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Original Article

Urbanised Santhal Communities: Sociological Study of Cultural Transition in West Burdwan District

Barun Tudu[1], Dr. Sangeet Kumar[2]
[1]Research Scholar, Ph. D. Registration number-281/**2020**
University Department of Sociology, T. M. B. U., Bhagalpur
[2]Assistant Professor & Head in Sociology, Marwari College, Bhagalpur, T. M. B. U., Bhagalpur
Email: 14baruntudu@gmail.com

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Abstract

Due to urbanization, industrialization and globalization, there has been a major change in the social and cultural structure of the Indian tribal community. As a result, their traditional way of life, social institutions, cultural values and community identity are constantly being reconstituted (Singh, 1973; Srinivas, 1966). The Santhal community residing in West Burdwan district of West Bengal has also been directly affected by this transformational process. With the spread of employment, education and media, new dimensions are being added to their socio-cultural life and at the same time new challenges are also arising. The objective of the present study is to conduct a sociological analysis of the nature of cultural transition in the urbanized Santhal community of West Burdwan. It examines changes in family structure, occupation, language, religious life and cultural identity. The study is based on a descriptive and analytical research design using a blended research methodology. The primary data has been compiled through purposive sampling through interviews, schedules and observations from 50 Santhal respondents, while the secondary data has been relied upon from books, research papers and census documents. The findings of the study show that urbanisation has had a positive impact on the economic status, education and social mobility of the Santhal community. On the contrary, the decline in joint families, the decline in the use of Santhali language and the spread of consumerist lifestyles are emerging as key indicators of cultural transition. The younger generation is more inclined towards modern education and digital technology, while the older generation gives importance to the preservation of traditional values. Thus, the cultural change in the Santhal community is not a dissolution of tradition but a new 'hybrid identity' developed by the coexistence of tradition and modernity. Therefore, there is a need for special efforts for Santhali language, Ol Chiki script, establishment of cultural centers and skill development of tribal youth so that this community can move towards sustainable and inclusive development with its unique identity.

Keywords: *Santhal Community, Urbanization, Cultural Transition, Social Change, West Burdwan, Tribal Society, Cultural Identity, Modernization.*

Introduction

The tribal society of India is an important part of Indian society due to its distinct cultural traditions, social organization, community life, nature-based livelihoods and cultural diversity. Despite the special protection provided to the Scheduled Tribes by the Constitution, the process of development, industrialization, urbanization, education and globalization has led to major changes in the social and cultural life of the tribal community. Due to the influence of modernity, changes are being reflected in their traditional social institution, economic activity, family structure, cultural behavior and community relations. From a sociological point of view, these changes are the result of economic development as well as the process of restructuring social values, cultural beliefs and identities (Giddens, 1990; Srinivas, 1966; Yogendra Singh, 1973). In this context, the study of cultural transitions taking place in tribal societies has become an important research area of contemporary sociology. The Santhal community has a special place among the major tribes of India. Santhals are considered to be the third largest Scheduled Tribe in India and their major population resides in several states including Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Assam (Census of India, 2011).

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Address for correspondence:
Barun Tudu, Research Scholar, University Department of Sociology, T. M. B. U., Bhagalpur

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The Santhal communities are famous for their distinctive language (Santhali), Ol Chiki script, community organisation, traditional self-governance system, folk dance, folk music, nature-worship and collective cultural life (Bodding, 1925; Singh, 1994). Historically, the economy of Santhal community has been based on agriculture, forest produce and labour-intensive activities. However, as a result of industrialization and urban expansion, a large number of Santhal families are migrating to the city in search of employment, education and better living conditions. This process is having a profound impact on their values system, social relationships and cultural behavior (Xaxa, 2008).

