigenous communities. Attention will be on the geography of Chotanagpur in general and that of Oraon core area in particular in this study.

The crystalline plateau of Chotanagpur was once a sub-province of Bengal and since 1912 became a division of Bihar which subsequently from 2000 it is in the state of Jharkhand. It lies between 21 49’-24 48’ north latitude and 82 20’-87 54’ east longitude. Chotanagpur, also known as Jharkhand is not only a geographical but also a cultural region, the homeland of several tribes, such as Oraons, Mundas, Kharias, Santals, Ho and others. It is also an administrative unit with a unity in diversity. Topographically up to 3,000 feet above sea

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level, it is not affected by flood. Being a series of plateaus, it is full of hills, covered with thick forests, rivers and hence greenery prevails all over the region except the areas which have been highly industrialized. In this sense, there is clear contrast between Gangetic plains of Bihar and plateau of Chotanagpur.

Table 4. OCCURRENCE OF MAJOR MINERALS IN JHARKHAND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mineral</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Reserve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asbestos</td>
<td>Ranchi, Santhal Pargana, Saraikela</td>
<td>Saraikela</td>
<td>159.9 thousand tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauxite</td>
<td>Gumla, Latehar, Lohardaga</td>
<td>Bijapat, Chandipat, Banglatoli, Bagru hills</td>
<td>460361 thousand tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Clay</td>
<td>Lohardaga, Ranchi, Dumka &amp; Paschimi Singhbhum</td>
<td>Nutandih &amp; Chandrikol</td>
<td>189929 thousand tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>Dhanbad, Bokaro, Hazaribag, Palamu, Garhwa, Sahebganj, Giridih, Deoghar, Chatra &amp; Latehar</td>
<td>Jharia, Katras, East &amp; West Bokaro, South &amp; North Karanpura &amp; Rajmahal, Ramgarh, Hutar, Daltonganj, Auranga</td>
<td>74.392 billion tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper Ore</td>
<td>Paschimi &amp; Purbi Singhbhum</td>
<td>Duarpuram to Bahragora Rakha mines &amp; Pathargarha</td>
<td>226082 thousand tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolomite</td>
<td>Palamu, Garhwa &amp; Paschimi Singhbhum</td>
<td>Noamundi</td>
<td>51094 thousand tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feldspar</td>
<td>Dumka, Hazaribag &amp; Deoghar</td>
<td></td>
<td>1657391 thousand tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Clay</td>
<td>Dhanbad, Bokaro, Hazaribag &amp; Chatra</td>
<td>Balumath &amp; Khapia</td>
<td>66802 thousand tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphite</td>
<td>Palamu &amp; Ranchi</td>
<td></td>
<td>10347016 tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Ranchi, Gumla, Garhwa, Purbi &amp; Paschimi Singhbhum</td>
<td>Along Damoder &amp; Subarnarekha rivers, Kunder Kuchi</td>
<td>346850 tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Ore (a) Hematite</td>
<td>Paschimi Singhbhum</td>
<td>Chaibasa, Noamundi, Gua, Chiria, Marang Ponga, Saranda &amp; Kiriburu</td>
<td>2494424 thousand tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnetite</td>
<td>Palamu</td>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>10269 thousand tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limestone</td>
<td>Paschimi Singhbhum, Ranchi, Palamu &amp; Hazaribag</td>
<td>Along Damodar river Valley, Chaibasa &amp; Lota Pahar</td>
<td>745778 thousand tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>Hazaribag, Ranchi, Palamu, Singhbhum &amp; Dhanbad</td>
<td>Leda Hills, Gua, Limtu, Tutugutu, South of Chaibasa</td>
<td>23840000 Kilograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese</td>
<td>Paschimi &amp; Purbi Singhbhum</td>
<td>Leda Hills, Gua, Limtu, Tutugutu, South of Chaibasa</td>
<td>12527 thousand tones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mica</td>
<td>Kodarma, Hazaribag &amp; Giridih</td>
<td>Kodarma, reserve forest &amp; Domchanch etc.</td>
<td>1665130 Kilograms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other minerals found in Jharkhand are Tin, Tungsten, Lead, Kyanite, Pyrite, Bentonite Quartzite, Silica, Quartz, Choromite, Garnet, Nickel, Titannium, Illmanite & Cobalt etc.

Chotanagpur is rich with mineral resources. Here coal, iron, copper, mica, kyanite, dolomite and other natural resources are abundant. This forms one of the chief natural resources of the region and provides a base of economic development. This has also attracted industrial enterprise of the country resulting in the establishment of mines and factories. In the middle of 16th century, the mining of coking coal for metalurgical purposes started in Jharia Coalfields followed by the opening of many more coal mines at Palamu, Bokaro, Giridih, Bermo, Nort and South Karanpura Coalfields. Major coalmines are run by Central Coalfields Ltd. and Bharat Coking Coal Ltd. Some of the major mines are also located at Mosamani, Lohardaga, Dhanbad and so on. Other industries are Bokaro Steel Ltd. in Bokaro Steel City, Hindustuan Copper Corporation at Ghatshilla, Tata Steel Ltd., the pioneer in Steel Industry established since 1907 in Jamshedpur Steel City which is presently producing 7 million tonnes of steel per annum, Mica factory in Giridih and Koderma, Indian Alimunium Ltd. with its Plant at Muri, Ranchi, Heavy Engineering Corporation Ltd. Hatia, Ranchi, Uranium Processing Plant at Jagdugoda, Cement factories at Japla, Khalari, Jingpani, Sindri, Fertilizer Corporation of India at Sindri, Ceramics Factory (glass) at Bhurkunda and Kandra. Their impact on the Oraons will be dealt with in subsequent sections of the chapter.
Figure 10.
Occurrence of Minerals in Jharkhand

Figure 11.
Mineral wealth of Jharkhand
Table 5. MULTI PURPOSE WATER DAMS OF JHARKHAND FOR IRRIGATION, WATER SUPPLY & POWER GENERATION\textsuperscript{95}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water Dams</th>
<th>On Rivers</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Length x depth in meters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tilaiya</td>
<td>Barakar</td>
<td>Koderma/Haz</td>
<td>0350 x 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchet</td>
<td>Damodar</td>
<td>Dhanbad</td>
<td>0693 x 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konar</td>
<td>Konar</td>
<td>Haz/Bokaro</td>
<td>3960 x 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massanjor</td>
<td>Mourakhi</td>
<td>Dumka</td>
<td>2150 x 113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patratu</td>
<td>Damodar</td>
<td>Hazaribag</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenughat</td>
<td>Damodar</td>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikidiri (Hundru)</td>
<td>Subarnarekha</td>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maithon</td>
<td>Barakar</td>
<td>Jamtara/Dhanbad</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandil</td>
<td>Subarnarekha</td>
<td>Saraikela-Kharsawan</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. POWER GENERATION & PRODUCTION OF JHARKHAND\textsuperscript{96}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power Plants</th>
<th>Generation Capacity in MW</th>
<th>Production in MW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thermal</td>
<td>Hydel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patratu (JSEB)</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenughat (JSEB)</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikidiri (JSEB)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bokaro B (DVC)</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandra Pura</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchet (DVC)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maithon (DVC)</td>
<td>30 (gas turbine)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilaya (DVC)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.2 Religion and Culture

While discussing the demographic, social and historical characteristics and geographical environment of Oraons, it came into light that all elements have influenced one another. The same thing appears when discussed about their religion and culture. The humanistic


\textsuperscript{96} JSEB and DBC referred to by K.G. Banerjee, ibid, p.16.
disciplines in India as elsewhere have failed to recognize the religion of the tribal people. Fortunately this gap has been filled by the social sciences under the rubric of culture. Under this influence of a cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, the Groningen group of scholars of religion states that ‘Religion is a function of culture and is connected with and interacts with other functions of culture, such as, social order, art, economy, law etc.’

In a similar vein, taking culture as a comprehensive term, Whilhlem Dupre opines that one of the fundamental issues of culture is without a doubt the significance of religion within the changing context of cultural and historical dynamics. Hence the necessity and relevance of the study of Primal religion. Perhaps it does not imply a negation of the distinct identity of religious phenomena, it would be necessary to consider religion and culture as interrelated and interdependent phenomena, particularly in the context of studying Primal religions.

Taking into account the above perspectives, the cultural classification proposed by Vidyarthi and Rai seems to be of help. In their view the classification of cultural types is affected by interdependent factors, such as (I) economy, (ii) ecology including human environment (human–to human relationship), (iii) socio-cultural adaptation to ecology and economy, (iv) religious beliefs, and (v) emerging contemporary situation. First the traditional systems of Oraons will be dealt and then discussion on the changing situations.

### 3.1.2.1 The Traditional System

#### 3.1.4.1.1 Economic System

The term “economic” implies two things: the mode and structure of production and its relations, and the process of distribution existing and operating in a given socio-political set up. Taking this definition, the mode of production in tribal economy is traditional,

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97 It is to be noted that D.D.Kosambi has pioneered in recognizing the contributions of tribal traditions for the understanding of Indian history. See D.D.Kosambi. *Myth and Reality.*) Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1964.


102 *Ibid.* p.95: The concept and meaning of Economic system relating to Oraons and other tribe is defined in general economic theories.
indigenous and culturally predominant. The Oraons, like other major tribes of Chotanagpur, such as Santals, Mundas, Hos and Kharias, are basically settled agriculturists. In 1961 two-third (68.18%) of the Oraon population were recorded as cultivators.\textsuperscript{103} Thus, like other agriculturist tribes, Oraons also had their land as the main stay of their economy. Not only that, but Oraons claimed to introduce plough cultivation in Chotanagpur.\textsuperscript{104} Roy argues that Oraons had a better skill for agriculture compared to other tribes. According to 1981 census 66.49\% in Jharkhand, 74.62\% in Madhya Pradesh (undivided), 24\% in West Bengal, 55.39\% in Orissa, 47.61\% in Maharashtra and 13.21\% in Tripura of the Oraon population was designated as cultivators.\textsuperscript{105}

Generally Oraons use simple technology which fits in with their ecological surroundings and relatively conservative outlook. Considered as an economically independent unit, Oraons, like other indigenous communities have their own pattern of living, involving divisions of labour, gift and ceremonial exchange, trade and barter, consumption norms, land tenure and so on. One of the basic characteristics of the Oraon community is that it is imbedded in other community relationships. Traditionally, before the advent of British, their land belonged to the community, and not individuals. In other words, they belonged to the land; even now they claim this to be the case. The community as a whole can be regarded as a co-operative economic unit. Most of them have economic interests in common, for example, gazing the cattle, working in the agricultural fields etc.\textsuperscript{106} At the time of transplantation of paddy, their singing groups of workers can be seen in the muddy fields. They transplant each other’s field on a reciprocal basis.

\textbf{3.1.4.1.2 Social System}

The social life of the tribals involves methodical of grouping and grading people for effective carrying out of various activities for common existence by sharing in common activities under the bonds of relationship. Traditionally, Oraons, like other tribals form a small community of their own in particular territory, and their relationships are direct and intimate.

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid. p.126.
\textsuperscript{106}Ibid.
Like their neighbours—the Mundas, Hos, and Santals, the Oraons are divided into exogamous clans. In other words, clan exogamy still forms the fundamental feature of the Oraons’ social organization in so far as kinship, marriage and relations of the sexes are concerned.\textsuperscript{107} Tribal endogamy is generally practiced with a few exceptions, since Oraons seem to be more liberal than other tribes of the region.

