

Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Sustainable Forest Management Among the Oraon of Matha Hill, Purulia

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Abstract:

India has many cultures and a lot of tribal groups that have lived in peace with nature since the emergence of humans. The Oraon group, which is also called Kurukh or Dhangar, is one of the biggest Scheduled Tribes in Jharkhand. Most of them live in Jharkhand and nearby states like West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, MP, Bihar, and other parts of the country and abroad. The present study tries to reveal the role of Indigenous Knowledge and sustainable forest management among the Oraon of Mudidih village of Matha hills in Purulia district of West Bengal. The Oraons have traditionally relied on forests for their religion, culture, and way of life. They have a lot of knowledge about traditional farming, using forests, healing, and activities that happen in nature. This ancient ecological knowledge is not only a big part of who they are, but it also shows others how to live in a way that doesn't harm the environment.

Even though there are constitutional protections and positive policies in place since independence, the Oraons and many other tribal groups are still on the outside, and their knowledge systems are not fully taken into account in standard forest management plans. When looking at world environmental problems like climate change and cutting down trees, the Oraons' eco-friendly ways of living teach us a lot about protecting forests. Through traditional Anthropological tools like observation, in-depth interviews, focused group discussions, and photography, etc., were used for the present research

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, Oraon tribes, Forest management, Scheduled Tribes, Biodiversity Conservation, Sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

India is a land of many communities, cultures, and traditions. Among them, tribal communities are some of the oldest groups in the country. They usually live in forests, hills, and far-off rural areas. Tribes have their languages, festivals, and ways of living. They depend mostly on nature for their survival. Many practice farming, collect forest produce, go hunting, and make handicrafts for their livelihood (Xaxa, 2008). They live in close groups and follow their own customs and belief systems. Their lifestyle is simple and closely linked to nature. For many years, these communities remained away from modern society, schools, hospitals, and government facilities (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2014).

After India became independent in 1947, the government realized that tribal communities were socially and economically backward. They did not have enough education, healthcare, or opportunities for

employment. To help them, the Indian Constitution gave them special rights. Article 342 lists some communities as Scheduled Tribes (STs). This gives them benefits like reservations in schools, jobs, and politics (Government of India, 1950; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2021). According to the 2011 Census, about 104 million people in India belong to the Scheduled Tribes. This is around 8.6% of the country's population (Census of India, 2011). Among them, the Oraon tribe is one of the largest STs, making up nearly 19.6% of the tribal population (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2014). They mostly live in Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, and some parts of the northeastern states of India.

The Oraon community, also called Kurukh or Dhangar, has a long history. Many believe they migrated from the Rohtas plateau in the Konkan region to the Chhotanagpur plateau in eastern India. Some scholars even say their culture has links with the Indus Valley Civilization because of similarities in rituals and symbols (Roy, 1915). Traditionally, they depended on forests and agriculture for food and religious needs. They celebrate festivals like Sarhul and Karma, which show their deep respect for nature. During the British period, many Oraons were forced to work in tea gardens in Assam, West Bengal, and even in foreign countries. They were often insultingly called “Hill Coolies” (Guha, 1999). Still, the Oraons managed to keep their culture, language (Kurukh), and knowledge about farming, forests, and healing practices (Ekka, 2000).

Traditional knowledge means the skills, practices, and wisdom that communities develop over generations. It includes how they grow crops, use forest resources, treat illnesses with herbal medicine, and carry out rituals (Berkes, 1999). For tribes like the Oraons, this knowledge is more than survival—it is their way of living in harmony with nature. Today, the idea of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) is very important. It means using forests in a way that meets our needs now but also keeps them safe for future generations. It tries to balance the needs of people, the environment, and the economy (FAO, 2015). Tribal communities like the Oraons have been practicing this balance for centuries. They take what they need from forests without destroying them. Their traditions can teach us how to use forests wisely. Around the world, there is growing respect for indigenous knowledge. It is now seen as very important in fighting big problems like deforestation, climate change, and loss of plants and animals (UN DESA, 2020). The Oraon tribe's knowledge about forests and nature can be a valuable resource for modern conservation efforts. Sadly, much of this knowledge is slowly disappearing because of modern lifestyles, deforestation, and a lack of recognition.