West Burdwan district of West Bengal is one of the major industrial areas of the country. The Asansol-Durgapur industrial belt, coal mining, steel industry, power generation and transport infrastructure have made the region a hub of rapid urbanization. Due to industrial development, there has been an increase in permanent or temporary residence of various tribal communities, especially Santhals, in this area. New employment opportunities, educational institutions, urban housing and modern communication facilities have given rise to new social experiences in their lives. Along with this, changes are also seen in traditional community life, language, religious rituals, folk festivals and family relations. Thus West Burdwan is emerging as a suitable social laboratory for the study of urbanization and tribal cultural change (West Bengal District Statistical Handbook, 2023; Xaxa, 2008). In sociology, cultural transition refers to the process through which many communities experience changes in their traditional cultural form under the influence of changing social, economic, political and technological factors. This change is not a sign of a complete abandonment of tradition but rather a process of cultural adaptation, selection, reinterpretation and reconstruction to the new situation (Ogburn, 1922; Redfield, 1956). In the urbanized tribal community, there is a constant interaction between traditional cultural elements and modern lifestyles, resulting in the development of a mixed or hybrid cultural form. It is therefore more appropriate to understand cultural transition as a dynamic process of social change rather than as cultural degradation (Bourdieu, 1986).

Although there are many sociological, anthropological and historical studies on the Santhal community in India, empirical research on the nature, direction and social consequences of cultural transition in the urbanized Santhal community of West Burdwan district is relatively limited. Most of the studies have focused on rural Santhal society, cultural traditions or economic life, while the changing social reality of the Santhal community living in an industrial and urban environment has not received the required attention. The present study attempts to fill this research gap. The basic problem of the present study is how the impact of modernity, industrialization and urbanization has brought about changes in the social and cultural life of the urbanized Santhal community of West Burdwan district and how these changes are affecting the cultural identity, social institutions and traditional way of life of the community. In addition, the study also seeks to know the extent to which the community has been able to preserve its cultural heritage, language, traditions and community values along with economic and educational progress. The sociological analysis of these questions will not only develop a new understanding in the field of tribal studies but will also prove useful in formulating policies related to tribal development and cultural preservation.

Literature review

1. Studies on tribal society

The sociological and anthropological literature on Indian tribal society has been very rich. The preliminary study sought to understand the tribal community in terms of their social structure, cultural traditions, religious beliefs and nature-based lifestyle. According to Elwin (1964), Indian tribes are distinct cultural communities and he emphasized their cultural preservation and autonomous development. As per Bose (1971), the interaction between tribal society and the wider Indian society is an important basis for social change. According to Dube (1990), development planning, education and administrative interventions in Indian society have led to structural changes in tribal life. In Vidyarthi's (1977) view, tribal culture is a dynamic social system that constantly evolves with external contact. On the other hand, liberalization, land displacement, industrialisation and identity politics are the major transformative factors of contemporary tribal society in the analysis of the blueprint (Xaxa, 2008). According to him, the tribal societies in the present times are experiencing economic transformation as well as the process of rebuilding cultural identity and social rights. It is clear from these studies that it is more appropriate to understand tribal society as a changing social order rather than as a static unit.

2. Studies on the Santhal community

The literature available on the Santhal community has mainly focused on their social structure, folk culture, language, religious life and cultural history. Bodding's research work led to a detailed documentation of Santhal folklore, language, medical traditions and cultural institutions, which are still considered the basis of Santhal studies. Culshaw's (1949) study provides an in-depth anthropological account of the social and religious structure of Santhal society. In*'People of India'* (Singh, 1994) project, a detailed description of the demographic, cultural and social characteristics of the Santhal community was presented. A census-based study by Saha and Saha (1998) concludes that education, migration and economic opportunities have led to significant changes in Santhal society, although regional disparities still exist. Recent studies have paid special attention to globalization, modern communication and cultural change in the Santhal society of West Bengal. In the study of Murmu (2023), it was found that the impact of urbanization and globalization has led to changes in the lifestyle, cultural behavior and social aspirations of Santhal

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youth. At the same time, the community is also trying to maintain its cultural identity. Similarly, a study on socio-cultural changes in the Santhal society of West Bengal makes it clear that traditional social institutions have been influenced by modern education, employment and the medium of communication but many elements of cultural continuity still exist.