As far as outsiders are concerned, Oraon tribal history has naturally made its people suspicious of all aliens, due to the Oraons’ experience of oppression and exploitation by non-tribals.\textsuperscript{109}

\subsection*{3.1.4.1.3 Political System}

The administration of an Oraon community used to be under a traditional system, with the village being the smallest unit. \textit{Mahto} is the secular head of the village, elected from amongst the descendants of the founders (\textit{Bhunihars}) of the village, and the most influential person in the village. He is responsible for the protection of the village community against external threats.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{tribal_welcoming_washing_feet.png}
\caption{Tribal Welcoming: Washing of the Feet\textsuperscript{108}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{108} Taken from John Lakra, \textit{Tribal Culture}, Gumla: St. Ignatius School, 2007.
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Ibid.} p.248.
threats. In former times the Mahto was the representative of the village, and was responsible to the local government for the collection of rents and maintenance of law and order in the village. In addition of Mahto, the Pahan (village priest), Kotwars (guards), Serpanch and Panches (councilors) constitute the village Panchayat. Parha was the next largest unit comprising several villages grouped in uneven members, such as 5, 7, 9, 11, 21 or 25. Each Parha had its well-marked territory with its own agricultural land, forest tracts, grazing grounds, water supply and fishing pools. The evolution of the Parha system signifies a great achievement of the Oraons in the field of efficient village administration. It was developed to bring together all the villages in one neighborhood, for protection against natural and supernatural threats.

3.1.4.1.4 Religious System

For the Oraons, their myths and legends constitute the basis of their belief systems and function as explanations of their rites, religious occasions and other religious affairs. Their religion in India, along with that of many other tribal communities has been described as animistic. The term ‘animistic’ was used in the early census reports to distinguish the religion of tribal communities from Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. This indicates that they have distinct religious system.

Broadly speaking Oraons, like other tribal communities elsewhere, have strong belief in supernatural/superhuman powers. It would not be wrong to say that besides animism, their belief system includes totemism, taboo, belief in ancestor spirits and belief in different native spirits. Their “worship” place is called saran (sacred grove) which consists of Sal (Shorea robusta) trees left untouched when they first cleared the forest and established village. The village priest called Pahan, is the official religious functionary who performs rituals for the community.

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111 Ibid. p.132.
112 Ibid. p.133.
The Oraons’ attitude/orientation to environment is shaped by their religious beliefs and customs. Their social life is inextricably linked with nature. In the process, not only their activities assume a community character but they also acquire a ritual form. Their belief in nature spirits comes after their belief in the supreme God Dharmes and the ancestors called Pachbalar. These spirits are basically nature spirits and act as guardians of the nature.

The spirits have to be placated by offerings and sacrifices lest they destroy crops, forests, vegetation and other natural resources. The creation myths, including the Asur myth, describe the role/place of nature in the whole process of creation, preservation and maintenance of the universe. The important ceremony of dandakatta is performed to ensure abundance of crops and increased number of cattle and progeny. The Asur myth, recited during the ritual of dandakatta, vividly expresses the concern for environment. Dharmes favours those who live in harmony with nature and punishes those who through their greed try to exploit and destroy natural beauty and richness.

Similarly, the Oraons performed their ritual, music, and dance according to nature’s signals, i.e. on the blossoming of plants and trees, on the position of the moon, on the cycle of seasons etc. Xaddi (Sarhul) is one of the most important festivals of the Oraons. It is celebrated when the Sal (Shorea robusta) trees are in full blossom and branches of white flowers dominate the landscape. In this festival, a symbolic marriage of Dharmes with earth is enacted. Only after this festival, Oraons are allowed to use/consume the fruits of the season. The Karma festival has similar significance which is observed with an expectation of potential for fertility in the maidens.

Religion and culture do not remain unchanged, but have undergone several changes with the passage of time. However, the basic elements continue to influence Oraon life and society. Further the changes in Oraon religion and culture will be examined.

115 Ibid. p.102
116 Ibid. p.103.
117 Ibid. p.104.
118 Ibid. p.105.
Figure 13.
Sarhul Puja: Symbolic Marriage of Dharmes with the Earth

Figure 14.
Sarhul Dance
Figure 15.
Saal Leaves and flowers used during Sarhul festival

Figure 16.
Sarhul Procession at Ranchi
Figure 17.

Karam Puja: Agricultural festival and a festival of unmarried girls seeking God's favour and blessings for generative and regenerative process

Figure 18.

Karam Dance
Figure 19.
Tribal Jatra

Figure 20.
Sal Forest
3.1.2.2 Religious and Cultural Change

With the passage of time, Oraon religion and culture have undergone several changes in contact with outsiders and their alien ways of life for a long time. Even the Vedic literature testifies to interaction between the Aryan and the tribal/indigenous communities of India.\footnote{S.C. Roy, \textit{The Mundas and their Country}. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1970. Pp.15-16.} More significantly, the tribal traditions have contributed to a considerable extent in the formation of Indian and particularly Hindu tradition.\footnote{Cf. D.D. Kosambi. \textit{Myth and Reality}. Op.cit.} With increasing facilities of communications the isolation of tribal villages has been broken. The increasing urbanization and industrialization in Chotanagpur has further accelerated the process of change. The coming of Christian missionaries to the area in 1845 has been another significant element in bringing social transformation among the Oraons.

The scheme of Rai and Vidyarthi\footnote{B.K. Rai & L.P. Vidyarthi: \textit{Tribal Culture in India}. pp.45f} shall be followed terms of ‘Traditional’ and ‘Modern’ process while analyzing the process of change among the Oraons. They observed that in spite of many changes; tribes have retained the principal elements of their way of life. They have also resisted change whenever they found it appropriate and necessary in order to protect their cultural and religious values.\footnote{Manmasih Ekka. “Socio-Religious Impact of Hinduism on the Tribals of Chotanagpur with special reference to Munda, Oraon and Kharias.” Unpublished M.Th. thesis, Senate of Serampore College, 1988.} This phenomenon of resistance has been in many major tribal groups including Santals and Mundas.\footnote{Joseph Troisi. \textit{Tribal Religion: Religious Beliefs and Practices among the Santals}. New Delhi: Manohar, 1979, see specially chapter vii. “Conclusion: The process of Change and Adoption in Santal Religion.” Pp.238-274.} Through the study of Santal religion from a functionalist perspective, Troisi has even questioned the anthropological assumption that the survival of tribal religions is rather doubtful. He calls for a re-examination of such ‘biased’ assumption.\footnote{Ibid. p.274 cf. also T.Hembrom. \textit{The Santals: Anthropological- Theological Reflection on Santali and Biblical Creation Traditions}, Calcutta(Kolkata); Punthi Pustak, 1996.}

3.2.2.2.1 The Traditional Process

‘Traditionalism’ is conceived as continuity whereas ‘Modernity’ implies break. ‘Traditionalism’ conforms to timeless norms, those affirmed or justified by myth or dominant
mythology and those handed down by tradition. This connotation of ‘tradition’ is criticized for overemphasizing ‘fixity’ which tends to undermine the ‘dynamic’ aspect of social reality. However, to understand ‘traditional process’ it is helpful to study the ancient Hindu tradition that has been dominant in India and affected changes in tribal society and the society at large. This kind of process of change has been in operation and has led to the resultant concepts like Hinduization, Sanskritization, Tribe-caste continuum, Tribal-Rajput continuum, revitalization, Bhagat movements and so on.

The anthropologist, K.N. Sahay, reports the process of “Sanskritization” among the Oraons. Among the Oraons of Chiri village (in Ranchi district) Sawani Pooja is reported to be performed due to Hindu influence on the seventh day of the moon in the month of Sawam. The Oraon Pahan (priest) is said to lead the worship which is performed with incense, rice beer, ghee, vermilion and leaves of Bel-tree.

Edward Jay makes an important point that there have been strong tendencies of revitalization of Oraon religious elements and that of other tribal communities of the region. Tana Bhagat movement, Kabirpanthi Bhagat movement and similar Bhagat movements among the Oraons tried to revitalize their religion through the incorporation of Hindu and Christian belief systems and rituals. In this process all Bhagats are required to maintain the rules of ceremonial purity in food, drink and all retain most of the social customs and observances of the tribe which do not militate against the Bhagats’ ideas of ceremonial purity. This kind of ritual purity, that includes abstention from eating beef, veneration of cow and wearing of sacred thread (janeu) are due to the Hindu impact. But these Bhagat Oraons claim that their forefathers observed all these, and only later, with the impact of other communities...

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126 Rai and Vidyarthi. op.cit.p.454.
127 K.N. Sahay. “Trends of Sanskritization among Oraons”. In Bulletin of the Bihar Tribal Research Institute. Vol.iv, No.2, 1992, pp.16-30; The concept of ‘Sanskritization’ was developed by M.N. Srinivas in his book Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1952. This describes the low caste Hindu and the Tribals climbing the social ladder through following Hindu/Sanskrit scriptural rituals. It may not necessarily be the same case among the Oraons.
they followed ‘unclean/impure’ habits. Similarly, following the ‘monotheistic’ concept of God the Bhagat Oraons assert that only Dharmes be worshipped as the only God and spirit worship, idol worship be abandoned. The same phenomenon has been described as revival movements by Philip Ekka and S.C. Roy.\textsuperscript{130}

3.2.2.2 The “Modern Process”

The Modern process of social/cultural change includes such factors like Christianity, urbanization and industrialization.\textsuperscript{131} Tribal development, community development schemes, democratic set-up of the nation, modernization in education, communication and administration and the like are of recent origin, and are directly or indirectly external factors which seldom emerge as a result of normal contacts of the tribal people with the non-tribal population of the region.

In this context, a study of the Christianization process among the Oraons comes with some startling findings. The study by an anthropologist concluded that the Christianity has been a factor of conflict and tension among the Oraons in particular, and in tribal society in general.\textsuperscript{132} On one hand the sphere of religious activities has widened from the limit of a village to the parish, diocese and also from intertribal to intra-tribal context, on the other, the Oraons (like other tribals) have been divided into denominations and through conversion a separation has come between converted Oraons and those remaining in the traditional form of Oraon religion. The rivalry between denominations with regard to their working area and their different ideologies have further weakened the existing social solidarity among the Oraons.\textsuperscript{133}

The state government programmes of community development, inspite of their good intentions have failed to bring desired results. One of the basic reasons for this failure has


been that development planners, working officers and other workers too were primarily outsiders and non-tribals. Rather than being well-wishers of the suffering tribals, these persons were seen with suspicion as exploiters. This suspicion came out of bitter experience Oraon history.\textsuperscript{134} Similarly, the introduction of the \textit{Gram Panchayat} by the government of India replaced the Oraon traditional system of \textit{Parha} and thus weakened their social solidarity.\textsuperscript{135}

The above illustrations are enough to substantiate the argument that through traditional and modern processes a lot of changes have come among the Oraons of Chotanagpur, causing the breakdown of traditional systems, resulting in their enslavement. Further discussion of the historical situation will highlight the same in more specific way.

3.2.3 \textbf{Oraons in a Changing Environment: Situation of suffering, Exploitation, Injustice and Powerlessness}

For long periods of time the \textit{Adivasis} of India have been subjected to exploitation and torment, injustice and discrimination. Their problems, such as, indebtedness and land alienation, bonded labour, displacement due to industrialization, exploitation by forest contractors, exploitation related to dependency on liquor, atrocities-murder, rape, arson, assault, poor provisions for health care, illiteracy, poor quality of rural education, unrest and lack of leadership have been part of their history in the past. But that they continue today and are even aggravated despite free India's profession of democratic socialism and uplift of the poor; this state of affairs has become insufferably brutal. The Oraon community is not exception to the above-mentioned suffering, inspite of its being a numerous community. This calls for an exploration into the mode of suffering they have been subjected to and their root causes.

\textsuperscript{134}Ibid.p.111.
\textsuperscript{135}Ibid.p.118.
3.1.3.1 Oppression Under Alien Rule

3.1.3.1.1 Dislodgement from Rohtasgarh

The Oraons' history of oppression begins with their dislodgment from Rohtasgarh. The ruins of Rohtasgarh stand as eloquent proof of a rich Oraon civilization even today. The period of dislodgment and the stronger and perhaps craftier people, who dislodged them, still remain mystery and a matter of historical research. However, this thesis has a strong support from the living traditions of oral history and ritual performed even to his day. The ritual of Mukka Sendra or Jani-Sikkar (a ritual hunt by Oraon women) is unique to Oraons. It is observed once in twelve years\(^{136}\) as a commemoration of Oraon women's courageous defence against the enemy, until the fort was lost to the latter by a trick. The ritual of Mukka-Sendra as practiced today may easily be misunderstood by an outsider merely as a method of recreation.\(^{137}\) But if taken seriously, it recalls the oral tradition or myth when the Oraon women defended the Rohtasgarh fort against enemy attack while their men folk lay helplessly drunk. It goes to show their bravery and this hunt was instituted by the community in gratitude for their courage. The hunt was held last in 1994. It may not be out of place to discuss the matter with more detail for the clarification of the opinion presented.

