

Changes of Traditional Clan and forms of Communication: —an Anthropological Study on Oraon in North 24 Parganas W.B

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Abstract

The present study exerts the nature of traditional clan system of Urban Oraon, a Dravidian linguistic family. The study of General village and clan structure has been applied in present research to understand that how traditional means of communication affect? Attempts have been made in the present research to brighten up the pattern changes and modifications. Again to study of what sort they control their conventional clan system, taboo & settlement under the pressure of modernization. The function of clan and its transmission under the study is examined. And observes how the urban oraon made clear with the local settlement and their own traditional needs in balancing equilibrium?

Keywords: clan, Taboo, Communication, Tradition, Modernization

Introduction

Communication, which is the transmitting and exchanging of information, exists in many forms and occurs for many groups purposes. It is primary ingredient in the Biological world, the cohesive force in every human culture and the dominant influence in the personal life a every one of us. Social communication viewed as the vehicle for more intimate social interaction, communication among groups and among individuals supplies the sinews that make possible industry, commerce, international relation and the structure of our culture. Face-to-face conversations , letters, telephone calls, committee meeting and conversations ; memoranda, invoices and bills of conduct ; legislative proceedings, diplomatic exchanges and court hearings; the organizations , professional, associations, labor unions, political parties and religious faiths lare but a few of the many channels whereby society achieves its hesion , preserves its components, and modifies its form , It is the social sciences which deals with phenomena generated by communication at these various levels. The interaction is complex, producing a multitude of cultural and economic relationships and entities. Communication somewhat analogously is essentials as to the creation of knowledge succeeding generations. Man has been called the “Time binding” creature because he can use his communication skills to encapsulate his experiences and then convey, even across centuries the wisdom he has gained.

For Dewy (1925) described that communication is social, political, and aesthetic principle. Communication joins people in community associations , it works not by transporting the private thoughts of people share in the making of common life. In this view that art is a form of communication and communication is a form of art.

Anthropology and Communication

According to Kluckhohn (1961) “I take my general definition of communication Hocktt,s (1958:573) “ communication acts by which one organism triggers another”. But I shall deal only with that kind of communication called language. Language differs from other communication systems in that there is a nonlinear feedback. Language is physics, Biology and culture I shall deal only with the cultural aspect of language , though I recognize that some of the universal features of human language which are built into all cultures rest upon certain limiting conditions and forwarding’s provided by the constancies of physics and Biology.(p-63) ²

According Franz Boas (1938); Animals convey their emotions by means of cricks, touch and visible movements ,. And in so far as there are related to experiences exciting fear, anger, or pleasure they are significant, No case has been observed in which an animal represents a specific experience by visual , tactile or auditory signs. Certain movements of the body or changes in posture of animals are also indicative of situations that may be understood by other individuals. The direction of gaze toward an object that excites interest , the rigid position of the body in close attention , the movements when a scent is taken, the erection of the hair excitement , the wagging, of the tail of familiar stimuli in the same manner. Man use movements and sound in the same manner, but addition to vague expression there are others by means of which specific experiences are indicated. In gestures as well as in spoken language numbers of situation are expressed by the same formal expression. In other words, a grouping together of similar experiences persisted, and these have found their representation in symbols. Thus dog, water, running, sleeping, expressed either by gestures or by sound, include each large numbers of varied experiences, all understood under a single vague symbol. By means of combination of these symbols, the whole situation is described from various angles and is communicated. It may be presumed that the possibility of calling attention to specific situations actual as stimulus to further developments of communication by both gestures and sound. Gesture represents the advantage that pectoral movements a whole situation may be described at once, and it is still used when spoken language is not understood.

Tylor (1899), described there are many ways in which man can communicate with one another. They can make gestures, utter, cries, speak words, and draw pictures, write characters or letter : when for any reason people cannot talk together by word of mouth , they take to conversing by gestures , in what is called dumb show or pantomime. The gestures-language among the deaf and dumb, the most perfect way of making out its principals is in its use by people who can talk but do not understand one's another's language.

Lowie (1940) Language falls under the definition of culture become it is acquired by an individual through his fellowship in a social group. There means of communication besides writing which dispense with auditory symbols. Speech evolved from an attempt to represent phenomena by sounds that intrinsically suggest them.

The present investigation has been studied on oraon tribe, live in North 24 parganas. The people had come from Chotonagpur during colonial period for cutting jungle and as an indigo labour. Anthropologists have manifested that their ancestor most probably came with Jamimdars for several works. These migration histories made it clear that they actually a new settlers in this village. For the reason, it is assumed that naturally their traditional system must have changed or wholly assimilated by the pressure of modernization or native culture, but an interesting scenario has been observed or detected that they yet have not been lost their own cultural entity or reality.