3. Urbanization and cultural change

Urbanization is considered to be the major process of social change in sociology. According to Wirth (1938), urban life is the basis for changes in social relations, roles and lifestyles. Redfield's (1956) concept of the 'folk-urban continuum' makes it clear that rural and urban societies are not contradictory but part of the continuum. Similarly, according to Ogburn's (1922), 'Cultural Lag' theory, the rate of change in material culture is higher than that of non-material culture, which creates a situation of social imbalance. In the Indian context, Srinivas's (1966) concepts elucidate the process of social change through culturalization, westernization and modernization, while Singh's (1973) ideas emphasize the coexistence of Indian tradition and modernity. According to Bourdieu (1986), education, language and cultural resources influence social status and identity. Recent studies on the Santhal community indicate that urbanisation has had a cascading effect on traditional language, folk traditions, employment structures and cultural behaviour. Along with this, new cultural identities and social dynamics have also developed. A study conducted on the socio-economic and educational status of the Santhal community in West Burdwan district found that despite increasing access to education, government schemes and urban opportunities, the community continues to face challenges related to quality education, career guidance and social awareness. (Soren, 2026)

4. Research Gap

From the analysis of the available literature, it is clear that most of the studies on the Santhal community have focused on their history, folk culture, language, religious life, rural social structure or economic status. There are also some studies on urbanisation and cultural change but relatively few empirical sociological studies have been conducted in the context of the urbanised Santhal community of West Burdwan district. In particular, the analysis of the combined impact of family structure, language, education, employment, cultural identity and modern urban lifestyle appears to be limited. In addition, most of the preceding studies lack a multifaceted explanation of cultural transition based on primary regional data. Keeping these research gaps in mind, the present study attempts to analyse the nature of cultural transition, its key dimensions and sociological implications through a field study based on 50 respondents from the urbanized Santhal community of West Burdwan district. The present study will provide a useful basis for understanding the interlinkage of tradition and modernity in tribal society as well as for policies related to tribal development and cultural preservation.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the present study is to conduct a sociological analysis of the cultural transition taking place in the urbanized Santhal community living in the West Burdwan district of West Bengal. The following specific objectives have been set to achieve this overarching objective:

1. To study the social and economic background of the urbanized Santhal community of West Burdwan district.
2. To analyse the changes in the family structure, business, education and social life of the Santhal community due to the impact of urbanization and industrialization.
3. To study the cultural transition taking place in the language, religious beliefs, cultural traditions, folk festivals and lifestyle of the Santhal community.
4. To evaluate the impact of the role of modern education, communication media and digital technology on the cultural identity of the Santhal community.
5. To conduct a sociological analysis of the evolving interrelationship between traditional cultural values and modern urban lifestyles.
6. To study the balance between cultural preservation and cultural change in the urbanized Santhal community.

Research questions

The following research questions have been prescribed in the study to meet the above objectives:

1. Has urbanization brought about significant changes in the social and economic structure of the Santhal community of West Burdwan district?
2. How has urbanization and industrialization affected the family system, business and social relations of the Santhal community?
3. Has the influence of modern education, employment and digital media changed the language, religious life and cultural traditions of the Santhal community?
4. What is the difference in the cultural attitude of the young and old generations of the urbanized Santhal community?
5. Have the Santhal communities been able to preserve their cultural identity and traditional heritage despite the influence of modern urban lifestyle?
6. What social, economic and cultural factors are most influential in the process of cultural transition?

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Study area

1. Introduction to West Burdwan

West Burdwan is a major industrial district of West Bengal, formed in the year 2017 after the bifurcation of undivided Burdwan district. The headquarter of the district is Asansol. Durgapur is its second major industrial town. The district is located in the western part of the state and borders the state of Jharkhand. Geographically, the region occupies an important position at the national level due to mineral resources, especially coal reserves, industrial establishments and developed transport network. The social structure of the district is multicultural where Bengali, Hindi-speaking and various tribal communities co-exist (Census of India, 2011).

2. Industrialization

The economic development of West Burdwan is mainly based on coal mining, iron and steel industry, power generation and engineering industry. Large industrial establishments such as Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL), Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) and Durgapur Steel Plant have established the region as a major industrial hub of Eastern India. Industrialization created new employment opportunities resulting in the migration of a large number of people from the surrounding rural and tribal areas. The Santhal community has also been an important part of this process. Many families dependent on agriculture and forest produce are today engaged in industrial labour, service sector and other non-farm occupations. This change has had a profound impact on the economic structure of the community as well as the social and cultural life (Xaxa, 2008).