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The tradition goes that on the Rohtas plateau of the district of Shahabad in modern Bihar the Oraons built their garh (fort) with their own king. The Rohtas period is believed to have been the golden age of the people.\textsuperscript{138} They had autonomy of their own kingdom, a fort and a well established agricultural life. Here their chief, known as Kurux is said to have established his authority and the country was called after him, Kurux-Des. It is probably after the name of their brave chief, the people used to call themselves Kuruxar and their language as Kurux. The name of the community known in administrative and academic circle is Uraon or Oraon which the people themselves seldom use.

According to their traditions the Oraons lost the Rohtasgarh to more powerful and crafty people. It was the day of the important festival Xaddi when men folk were drunk and women defended the enemy. Women, in the disguise of men took up bows and arrows and chased away the enemies. This they did three times. As a mark of three victories Oraon women continue to have three vertical marks on their forehead.\textsuperscript{139} Not only in the Oraon core area, but also in Assam and other distant places among the Oraons, the three vertical tattooed lines on the women’s forehead marks the Rohtasgarh incident of the victory of women.\textsuperscript{140} Inspite of several changes brought about by the forces of modernity, this tradition continues.

The form of celebrating the Mukka-Sendra might differ in time and space, but the core elements seem to continue.\textsuperscript{141} Before an expedition is organized, a particular village makes an agreement with the councilors of another village. If they agree on an appointed day the womenfolk put on male dress, carry small axes, bows and arrows and proceed to the approved village. This group is generally not allowed to kill any goat, pig or hen on the way. From the other side, the party of women receives the one which sets out on the expedition. These two parties stand as defenders and aggressors, who were once stopped at Rohtasgarh. The party of aggressors goes to the akhra, the dancing ground and dance. After the dance, the

defenders show to the Mukka-Sendra party a goat or a pig which has to be chased and slaughtered and taken with them as a kill. Then the whole community shares and feasts on it. This hunting expedition is carried out even in cities like Delhi, Calcutta (Kolkata), Patna and so on, where it may seem strange to the public. This is a reviving phenomenon with people’s awareness to their identity and historical roots. Mukka Sendra is reported to be in practice even in Bangladesh, where about 25,000 Oraons live in the midst of Muslims and Bengalis, the communities, culturally very different from the Oraons.

More important than commemorating Oraon women’s victory over enemy is the dislodgment of the community from their kingdom. Tradition narrates that the milkmaid had observed the ‘men’ in disguise and reported to the enemy so that the latter plotted a different strategy. Thus Oraons were dislodged from their forts as well as they were divided, never to come again as one community. Traditionally, the Maler community inhabiting the Rajmahal hills in the eastern part of Jharkhand is a group that got split from the parent Oraon community at the time of dislodgment from the fort of Rohtas. The similarities in vocabularies among Oraons and Maler point to the original genetic identity of the two. This opinion is supported through a lexico-statistical study of linguistic affinity, which has more genuine reasons to follow than cultural differences caused by separation in time and space. The Maler still continue to live in the hilly region of Santal Pargana in Jharkhand, whereas Oraons have scattered in plain and forest areas throughout India. The Oraon people divided from the time of dislodgment from Rohtasgarh remain divided; rather division is aggravated by other factors, such as change in their religious system, loss of language in many parts, particularly in urban areas, and so on.

From the Rohtasgarh incident it appears that the invaders coveted the property and peaceful life and autonomy of the Oraon people. About those invaders there are several imaginations. One explanation considers the Muslim as such invading group. But this view historically cannot be true since the Muslim conquered Rohtasgarh as late as 1539 C.E. Some scholars like Dalton and Roy mention the name Mlecchas who were perhaps Kharwars of Cheros and

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once occupied the Rohtas plateau.\textsuperscript{144} The concept of \textit{Mlecchas} prevalent in early Northern India must have been a part of the moral and the socio-economic framework of the Brahminical society that believed in its inherent cultural superiority.\textsuperscript{145} However, \textit{Mlecchas} as a reference group in early India included all outsiders who did not conform to the values and ideas and consequently, to the norms of the society accepted by the elite groups. The attitudes of Buddhists and Jains towards \textit{Milakkhas} (Pali equivalent of \textit{Mlecchas}) was not essentially different from that of the Brahmins\textsuperscript{146} though its application for outsiders must have varied. In this context the term \textit{Mleccha} seems parallel to \textit{diku} or \textit{Khatakhuru}, the term used by Adivasi communities for alien people who oppressed them. In such case it is also probable that the Aryans defeated and dislodged the Oraons from Rohtasgarh.\textsuperscript{147} The further exploration of this event and invaders is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, it is important to note that Oraon women’s defence of their fort under the leadership of a young woman named \textit{Singi Dai} is significant to recognize the Oraon women’s \textit{brevity} and leadership capabilities. At the same time Oraon men’s irresponsible \textit{drunkenness}, eventually resulting in their defeat is also significant in the understanding of the cause of people's enslavement to oppressive powers.

3.2.3.1.2 Cultural Invasion during Pre-Colonial Period

After being driven away from Rohtasgarh, the Oraons took shelter in the Chotanagpur plateau, their present abode. Here they developed a democratic \textit{Parha} confederacy, which mainly had judiciary function. But sometimes in the early years of the first millennium C.E. their way of governance was under attack with the formation of state by Nagvansi dynasty. Tradition says that tribals, Oraons and Mundas, who were living side by side in Chotanagpur elected Phani Mukut Rai to be their king and leader.\textsuperscript{148} It is strange that they did not choose a tribal but a non-tribal Nagvansi. The three-tier system of administration of Oraon and Mundas, namely village, \textit{parha} and \textit{pargana} was not a centralized nor was it stratified. But

\textsuperscript{144} Amar Nath Pal. \textit{Op.cit.69}.
\textsuperscript{145} Aloka Parasher. “Attitude towards the \textit{Mleccha}, in Early Northern India upto A.D. 600”. In \textit{The Indian Historical Review}. Vol. IX Nos.1-2 July 1982-January 1983 p.1.
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{148} B. Tirkey. \textit{op.cit.} p.11
how and why the centralized system of governance emerged, still remains a matter for exploration. In view of exploring the form and effects of state formation it will be worthwhile to look into the origin of state among Oraons in particular and among the tribals of central-eastern India in general.

The development of state formation in Chotanagpur was internally evolved or imposed by aliens is still a subject of controversy. Due to lack of sufficient data much of conjuncture is based on prevailing myths on the origin of state. The Oraon myth tells that the first king (Raja) of Chotanagpur, Phani Mukut Rai, was the grandson of Lakhan Bhagat, an Oraon.149 It is said that as soon as this future king of Chotanagpur was born at Sutiambe Biarkho, his parents died. Then a cobra (Naga snake) protected the baby with his hood till he was picked up by an old Munda couple and brought up. When this child came of age, he was elected as their Raja by the Mundas. This myth does not hold weight except the emotional attachment of Munda and Oraons to the centers of places of Nagvansi Kings in Chotanagpur.

The mythical accounts of the origin of the Nagvansi state appear in dynastic chronicles or Nagbanshavali as follows:-

Pundarik Nag, having escaped from the Sarpasatra sacrifice celebrated by Raja Janamejaya, took the shape of a Brahman, and found refuge in Kasi (Banaras) in the year of Kaliyug 3044. At that time, the sun of (prosperity of) the Kuruvans (the dynasty of the Kouravas) had set, and in Avantishaka (meaning Kota or Sikavati) Bundi reigned Raja Vikramaditya. Pundarika lived in the house of Brahman as a student, and in course of time, he was married in the Gandharva form to his Guru’s daughter Parvati.

He always slept with his back turned towards his wife. On one occasion, while husband and wife were asleep, Pundarik chanced to turn his face towards his wife, and his breath, hot as fire, awakened her. She observed that her husband had a pair of tongues. Feeling much alarmed at this unusual circumstance, she awakened Pundarik and inquired earnestly who he was. The Nag said he would divulge the secret after visiting the Jagannath temple at Puri. To Jagannath both husband and wife went and the Nag informed his wife that the secret which she was so anxious to know would be divulged in Jharkhand. While there Parvati forgot to inquire about the secret. Passing through Jharkhand they arrived in a jungle near the Sutiambe hill. Then Parvati’s

149 S.C. Roy. The Mundas. P.68
pregnancy had advanced 10 months and 10 days. She was soon in labour, and happened to recollect the secret which she was so anxious to know. On her asking the Nag again about it, he assumed his own proper shape and after telling his wife who he was, he vanished by entering into the Tank of Banasur close by, which was constructed in one month, that is one dark half and one bright half of the moon. Parvati in her grief delivered a boy and placing him on the ground erected a funeral fire, and burnt her. The child’s cries attracted Pundarik onto the surface of the water. He came up to the child, found that his wife was no more, and was aggrieved. He prepared a temporary bed, in which he led the child and spread his hood over him and thus protected him from the sun.

It came to pass that a Sakadwipi Brahman from Magadha Desh, by name Janardhan happened to arrive where the child was. He had a stone image of the sun, and came to Jharkhand with the idol. He went to drink water in the tank, leaving the idol on the bank, but on his return he was unable to raise the image from the ground. Feeling much surprised, he began to look around and lo and behold—he saw the Nag with the child under his hood. The Nag then uttered certain prophetic words to this effect. “O Sakadwipi Brahman! I am Pundarik Nag, and this child is my son, he shall be known as Kasyapa-Santan Nagvanshvatsans Suryavatsa Phanimukta Rai, he shall be Raja of Nagpur Des”; and shall live in Sutiambe; the Surya (Sun) shall be his Kuladevata; and you shall be his family priest. The Nag having delivered several other secrets which are recorded in another book and not fit for the years of other men, disappeared.

The poor Brahman, having taken charge of the boy, came to Sutiambe. Numerous families of Mundas had previously come from Pipra and Paligarh and settled in Nagpur. There had also come the Oraons from Jaipurghar, Ruhidasgarh, Simabiaghar, and from other countries among the Mundas. There was one Munda by name Madra who was a Raja of 12 villages. The Brahman took and delivered the boy to him. Madra and his brother Hangra gladly took charge of the child and made him over to the Rani (Madra’s wife) who had only one son. The boy (Phanimukut) would not suck Rani’s breast and consequently Madra was obliged to make over the child to Dewan (Prime Minister) Yudhistir Dubey who lived in Kunti to the suitably brought up. Agreeable to the Munda’s order Yudhisthir took the child and Janardhan also lived with him. The boy was suitably educated. He was handsome, with marks of a hood and a trace of tongues on his head. When Phani Mukut Rai was grown up and the Munda’s son too, Madra took counsel of the Purohit Janardhan and the Dubey
whether his own son or Phani Mukut Rai should succeed him as Raja. The purohit and the Dubey advised him to hold a Panchayat of his friends and kinsfolk.150

The above family chronicle of the Chotanagpur Raj agrees with the traditions of the Mundas themselves in stating that they voluntarily superseded the son of their own patriarch Madra Munda of Sutiambe in favour of Madra’s fosterson Phanimukut, in consideration of the latter’s superior intelligence. As Phani Mukut was by common consent elected the Raja of the Mundas as well as the Oraons.151 The myth of the origin of Nagvansi king is not corroborated with historical evidence except that Oraons and Mundas consented to the kingship of Phani Mukut Rai. Due to lack of satisfactory and convincing explanation, efforts have been made by historians to probe into the matter. One such study concludes that the phenomenon of state-formation among the tribal communities in India occurs particularly among the Dravidian tribe in the exposed central region and the Mongoloid Ahoms in Assam.152 The Kolarian tribes such as the Mundas in Chotanagpur with their communitarian agrarian organization borne out by their Khuntkatti villages show little propensity towards the development of state. According to this view the case of state formation among the Kolarian tribe Bhumij of Barabhum153 may be an exception. The view held by some that the Chotanagpur Raj arose from the Munda culture matrix is alleged to be ‘bad history and poor ethnography’.154 This view implies that the Chotanagpur Nagvansi chiefs were the descendants of the historical Dravidian Nagas who rules at Bastar as late at the 14th century.155 Other Dravidian tribes which witnessed the rise of states, were Doms, Bhars, Cheros in South Bihar, Kharwars in the Sone-Damodar valley and the Gonds and Rakshels in the Chattisgarh region. Taken this view, the question arises whether the system of parha prevalent among the Oraons has any Dravidian element. Among the Mundas the village confederacy is called Patti which seems only a variation of Parha or vice-versa. The chief of Parha is still called Parha Raja, perhaps an imprint of the Rohtasgarh experience of Oraons.