In the Purulia district of West Bengal, many Oraons still depend on forests for their livelihood and culture. But their traditional practices are not properly documented or included in forest policies. This creates a gap between what local people know and what the government plans for forest use.

Division	Renge	Area division (He.)	Total Area (He.)
Matha	Matha	796.779	4259.752
	Matha PF	391.496	
	Kunda	1712.568	
	Pardi	1358.909	
Source: Secondary data			

This study aims to understand the Oraon tribe's traditional forest practices in Purulia. It aims to record their indigenous knowledge, see how useful it is today, and explore how it can help in making better forest

management plans. Through this research work hope to connect tribal indigenous knowledge with modern conservation methods. It also protects both the forests and the communities that depend on them.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. Ruiz Mallen Isabel & Corbera Esteve (2013) wrote a paper named “*Community–Based Conservation Ecological Knowledge: Implications for Social–Ecological Resilience.*” The Research shows that local and Indigenous people know how to care for nature. They learn this knowledge from their elders and pass the education to the next generations. Their ways of using land, water, and forests help protect the environment. When the Community takes part in conservation, nature stays healthy. It also helps people and nature deal with problems like climate change.
2. Roy S.C. (1915) worked on the Chhotanagpur Plateau and wrote “*The Oraons of Chhota Nagpur,*” which is one of the first detailed books about the Oraon tribe of Jharkhand. It describes their religion, customs, festivals, laws, and way of life. The book helped preserve Oraon traditions and is still used by researchers today. However, it reflects some old colonial views and focuses more on men’s roles. Despite this, it remains an important source for studying Oraon culture.
3. Roy S.C. (1928) wrote the book “*Oraons: Religion and Customs,*” by talks about the life, faith, and traditions of the Oraon tribe. It explains how the Oraons believe in nature gods, forest spirits, and their ancestors. They celebrate special festivals like Sarhul and Karam with songs and dances. The book also talks about their marriage rules, family customs, and rituals during birth and death. S.C. Roy shows how the Oraons live close to nature and follow their old customs. This book helps us understand the culture and values of the Oraon community deeply and respectfully.
4. Ramakrishnan (2007) worked on Traditional Forest knowledge and sustainable forestry in northeast India. In the research, he says Forests in the Asian context are part of a cultural landscape linked to livelihood concerns of traditional societies, particularly those living close to nature and natural resources.
5. Ekka Amia & Ekka N. Sanjeev (2013) studied in the District Jashpur of Chhattisgarh, and their research article, named “Traditional plants used for snakebite by Oraon tribes of Jashpur District”. They examine the indigenous knowledge and practices of the Oraon community and focus on the use of plants to treat snakebites. In the research, they talk about indigenous knowledge, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering the integration of traditional and modern healing methods. It raises awareness about the need for the conservation of medicinal plants and the protection of indigenous cultures.
6. Mishra Sachidananda (2015) wrote an article named “*Forest Resource Management: The use of Indigenous Knowledge*”. The article highlights that Indigenous knowledge plays an important role in forest resource management. Tribal and local communities have used traditional methods like protecting sacred groves, seasonal harvesting. The forest communities like Santal, Oraons, and Munda’s control over usage of forest products from generation to generation and follow rules made by the community. These methods help keep the forest healthy and full of life. Besides that, it is also useful in many challenging problems like deforestation and Climate change.
7. Murmu S.C. & Bhattacharya Shreyasi (2018) also operated in the village of Pahadpur, in the state of Odisha. Traditional forest knowledge has also surfaced as an issue that all stakeholders in forestry management schemes must address to ensure sustainability. For sustainable forest management, it is necessary to understand how human culture interacts with landscapes and shapes them into cultural

landscapes. Forests of any kind are a storehouse of medicinal plants, yet knowledge of ethno-medicine is typically limited to the village Shaman, also known as Ojha.