3. Urbanization

With the industrial development, the process of urbanization in West Burdwan has accelerated. The expansion of residential colonies, educational institutions, health facilities, transport and communication infrastructure in the Asansol-Durgapur industrial area has given a boost to the urban lifestyle. The migration from rural areas to cities has brought about significant changes in the social relations, family structure, education, employment and cultural behaviour of the tribal community. The expansion of modern media, internet, digital technology and the market system has had a huge impact on the lifestyle and cultural orientation of the younger generation, in particular. The result is a constant interaction between traditional community life and modern urban culture (Singh, 1973; Wirth, 1938).

4. Santhal population

The Santhal community is one of the major scheduled tribes of West Bengal and has a notable presence in the West Burdwan district. Santhal families have been living in various urban and semi-urban areas of the district, especially Asansol, Durgapur, Raniganj, Kulti and its surrounding areas for a long time. Many of these families are engaged in industrial labour, construction work, small business, service sector and other urban occupations. The impact of urban life has led to a change in their social and economic status. Along with this, efforts are also going on to preserve the language, traditional festivals, religious beliefs, folk dances and community identity. This position of duality is the key theme of the present study as it provides an opportunity to understand the evolving cultural transition between tradition and modernity (Census of India, 2011; Singh, 1994; Xaxa, 2008).

Research methodology

The present study aims to conduct a sociological analysis of the cultural transition in the urbanized Santhal community living in West Burdwan district of West Bengal. The study uses both primary and secondary data following the scientific research methodology. The research methodology has been adopted keeping in mind the objectives of the study, the research questions and the social situation of the study area (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kothari, 2004).

1. Type of Research

Descriptive and analytical research methods have been used in the present study. A systematic description of the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the respondents is presented through descriptive research whereas, through an analytical approach, sociological analysis of various dimensions of cultural transition caused by urbanization and industrialization has been done. The purpose of the study is to compile the facts as well as to understand the relationship between it and the process of change (Kumar, 2019).

2. Research Design

The study adopts a mixed research design that uses both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Statistical analysis of socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the respondents has been done through quantitative data while aspects related to cultural change, traditional beliefs, social experiences and cultural identity have been explained through qualitative data. Thus, the mixed research design makes the study more comprehensive, objective and reliable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3. Universe

The universe of the present study are adult members of the Santhal community living in urban areas of West Burdwan district. The study selected respondents who have lived in an urban area for at least five years and whose social and cultural life has been directly influenced by the urban environment. Each respondent has been considered an independent analytical unit of the study.

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4. Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling has been used in the study. This method was chosen because the purpose of the study was not to represent any general population but to specifically select members of the urbanized Santhal community of West Burdwan district who are directly associated with the topic of study (Kothari, 2004).

The following criteria have been laid down for the selection of respondents:

1. The respondents should belong to the Santhal community which is recognised as a Scheduled Tribe.
2. The respondents reside in an urban area of West Burdwan district.
3. The respondent should be 18 years of age or older.
4. Respondents should agree to participate voluntarily in the study.

5. Sample size

Keeping in view the nature of the research paper, the time available, the resources and the purpose of the study, it is considered appropriate to ensure the sample size. A total of 50 respondents from the Santhal tribal community of West Burdwan district have been selected as a sample in the study. The sample includs both male and female respondents to ensure proper representation of different social perspectives of the community.

6. Data Collection

The study has collected and used both primary and secondary data.

(a) Primary Data

The primary data was compiled using the following methods:

1. Structured Interview Schedule
2. Direct Observation
3. Informal Interview

The interview schedule included questions related to the respondents' socio-economic background, education, occupation, language, religious life, family structure, cultural traditions and modern lifestyle. Through observation, the daily life, social behavior and cultural activities of the respondents were directly studied.

(b) Secondary Data

The following sources were used for compilation of secondary data:

1. Census of India (2011)
2. Report of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs
3. Publications of Anthropological Survey of India
4. Research Papers & Dissertations
5. Books and Government Reports
6. Published Statistics of the Government of West Bengal

The information obtained from these sources were used to compare the background of the study, literature review and findings (Census of India, 2011; Xaxa, 2008).

7. Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected were analysed in accordance with the objectives of the study and the research questions. Quantitative data were tabulated and presented through its frequency and percentage. Each table was then analysed from a sociological point of view and compared with previous studies and relevant theories. The qualitative data was analysed through content analysis to provide an in-depth understanding of respondents' experiences, cultural perceptions and social change (Krippendorff, 2018). The sociological approaches of Ogburn (1922), Redfield (1956), Srinivas (1966), Singh (1973) and Xaxa (2008) have been used to explain the findings of the study to enable a theoretical analysis of the process of urbanization and cultural transition.

8. Ethics of study

Informed consent was obtained from each respondent during the study. The respondents were made aware of the purpose of the study and it was ensured that the use of personal information obtained from them would be limited to academic and research purposes. The identity and confidentiality of the respondents were fully protected so that the ethical credibility of the research was maintained (American Sociological Association, 2018).

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Table No.01

No.	Variables of the study	Relevant Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Changes in the socio-economic structure	Extreme changes Moderate change Insignificant/ No change	32 14 4	64% 28% 8%
2	Family Structure	Nuclear Family Joint Family	38 12	76% 24%
3	Main business position	Industrial/Industrial Official/ Private job Self-Employment/ profession Traditional Agriculture/Agriculture/Traditional Agriculture Wages	28 12 10	56% 24% 20%
4	Nature of social relations	Formal & Personal (Urban Focus) Community & Traditional	34 16	68% 32%
5	Use of Language (Santhali)	Use of Hindi/Bangla with Santhali Only Santhali in daily life	36 14	72% 28%
6	Religious Life and Rituals	Modern Influence in Traditional Sarna Religion Completely traditional Sarna ritual	30 20	60% 40%
7	The Impact of Digital Media and Communication	High Impact (Social Media/Internet) Medium or Low Impact	35 15	70% 30%
8	Generational Differences (Inter-Generational Approaches)	Huge difference between young and old Normal or low differences	41 9	82% 18%
9	Preservation of Cultural Identity	Partially successful (infection conditions) Fully successful (tradition preserved) Identity in crisis	24 18 8	48% 36% 16%
	Total		50	100%

Source: Field work, 2025.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The data presented illustrates the multi-faceted socio-cultural change taking place in the urbanized Santhal community of West Burdwan district.

1. Changes in socio-economic and family structure

It is evident from the data obtained that 64% of the respondents are experiencing 'extreme change' in their socio-economic structure. The impact of industrialization and urbanization has led to the spread of nuclear family system in 76% of households, thereby weakening the traditional joint family system. At the occupational level, 56% of the respondents are employed in industrial, government or private jobs and 24% are self-employed. Agriculture-based traditional livelihoods have been reduced to just 20%. This occupational mobility has led to the emergence of a new middle class in the community.

2. Social relations, language and religious life

Urban busyness and modern lifestyle have led to increased formality and individuality in social interactions of 68% of respondents. At the linguistic level, 72% of the people are using Hindi and Bangla along with Santhali language, which shows the process of acculturation. At the same time, 60% of the respondents accept the modern influences on the traditional rituals of Sarna religion.

3. Technology, Generational Differences and Cultural Identities

The proliferation of digital media and communication technology has had a high impact on 70% of respondents. This technological shift and modern thinking has led to an inter-generational approach between the young and the old, which is confirmed by 82% of the respondents. On the question of preserving cultural identity, 48% of respondents consider themselves partially successful, while 36% claim complete success.

Conclusion: The above analysis proves that urbanization has not only led to 'cultural assimilation' in the Santhal community but has also led to the creation of a 'hybrid identity' through the combination of tradition and modernity. They are dynamically harmonizing with modern urban society while retaining their cultural capital viz. Sarna religion and Santhali language.

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Table No. 02: Major Reasons for Change

Order	Causes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Education	14	28%
2	Industry & Employment	12	24%
3	Urbanization & Housing	09	18%
4	Mobile & Internet	07	14%
5	Social Media	05	10%
6	Migration	03	06%
Total		**50**	**100%**

Source: Field work, 2025.