151 S.C. Roy. The Mundas. P.76
155 Ibid.
The study of state-formation among the tribal society indicates some generalization of the process. There were four preconditions for the formation of states among the tribal communities—settled agriculture and correspondingly organized tribal village community; acculturation such as long network of temples as a process of Hinduization; the role of a determined acculturated powerful tribal minority in ruling the people; and they were subjected to invasions from outside, feudalized their structure, weakened them and hastened their end. These factors and processes seem to have associated with the Nagvansi kingdom of Chotanagpur. According to the view the process of Hinduization of tribals began long before in the history of Chotanagpur and elsewhere. This is an indication of cultural invasion on tribals. The above view does not go uncontested. From the origin myth of Nagvansis is similar in structure to a large body of such myths incorporated with the Vansavalis or dynastic chronicles. The vansavalis relate how a number of formerly obscure families came into prominence in the early medieval period and ultimately established independent kingdoms. These origin myths cannot be treated as authentic history in details, but they do provide some historical assumptions in their structuring of events.

A characteristic feature of the agrarian system of northern India and eastern India in the first millennium C.E. was that of kings making grants, initially of land and later of villages, to either religious and secular grantees. The grant carried the rights of ownership and revenue from the land and, in the case of village, the rights of administrative authority at various levels and the collection of taxes and dues. Land grants to religious beneficiaries must have become more common in the later half of the millennium. And these were frequently made to offices in lieu of salaries for services. In addition, when senior administrative offices became hereditary, it was possible for families to use these grants to build a base for themselves and eventually emerge as independent rulers. Such families used origin myths to acquire Kshatriya status.

Brahman grantees settled on their estates and either introduced or strengthened the influence of Brahminical Sanskrit culture in the region. The Nagvansi Annals reflect that the above kind of transition was not as peaceful as it is often thought of. It is told that the first Nagvansi King

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156 Ibid pp.328-330
158 Romila Thapar. Ibid. p.421
Phani Mukut Rai once invited all the Munda and Oraon chiefs to a feast and plied them with liquor.

In an ensuing drunken brawl they began killing one another. Only a few survived and they were put down. Among those who survived were two Mankies who had reared Phani Mukut Rai as an orphaned child. When permitted to ask for a favour, they requested to become Bhunihars and he permitted to take this title. The Oraons enslavement to the habit of drinking and its ensuing result reminds us of the Rohtasgarh incident when Oraon men were senseless due to over drunk while celebrating the festival of Xaddi.

It is generally assumed that the Nagvansi Kings did not interfere with the tribal Parha system of democratic administration. But there are certain pertinent elements that appear for the enslavement of Oraons. First of all was that the Nagpur language was imposed as the official language of Chotanagpur raj. Oraons were worst affected and many lost their Kurux language. The centres of the raj were shifted from Sutiambe to Doesa, to Chutia, to Palkot and finally to Ratu.

These fall in the Oraon-dominated area. The Mundas, however, were able to protect their language and other cultural traits by further migrating to the eastern part of Ranchi district and to Singhbhum. There was a major change in administrative system. The clan-based Parha system gave way to the territory-based Chotanagpur raj. The influx of non-tribals to the area was intensified with invasion of Moghul rulers.

The major breakdown of Oraon cultural and political system happened during the Moghul rule, particularly from 1585 C.E. when the Raja of Chotanagpur was made a tributary of the Moghul Emperor of Delhi. In 1616 C.E. Nagvansi Raja Durjansal was imprisoned during the reign of Emperor Jahangir for twelve years for being default of payment. Initially Oraons with other tribals resisted their king against charging regular revenue. After return from Gwalior jail, Durjansal adopted Hinduism, changed his title from Raja to Maharaja. He surrounded himself with a pompous returnees of Brahmins and Rajput’s and other hangers on belonging to the various Hindu castes. When the Oraons refused to pay rent, the Raja and his

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159 Ibid. p.425
advisors, in order to strengthen themselves, they brought more and more aliens to Chotanagpur.\(^{161}\) The new immigrants were given land by the Jagirdars. Thus the pan tribal region experienced the immigration of non-tribals and the process of sub-infeudation spread throughout the tribal tract of Chotanagpur. When the alienation of land got intensified, it was certainly the cultural invasion as well.

### 3.2.3.1.3 Breakdown of social structure during the Colonial rule

In 1765 C.E., the British East India Company was granted with the *dewan* of Bengal, Bihar (undivided) and Orissa. As a result, Chotanagpur came under British rule for the period of 1765-1947 C.E. The new rules introduced some measure of law and order into the country. For its own enhancement the East India Company demanded from the *Vazir* a large sum of rupees in tribute, but it did not change the Moghul administrative structure. The *jagirdars* and the *thickadars* continued to exploit land from them.\(^{162}\) At that time British laws were inadequate to guard the interests of the tribals. The complicated courts, far from giving protection to the Oraons and Mundas, helped the Hindus to obtain ex-party decrees in their favour. The tribal socio-political structure, known as *parha* and the system of community land ownership for justice were far away from the courts, whose proceedings were beyond the unlettered tribal comprehension.\(^{163}\)

It was evident that the tribal structure would breakdown with the introduction of the system of private ownership of land. These resulted into the growth of more and more discontentment among the tribals. The peace and freedom loving people revolted against such naked oppression. They rose against their unjust landlords in 1789, 1797, 1807 and 1820.\(^{164}\) Every time these uprisings were suppressed with the help from the forces of law and order by the British army. Massive agrarian discontent finally erupted in the great “Kol Insurrection” 1832-32. This revolution shook the whole country, in which the Oraons participated actively along with Mundas and Hos. The obvious reasons for this outburst were the deep frustration and anger of the tribals exploited by the Hindu and Muslim *Jagirdars* and *Thikadars*.\(^{165}\)

\(^{161}\) Amar Nath Pal. “Political Economy of Migration among Oraons”. P.70


\(^{163}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{164}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{165}\) *Ibid.*
There were subsequent revolts by the tribals due to their discontent. British government did try to understand the reason of the grievances. As a result the district administrative centre was shifted from distant Sherghati (near Gaya) to Kishunpur, which later became Ranchi. The tribal plateau till now known by the name of Khukhra or Jharkhand came to be officially called Chotanagpur. The oppression did not stop even after a partial remedy was effected in 1869 by registering land originally reclaimed from the forest by Oraons and Mundas.\textsuperscript{166}

The missionaries too took up the cases of the loss of land by tribals when the first mission station was opened at Ranchi in 1845. But alas! the Sardar Larai or Christian leaders revolt for the restoration of land was not supported by the foreign missionaries because they themselves were working under the patronage of the British.\textsuperscript{167}

The missionaries did a good job in assisting the British to formulate the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908.\textsuperscript{168} This influential law went a long way to secure tribal rights; further land alienation was brought to check, and record-of rights were prepared for lands held by tribals and they looked forward to a time of peace and progress. The education initiated by the missionaries did bring some fruitful result in making conscious about their plight. Here the Western Education played a positive role in educating the Oraons and other tribals. As a consequence to this there rose the identity consciousness among the educated people. Educated tribals were able to discern and articulate their distinct identity against the internal colonialism perpetuated by the Biharis and against the communal politics engulfing Bengal.\textsuperscript{169}

The exploitation did not stop altogether, because many Oraons were dispossessed with their land because of their inability to pay land tax. In early 1914-20s there arose a reform movement known as Tana Bhagat movement\textsuperscript{170} that took up the cause of the people. They (Tanas) refused to pay land tax because they claimed that land was given to them by God, why should they pay rent to the government. In this way also many were further dispossessed of their land. Oraons had earlier participated in similar movement known as Birsa

\textsuperscript{166}Ibid. p.15
\textsuperscript{167}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{168}Ibid. p.16
\textsuperscript{170}S.C. Roy. \textit{Oraon Religion and Customs}. P.247
movement\textsuperscript{171} that had influenced for its concerted arm revolt against the British and the local landlords. Some people had to migrate to tea gardens in Assam and to Andaman Islands in order to escape oppression in Chotanagpur. The capitalist system of economy introduced during British period was harmful to the tribals.

\textbf{3.1.3.2 Continuation of Oppression and Internal Colonialism in Post-Independent India}

With the Indian independence in 1947 Oraon people hoped that their grievances would be wiped away. But in fact it became in some aspect even worse a situation and enslavement has continued. With the abolition of feudal system (jamindar system) and introduction of socialism there was certainly a ray of hope. The Oraons in the British period were more subject to oppression compared to the Mundas. The same continues even today in a different form. With the interest of Nehru the Panchsheel was introduced for the uplift of the tribals. But, inspite of good intention, even the tribal development programmes failed to bring desired result.\textsuperscript{172}

In the late 1960s a study was undertaken to help plan for tribal development with an aim to integrate tribal people into the so-called ‘mainstream’ of the country.\textsuperscript{173} But another study undertaken three decades later reveals the devastating fact that the plight of tribals has in many cases even aggravated.\textsuperscript{174} Some of the problems that have crept in are the loss of tribal control over resources, continuation of the exploitation of the tribal people, erosion of identity, erosion of customary laws, displacement and migration due to ongoing industrialization, degradation of women, deforestation, growing inequality and the tribal peoples being reduced to minority in their homeland. There are serious problems to be responded to in the face of the growing trend of globalization.


\textsuperscript{173} See for example K.S. Singh ed. \textit{Tribal Situation in India}. Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study. 1972

Concluding Remarks

The review has shown that Oraon people and their country tried to reconstruct the Oraon history of enslavement. Though Oraons are a numerous tribe many of them have gone far to earn their living, the core area of Oraon still remains under the chain of slavery in various ways. From the time of dislodgment from Rohtasgarh to the settlement in Chotanagpur, Oraons have been in search for permanent domicile. The second phase was more arduous and painful, it was their life struggle characterized by eviction, displacements, subjugation and exploitation by the alien people, the more powerful and the greedy outsiders. However, their inner weakness like evil of drinking should not be ignored while discussing the cause of suffering. Many Oraons have lost their language and they have become the divided people. With the 73rd amendment of Indian constitution which proposes to facilitate Tribal Self Rule based on Bhuria Committee report, a new impetus is of painful concern and already it has been traced to by Verrier Elwin in the late colonial period.175

3.3 Towards Understanding Primal Myths: A Methodological Review

A brief description and discussion of the Oraon community and their situation of enslavement and exploitation in the previous chapter (The Oraons and their Country) is sufficient to put the matter under the rubric of Fourth World Dynamics. Noted sociologists (cum activists), theologians and scholars of other fields as well as indigenous/tribal peoples themselves have very strongly debated on the classification of the indigenous/native/aboriginal people of the world under Third World. An Indian thinker176 supports the view that within the Third World (Two-third World) itself, the oppressed ethnic minorities need to be considered separately as constituting a Fourth World for the reason that merging them with the relatively developed Third World may undermine the distinctive features of their problems. Not only in the context of political economy, but also theologically have the indigenous/tribal people needed to be seen as a distinct category. A Native American theologian working among the Native Americans has proposed that without

studying the spatiality of Native American existence, one cannot understand Native American Spiritual traditions. He puts forward a theology of place as a distinctive methodology to understand the problem of the indigenous peoples and to address it responsibly. This he speaks in addition to classifying the indigenous people under the Fourth World while recognizing their struggle of liberation moving around the question of land.