The present research examines, what sort they had been changed traditional system, slowly, under the audience of modernization but not lost its potentiality.. The purpose of the study has also been engaged to search how the additions and reshuffle have been done on their clan and taboos. The study also investigates to detect, how ecology, local environment and literature have provides to accept the essence of modernization? Here two elements of social –cultural trait are jointly taken for understanding the objects of present research. The study has been carried out on two elements, like, Clan & Settlements.

History of Literature

According Dalton (1872), oraons live in mixed villages, they focus them separate settlement of their own identity. He again said there is no limit to permanency of such walls when protected by roofs; and when exposed, all that is necessary to render them durable is to prevent the direct action of the rains by some slight covering of leaves or straw by way of copping. The words of this method of building are that holes are dug to supply the material which is never afterwards receptacles of fifth and hot-beds of fever. Very few villages are found tenanted only by Oraons. The majority have been assigned to middle man, whose more pretentious tiled dwellings with their upper stories look down patronizingly or contemptuously on the low thatched gable-ended huts of the aborigines, and it may be surely predicted that the grander the manon houses the poorer and more squalid are thus that surround it. Chakraborty and Mukherjee had proposed on oraon settlement that generally household consists of two side-walls, as entrance and no windows. The gigger hut is divided internally into two unequal compartments-the larger one serving as the bed-room, during –room and kicthen , while 7the smaller one serves as the store for gains, utensils and implements. The floor and the walls of the huts are made of mud while the roof is made of tiles or grass-thatch.

Method and Technique

Only fifteen to sixteen kilometer distance from the Bangaon town the village Dhalani is situated. Everyday their life style is contacted with this city life. Even today they are maintained their traditional way of life. How they perceive and why they are carried out their nature of conventional life under pressure of modernization or influence of modern life. The study initiated to focus on occasion.

We have several anthropological techniques like Observation, questionnaire, interview and Genealogy.

The Village

The present studies is carried out on Sardar Para, a hamlet of Village Dhalani, under the block Bagdha, 3 No Konira-1 Panchayet in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. The study intends the modernization of traditional communication system in indigenous people. The hamlet of the observing village is allegedly composed with homogenous people, belongs to the tribe oraon. Basically, agriculture is the main occupation. Needless to say, they have to work as agricultural labourers or daily labourers. Though agriculture related work is their primary occupation but this type of occupation could not satisfied their necessities. For this reason they have to accept different secondary occupations as and when available from their society. They had been living since more than hundred years. The paper has showed their settlement pattern only. There are 134 Oraon families live here. All families are selected for the investigation. Dhalani is the midsized village located in the district of North 24 Parganas in the state of West Bengal in India. It has a population of about 2799 persons living in around 578 families. At present there are 69 families studied. The total population is 282, out of them, 158 female and 124 male.

Family Size:

The investigation has announced that the Small family is seen 81.15%. The middle size family or medium family has placed after the Small family with 15.95 % and last 2.9 % i.e. large family. The following table has shown the detail picture.

Table-1: (Family Size)

Nature of the family	NO	%
Small (1-4)	56	81.15
Medium (+4-7)	11	15.95
Large (7)	02	2.9
Total	69	100

Generally Small family holds one to maximum 4 numbers i.e. 81.15%. Medium family recognizes with more than four & less than 7 member. It is found in 15.95%. More than 7 member of a family is called large family. The percentage of each family in the mentioned table is calculated in the respect of total number of family.

Clan Distribution

Several types of clan have found in this Hamlet or Sardar Para. These are namely Tirki, Toppo, Panna, Kerketa, Dhanua, Miz, Khalko etc.

The following table shows the clan distribution in the respect of presently studied families.

Table-2

SL No	Clan	No of Family	%
01	Tiriki	33	47.14
02	Toppo	29	41.42
03	Panna	01	1.43
04	Kerketa	01	1.43
05	Dhanua	01	1.43
06	Miz	03	4.29
07	Khalko	01	1.43
08	Lakra	01	1.43
Total		70	100

Population wise Clans distribution

It has found that 132, 115, 12, 04,03,04,05, &07 persons are belonged to clans Tirki, Toppo,Miz,Khalko, Panna, Kerketa, Dhanua & Lakra respectively. The next table describes a detail account on Sex wise clan distribution.

