

Socio Economic Condition of Oraon Tribe in Garal Bari Gram Panchayat of Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

The Adivasi society is the main keystone of inherent society in India. These nature worshipper tribes are aloof from modern civilization. The tribals live in isolated and inaccessible places in India. The Oraon tribes in Garal Bari gram panchayat of Jalpaiguri district is a socially, economically and culturally diversified village in compare to the surroundings area. The tribal dwellers of such region are deprived from basic necessities of life. Most of them are facing the problem of unemployment making their survival difficult. They could not maintain their livelihood due to their low incomes. They are stressed with education, economic and social backwardness. Therefore, it is very important to explore the socio economic status of Oraon tribe in Garal Bari gram panchayat with respect to their occupation, lifestyle, income, education, sex structure, food habits etc. Therefore, in this paper an attempt has been made to analyze the socio economic conditions of Oraon tribe in Garal Bari gram panchayat of Jalpaiguri district.

Keywords: Adivasi, Senile population, Garal Bari, Muthiya, Ghashi, Sarnaism.

1. Introduction:

The tribes are an independent political division of a population with a common culture and they are primitive residents of our country [3]. Most of the Indian tribes are originally belongs to the Adivasi family. The term Adivasi means the member of any of the aboriginal tribal peoples living in India before the arrival of the Aryans in the second millennium BC [19]. Generally the peoples live in India from very earlier were commonly named as Adivasi. Oraons are one of the Adivasi members of India. The term Oraons comes from the Oraon word of Choto Nagpur Plateau "to roam" which means vagabond [23]. A good number of Oraons are living in India since the ancient time. The Oraons are the 5th largest tribes in South Asia [20]. India has the second largest tribal population after African continent [18]. Though the numbers of Oraons are gradually decreasing day by day but the percentage of Oraons population is quite higher than any other tribes in India. According to 2011 census, the total population of Oraons tribe's estimates is about 3.5 million to 4.5 million in India [23]. Though the primitive activities like haunting, fishing, food gathering are commonly found in tribal community, but recently many of them are engaged in settled agriculture, firms and labour of tea gardens.

Socio economic condition are often discussed in broad term as satisfaction of needs, feelings of well-being, good or bad working conditions, and other indicators [11]. Drinking water, health, occupation, schooling etc are the good indicators of socio economic status of any tribe. Now in 20th century, the impact of globalization is worldwide but it is despairing that some of the tribal community are still surviving in a grievous condition. The Oraons of the garal bari gram Panchayat in Jalpaiguri district is one such community which are trampled in the society due to their socio economic backwardness. Thus the present paper is concentrated to identify the socio economic conditions of them.

2. Objectives:

The root objectives of this study includes

- To review the historical background of the Oraons in the study area.
- To examine the socio economic status of the Oraons in the study area.

3. Study area:

The tribal village (Pakuritala) of Garal Bari gram panchayat is occupying 0.13 Sq.km. areas out of 7.71 Sq.km of the total gram panchayat areas. There is 54 number of dwellers in this village and they are geographically located between 26°26'13.43"N to 26°26'01"N and 88°37'56.12"E to 88°38'10.16"E.