The above discussion and illustrations imply that the religion and myth of the indigenous people need a distinct category to understand it in a better way hence, the need of applying the category of Primal myth and exploration of development of a new methodology to interpret them.

### 3.3.1 Primal Myth as a Distinct Category

#### 3.2.1.1 The problem of classification and inadequacy of theories

The need for a distinct rubric for Primal myth and methodology to interpret it arises as a reaction to and for removing some of the prevailing misconceptions about the world of myth itself. One of such misconceptions may be seen in the observation of a myth interpreter of the 20th century. Eliade makes the following observations:

If in every European language the word ‘myth’ denotes a ‘fiction’, it is because the Greeks proclaimed it to be such twenty-five centuries ago. What is even more serious for an historian of religion: we do not know a single Greek myth within its ritual context. Of course this is not the case with the Paleo-Oriental and Asiatic religions; it is especially not the case with the so-called primitive religions. As is well known, a living myth is always connected with a cult, inspiring and justifying a religious behavior.

The above observation is strong enough to assert that Primal myth is essentially connected with ritual and if this aspect is ignored or overlooked, there is danger of misinterpreting it.

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This type of misconception of isolating myth from ritual is shared equally by philosophers and theologians.

Further, the scholars of religions and myth interpreters too fall prey to such or other misconceptions. Joseph Campbell a noted myth interpreter classifies the myth of the world under the rubric of primitive, Occidental, Oriental and Creative Mythology.\footnote{Joseph Campbell. \textit{The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology}. New York: The Viking press, 1965. P.7. Campbell devoted one full volume for each category of myths.}

He defines ‘Primitive Mythology’ as the ‘spiritual resources of pre-historic man’, whereas Greek myths have been classified under “creative mythology”, and considered as the most important mythological tradition of the modern world. If Eliade’s observation ia taken seriously, there lies the problem of exaggerating Greek myths, or rather to qualify it wrongly.\footnote{M. Eliade. \textit{Op.cit.} p.73} However, it is not to ignore Campbell’s contribution towards interpreting myths in general.

Campbell puts Primal Myth under the category of that belonging to the ‘prehistoric’ people as if the native/indigenous people did not have their history. This is objectionable from a perspective prevalent today. Moreover the terms like ‘Oriental’ and ‘Occidental’ have suffered severe criticism today. One thinker coming from the Islamic world argues that in the case of the Orient as a notion in currency in Britain, France and America, the idea drives a great extent from the impulse not simply to describe, but also to dominate and somehow to defend against it……this is true with reference to Islam as particularly dangerous embodiment of the ‘Orient’.\footnote{Edward W. Said. \textit{Orientalism}. New York: Vintage Book, 1994. P.331} This kind of reaction against essentialist perspective cannot be simply ignored. This may be also because Campbell, as Universalist has tried to prove by taking data from different cultures that all myths have a universal pattern. This overlooks/undermines the pluralistic character of cultures of the world, or with Segal one can argue that Campbell’s categories are imposed on the data rather than deriving from it.\footnote{Robert A Segal. “Joseph Campbell’s Theory of Myth”, in Alan Dundes ed. \textit{Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth}. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. P.264.} If this view is accepted that ritual is an essential element to be related to myth, one does not get
much help from Campbell’s theory, because he denies the outward expression by considering
myth only as an internal psychological phenomenon.

One of the thinkers who paid sufficient attention on the thinking pattern of Primal people was
Levy-Bruhl. He sees a contradiction between pre-logical and logical thinking pattern
respectively belonging to the ‘primitives’ and the ‘civilized’.

Though quite influential were his thought among his contemporaries, one of more recent myth interpreters Levi-
Strauss has refuted his theory and has considered it a false antinomy. He argues that the mind
of Primal peoples is logical in the same sense and the same fashion as ours. This indicates
a fundamental change in perspective regarding the Primal people and hence a more positive
attitude to the people concerned and their thought patterns. It would imply that the attitude to
Primal myth also would change and in fact it has changed.

The above observation challenges the existing assumptions and calls for reviewing them with
an effort to explore fresh way which would be more adequate to tribal myths of Chotanagpur.

The problem of classification of Primal myths and the inadequacy of prevailing interpretive
theories and assumption are sufficient indication of the necessity of developing fresh and
better method of investigation. In this process the researcher proposes to discern some of the
distinctive characteristics of Primal myths in an effort to derive theory from the data itself
rather than imposing theory on the data.

Though, based on Levi-Strauss’ structural theory, the interpretation of Hindu myths has
brought fruitful and significant results, the same is questionable in the context of interpreting
Primal myths. Wendy Doniger’s observation of the interpretation on Gond tribal myths of
Central India is as follows:

Indeed, purely structural, Levi-Strauss’ inspired analysis of Indian tribal mythology
have yielded interesting results, the authors have tried to relate these myths to the
Hindu ritual materials at their disposal, but had they been able to make use of the full

range of Sanskrit myths upon which the tribal stories are based, their conclusions might have been more subtle, if not necessarily more sound.\textsuperscript{186}

The above categorical observation of Wendy Doniger may be questioned on her supposed assumption that Primal myths basically derive from Sanskrit texts. It is noted that Wendy Doniger deals with only those myths that derive from Sanskrit texts. The question is: is there no independent identity of Primal myths? In fact this has been a trend (and perhaps not a healthy trend) to look for Sanskrit texts for everything, including the analysis of Oral tribal/Primal traditions. This has been succinctly put forward by an Indian folklorist A. K. Ramanujan:

Until recently many studies of Indian civilization have been done on the following principle: - look for it under the light, in Sanskrit, in literary texts, in what we think are the well-lit public spaces of the cultures, in things we already know. We may not find the Keys and may have to make new ones.\textsuperscript{187}

3.2.1.2 Orality of Primal Myth as a Characteristic of Dynamism

Primal Religious traditions in every part of the globe are essentially oral traditions. Hence their myths are transmitted from generation to generation in oral form and represent the corporate ‘memory’ of a community.\textsuperscript{188} Further, it would be appropriate to recognize that orality is a mode of communication like that of written text. It may be further asserted with Baidyanath Saraswati that as a mode of transmission writing is in no way superior to the oral.\textsuperscript{189} For this purpose here the researcher shall try to concentrate on the dynamic characteristic of oral mode of transmission in general and that of myth in Primal society in particular. From the point of view of communication, thought and expression in oral cultures

\textsuperscript{186} Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty. \textit{Ascetism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva}. Delhi: OxfordUniversity Press, 1975. Pp.15f; 176-178
No.69, March-April 1992, p.3
are organized in the forms of formula, and structured in proverbs and other sets of expression. In addition, it is aggregative, participatory and situational or contextual. Its priority of oral utterance reflects power or ‘dynamism’ within it.\(^{190}\)

In a process to discern distinctive characteristics of orality, as different from written text, further it is narrated that in oral transmission the construction of sound is found, direct or personal interaction between producer and receiver, creativity, effectiveness of the power of spirit as in the recitation of Vedic mantras, the flow of thought maintained uninterruptedly, collective memory, anonymous authors etc.\(^ {191}\)

In addition to the mentioned above, the oral form of transmission also claims to be authentic and complete. In this context the impact of Bhakti tradition in India can be aptly illustrated with its overwhelming response among the Indian masses. One of such devotees, Kabir said ‘You say what is written on papers, I say what my eyes have seen’.\(^ {192}\) This statement with an affirmation of the significance of the significance of his teachings indicates the involvement of contemporary living experience. In fact the teachings of Medieval Saint Kabir on Hindu-Muslim Unity and other social problems were the outcome of his experience and addressed well to the society being fragmented on the basis of traditional beliefs on caste and religion differences. Not only this, but his and of others prophetic voices were questioning the authenticity of established texts like Vedas, and challenged the Islamic dogmatism based on Koran.\(^ {193}\)

Many more illustrations can be cited in support of dynamism and creativity inherent in the oral form of transmission particularly in the context of religious traditions at the popular level. However, the argument in favour of oral tradition and illustrations will be worth mentioning here as presented by the Indian folklorist A.K. Ramanujan.\(^ {194}\) He argues that the relations between the oral and written traditions in any culture are not simple oppositions, but they both interpenetrate into each other and transform each other. In a culture like the Indian,

\(^{193}\) One of the important contributions to this issue can be found in Mohammad Hedayetullah. *Kabir: The Apostle of Hindu-Muslim Unity*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1989.
and certainly in villages and certain communities to this day writing lives within the context of oral traditions. Even newspapers are read aloud. Some of the dynamic functions of oral traditions as discussed by Ramanujan can be mentioned as follows:

a) Oral traditions enlarge the range and they compliment and balance the texts known to many people. For example, in the anthologies of Hindu myths, several folk versions are found. Every version claims to have its source in Sanskrit text, yet different oral versions are found in several Indian languages as in Tamil and Bengali and so on. Alf Hiltebeitel’s work on Draupadī\textsuperscript{195} eloquently demonstrates how different versions of regional myths revolving around the cult of Draupadi complement the Sanskritic myths and epics in important ways. This phenomenon is also an indication of the flexibility of myth.

b) Oral traditions give alternative conceptions of deities that balance and complete and therefore illuminate the textual conceptions. For example, in pan India mythologies Lakhsmi and Saraswati rise out of Sea churned by Gods and anti-gods, these are consort goddesses and considered as subordinate to Vishnu and Siva. The pattern differs in the rise of village goddesses. Their myths tell of ordinary human women who were cheated into marrying untouchables, or raped by local villain, or killed and buried by cruel brothers. Out of such desecrations they rise in fury, grow in stature to become figures that span heaven and earth with powers of destruction that terrify the village into submission, sacrifice and worship. The myths about these village gods and goddesses are not the myths of descents but of ascent from the human into divine forms. They become boundary goddesses of the village, give their name or take their names from the village. In South India most of the myths concerning the origins of the Paraiyars are said to stem from an element of foundational core-myth that involves their goddesses Ellaiyamman and Mariyamman.\textsuperscript{196} They arise out of human deception and tragedy and function as representation of the resistance of


Paraiyars to the conquering tendencies of the caste Hindus. In other words this process of the making myths-initially in oral form- carries a dynamic potential of liberating human beings. The same applies to male gods also.

c) The oral traditions offer also a different view of the female from the views found in written texts. In the Sanskrit myths it is generally the father figures that lust after the daughter,\(^\text{197}\) as in the case of Prajapati lusting after his daughter. But in oral folk myths the female too has her share of sexual desire made explicit.\(^\text{198}\)

As illustrated above, oral form of transmission has certain distinctive characteristics which may be absent from literary traditions. This is an indication of being dynamic creative, and living. In the context of myths from Primal society, Malinowski\(^\text{199}\) succinctly tried to show that Primal peoples commonly consider words to have great power. Sound, especially by oral utterance, in his opinion, comes from inside living organisms, and is dynamic.

Related to the above characteristics is the characteristic of flexibility. Hence further effort has been made to discern the effect of flexibility in oral tradition in general and in Primal myth in particular.

### 3.2.1.3 Flexibility of Primal Myth and Its Creativity.

Orality as a characteristic of Primal Myth implies its flexibility. It is argued by scholars of religions with special interest in the study of myths change, and the changes are apparent in social, cultural and economic environments.\(^\text{200}\) Not only that, in non-literate/oral societies which for a long time were considered static, changes in myths occur more easily than they do in literate societies.\(^\text{201}\) The question remains, what would the change/flexibility of mythic form imply.

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\(^{197}\) One of the classical examples of father figure lusting after the daughter can be found in the myth of Prajapati and his daughter recorded in *Brhadārānyaka up.* I.4.1-4

\(^{198}\) A.K. Ramanujan *op.cit.* p.12.