8. Jana Sahana & Dolai Mohan Chandra (2020) the study titled “Changing Livelihood Pattern of the Forest Dwelling Oraons through Developmental Initiatives by the Government Agencies”. This study highlights the discourse on tribal livelihoods and the effectiveness of policy interventions in fostering economic resilience among indigenous populations.
9. Oraon, Jagdeep (2021) Studied at the Ranchi District and wrote an article named “Role of Traditional Community Festivals of the Oraon in Maintenance of Ecological Balance and the Mitigation of the Effect of Global Warming”. It shows how Oraon’s traditional festivals are not only cultural expressions but also play an important role in sustaining ecological balance and addressing global environmental challenges. It also highlights that the Oraon community’s traditional festivals are an example of how tradition can contribute to ecological sustainability and offer valuable lessons in mitigating the impacts of global warming.
10. Tigga Hemant & Koireng, T. Neishoning (2021) wrote an article “Harnessing Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Practices from Oraon Folklore”. It explains how the Oraon tribe uses their old stories, songs, and sayings to teach people how to live in harmony with nature. These folk traditions contain important knowledge about saving water, protecting forests, growing food naturally, and using natural resources carefully. The article highlights that such knowledge is slowly disappearing due to modern life and needs to be preserved.
11. Oraon Bijay & Mishra Nihar Ranjan (2021) wrote a paper “*Changing of Tribal Livelihoods: A Case Study in Sundargarh District, Odisha*”. The Study was conducted in the Sundargarh district of Odisha. The study explores the impact of modernization and deforestation on the change of livelihood in Sundargarh. The study highlights how tribal communities’ loss of access to the forest and forest products, and also loss of their own indigenous Knowledge Systems.
12. Mollick Farhad & Singh J. Narayan (2022) say in their article titled “Folk knowledge. Sustainable development and tribal culture. Studied tribal culture and nature, Folk knowledge system, and sustainable resources. Resource management. The article shows the Importance of recognizing and integrating tribal folk knowledge into broader sustainable development Strategies, and it can be for the well-being of tribal communities.
13. Kumar Sanjeev (2022) Conducted districts of Jharkhand, and wrote a research article named “Use of Traditional Knowledge in Sustainable Forest Management and Provisioning of Ecosystem Services in Jharkhand, India”. The study highlights various traditional practices, as an example of it the preservation of sacred groves, nature-based festivals, taboos, and social beliefs, all of which have been instrumental in sustainable forest management.
14. Karunamay Priyanka, Sethy Rasmirekha, and Sharma Dipanshu (2024) Published an article named “*Indigenous knowledge system of the Oraon tube of India*”. It explains how the Oraon people live close to nature or the forest and protect the environment using traditional methods. They practice organic farming, collect rainwater and save seeds, and also take care of forests. The knowledge is passed on through the generation to generations by stories, songs, festivals, etc.
15. Kumar Arvind & Kumar Amlesh & Kumari Situ (2025) the study on “*Cultural Ecology and Conservation: Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Jharkhand*”. It reveals how tribal communities live in close connection with nature and the forest. Their traditional knowledge helps protect forests, manage resources, and support sustainable living. They follow age-old customs, farming methods, and

conservation practices that are deeply bound with their culture and beliefs. However, modern development, deforestation, and loss of land harm these systems

3. OBJECTIVES:

1. To explore the present status of Oraon
2. To explore how indigenous knowledge contributes to sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation in the region.
3. To examine the role of community festivals and traditional practices in promoting environmental sustainability among the Oraon community.

4. METHODOLOGY

Study Area: The village of Mudidih is situated within the administrative boundaries of the Baghmundi block. Postal services for Mudidih are managed through the Matha post office, which ensures the smooth delivery and dispatch of mail and parcels in the region. Law enforcement and public safety in Mudidih are overseen by the Baghmundi police station, which maintains order and addresses any security concerns in the area. The village is identified by the pin code 723143, which helps in the efficient sorting and routing of correspondence and goods. Together, these Administrative and postal details help define the location and governance structure of Mudidih within the wider district.



Map of the Study Area

Sample Size:

A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents with extensive traditional knowledge or involvement in forest-related activities. The sample included:

Male Respondents = 134

Female Respondents = 121

Categories included elders, forest users, traditional healers, community leaders, and youth.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis Framework

Below is the data collection method and the analytical framework mentioned.