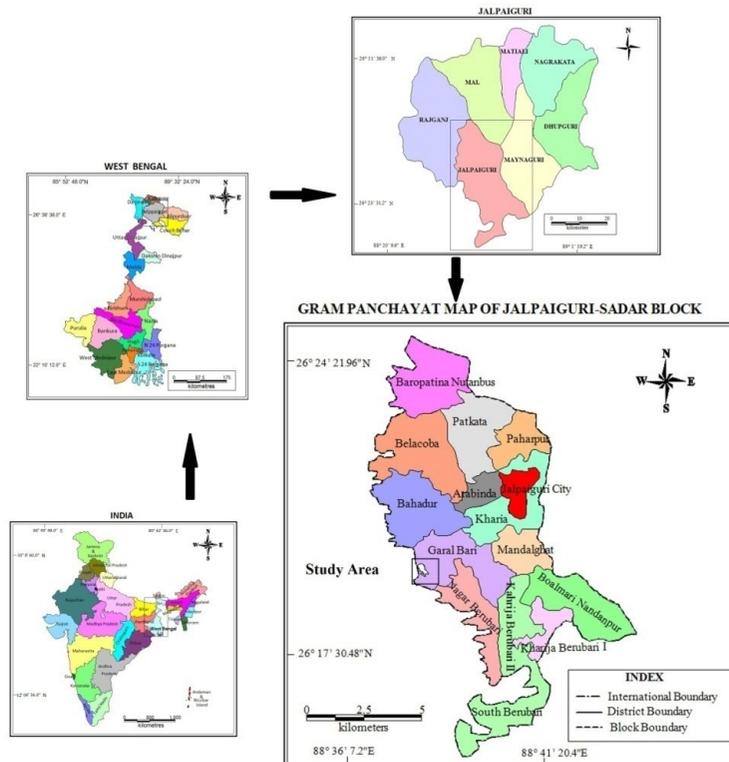


Figure 1: Location map of the study area

4. Materials & Methods:

The study has been conducted by collecting primary data using closed ended structured questionnaire, open ended questionnaire, focus group discussions and in depth interviews by the foregoing tribals. For carrying out survey scheduled questionnaire (door to door) was prepared and almost 54 dwellers of the villager were selected. A few young of them were educated (Madhyamik candidates, 2018) and this was an advantage to interact with them. For qualitative evaluation Panchayats, personal interviews of the elderly person and discussions with neighboring villagers conducted. Collected data from 54 respondents have been tabulated and analyzed using simple statistical methods.

5. Historical background:

It was heard that the word Garal bari comes from the word of 'Garh' trees. Garh tree belongs to the bush or copse wood family. The undivided Jalpaiguri district had a big area before 1947's partition. At that time the Panchagarh part of the Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) lies in the undivided Jalpaiguri District. To facilitate better collection of revenue, Indo-Bangladesh International border near Garal bari (up to Mahazza Dighi) was the edge of the sadar part of this district. At that time there was no physical boundary. The end of the Mahazza dighi (Mahazza dighi is a big pond named by Mahazza place), there was widespread Garh trees. There was a lonely seclude resident behind the Garh bushes which was supposed to be the bottom part of this sadar block. This secluded resident behind the Garh trees giving birth to the name of Garal bari. The Oraon tribe in Garal Bari gram panchayat has a significant importance from the historical perspective. After the 1947's partition of the country, the refugees coming from East Pakistan were settled down in Duars area of Jalpaiguri district [21]. The elderly people who have witnessed the partition shared their migration story with tears in eyes. According to them, they used to live in Rangpur district of undivided Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) in British period. But being the victim of cast structure, untouchability, torture to women, burning of crops abuse by landlords they were forced to migrate. Although some of them stayed back in their patrimonial or original village. During the freedom movement of India (1947) they migrated from Rangpur district of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) to Islampur and Chopra of North Dianjpur district in West Bengal. Afterwards, by getting the Govt. privy land (Khas jami), they further moved to Dhapra of Cooch behar district and Garal Bari of Jalpaiguri district in the year of 1955. Though in earlier days they were practicing shifting cultivation but now they have transformed into settled cultivators [14]. Now they are nicely adapted to the society of Garal Bari with perceives to the neighboring regions.

6. Results & discussions:

Generally the term socio economic conditions has been adopted to study the use of food habits, housing characteristics, age sex structure, life style, religious status, amenities of life, education, marriage, apparel status, occupation etc characteristics of a society. The following socio economic conditions are noticed in tribal village (Pakuritala) of Garal Bari gram panchayat in Jalpaiguri district.

6.1. Demography: Demography is the statistical and mathematical size and distribution of human population. It is the main and essential components of any society to understand its socio-economic status. The Pakuritala is a small tribal village in Garal Bari gram panchayat of Jalpaiguri district comprising 54 families. Table 1 illustrate that percentage of male population (53.56%) is more than female population (46.44%) in the study area. There are 100% Oraon sub tribe, ST caste and Hindu religion. The male female ratio is 1000: 790 which reveals that the sex-ratio is highly skewed towards male.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the study area

Variables		No. of Respondents	% of Family	
Gender	Male	158	53.56	
	Female	137	46.44	
Sub Tribe	Oraon	54	100	
Caste	St	54	100	
Religion	Hindu	54	100	
Age- Sex structure (Years)	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
0-14	51	17.29	44	14.92
15-29	33	11.19	26	8.81
30-44	31	10.51	23	7.80
45-59	29	9.83	26	8.81
>60	14	4.75	18	6.10