\(^{201}\) *Ibid.*
The affirmation of ‘change’ is a late development in philosophical thought, primarily advocated and popularized by process philosophy. In earliest period of Greek philosophy, the antithetical concept of changelessness and immutability was developed which resulted in the concept of ‘change’, being a problem of philosophical thought.\(^{202}\) In the abstract and radical view of Parmenides of Elea, ‘change’ and ‘diversity’ were denied in the name of the unity and immutability of the ‘First Principle’. Parmeneides’ concept of ‘Being’ and his denial of ‘Non Being’ underwent change in course of time. Heraclitus argued that all change is contradictory, therefore contradiction (the unity of opposites) is the very essence of reality. Thus it became a different perspective: it was the dynamic unity of process, in which each momentary phase was continuously transformed into ‘opposite’ that is into a subsequent qualitatively different phase.

Further, in the modern philosophy Being and Becoming were given autonomous status with a subordinate and inferior role to Becoming. But in contemporary philosophy, the process philosophy reaffirms the concepts of change and it is one of the salient features of it. It indicates that change and flexibility, do not imply an inferior status.

Thus the scholars of religion affirm the dynamic/creative aspect of Primal myth and ritual taking illustrations from all over the globe. In Primal societies the movement is comparatively more apparent than in literary traditions.\(^{203}\) It has been already seen above (section 3.2.1.2), in the process of discussing the dynamic characteristic of oral traditions and myth that oral and literary texts interpenetrate each other. It also has become clear that oral forms of myth vary according to region, linguistic groups and differ a lot though they are said to have emerged from the Sanskrit written text itself. Not only this, but it has also been that oral traditions enlarge the range, complicate and balance the text, they also provide alternative conceptions of deities and portray the status of human being differently. In other words, in oral traditions, the subaltern becomes the centre of power.\(^{204}\) Now effort shall be made to see how flexibility of myth works in Primal societies.


\(^{203}\) D.L.Carmody *op.cit.* p.4

Raymond Firth\textsuperscript{205}, a social anthropologist, based on his field work among Tikopia of Polynesia, demonstrates the significance of myth variation. He informs that there may be as many different versions of particular myth as there are tellers of that myth. Even one individual teller may alter details in his account of a myth over a period of year or a lifetime. Whereas the written texts remain unaltered, the oral myth varies with change of time, place, teller and so forth. Since Firth works on the line of Malinowskian functionalism, he views the creation of contemporary myth as a significant function of compensation.\textsuperscript{206}

Inspired by Firth’s study, the P. Van Baaren makes more significant contribution towards understanding the significance of the flexibility of myth. His study is not in the sense of degeneration or secularization, but in the sense of its adaptability to new situations and challenges.\textsuperscript{207} He convincingly says that even if myth is defined as the supernatural charter on which a society is based, is not all inflexible except in theory. He argues that by changing, a myth is adapted to new situation, armed to withstand a new challenge. He illustrates from Tahiti, which before coming of the Europeans was governed by a king belonging to one of the great noble families. The noble families claimed descent from divine beings; their genealogies were of importance to legitimate the claim to the throne of the reigning one. The myth used to be recited by the priest at important festivals, and it was of the highest importance that this was done without any error being made. A priest who made a mistake in reciting could be executed. Thus, the myth was protected against change, and as in Durkheim’s view the maintenance of the tradition was the paramount function of myth. However, when dynasties changed, the problem arose that the existing ‘traditional’ myth was no longer in accordance with the real political situation. To solve this problem the priests made small unobtrusive errors every time they recited myth till the text of the myth was wholly adapted to the new situation. Officially the myth was not changed at all.\textsuperscript{208}

Raymond Firth gives another example from Borneo. Among the Dayak, there existed the custom of sacrificing human beings during laying of foundation. When Dutch government

\textsuperscript{206} \textit{Ibid.} p.216
\textsuperscript{208} \textit{Ibid.}
banned human sacrifice, it was replaced by water buffalo. The change in the myth & ritual made it possible henceforth to sacrifice water buffalo instead of a human being (slave).\textsuperscript{209}

The above example indicates the reason of change in myth due to political change and outside influence respectively. Changes in myth occur also due to technological changes as in the case of Tikopia. It is also affected due to syncretism. In Primal societies the change take place more easily because oral traditions are easier to manipulate than those which are fixed in writing.\textsuperscript{210}

It may be concluded that changeability is one of the specific characteristics of myth. Only the study of the myth makes it possible to discover the constant and variable elements of this phenomenon. Victor Turner’s opinion about ritual among Primal peoples may apply to myth as well. On the basis of his own experiences among the Ndembu of Rhodesia Turner asserts that no performance of a given, \textit{cult/ritual} ever precisely resembles another.\textsuperscript{211} Now the myth rituals continuum relationship shall be explored.

\textbf{3.2.1.4 Myth-Ritual Relationship In Primal Religious Traditions}

It has already been said above that ritual is an essential correlate of Primal myth. And, following Eliade's observation in this regard, tentatively it is assumed that the relation of Primal myth to ritual is an important point of departure. Myth and ritual representing the beliefs and practices of any religious tradition is an accepted phenomenon. But in connection with relation between myth and ritual, biblical scholarship has gone far ahead in research, though it has been followed in a number of other fields as well where the results achieved are impressive.

In this regard the question has arisen whether myth narrates the procedure of ritual or vice-versa. An important insight comes from Levi-Strauss, one of the modern influential myth

\textsuperscript{209} In India among the Kui tribal people of Orissa we find similar example of human sacrifice replaced by the buffalo sacrifice due to human sacrifice being banned by British Government & Christian missionary pressure ; See Barbara M. Boal. \textit{The Church in the Kond Hills: An Encounter with Animism}. The National Christian Council of India, 1963; B.M. Boal. \textit{The Konds: Human Sacrifice and Religious Change}. Bhubaneshwar: The Modern Book Depot, 1984.

\textsuperscript{210} Th.P. Van Baaren \textit{op.cit.p.221}.

\textsuperscript{211} Victor W. Turner \textit{Chihamba, the White Spirit: A Ritual Drama of the Ndembu}. Manchester. 1969.p.3
interpreters. In his view myths and rites can be treated as ‘modes of the communication from
gods to men (myths) or from men to gods (rites)’.212

The above observation based on Primal religious data and by one of leading thinkers implies
that a perspective is necessary to understand the myth-ritual relationship.

3.2.1.4.1 Definition/Description of Myth in relation to Ritual

The importance of myth and ritual in Primal religious traditions cannot be exaggerated. Kitagawa suggests that Primal people understand life as participation in the act of creation of a ‘Cosmos’ out of ‘Chaos’ by initiating the celestial model, handed down in various kinds of
myths.213 Kitagawa's suggestion seems very much similar to Charles H. Long's observation
that myth, specially the creation myth is an expression of human's cosmic orientation.214 In
other words, Primal people grasp symbolically and simultaneously human, society, and
nature and past, present, and future in a unitary system.215 Kitagawa's suggestion and
observation is very much based on and inspired by Eliade's definition of myth. Eliade says:

   Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in Primordial
   Time... Myth tells us, through the deeds of supernatural Beings, a reality came into
   existence...Myth, then, is always an account of ‘creation'; it relates how something
   was produced, began to be.216

In other words, by imitating the mythical accounts of supernatural beings, Primal people
repeat and participate in the Primordial act of creating cosmos out of chaos, which implies
establishing and maintaining norms and forms as well as order.217

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3.2.1.4.2 Ritual as Dramatized Expression of Religious Experience

Joseph Kitagawa, while trying to distinguish the Primal religions from others, argues that in Primal Society religious experience is dramatically expressed in rituals. The close relationship between myth and rituals has been suggested by many scholars. For example, according to Robertson Smith, ‘myths are derived from rituals, and in turn every rite is originally based on a myth’. It is also significant to note that just as in the case of myth, ritual in Primal societies has a divine model. Eliade stated that human beings repeat the act of creation in rituals, when he says:

…his (Primal peoples’) religious calendar commemorates the space of a year, all the cosmogenic phase which took place aborigine. In fact, the sacred year ceaselessly repeated the creation; man is contemporary with the cosmogony and with the anthroponomy because ritual projects him into the mythical epoch of the beginning.

Thus, marriage rites are recognized as the repetition and continuation of the union of heaven and earth that took place in primordial time. New Year rites signify on one hand the return to chaos and the creation of cosmos. In the initiation ceremonies, death signifies a temporary return to chaos:

Hence it is the paradigmatic expression of the end of mode of being – the modest of ignorance and of the child’s irresponsibility. Initiatory death provides the clean state on which will be written the successive revelations whose en is the formation of a new man.

Kitagawa delineates two main characteristics of ritual in Primal societies. First, that rituals are corporate activity, and secondly, ritual is not isolated from other human activities as the only ‘religious’ act. In his view salvation/soteriology in Primal religion implies the Primal

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218 Quoted in Kitagawa op.cit. p.46
219 Ibid; Kitagawa uses the terms ‘archaic’ and ‘primitive’ as descriptive term for earliest human community and the contemporary Primal Society, we use them together as ‘Primal Society’.
peoples’ initiation into the ancestral orientation of their tribal or communitarian life that is expressed in the mythical, apprehension of cosmos. From this he concludes that the *summum bonum* of Primal religion is continuity and preservation of this type of cosmic orientation, which holds in the inner unity of ritual, art, inter-human relationships, and all the rest.

### 3.2.1.4.3 Myth and Ritual as Complementary Entities

Highlighting the characteristics of comparative religion of the non-literate peoples/Primal peoples, Levi-Strauss opines that myth and ritual do not always correspond to each other. Nevertheless, they complete each other in domains already presenting complementary character. In his view the value of ritual as *meaning* seems to reside in instruments and gestures; it is *paralanguage*. The myth, on the other hand, manifests itself as meta-language; it makes full use of discourse. Although Levi-Strauss devotes far less attention to rituals than to myths, he does interpret rituals in the same way that he interprets myths. In his view both serve to express and resolve the contradictions human experience between nature and culture. He emphasizes the dialectical relationship that groups of myths have to one another and that groups of rituals have to one another.

### 4.2.1.4.4 Contribution of the Myth-Ritualist Theory:

As indicated above, due to the complex situation, the understanding of the relation between myth and ritual requires a distinct and clear perspective. In order to get a clear perspective, then requires a discussion of the prevailing myth-ritualist theory. A survey of the Primal societies in different parts of the world shows that myths and rituals are the principal ways in which oral peoples sought to bring the sacred into their midst, tame it, bow to it, and let it order their souls.