Table 4.1: Research Methods and Analytical Framework	
Method	Description

1. Semi-structured Interviews	Conducted with individual respondents in the village to gather the data.
2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	Each FGD involved 20–25 participants, aimed at understanding community practices, perceptions, and collective memory.
3. Observation	Direct observation of interactions with the forest, including collection of Minor Forest Produce (MFPs), participation in rituals, and governance meetings.
4. Secondary Data Review	Analysis of literature, government documents, and academic studies relevant to traditional forest knowledge and sustainable forest management (SFM).
5. Data Analysis	<p>Qualitative Data: I conducted some thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes.</p> <p>Quantitative Data: I also analyzed descriptive statistics presented through tables and charts.</p>
6. Location and Geography	Mudidih is a small tribal village situated within the Baghmundi Block of Purulia district, West Bengal. The village lies near the Matha Forest area, part of the Ajodhya Hills and Matha Hill ranges

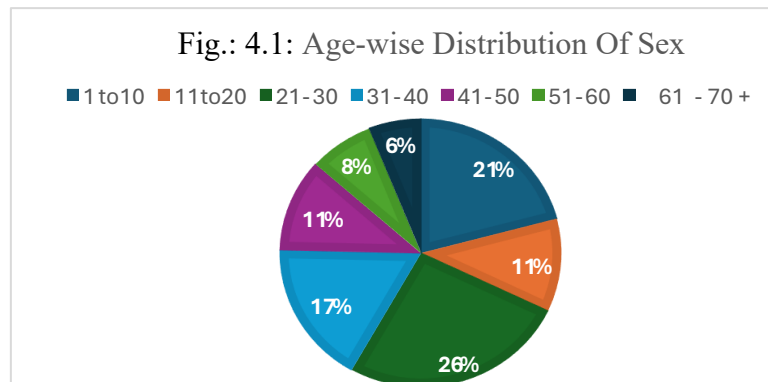
Socio-Cultural Demography of the Village:

Age-wise gender distribution:

The distribution of males and females by age groups is given in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 1 as a population pyramid. The structure of the population pyramid indicates that this is an ageing population because the shape of the pyramid is asymmetric, both in the case of males and females. The frequency of children below 10 years is less than 10-14 years, indicating that they do practice family planning, as child mortality was not noticed among them.

Table 4.2: Age-wise Distribution of Sex

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
1 - 10	28	18	46
11 -20	15	24	39
21 - 30	35	22	57
31 - 40	23	19	42
41 - 50	15	11	26
51 - 60	10	17	27
61 - 70 +	8	10	18
Total	134	121	255
Source: fieldwork data			



5. MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Traditional Forest Management Practices among the Oraon of Mudidih

- Protection of forest fires:** The Oraon community of Matha Hill in Purulia district, West Bengal, has lived close to forests for generations. They depend on the forest for food, fuel, and other resources, but they also treat it as a sacred place. So, the tribal community always keeps an eye on the forest. They understand that most fires in the area occur during the dry months or summer season due to extreme heat, lightning, careless controlled burning on farms, or the use of fire to scare away wild animals. When they see smoke or flames, villagers (men and women) immediately alert each other and rush to the spot. Though they inform the forest office, there is little major contribution from the government or the forest department, so the community largely manages the situation on their own.
- Clear the forest Fires:** Once gathered, the community uses different methods to control the fire. They create firebreaks by clearing away dry leaves, twigs, and grass so that the fire cannot spread. Sometimes, they dig shallow pits or trenches as an extra barrier. To directly fight the flames, they use green tree branches, often from Sal trees, to beat down and smother the fire at the edges. When water is available, they carry it in pots or buckets from nearby wells or streams and pour it on the burning areas. They also use wet soil to cover small fires. In more serious situations, experienced villagers set controlled small fires (backfires) ahead of the main fire to remove dry fuel, which stops the bigger fire from moving forward. The community people know that even when a fire looks like it is gone, it can start again. So, they keep watch over the burned area for hours, and sometimes even through the night. This extra care makes sure that the fire does not come back. The community also works to prevent fires before they happen. Before the summer season, they clean forest paths and remove dry leaves, branches, and other things that can catch fire easily. They also control low-intensity burns in some areas. This removes dry fuel in a safe way, so that bigger fires do not start later.
- Traditional Agro-Forestry System:** The Oraon tribe of Matha Hill in Mudidih village, located in Purulia district of West Bengal, has developed a unique agroforestry system deeply rooted in their cultural and ecological knowledge. Living in a forested upland environment, they have integrated agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry in ways that ensure sustainability, food security, and preservation of biodiversity.
- Mixed Cropping with Trees:** The Oraon farmers practice intercropping of millets, pulses, maize, and oilseeds with naturally growing and planted tree species such as Sal, Mahua, Kendu, Palash, and Neem. These trees enrich the soil through leaf litter, provide shade, and supply essential resources like fuelwood and non-timber forest products (NTFPs).