T able-03

Sl No	Clan Name	Male	Female	Total
01	Tirki	78	54	132
02	Toppo	63	52	115
03	Miz	06	06	12
04	Khalko	-	04	04
05	Panna	01	02	03
06	Kerketa	02	02	04
07	Dhanua	04	01	05
08	Lakrar	04	03	07
Total	08	158	124	282

The table shows an interesting note that the most of the people belongs to Clans, like Tirki and Toppo. Toppo clan is second highest in position and rests are very rare.

According to Dalton, the oraons are divided into tribes, and are what a recent authors on the subject of primitive marriage calls exogamous, as are also Mundas. He had shown above that Oraons preserve very remarkably the symbol of the marriage by capture. The family or tribal names are usually those animals or plants, and when this is the case, the flesh of some part of the animal or fruit of the tree is tabooed to the tribe called after it.¹⁷

The following are names of tribes.

Dalton –“Oraons” Tribal Division” in 1872(the original book entitled “Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal” p-260. We have taken an Ideal type of clan structure or classification which are mentioned here.

Table-04, Ideal Type

Sl no	Names of the tribe	Tabooed
01	Tirki	Must not eat Tirki , young mice
02	Ekhar	Must not eat head of tortoise
03	Kirpotas	Do not eat the stomach of the pig
04	Lakrar	Do not eat tigers flesh
05	Kujrar	Must not eat oil from this tree or sit in its shade
06	Gedhiar	Must not eat kite
07	Khekhar	Must not eat crow
08	Minjer	Must not eat Eel
09	Krtketar	Must not eat the bird so called.
11	Barar	Must not eat leaves of the Ficus Indicus.

The clans are totemic i.e., they are named after birds, fish, animals, vegetables, plants, and minerals. S.C. Roy is of opinion that formerly, most of totem names have been supplied by the fauna and flora of their past and present habitat and a few new names have been added after they have gathered knowledge of agriculture and the use of metals. Some of the totem names may be cited for example: Toppo: wood-peeker, Minz: a kind of flesh, Panna: Iron. The tribe is divided into a number of totemic exogamous clan (gotra). A clan is further sub-divided into a number of maximal lineages which are again subdivided into a number of major lineages which are composed of ultimate social units.¹⁸

In present study detects the aforesaid phenomenon. The study observes that a few changes & reshuffle have been triggered on their clan nature. This is not only done by addition or deletion, rather it has played a communication of balancing mood. This communicative skill is perceived after taken a long experience.

Modern Feature of Urban Taboo

The study primarily intends that how the traditional aspect of clans and taboo has changed ? The table shows the clear cut pictures.

Table -05

SL NO	Ideal type Clan	Ideal Type of Taboo	Clans found in Dhalani, Sardar para	
			Clans	Present features of taboos
01	A) Tirki	Must not eat Tirki, young mice.	Tirki	At present they do not know the actual meaning of Tirki, but they give respect Arrow, because its pronunciation as same Bengali word likes Teer.
02	B) Ekhar	Must not eat head of tortoise	Not found	
03	C) Lakrar	Must not eat tigers flesh	Lakrar	A big size of wild cat, they say in Bengali word as Bonbiral
04	D) Kujrar	Must not eat oil from this tree or sit in its shade.	Presently Not found in this hamlet	
05	E) Gedhiar	Must not eat kite	Presently not found	
06	F) Khckhar	Must not eat crow	Khalko /Halko	Must not eat crow
08	G) Minjer	Must not eat Eel	Minz	They do not know.
09	H) Kirpotas	Must not do not eat the stomach of the pig		
10	I) Kerketar	The bird so called	Kerketa	Any kind of bird
11			Toppo	A bird
12			Panna	Not known
13			Dhanua	Not known to them

The oraon are divided into sixty (Roy, 1916) or more exogamic totem clans, named after and plants. No descent from these is claimed, but they are supposed to have aided or protected the ancestor in some way. Descent is apparently in the male line. No phratry grouping of the clans has been observed. Quite strict taboos are in force among the members of clan regard to the totem, and not only will an oraon himself abstain from killing, eating or using his totem, but he will attempt to prevent others doing so in his presence. In the case totem such as 5rice, salt, etc, whose is indispensable only some special form or manners of eating is forbidden. There are also interesting cases of the transference of totem taboos to other objects which happen in fact or in name, a resemblance to the totem proper. Thus the tiger clan must abstain not only from the tiger, but from the squirrel, whose stripes suggest the tiger; the monkey clan extend their taboo to a tree which bears the same as the monkey, and therefore may neither cut or burn it nor sit under into shade. No distinctive badges or personal marks symbolic of the totems are in use, although there is a possibility that the wooden figures carried in certain clan festivals, may represent the totem of the village founders¹⁹.