Source: Compiled from the field survey

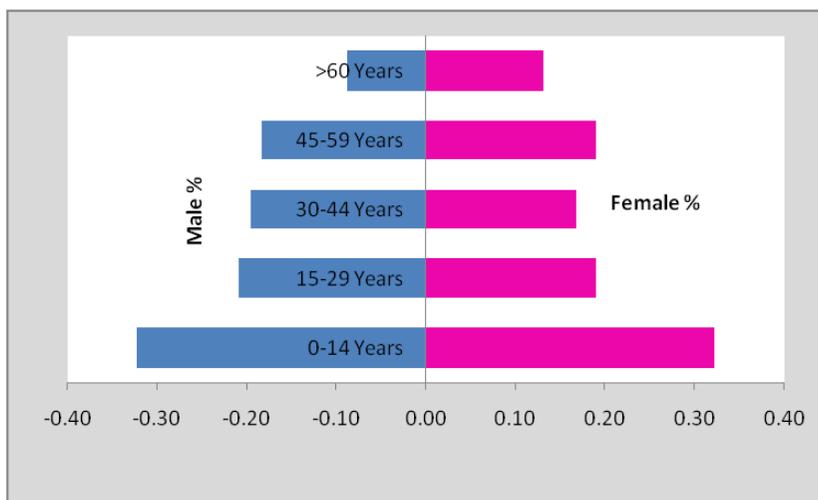


Figure 2: Age Sex Structure of the Study area

The age sex structure (figure 2) shows that there is high concentration of dependent population (0-14 years) and this is because of large number of Childrens in this village. Every family has an average of two to three children. There are also a large percentage of people in the age group of 15-29 years indicating the progressive population of the study area. One more important fact is that the percentage of female senile population or old age female population (6.10%) is more than the percentage of male senile population or old age male population (4.75%). That means there is a good number of widows are in the village.

6.2. Education: Education is one of the most important indirect variable affecting socio-economic behavior as well as labour force participation of a population [4]. Education is supposed be the spine of any community and it is such a process which help to learning or acquisition of knowledge, skills and habits etc. It carries the contents of human being also. The development of any villages depends on the literacy rate of dwellers [9]. Table 2 shows the percentage of literate population (52.54%) is quite low and there is huge

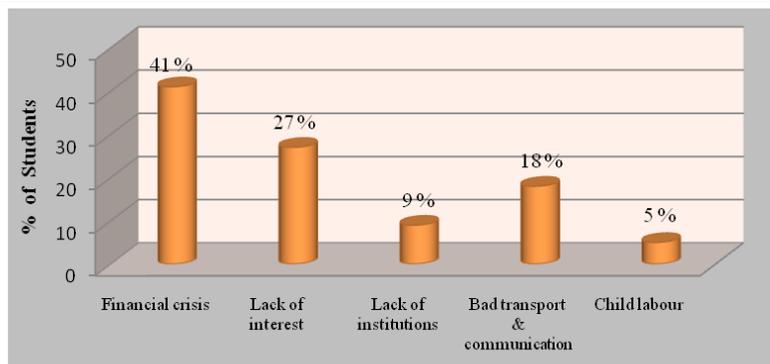
deviation from national literacy rate (74.04%) and state literacy rate (76.26%). The pupil of this area goes to Garal Bari high school (H.S).

Table 2: Educational status of the study area

Total literate status			
Male	Female	Total %	
92	63	52.54	
Total literate status			
Male	Female	Total %	
66	74	47.46	
School dropout status			
Class	Up to IV	Up to VIII	Up to X
Male (%)	13	8	7
Female (%)	11	6	2
Causes of Dropouts			
Variables			%
Financial crisis			41
Lack of interest			27
Lack of institutions			09
Bad transport & communication			18
Child labour			05

Source: Compiled from the field survey

Besides this, there are also a huge number of school dropouts. Almost 20% of the pupils leave their study before completing the upper primary level (table: 2). The figure 3 shows the dropout rate of schools in the study area. The main reasons for dropouts are destitution, sick and closed tea gardens, child labour, bad condition of roads in the rainy season, lack of interest in the education and financial crisis of the family [6]. As the proportion of lower income family is more, so the students of these families start working at young age due to family demands. Although many of them are willing to study but they couldn't continue due to family pressures.