- **Minor Forest Produce and Supplementary Livelihoods:** Minor Forest Produce (MFP) or Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) form another cornerstone of the Oraon economy. The forests surrounding Matha Hill supply a range of resources critical for household subsistence and cash income. These include:

5.1 Minor Forest Produces and their usages		
Forest Produce (Local Name)	Scientific Name	Usage
Sal	<i>Shorea robusta</i>	Leaves are used to make Plates to sell and use, and branches are used as firewood
Mahua	<i>Madhuca longifolia</i>	Brewing Tradition liquor (Mahula), the fruits are also edible
Kendu	<i>Diospyros melanoxylon</i>	Fruits are edible. Leaves are also used to make Bidi (Traditional Cigarette), and dry branches are also used as firewood
Karam	<i>Adina cordifolia</i>	Leaves and flowers are used in the traditional festivals, and branches are used as firewood
Neem	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Use as a medicinal plant, Dry Branches are used as firewood
Tamarind	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	Used to eat
Palash	<i>Butea monosperma</i>	Flowers are used to decorate like a chain of flowers
Jackfruit	<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i>	Eatable fruit
Mutmuti	Possibly <i>Clerodendrum viscosum</i>	A forest collected fruit. This is also used as a vegetable
Mango	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Use to eat
Kusum	<i>Schleichera oleosa</i>	Fruits are used to eat, and branches and leaves are used to burn
Shegun	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	A hard-wooded tree. The stems of the tree are used to make beds and other furniture, and dry leaves are used to burn
Blue Berry		Use to eat
Haritaki	<i>Terminalia chebula</i>	Use to heal cold and calf
Bahera	<i>Terminalia bellirica</i>	
Amla	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i>	Use to improving digestion
Arjun	<i>Terminalia arjuna</i>	

Ashwagandha	Withania somnifera	Use to contipation healing
pial		
Dumur	Ficus racemosa	The fruits are also use as vegetable
Madhu		Use to healing cold and calf
Chatu	Agaricus bisporus	Use as food
Lackkha	Kerria lacca	Use in industrial purpose
ce: Fieldwork Data		

These forest-based activities provide a crucial safety net, particularly during the agricultural lean season. However, over-dependence on these resources, coupled with illegal logging and overharvesting, has led to forest degradation, a trend also observed in tribal areas of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh (Sarin, 2003; Rao et al., 2007). This degradation creates a vicious cycle: as forests decline, the very livelihood strategies that rely on them become increasingly unsustainable.

- **Home Gardens:** Around their homesteads, multi-layered home gardens are maintained, growing vegetables, tubers, medicinal plants, and fruit trees like mango, jackfruit, and papaya. These gardens ensure year-round access to food, medicine, and supplementary income.
- **Grazing:** -Livestock such as goats, cattle, and pigs are grazed within forest patches. Fodder trees like Bamboo, Guava leaves, and leaves of the Arjun tree are preserved to provide leaf fodder for animals, integrating forestry with pastoral needs.