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By definition, all myth-ritualists presuppose that a relationship of some kind exists between myth and ritual.\textsuperscript{227} They differ only over what the relationship is. For Robertson Smith myth is an explanation of ritual and arises after the magical meaning of ritual has been forgotten. For Jane E. Harrison and Biblicist Samuel Hooke, myth is the script of ritual and arises alongside it. Harrison says, “The Primary meaning of myth is spoken correlative of the acted rite, thec things done….”\textsuperscript{228} In Hooke’s view the recitation of the myth is as magically potent as the performance of the ritual, when he says,

Together with the ritual, and as an essential part of it there was always found….., the recitation of the story whose outline were enacted in ritual. This was the myth, and its repetition had equal potency with the performance of the ritual.\textsuperscript{229}

Some insights from scholars of religion will be helpful here. Clyde Kluckhohn in his oft quoted article shows that there is no necessary primacy of myth over ritual, or vice versa. In some cases, myths were composed to justify rituals. But in general, there is a tendency for the two to be intricately interrelated and to have important functional connections with the social and psychological life of a particular people as for example, in case of Navaho.\textsuperscript{230} Emphasizing the relationship between myth and ritual Kluckhohn further opines that their relationship is one of intricate mutual interdependence, differently structured in different cultures and probably at different times in the same culture.\textsuperscript{231} Further, in his view, both myth and ritual are ‘symbolical’ procedures and are most closely tied together by this as well as by other facts. He categorizes myth and rituals as a system of word symbol and of object and act symbol.\textsuperscript{232}

Taking the example of the Navahos, Kluckhohn observes that relation of myth to ceremony (ritual) is variable. The rite-myth, in his view, never explains all of the symbolism of the rite, although it may account for all the important acts. Even if the practitioner is ignorant of the

\textsuperscript{227} Robert Segal, (1980), p.175
\textsuperscript{228} Quoted in Ibid.p.175.
\textsuperscript{229} Quoted in Ibid. p.17.
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid p.149.
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid p.50.
myth, the rite (or chanting of myth) is regarded to be efficacious. With regard to their mutual influence, it is also observed that myths and rituals are reinforced because they reduce the anticipation of disaster. Navaho myths and rituals provide a cultural store-house of adjustive response for individuals.\textsuperscript{233}

A comparison and distinction between Navaho and Pueblo Indians physical environment and rituals, in Kluckhohn’s view, explains the role of differing historical experience of the two people and in terms of contrasting economic and social organizations though both communities live in essentially the same physical environment, the Pubelo’s rituals are concerned predominantly with rain and fertility whereas those of the Navaho are curing ceremonials.\textsuperscript{234}

While recognizing the valid points contributed (raised) by Kluckhohn, Gaster, a scholar concentrating on religio-cultural context of west Asia, opines that myths be studied not solely as ends in themselves but as reflections of other aspects of the cultures in which they are found. He tends to see myth and ritual as parallel expressions, but not as derivative one from the other.\textsuperscript{235} In this context, Gaster proposes a redefinition of myth with a view to a new approach to it. Taking note of the contribution made by archeological discoveries which widened the study of myth (eg. In Western Asia-Biblical land), and findings of field anthropologists, he is convinced to say that myth can no longer be studied merely as a branch of literature or arts, but it belongs also and more fundamentally within the realm of religion and cult(ritual). Mythological stories are recited in many societies, not for entertainment or diversion, but as part and parcel of ritual procedures.\textsuperscript{236} On the basis of the above he argues that myth has not only a new context, but also a new dimension. Taking cue from its cultic function, myth is defined by Gaster as any ‘presentation of the actual in terms of the ideal’.\textsuperscript{237}

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{233}Ibid. p.149.
    \item \textsuperscript{234}Ibid. p.155.
    \item \textsuperscript{237}Gaster \textit{op.cit} p.112.
\end{itemize}
Gaster goes one step further and proposes that myth is *co-substantial* with ritual. They are not two things artificially or schematically brought into relationship with each other, but one thing viewed from two different angles or through two different prisms.\(^{238}\) Thus he would reject any preponderance of one over the other.

The above discussion of Gaster’s points implies a clear distinction between myth and tale. He distinguishes between myth and tale in their function and motivation. A myth is, or once was used, a tale is, and always was merely told. In his view myth presupposes an actual or original counterpart in cultic performance, tale does not.\(^{239}\) Gaster further delineates four stages through which a mythological story passes, namely ‘primitive’, ‘dramatic’, ‘liturgical’ and ‘literary’: He, taking the view of Pettazzoni that ‘myth is a true story’, opines that taken this view, myth must of necessity be true, they cannot be false, because in addition to their contents, but also by virtue of the concrete sacred forces which it sets in operation.

### 4.2.1.4.5 Myth-Ritual and Social Change

A three-fold linkage between myth, ritual and social change has been attempted by William A. Lessa in his study among the Primal peoples of Micronesia.\(^{240}\) Through a study among Ulithi he shows the enmeshment of myth, ritual and their relationship to the native political system. It is striking to notice that this linkage declines in the face of the subversive influences resulting from involvement with the outside world:

As the myth lost strength, its grip on the ritual weakened….. As the myth crumbled, the ritual lost its pagan meaning and assumed a largely secular character. It will probably persist for a while as an economic rite with some political overtones, and eventually disappear entirely. It is interesting that it persists at all, having been able to do so partly by reason of custom and partly because of its lingering political and sportive roles.\(^{241}\)


The above observation of Lessa is based in the light of his depiction of the expressive function of myth. In his view myth derives its strength and authority from a more ultimate body of beliefs and values. When this authority became undermined on Ulihti Atoll through the determination of ‘pagan’ religion, the myth no longer could draw upon its former support in controlling the ritual. This also reflects the flexibility of myth. Lessa is quite convinced that it is possible to trace social change through myths.\textsuperscript{242} It is possible to view them as instruments of more fundamental forces operative in a changing culture. Myths are not mere mirrors that reflect events, instead, even though they are creation of social forces, they are capable of exerting active influenced in return.

Another thinker Kluckhohn points out that in addition to being agencies in transmission of a culture, myth and ritual act as brakes upon the speed of culture change.\textsuperscript{243} This observation has been made on the conviction that myth and ritual satisfy a group of identical or closely related needs of individuals, and also they promote social solidarity, enhance the integration of the society.

3.2.1.4.6 Importance of the Myth- Ritualist Theory:

The foregoing discussion on the relationship between myth and ritual indicates that it is a complex phenomenon. It has been viewed variously by myth-ritualist theoreticians and practitioners. In such situation the import of myth-ritualist theory has to be discerned in what way it can be relevant for interpreting available data. Robert Segal’s observation may be a pointer to the issue.\textsuperscript{244} In his view myth-ritualist theory suggests the importance of both myths and rituals in religion. Modern skepticism toward the two, especially to rituals undermines their significance. By making myths and rituals the heart of religion, the theory compels one to consider the status of both in Primal as well as non-Primal religions.

Secondly, the myth-ritualist theory challenges the ordinary assumption of a gap in religion between beliefs and practices. Thirdly, the myth-ritualist theory questions anew the

\textsuperscript{242}Ibid. p.180
\textsuperscript{244}Robert A.Segal.\textit{op.cit.p.173.}
relationship between religion and science. Segal hopes that Science and religion can be seen in terms of their reconciliation unlike their confrontation in the last 19th century.\textsuperscript{245}

Thus, a review of different views on the relationship between myth and ritual may be an important point in an effort to choose and/or build a framework for interpreting the \textit{Asur} myth among the Oraon people. The other factors, such as orality and flexibility are of similar importance in the process. Now the researcher shall move to a discussion of theoretical model(s) in an effort to evolve suitable framework for discussing both meaning and function of myth in Primal society.

\subsection*{4.2.2 Methodological Review for Interpreting Primal Myth}

In the process of discerning and discussing some of the distinct characteristics, polemics has been used. This was in the form of misconception/suspicion prevailing in connection with the classification and interpretive tools for Primal myths. It has been noted how there is a temptation and a danger from the part of scholars to impose theory on the data rather than derive theory from the data itself. This implied an effort to delineate some of the distinctive characteristics of Primal myth with a view to derive and evolve adequate interpretive tools. In this process the researcher noted the observation of Eliade that it would be inadequate to situate Primal myth without a ritual context. This entails that it would be proper to delineate some of Eliade’s contributions to the interpretation of Primal myth.

\subsection*{3.2.2.1 Eliade’s Interpretive Vision: The Meaning and Function of Myth}

\subsubsection*{3.2.2.1.1 A definition of Myth}

While grouping the myth theories according to their claims with regard to the nature and source of myth on the one hand, and the essential use of function of myth on the other, L.D. Shinn divides the myth theories in two groups, namely, psychological and sociological.\textsuperscript{246}

In his view, Eliade’s approach to myth may be a good example of a ‘combined’ approach which incorporates both psychological as well as sociological insights. Eliade, as a ‘historian

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{245}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
of religion' affirms his theological assumptions, built upon the work of Rudolf Otto. Eliade argues that myths are born out of genuine religious experience (*hierophanies*) and are thus ‘true stories’ of the encounters between a sacred power and humans. Following Malinowski’s emphasis on the paradigmatic and living quality of myth, Eliade asserts that myths are paradigms for behaviour. Two more important points are crucial in Eliade’s understanding of myth. For Eliade, myth means ‘Cosmogenic myth’ in either original or derivative.

In other words myth tells only of that which really happened, which manifested itself. Hence disclose the creative activity of supernatural Beings and the sacredness of their works. This further implies that it is necessary to clarify the difference between myth, saga, folktale, fairytale and dream.

In Eliade’s view, cosmogenic myth is a narrative account of the creation, and a disclosure of primordial beginnings is a disclosure of being. He writes:

> When the cosmogenic myth tells us how the world was created, it is also revealing the emergence of the totality of the real which is the cosmos, and its ontological laws; it shows in what sense the world is, Cosmogony is also ontophany, the plenary manifestation of Being.

Because the myth relates the *gesta* of supernatural Beings and manifestation of their sacred powers in Eliade’s view, myth becomes the exemplary model for all significant human activities. This further implies that recitation of myth be followed by ritual acts to complete the circle, i.e., to act myth as paradigm for human behaviour.

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250 *Ibid*.
3.2.2.1.2 Soteriology as the linking point between Myth and Ritual

Human effort to escape history through myth finds expression in ritual behaviour. In this connection Eliade’s concept of *illud tempus* throws light on his understanding of soteriology/salvation/liberation. He writes: “My essential preoccupation is precisely the means of escaping History, of saving myself through symbol, myth, rites, archetypes,” Eliade is struggling for the recovery of mythic time. For him *illud tempus* is the time before non-repetitive, linear history began, the time before the inevitability of change and death had entered the human consciousness. This made humans aware of sequential time which is understood to be irreversible.

The dichotomy between mythic time and historical or profane time illumines the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane. The mythic time of beginnings is sacred, and the time that which is popularly known as history is profane. Since mythical events occur in sacred time (*in illo tempore*), for Eliade, every myth is in a general sense an expression of a new birth or creation, whether of things, persons or relationships, which is to be emulated in human acts. Following Jung, Eliade uses a comparative approach to find universal or archetypical symbols in myths which arise from ‘trans-conscious’, Eliade calls the “reversibility of time”.

The archetype accomplishes this alchemy by acting as a paradigm or model for human behavior. Eliade has concerns for the emancipation of human beings. But he does not have a different view of history. He rejects the Jewish concept of history which is irreversible, and can be tolerated. He writes about the futility behind all attempts to valorize by doctrine of historicism:

For our purpose, only one question concerns us: How can the “terror of history” be tolerated from the view of historicism?...We should wish to know, for example, how it would be possible to tolerate, and to justify, the sufferings and annihilation of so

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many peoples who suffer and are annihilated for the simple reason that their geographical situation sets them in the pathway of history…

These all reflect Eliade’s concern for a new humanism in the face of devastating war, atom bomb, ecological disaster, breaking of human relationships and so on.

It has been noted above that in Eliade’s view human effort to escape history through myth finds expression in ritual behavior. This involves his understanding of history and ontology as well as millenarianism. Rituals not only regenerate individuals and social groups: they also regenerate time itself. For example, New Year rituals imply a return to illud tempus, where the cosmogenic act can be ritually enacted. The regeneration of time in a New Year ceremony is a soteriological act in which time is rescued from the meaninglessness that has overtaken it in the form of irreversible history. Ritual is understood by Eliade as the means through which humans save themselves from death and nonbeing.

### 3.2.2.1.3 Some Problems in Eliade’s Hermeneutics

In Eliade’s hermeneutics (‘total hermeneutics’ in his words) the ‘sacred’ represents the total homo religiosus or religion as sui generis phenomenon. This ‘anti-historical’ attitude has been debated. His critics argue that Eliade does not do justice to the concrete, particular, historical nature of the data in the analysis of religion in its totality or in the interpretation of myth/Primal myth in particular.

Commenting on Eliade’s theory millenarianism, Robert Segal observes that by finding ‘meaninglessness’ in ‘history’ and by promoting the importance of primordial times, Eliade “seeks instinctively to abolish history and return to primordial time.” He further observes that his theory of such an ‘innate’ or natural yearning forces Eliade to deny the specific Israelite sense of history and to misinterpret Jewish eschatology.

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In general Eliade seems very much critical of the Judeo-Christian Tradition that attacked cosmic religiosity and emptied nature of the sacred. Eliade sees the roots of many of the contemporary crisis in terms of such a historical development and often expresses a hope that Christianity and the modern West can renew themselves by regaining this cosmic dimension of reality. He is much inspired by Patanjali’s Yoga, the cosmic religiosity of Romanian peasants and others.