Causes of School dropouts

Figure 3: Causes of Absenteeism in school in the Study area

6.3. Occupation & Incomes: Economically the Oraons are more dependent on primary sector, i.e. agriculture and this agricultural structures prevailing in different parts of Bengal [1]. Most of the Oraons are cultivating their crops to fulfill their daily demands for survival. Historically, most of the tribal economy was based on subsistence agriculture or hunting and food gathering [22]. In this village, the economy is based on mainly primary activities i.e. agriculture. The ancestors of this community of the study area were working in surroundings area (Harir bari, Sovaganj, Kahara para, Subhachani para, Kamperhat, Soverhat) as labour for getting only 2 Kgs of rice per day [2]. Afterwards they started to practice settled agriculture on the Khasjami or Govt. privy land. Though many of them had small agricultural land but they were under threat from private tea gardeners. The tea gardens of different private entrepreneurs have borrowed the land from the farmers in a condition that one or two members of each land donor family would be permanently employed in the tea garden. But after the agreement, no one got employed in the garden i.e. they were cheated [14]. But now (figure: 4) maximum number (41.61%) were engaged in tea leave plucking (table: 3), followed by agriculture (22.82%), and labour (16.78%) respectively. Besides, the participation of female workers is seemingly higher in this village (41.61%).

Table 3: Occupations and Income Structure of the study area

Variables		No. of Respondents	% of Family
Occupations	Tea leaves plucking	62	41.61
	Agriculture	34	22.82
	Labour	25	16.78
	Business	6	4.03
	Govt. Services	2	1.34
	Private Sector	11	7.38
	Self Help Groups	9	6.04
Work Participation	Male	87	58.39
	Female	62	41.61
Family Incomes (in Rs.)	Below 3000	5	9.26
	3000-5999	16	29.63
	6000-9999	22	40.74
	10000-14999	7	12.96
	Above 15000	2	3.70
Lands	<2 Bigha	27	50.00
	2-4 Bigha	17	31.48
	4-6 Bigha	7	12.96
	>6 Bigha	3	5.56
Livestock Farming	Cow	42	77.78
	Goat	37	68.52
	Hen	51	94.44
	Duck	22	40.74

Source: Compiled from the field survey

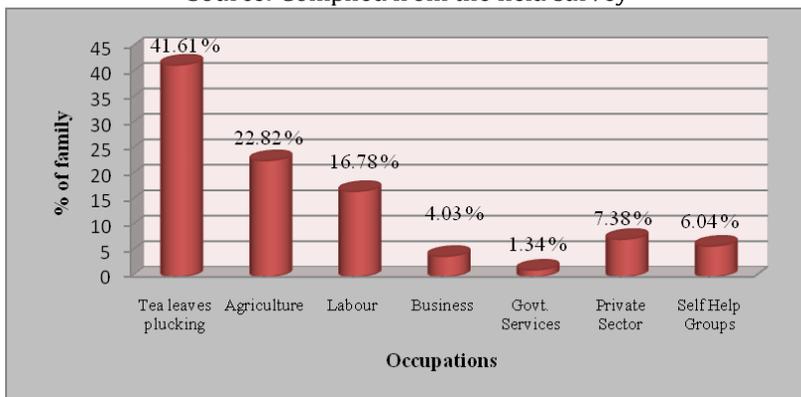


Figure 4: Occupational Structure of the Study area

Though tea gardens are the main sources of income or occupation but now-a-days many of them were engaged in diversified activities [15]. They are also engaged on private sectors, business and Self Help Groups (SHG). The maximum monthly family income (40.74%) of this tribal village lies in the range of Rs. 6000 to 9999 where as only 3.70% families has a monthly income above Rs. 15000. In the case of land holding, most of the dwellers (50%) have below 2 Bigha land (three Bigha = one acre). Reason behind it is they are not the aboriginal settlers in this region. They are refugees, coming from Bangladesh. They occupied Khasjami of Govt. Besides, some family members were interested to do the MGNREGA work but they got only 20-30 days instead of 100 days due to the irregular nature of work in their area [10]. This affects their occupational structure and is partly responsible for suffering and hardship.