5.1 Sustainable Harvesting Practices

- **Selective and Seasonal use:** The Oraon community depends greatly on the forest for food, medicine, firewood, and cultural needs. Over many generations, they have learned how to use the forest without harming it. Their practices show a balance between meeting daily needs and protecting the forest for the future. The people of this village collect forest products carefully. They take only what is ready to use and leave the rest. For example, when collecting Sal leaves for making plates, they cut only mature leaves and leave the young ones to grow. Bamboo is also cut only when it is fully grown, and new shoots are left for the next season. One elder respondent of the village said, *“If we cut everything now, there will be nothing for our children tomorrow.”*
- **Rotational use of the forest produces:** The community also follows the seasons while collecting resources. They gather Mahua flowers in March–April when they fall naturally. Kendu leaves are collected in May–June before the monsoon. This seasonal collection ensures that plants are not damaged and have time to regrow. They also change the areas where they collect from. One patch is used for a season, while others are left alone to recover. This rotation helps the forest heal and grow back.
- **Agriculture manure preparation by burning:** they try to make their agricultural land fertile by burning the dry leaves, grass, as well as the paddy remains. Every year, in the dry season or summer season, the community clears dry small plants for manure under the guidance of elders. This burning helps new grass grow, makes the land ready for seed germination, and lowers the chance of large forest fires. But nowadays, the new generation doesn’t have much knowledge about the traditional farming method. Today, many young people are leaving the village in search of work or education. As a result,

they are not learning these traditional practices. They lack knowledge about the seasonal harvesting, controlled burning, and sacred grove protection. This creates a big gap between the elders and the new generation. If this continues, these valuable methods may be lost forever.

5.2 Community participation in forest management.

- **Informal Rules and Community Monitoring:** The community has a simple but effective system of rules. These are not written down, but everyone in the village knows and follows them. Cutting live trees, hunting animals, or using fire in the forest without permission is not allowed. If someone breaks these rules, the community may call a meeting and decide on a punishment, like a fine and other major punishments. This form of self-monitoring is powerful because it is built on trust, respect, and social pressure.
- **Gender Roles:** In the Oraon community of Matha Hill, Women play a very important role in both the economy and the environment of their community. They are the main people who collect forest products, gather firewood, make leaf plates with Sal leaves, and also help in farming. They also have special knowledge about the nature and the forest products. As an example of it, they know about the medicinal plants of Matha Forest and also know how to collect forest resources without harming them. At the other end, males' role is to carry the heavy-weighted products like Salwoods and Bamboo woods. They don't have any big role or critical role in the collection. Meetings about forest management and discussions about community problems, and making decisions are controlled by men. Women are getting little chance to share their opinions and ideas in making decisions.
- **Community governance:** The management of forest resources is a community effort. In forest-related meetings, the community members decide when and how much people can collect. They also set rules to stop overuse and give fair access to all families. If anyone needs a maximum number of forest products (firewood, leaves, or hardwoods) for their uses (making beds or any furniture or any other things) and festivals (marriage, birth festivals, and any other festivals), Anyone breaking the rules has to pay a fine. This shows that the community works together to protect their forest.

5.3 Role of indigenous knowledge in maintaining forest ecosystem services and biodiversity.

- **Sacred Groves and Biodiversity Conservation:** - The Sarna Sthal is a small patch of forest considered sacred. In the past, no one was allowed to enter it, cut trees, or collect anything from there. Certain trees like Sal and mahua are considered sacred and cannot be cut without rituals, and hunting is not allowed in another season. While sacred groves (Sarna sthal) are completely protected, they become safe places for plants and animals. Though not in use now, older community members still talk about the importance of these groves and hope to revive them.
- **Role of Taboos:** The community members follow some taboos or traditional rules and restrictions, which help to protect forests and wildlife. Hunting is restricted during breeding seasons, and some animals, such as monkeys and peacocks, are never hunted because of their spiritual value. There are also seasonal rules for collecting forest products like mahua flowers or firewood, which prevent overuse and allow the forest to regenerate. These taboos are respected because they are linked to spiritual beliefs and community traditions, making them effective even without formal enforcement. Although modern pressures and market demands are slowly weakening these practices, they still play an important role in conserving biodiversity and maintaining ecological balance in the forests.