Nature and Balanced Mood of Urban Oraon Clan and Taboo

The following table shows the active clans nature of the studied oraon village in reference to Dalton, Roy and A C Hadden.

Table-06

Dalton Clan	Findings in sardar para				
	Present Status	Taboo Mixed with Bengali	Same taboo but different accent	Identical nature of clan	Factor provide for changing.(communicative devices)
A =Tirki	A	A=Tirki, the word is used as TEER,i.e arrow.		-	The word so mach with Bengali word.
B= Ekhar	Not find	Not find	Not find	Not	Not find
C=Lakrar	C			Big size wild cat	Experience, perception with knowlwdge., the clan transference is adjusted with local fauna.
D=Kujrar	D	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
E=Gedhiar	Not found	Not found	Not found	Not found	Not found
F=Khekhar	F		Halkho /Khalko instead of Khckhar		Crow is available, hence it is maintained easy to communicate with word Halkho or khalkho
G=Minjer	G	Pronounced as Minz			
H=Kirpotas					
I=Kerketar	I		Kerketa = A small sized bird like sparrow	A small sized bird like sparrow	Adjust with local Bird.
J= Barar					1

Analysis-01

1. Clan A(Taboo Mixed with Bengali Word): the members are understood it as an arrow, because the Bengali common word TEER is well known to them. Hence clan is shifted to a material object obviously which is related hunting traditional weapons. So the traditional system is preserved well and therefore they communicate it to outer world, through Bengali word, after a long experience.
2. Clan - F(Same Taboo but Different Accent): The taboo of the clan is practiced in traditionally but they change its pronunciation. The members or villagers respect their clan totem to the same as the original study of Dalton, 1872. The high density of communication has played a great role in between studied people and native language during a long time has been detected.
3. Clan C & I (Identical & Different accent): This is an interesting notion that the taboo has changed through the pronunciation. They pronounce it as Bengali word and totem is shifted to same species i.e Tiger to Big-sized cat and traditional bird to Sparrow. And same time they define to recognize, an undefined traditional clan to defined modern clan.(in the case of clan –I).
4. The clans namely Toppo,Panna & Dhanua which were not recorded by the author Dalton in his book” Descriptive ethnology of Bengal”p-260, although , these are present here.
Hence; Toppo(X)= Toppo means a long-necked white bird ,as in Bengali literature, it has well known to them as Bok Pakhi(Bird). This bird is practiced by the villagers. Under the space of Traditional taboo mixed local ecology with Bengali literature)
5. The members of Panna(Y) and Dhanua(Z) could not explain the taboo.

Balanced form of Communication

The study intends primarily that the villagers of Sardar Para , after a long time ,near about 120 years, changed their traditional system slightly. The changing process is continuously ongoing. The change might be clustered as a modernization. They communicate themselves within their traditional system in the domain of Modernization. In this study, three phases of clan structure have been recognized.(in the reference of Dalton study)

- I. Taboo Mixed Bengali Word—it depends on local language.
- II. Same taboo but different accent-
- III. Identical and different accent.
- IV. Traditional Taboo with Local resource.

In the above phases the clan law of exogamy is present. According to Roy and Hadden, the totem transference of tribe has been found under Modernize way. So the tradition is still now continued but it has gained a new audience.

The next table shows, how many people have been practiced the above nature of clan system.

Table -07

SL No	Clan category	Clan name	No of Family	%	No of Members	%
01	I	A	33	47.14	132	46.81
02	II	F	01	01.43	115	1.42
03	III	C	01	01.43	12	2.48
04		I	01	01.43	04	1.42
05	IV. EDCIKnT	X	29	41.42	03	40.78
06	DCUnT	G	03	4.29	04	4.26
07	EDCIUnT	Y	01	01.43	05	1.06
08	EDCIUnT	Z	01	01.43	07	1.77
Total		08	70	100	282	100

(E= Except, D= Dalton, Cl=Clan, Un= Unknown, Kn= Known, T= Taboo, A= Tirki, F= Khalko/Halkho, C=Lakrar, I= kerkata, X=Toppo, G=Minz, Y=Panna, Z=Dhanua.)