6.4. Housing Characteristics: The concept of housing in modern sense is not only a physical shelter but also house is a place where family can develop physically, mentally and socially [4]. During the survey, it is learnt that earlier their houses were made by leaves of banana trees and areca nut, floor by mud, hedge were nicely prepared by the band of rice and wheat. Though the mud floor exists even now but other features of houses has undergone a lot of changes and replaced with Tin and bamboos recently. Table 4 shows that 62.96% families have the Kutcha houses, 33.33% have Semi Pucca houses which are built up by

Tin (79.63%) are Straw (16.67%) as roof materials and bamboo (50%) and Straw (35.18%) as wall materials. There houses are nicely consist or casting of a courtyard which is middle of the houses. Most of the families of this village are like to live with disperse family style.

Table 4: Housing Characteristics of the study area

Variables		No. of Respondents	% of Family
House type	Kutchra	34	62.96
	Semi Pucca	18	33.33
	Pucca	2	3.70
Roof Materials	Concrete	2	3.70
	Tin	43	79.63
	Straw	9	16.67
Wall Materials	Straw	19	35.18
	Tin	8	14.81
	Bamboo	27	50.00
Floor	Mud	52	96.23
	Concrete	2	3.70
Source of Fuel food	Wattle of Tea	38	70.37
	Wood, Muthiya & Ghasi	24	44.44
	LPG	11	20.37
Reason for not using LPG	High rate	17	31.48
	Risk	09	16.67
	Available of Alternatives	32	59.26
Electricity	Yes	49	90.74
	No	5	9.26
Toilet	Yes	41	75.93
	No	13	24.07

Source: Compiled from the field survey

In the case of fuel for cooking, they use jute stick and wattle of tea (70.37%). Some of the families are using Muthiya and Ghasi (44.44%) for fuel purpose. Muthiya is one kind of fuel which is prepared by cow dung. The cow dung is rolled up and plastered around a jute stick popularly called as Muthiya. Ghasi is another fuel made by globule form of cow dung which is griping in wall and heated by sunlight [2]. There are only 20.37% families using LPG connection. The main reason behind not using LPG is (table: 4) availability of cheap alternatives (59.26%) and high cost of LPG (31.48%). 9.26% families have no Electricity connection and they using Bati (one kind of lamp featuring in a bottle) and Haricane/ Lanthan (one kind of lamp featuring with a Chimney) at night to dispel the deep darkness. 24.07% families have not toilet facility.

6.5. Food habit & Health: The foods and health is the most important indicator of tribals to get the idea which state they are actually live. They have a history of vulnerability and prolonged marginalization due to their poor socio-economic conditions in terms of work-participation, education and health preempting their inclusion and targeting in all developmental activities undertaken by the State [5]. In this study area, (figure: 5) most of the dwellers have their own tube well (59.26%) where as only 14.81% family depends on Pati kuyo (Pati kuyo is a common source of water in rural villages dig by man power). About 94.44% family did not have any idea about treatment of water. They drink water directly from tube well. Therefore, sometime they faces a lot of health problems specially looseness, diarrhea etc.

Table 5: Food habits and Health of the study area

Variables		No. of Respondents	% of family
Source of Drinking Water	Own Tube well	32	59.26
	Community Tube well	14	25.93
	Pati kuyo	8	14.81
Water Treatment	Yes	51	94.44
	No	3	5.56
Staple Food	Rice	43	79.63
	Wheat	11	20.37
Mode of Treatment	Allopathic	17	31.48
	Homeopathic	26	48.19

	Ayurvedic	11	20.37
Major Diseases	Fever	43	79.63
	Catarrh	19	35.16
	Diarrhea	28	51.85
	Others	11	20.37