5.4 Role of cultural practices in forest conservation: -

The community has a deep cultural and spiritual connection with the forest. Their indigenous knowledge,

learned over generations, guides how they use forest resources carefully without harming them. They practice sustainable collection of firewood, leaves, fruits, and medicinal plants, and their small-scale farming methods help preserve the health of the soil and prevent deforestation. They also protect sacred groves and big trees, which are never cut down, and protect biodiversity.

- **Traditional festivals for conserving the forest:** Traditional festivals play a vital role in this conservation. The Oraons celebrate festivals like Sarhul (worship of the Sal tree and nature) and Karma, which are closely linked to the forest.

Table 5.4.1. Season-wise Festivals		
Bengali months	English months	Festivals
Baishakh – Jaystha	April - May	Dhanbuni, Bipadtarani Puja, Kirtan
Asarh - Sraban :	June - July	Ratha Yatra, Sibh Puja
Vadra- Ashwin :	August -September	karma, Jitiya, Mansa puja, Durga puja,
Kartik - Agrayan:-	October – November	Kalipuja, Saharai/Bandna, Agan Sankrat
Powsh - Magh :-	December – January	Tusu Parab, Magh parab,
Falgun- Chaitra	February – March	Fagu and Sarhul
Source: Fieldwork Data		

Sarhul: During Sarhul, the Sal tree is worshipped; this is a symbol of the protection of trees and nature. These festivals involve rituals in sacred groves, where cutting trees or harming the forest is strictly forbidden. Such cultural practices ensure that certain forest areas remain untouched and act as natural reserves. They think that their god and goddesses are residing in the sacred groves.

Fagu, Magh, Agan Sankrat: The Festivals such as Fagu, Magh, and Agan Sankrat are celebrated in alignment with seasonal cycles, encouraging the community to leave certain forest areas undisturbed during key periods of plant growth and animal breeding

Karma: Karma festival involves the worship of the Karam tree, where only a single branch is taken respectfully from the forest without harming the tree, instilling a sense of protection and reverence for nature.

Dhanbuni: Worship of Mother Earth during Dhanbuni reinforces gratitude towards nature and promotes sustainable use of forest produce. Additionally, fasting rituals observed during Jitiya and Karma reduce the community's consumption of forest resources, allowing the ecosystem time to recover.

The festivals of the community play a vital role in protecting forests. Their celebrations are based on traditional knowledge and these are also a natural part of their way of life. For them, forest conservation is not forced; it comes naturally through their religious beliefs, community rules, and customs. These festivals work as a traditional system to take care of the environment. By following their beliefs and practices. They meet their daily needs while also keeping the forest healthy. Their way of living shows how traditional culture and celebrations can help protect nature.

6. CONCLUSION:

At the time of modernization and industrialization the Oraon tribe of Matha hill are affected. Now days the community are also get touched with their tradition and also deeply bounded with the forest. Their daily lives are also similar as other forest dwelling communities like Santal, Sabar and Bihor etc. They also collect forest produce like Sal, Mahua, Shegun, Karma and some medicinal plants like Haritaki, Amla, Neem, Aswagandha etc.to use. They also follow the Agro-forestry system combined with their traditional or indigenous knowledge. They also following traditional methods for extinction during forest fire. They

have also good traditional knowledge on sustainable harvesting to protect and use forest produce sustainably. But nowadays the young generation doesn't have much awareness about traditional knowledge the agroforestry and also knowledge about sustainable forestry due to Migration and modernization. The community fix a limit collection of forest produce from math hill forest. they have very strict rules and punishments are also available for over usage of forest produce. On the other hands the sacred grove (Sarna sthal) has an impotent role to conserve the forest and bio diversity of the forest. The community also believe that the trees which have spiritual values are not be cut or harm during the festivals and animal are not been hunted by the community members outside of hunting season. The festivals are also having a deep relationship with the forest. Maximum numbers of the festivals although the young generation doesn't give much afford to celebrate the traditional festivals and have not much interest in protect the forest. They have not taken part in forest related meeting of the village. There also a big cause of that is to follow the Hinduism. The community also follow the festival like Durga puja Kali puja and Radha Gobindo Kirtan in nowadays.

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