The table-07 shows that the taboo mixed with Bengali literature i.e “I” 47.14% is found out of 70 families. Clan X, which is not listed in the opinion of Dalton, but it has found in the study in 41.42%.. . In respect of total population it has practiced by 46.71 % & 40.78% members. From the nature of changes of the following table, it has been stated that the oraons , first communicate Bengali word in their traditional terminology and keep attention to the local resources. Thus, they modify themselves after a long experiment with the platform of Modernization. Next they have applied to coerce on traditional taboo and emphasized different accent.The result has come with the modern clan “II”

STAGE I.....I.....Mixed Taboo with Bengali Word (Ecological & literature)

STAGE.....II.....Same taboo Different Accent (traditionalism and literature)

STAGE.....III.....Identical and Differnt Accent (Ecology, knowledge ,literature & traditionalism)

STAGE.....IV.Traditional Taboo And Local Recourses.....Ecological Balance.

Conclusion

The study has observed the nature of change of traditional system and modernization. It has also manifested an incessant of self-revelation of Oraon.. The inhabitants of the village (Oraon) had come in British Colonial period. The reasons was Jungle cutting or Indigo-Cultivation etc. Since, they had been living here permanently. The migration history says they had migrated from Chotonagpur. From the point of literature, the Oraon of Sardar para is established that they are a New settlers. The present study has been examined their village settlement and Clan structure. It has found that their traditional village settlement somewhat changed. But they always have maintained their own cultural identity. Small family is identified in 81.15%. It has the criteria of traditional settlement of oraon.. It has observed the people do not maintain any definite row for making their houses. Most of the walls are mud built and roofs are tiles. The houses goods incorporated with mats, wooden stools, earthen pots and very rare weapons and metal utensils of daily use. They also use some of the agricultural implements and a few weapons like bows and arrows. Their huts not badly built. The material of walls and roofs have changed, they use concrete permanent settlement. The window is provided in the house and also with cattle-shed, pig-sty. There is no own flag and dancing place. No Dhumkura & Pelerpa or bachelors hall has been found. But they concerned about that tradition and sometimes they have tried to practice so-called tradition , uncertainly ,through the club activities and school hostels. It is observed that the traditional youth opportunity and education might have been carried out and satisfied.

The study holds that the members are divided into exogamous clans of totemistic nature. No phratry grouping of the clans has been observed. Quite strict taboos are in force among the members of clan regard to the totem. They believe the totem helped, protected and provide some services to their ancestors in crisis. Communication density has been interpreting a great role in between traditional system and modernization.

In this gateway, they modify themselves from the little tradition to great. Observing people always keep preserving their conventional or traditional system in accordance to modern audience. They represent themselves in space of outer world with the help of communication with or reshuffle their own cultural identity to the modern.. They have always been concerned to preserve their traditionalism. The present Study navigates a new dimension of clan structure. The clan of the study has emphasized with three different approaches. These approaches depend on experience, knowledge, perception and communication. The factors like ecology, language and adjustment with local resources provide their modification.

The villagers live near about 120-150 years. The oraon had been continuously fighting against local caste and local language. First they communicate their mother language to Bengali. Some taboos that they have already been forgotten, so they might have attached the clan with Bengali word which is similar to clan and available resources. This cognition of communication results the clan nature” I” name Taboo Mixed Local Language” (TML). Hence, the local language and Knowledge or experience provides the changes. In this particular case, here change means reshuffle their Own system. It has been observed that they would not renounce their realm of thoughts or ideas.

After long experience their perception used to achieve the control and preserve of traditional taboo with the Bengali articulation or pronunciation. That might have been resultant the nature of Same Taboo but Different accent (STDA). Here it should be mentioned that same taboo means traditional taboo (in reference to Dalton Literature). Thus it is benefited to oraon for keeping their traditional system in domain of modernization. In this phase they have articulated their language and traditional taboo for preserving their own identity. They would modify but not lost their tradition. An important nature of clan structure has observed name identical taboo and Different accent (ITDA). The people first have searched the local flora and fauna of the same species according their traditional taboo whether these different accent. Then they shifts clan. .As to result an undefined traditional clan to defined modern clan has come. An another important nature of clan has been studied that traditional taboo with Native ecology. So the evolutionary sequence of clan and settlement of the present study postulates Modernization of an Indigenous people have always been favored on traditional means communication system. They always had been frightening from past to present for reconstructing their traditional system under the pressure of modernization. The study have been carried out only a small indigenous people of North 24 Parganas in W.B , whose are a new settlers in the context of original home. The study would be more strengthen, if it is being done in wider area and original oraon home and every corner of Oraon settlement and their material and social cultural life.

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