Source: Source: Compiled from the field survey

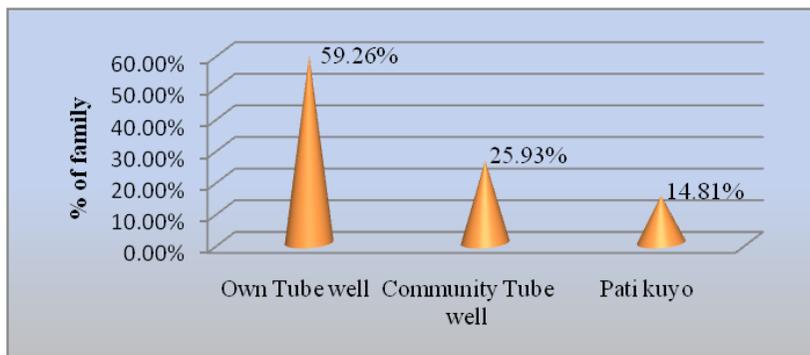


Figure 5: Source of Drinking Water in the Study area

It is heard from the elderly people that in early time they love to eat coney, rat, mat and snail. But now due to non availability of such insects, they have changed their food habit. They don't have any excuse about their delicacy. Rice (79.63%) and wheat (20.37%) are the main staple food in their daily livelihood menu. They preferred to eat pork in different occasions and ritual ceremonies. Besides, they like to drink Hariya or wine ('bare' in Khandra language). Hariya is one kind of wine which is made by squeeze of rice and barks of Hariya trees. All times they did not eat this Hariya as a wine some time they use it as a remedy of indigestion [2]. Fever (79.63% families), catarrh (35.16% families) and diarrhea (51.85% families) are the common disease among them (figure: 6) which they sometimes overcome by Homeopathic treatment (48.19% families), Allopathic (31.48% families) and pharmaceutical ayurvedic treatment (20.37% families). In case of any complicated or serious disease, their last hope is on Jalpaiguri sadar hospital.

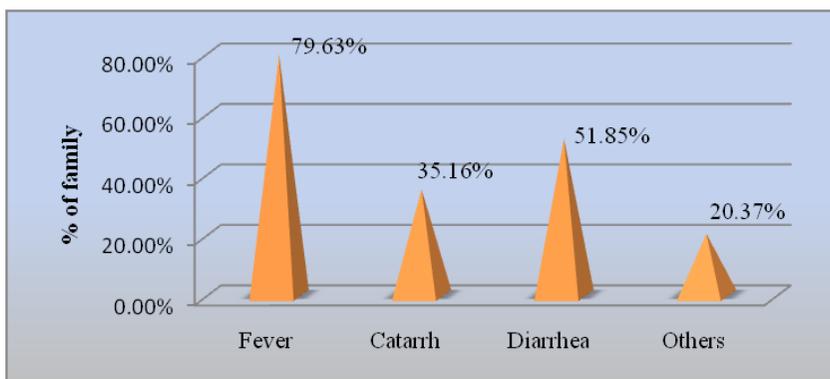


Figure 6: Major Health Problems of the Survey Village

6.6. Livelihood characteristics: Inter Community marriage is often very uncommon among them. In this survey area about 20.37% families had their marriages in own Community but 79.63% in others community. The age of marriage for both male and female is almost ok with average in respect to the country's constitutional law. Most of the cases it was observed that the ages of marriage lies in between 18-24 years for both male and female [9]. Dowry system is not prevailing in this village (table: 6). About 68.51% are following public media like T.V (12.96%), Radio (11.11%) and Use of Mobile Internet (44.44%) but 31.48% families do not have access to (figure: 7) any public media. Though many of this Oraons did not have mobile but they can easily tell where their neighbors are going out for work. The main reason behind this is that after breakfast and dinner they make a social gathering ('meetings manno' - in khandra language) where they can share their daily joy and infelicity. Refrigerator, motor cycle (14.81%), dish antennas are very uncommon in this village however bi-cycle (87.04%) is very much common.

Table 6: Livelihood Characteristics of the study area

Variables		No. of Respondents	% of family
Marriage	Own community	11	20.37
	Others community	43	79.63
Dowry System	Yes	3	5.56
	No	51	94.44
Transportation	Bi-cycle	47	87.04
	Motor cycle	8	14.81
Amenities	Television	7	12.96
	Radio	6	11.11
	Users of Mobile Internet	24	44.44
	No Access	17	31.48

Source: Source: Compiled from the field survey

They follow the Sarna Dharam (Sarnaism), which is based on nature worship but they started to follow the Sarnaism in a Hindu style, as the sects of the Bishnu Bhagats, Bacchinda Bhagats, Karmu Bhagats and Tana Bhagats [23]. Their main ritual ceremonies are Dalpuja, Karampuja, Pailabaishak, Saharai puja, Agnipuja, Chndrapuja etc.

They use their own language 'Khandra' in between them but they speak regional language whenever they talk with others. Though, the effect of modernization has already affected their culture and tradition as well as their languages. A few numbers of dwellers have changes their languages due to the impact of education [17]. Some of the others Oraons who lives in the surroundings regions speak in Sandra language (a language of Oraon family). But in this area they speak Khandra language (this is also a language of Oraon family). There is a subtitle difference between Khandra and Sandra language although these two languages belong to the same language family (Konkani language).