Charles Vernoff’s sophisticated discussion of Eliade’s methodology and fundamental structures of religious life throws some important light on the strengths and weaknesses of Eliade’s framework. Vernoff classifies religious traditions into first-order and second order traditions. He classifies Primal religions/archaic religions into first-order traditions which are culture specific and traditional, to which Eliade chiefly directs his scholarly attention.

In the process of concretizing and enlarging the notion of religion as orientation, the basic structure of a system of general orientation exhibits four paradigmatic elements, implicit in Eliade’s analysis of archaic religion: hierophany, archetypes, sacrality and myth, each element constituting an essential dimension of self conscious existence. These dimensions may be termed epistemological, ontological, axiological and behavioral. These functional dimensions of self-conscious existence are, knowing, being, valuing and doing.

What Vernoff calls the above framework is the basis for interpreting the ‘statics’ of religion. It implies that Eliade’s theoretical framework seems inappropriate to apprehend the ‘dynamics’ of religion which would require some other framework. In Vernoff’s analysis, the second-order traditions like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism which arose as a result of the clash between cultures, would require a different framework for interpreting them. If this point is taken seriously, the interaction between Primal religious traditions and non-Primal religious traditions, and its outcome has to be viewed in a different manner. Vernoff charges Eliade with reducing the phenomena of second-order traditions to first-order categories.

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261 Ibid. p.148.
However, he appreciates that Eliade’s treatment of second-order traditions merits its justification as a methodologically essential preliminary exposure of the archaic roots of all major traditions.\textsuperscript{262} A great deal of controversy in Eliade’s framework derives from his treatment of mental functions of the Primal people. In this regard Eliade is accused of utilizing Levy-Bruhl’s discredited theory that non-literate peoples lack the scientific attitude because their mental structure and logical thought differs fundamentally from that of modern Western peoples.\textsuperscript{263} Following in the same line, the anthropologists are of the opinion that the sacred/profane contrast is not an all-important category for non-literate peoples.

The criticism of Eliade’s theoretical framework is only one part of the whole story. Inspite of certain inherent weaknesses in it, Eliade’s theory has been used fruitfully. In the Indian context Sukumari Bhattacharji’s study of Indian theogony has brought fruitful result. Through her study she has tried to show how different streams of Hindu concept of divine converged in the triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.\textsuperscript{264} The study recognizes the contributions of different communities (Aryan and non-Aryan) in the development of the Hindu concept of divine.

At the moment there is no specific available example to say whether Eliade’s phenomenological interpretation has been used to interpret Primal myths from India. However, Wendy Doniger observes that Levi-Straussian structuralist interpretation of Primal myths (primarily, the Saivaite myths) has yielded fruitful and interesting results.\textsuperscript{265} Her observation indicates the influence of Sanskrit myths of Primal Society. However, it may be too hasty to generalize that all Primal myths are influenced by Hindu myths. The incorporation of nomenclature may not suffice to prove the impact, rather a study of structural similarity may be recommended for further exploration.

\textsuperscript{262} Ibid. p.159.
\textsuperscript{263} Robert F. Brown, \textit{op.cit.} pp.432-433.
3.2.2.3 Structure and Hermeneutics: Meaning and Function of Primal Myth In Levi-Strauss’ Thought

3.2.2.2.1 Place of Myth in Levi-Strauss’ Analysis

One of the noted French anthropologists, Levi-Strauss is in the attention of contemporary students of myth. Using the linguistic model in his structural study of myth, Levi-Strauss concludes that the aim of myth is to furnish a logical model for solving contradiction. Though the concept of ‘sacred’ is not special category in Levi-Strauss’ works, Eliade finds his works relevant for the study of religions: Levi-Strauss chooses to discuss his material taken from Primal society; his criticism of anthropological historicism and his growing concern for understanding the meaning of Primal cultures is timely; Levi-Strauss’ familiarity and judicious use of several recent discoveries like linguistic theory, Marxism, communication theory is important.\(^{266}\) Eliade estimates Levi-Strauss’ popularity primarily in his (Levi-Strauss) anti-existentialism, neo-positivism, indifference to history and his exaltation of material things.\(^{267}\)

Levi-Strauss remains the basic source for the structuralist approach to religion. This late development in the study of religion is founded on modern linguistics and is often identified as a branch of “semiology”, (the study of signs).\(^{268}\) Structural analysis is a system analysis. The emphasis is placed on an analysis of relation between terms or units in a religious system. The structural study of religion seeks to describe and explain the unconscious infrastructure which is presupposed in the performance of religion. From this point of view history of religion may be understood as a history of different transformations of a structure.

Though structural studies of religion based on Levi-Strauss framework may be scanty, the interpretations of myths based on his frame work abound. Levi-Strauss’ four volume study of

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\(^{267}\) Ibid., p.35.

the Primal myths from South America testifies to his massive work in the field. In the study of Primal religions he gives priority to the study of interpretation of myth with a view of elaborating the logic of the concrete, one of the major concerns of modern thought.

3.2.2.2 Assumptions and Interpretive Scheme of Levi-Strauss ‘Bricolage’ and the Logicality of Primal Peoples.

Levi-Strauss has a great appreciation for the mentality of the Primal peoples. Rejecting the notion of ‘pre-logical mentality’ espoused by Levy –Bruhl, Levi-Strauss strongly asserts the logicality of Primal peoples’ mental functioning when he says:

The savage mind is logical in the same sense and the same fashion as ours, though as our own is only when it is applied to knowledge of a universe in which it recognizes physical and semantic properties simultaneously…….contrary – to Levy-Bruhl’s opinion, it's thought proceeds through understanding, not affectivity, with the aid of distinctions and oppositions, not by confusion and participation.

Thus, it’s found in Levi-Strauss a more positive attitude towards Primal people particularly in the matter of thinking process.

There is significant support for this view from other myth interpreters. Agreeing with one of the hermeneutics Paul Ricoeur, G. S. Kirk, (a famous structuralist interpreter of myth) argues that Levi-Strauss’ structural analysis is valid for myths of Primal societies. It is such because in Primal or ‘totemistic’ societies arrangements matter more than contents.

This kind of thought is called ‘bricolage’ in French. This term is introduced by Levi-Strauss in his book *The Savage Mind*. *Bricolage* is a metaphor for the thought of Primal people. It means something like ‘improvising out of random materials’; the *bricoleur* is handyman

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who makes things out of what lie ready for use, whether or not they are the best conceivable materials.\textsuperscript{272}

Appreciating Levi-Strauss’ stance of generalizing human thought processes, Paul Ricoeur observes that Levi-Straussian structuralism as developed in terms of the concept of ‘bricolage’ is the ‘choice of syntax over semantics’.\textsuperscript{273} He further observes that Levi-Strauss opposes myth and science only to bring them back together. This is reflected when Levi-Strauss says:

Mythical thought, that bricoleur builds up structures by fitting together events, or rather the remains of events, while science, ‘in operation’ simply by virtue of coming into being, creates its means and results in the form of events, thanks to the structures which it is constantly elaborating and which are its hypotheses and theories.\textsuperscript{274}

Further he says in the same sequence:

Mythical thought for its part is imprisoned in the events and experiences which it never tires of ordering and re-ordering in its search to find them a meaning. But it also acts as a liberator by its protest against the idea that anything can be meaningless with which science at first resigned itself to compromise.\textsuperscript{275}

\textbf{Binary Oppositions: The Central Conception in Myth Analysis}

Recognizing the logicality of mythic thinking, Levi-Strauss views the essential process of myth-making as a type of binary thinking which offers a logical model capable of resolving human problems or conflicts. He analyzes, for instance, the Oedipus myth. It reveals in its structural (synchronic) juxtapositions a message quite different from its narrative message (diachronic). In order to uncover the latent meaning of this myth, Levi-Strauss first divides the story into its smallest conceptual units or “mythemes”. Then, by arranging all the separate

\textsuperscript{272} C. Levi-Strauss. \textit{The Savage Mind}. Pp.16-36.
\textsuperscript{274} C. Levi-Strauss. \textit{The Savage Mind}. P.22.
\textsuperscript{275} \textit{Ibid}
“mythemes” into columns of similar relationships, the underlying oppositional or binary structure is revealed. He concludes that the underlying, synchronic structure reveals the true message of the myth and also the unconscious binary process determinative of the myth itself.\textsuperscript{276}

Levi-Strauss further asserts that the binary logic of myth (even though imbedded in unconscious processes) is of the same type as that of modern science and is as rigorously applied. The only difference he points out is that what is unconscious process in the mind of Primal people is conscious in the modern scientist and that the subject matter to which the binary thought process is applied differs. In the analysis of the Native American myth, “The Story of Asdiwal”, Levi-Strauss concludes that search for vision’s meaning brings result in the structure and not in the narrative.\textsuperscript{277} Levi-Strauss’

Structural approach, adapted to ancient Eastern mythology by G.S. Kirk and to Indian Saivite mythology by the scholar of religion Wendy O’Flaherty, has yielded interesting results.\textsuperscript{278}

Levi-Strauss argues that not only myths and science reveal or work in taxonomies, but all human activities display human’s pairing impulse. He finally reduces all contradictions in terms of “nature” versus “culture” representing the animality and humanity co-existing in human beings.

### 3.2.2.2.3 The Method and Procedure of Interpretation of Myth

Levi-Strauss proposes a very ‘strict’ method of myth interpretation, which is reducible to three rules:

a) A myth must never be interpreted on one level only. No privileged explanation exists, for any myth consists in an interrelation of several explanatory levels.

b) A myth must never be interpreted individually, but in its relationship to other myths which, taken together, institute a transformation groups.

\textsuperscript{278} See above footnote nos. 90 and 96.
c) A group of myth must never be interpreted alone, but by reference (a) to other groups of myths; and (b) to the ethnography of the societies in which they originate.279

d) He suggests that in similar manner ritual may be studied. He has consistently emphasized the mutual relationship between myth and ritual. In more recent times S.A. Dange has adapted Levi-Strauss’ framework for understanding Hindu myths.280

3.2.2.2.5 Strengths and Weaknesses of Structural study of Myth

Levi-Strauss has challenged the functional analysis expounded by say, Malinowski. He goes beyond the overt description or narrative level to the unconscious level of human mind. Compared with Eliade, whose ‘structure’ is trans-historical, Levi-Strauss’ structure lies in the human mind, that is in the unconscious level.281 His recognition of Primal peoples’ mental functioning is illuminating. It is a more positive attitude towards Primal people, which he does through generalization. It implies that his theoretical framework may be applied to varied subjects.

Some of the criticisms leveled against Levi-Strauss will be worth mentioning here. Like Eliade, he too (Levi-Strauss) tries to isolate mythic content from its context in order to compare similar themes in the process of discerning common structures. His aversion to ‘sacred’ and matters ‘religious’ is another point criticized by scholars.

Concluding Remarks

The foregoing discussions centered on the delineation of some of the distinctive characteristics of Primal myths. The researcher has argued that an effort is being made to evolve methodological framework from the data itself. It is often alleged that scholars tend to impose theoretical framework on data and thus lose the credibility of scientific inquiry. In this process, orality, flexibility of myth (Primal) and its relationship with ritual were found to

be the important elements to enter into a discussion of prevailing framework for interpreting myth.

Taking the above three chief characteristics of Primal myths, the interpretative scheme of phenomenologist/morphologist Mircea Eliade and of structuralist Levi-Strauss were discussed. Some of the strengths and weaknesses have been discovered in both the theoretical frameworks. Whereas Eliade’s structure is trans-historical, it cannot be empirically verified. Thus it is accused of being ahistorical or rather anti-historical. He is critical of Marx and others who are in their turn critical of religion.

Levi-Strauss, on the other hand also is accused of being indifferent to history. Thus, Eliade and Levi-Strauss both fall prey of ignoring history (diachronic) in their effort of apprehending structural similarities (synchronic). The social function of myth is ignored by the very use of phenomenological or structural methodologists. However, both have stressed the importance of handling the ritual context seriously. From these discussions some important issues arise, such as the relation between myth and history and so on. This and other relevant issues will be discussed further in the section dealing specifically with Asur myth in the Oraon context.