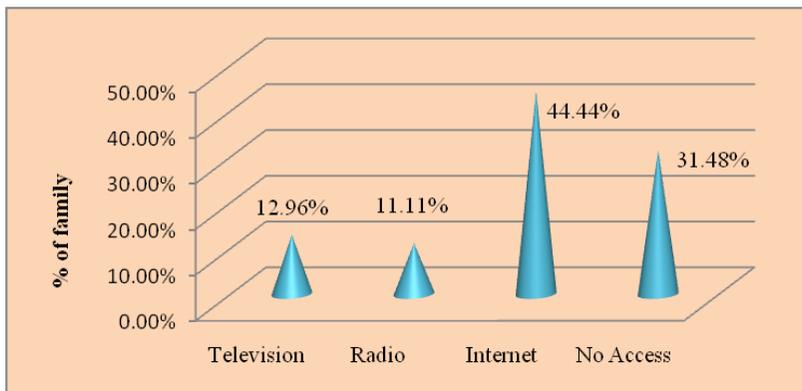


Figure 7: Household Possessions of Survey Village

They use archer, javelin, catapult, stave and net for haunting. They choose tea garden, jungle, river, thicket and fellow land as their place of haunting. However, their daily routine and occupation are changing due to the effect of modernization. Shifting cultivation, fishing, weaving and hunting are now not the prime occupations for tribal people as because the modernization has influence the occupation of tribal people in now days [15]. Modernization has also affected their apparel status recently. Now a day's most of them are not fond of their traditional dresses and gradually they are adapting themselves with pant and shirt which are wear by the advance community of this society [12] Napkin or Gamcha in women's neck is very common to see. Plait in the hair of young girls are also very common. The white sarees for widow women is antiquated in this village.

7. Problems of the study area: The perception of some civic amenities in survey village (table: 7) explicate some basic backdrops in the area. The main problems of the tribal village in garal Bari gram panchayat are given below:

- The prime riddle of this area is road networks and transportation. The roads (path track) are very narrow to run. .
- There are no effort by the local peoples and politicians for uplifting the economic status of this tribal population [13]. This may result in deprivation in comparison to other community of this area.

- The global tea market is now facing various problems and its negative impacts are affecting them [8]. Since most of them are engaged in tea leave plucking, tea garden labour so they are becoming unemployment gradually.
- Their poor housing conditions, low wages, long working hours, social discrimination deprived them from many basic human needs [16]. The tea garden workers are illiterate.
- All of the dwellers are deprived of pure drinking water facility.
- Up to 4 kilometers there is no primary health center.
- Maximum numbers of the villagers are not aware of their constitutional rights and opportunities.

Table 7: Perception of Civic Amenities in the Study area

Types of Problems	Response (% of family)		
	Good	Moderate	Bad
Education	---	17	83
Job security	20	50	30
Electricity	---	80	20
Drinking water	9	26	65
Health	4	20	76
Waste	17	76	7
Drainage	5	8	87
Sanitation	17	33	50
Transportation	---	13	87
Entertainment	---	20	80

Source: Source: Compiled from the field survey

8. Some Suggestive Measures: The tribal of study area face different barriers which make them deprived by socially, economically as well as from the point of view of modernization. Therefore, it is very difficult to raise them socio-economically without the assist of local folk and politicians. The following suggestive measures can improve their current state:

- Transport networks are the cardinal indicator for development of any community. So the area should be accessible at least by roads.
- Establish a pipeline tap for drinking water from the nearest centre for providing them pure drinking water and effort should be made to make them literate.
- The prevalence and spread of communicable diseases affect the poor households which leading to the loss of workdays and resulting in the depletion of income and livelihoods [7]. So there is need for a primary health centre with active and experienced staffs.
- It is very difficult to maintain their livelihood with their minimum incomes. Conditions becomes more complicated when tea garden are shrinking and closed [14]. So there is a need to security their jobs.

9. Conclusion:

From the discussion, it is notified that some of the socio-economic conditions have changed and some of the status is stagnant since early of the region under review. They comprehend a lot of problems such as sanitation, seeking of health condition, lack of education, unemployment. Though their daily livelihood environment are now in the stage of modernization but in some cases such as haunting, food habits, dresses etc. they are in a primitive state. The tribal village (pakuritala) is trample for long time. Therefore, it is become very essential to bring them into the mean stream of our society.

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