Education (28%), industry and employment (24%) have emerged as the primary drivers of cultural and social change in the urbanized Santhal community of West Burdwan district. Theory of 'modernization' by Srinivas (1966) fits right here. Education not only increases literacy but also forms the basis of modern rationality and social mobility. According to Lerner (1958) education and mass media develop 'empathy' in the individual, allowing him to move out of the traditional structure and embrace modern opportunities. In Sachchidananda's (1979) and Vidyarthi's (1977) studies of Chhotanagpur region, industrial development was considered to be the main driver of change. The present study shows that education and digital communication (24% of mobile and social media combined) are now emerging as factors equal to or greater than industrialization. Due to the presence of ECL, SAIL-DSP and educational institutions such as Kazi Nazrul University, in the industrial belt of Asansol, Durgapur and Raniganj, the local Santhal youth have moved away from traditional agriculture and joined the formal economy, which has seen a massive change in the socio-economic structure.

Table No. 03: Participation in Major Festivals

Festival	Regular	Occasional	Never	Family
Sohrai	36 (72%)	10 (20%)	04 (08%)	50 (100%)
Baha	32 (64%)	12 (24%)	06 (12%)	50 (100%)
Karam	22 (44%)	18 (36%)	10 (20%)	50 (100%)
Durga Puja Non-Santhali Festivals	28 (56%)	16 (32%)	06 (12%)	50 (100%)

Source: Field work, 2025.

Table 03 shows that despite urbanisation, the Santhal community continues to witness high participation in their core festivals such as 'Sohrai' (72% regular) and 'Baha' (64% regular). Along with this, 56% of the respondents also regularly participate in non-Santhali festivals such as Durga Puja. This situation highlights the 'Acculturation' of Srinivas (1966) and the 'Cultural Dualism' of Williams (1977). The Santhal community is adapting to the multicultural urban environment while maintaining its in-group traditions at the same time. According to the blueprint (Xaxa, 2008), when tribes settle in industrial areas, the nature of their traditional festivals changes from 'community agricultural rituals' to 'symbolic cultural identity'. Due to the widespread influence of Durga Puja in West Bengal, families from urbanised Santhal settlements (such as Kanksa or Raniganj) actively participate in the Durga Puja pandals in the locality along with performing the traditional puja at their 'Jaher Than'.

Table No. 04: Use of traditional wear

Frequency of Use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Special/ On cultural occasions	31	62%
Not at all in daily life	12	24%
Regular in daily life	07	14%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Source: Field work, 2025.

It is clear from the data in Table 04 that 62% of the respondents use traditional attire such as 'Panchi' and 'Parhand' on special or cultural occasions, while only 14% of the people wear it in daily life. Goffman's (1959), 'Dramaturgical Perspective' and 'Front Stage/Back Stage' are very much relevant here. For the urbanised Santhals, public spaces (offices, schools, markets) are the 'front stage', where they express their global identity by wearing modern attire. At the same time, festivals like 'Sohrai' or 'Baha' act as their 'back stage' or special stage, where they showcase their tribal identity through traditional attire. The study of Bara (2018) also shows that this change in daily life has happened at a rapid pace due to the impracticality of traditional attire at the workplace. Due to the implementation of formal dress codes in industrial factories, private offices and educational institutions, the youth prefer modern clothes (jeans, shirts, salwar-suits) in daily life but display the traditional dress with pride in community gatherings.

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Table No. 05: Cultural Identity of Youth

Perception of youth	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Hybrid Identity	26	52%
Supporting a fully modern lifestyle	14	28%
Attachment to Traditional Culture and Roots	10	20%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Source: Field work, 2025.

An overview of Table No. 05 makes it clear that the majority of Santhal youth (52%) prefer to live by maintaining a balance between tradition and modernity, while 28% favor a completely modern lifestyle. Bhabha's (1994) theory of 'hybridity' and Giddens' (1991) approach to 'reflexive modernity' are fully applicable here. The youth neither restrict their identity to the past nor completely merge with modernization but choose both to create innovative hybrid identities. According to Singh (1994), the tribal youth in the industrial areas live in a kind of mental dilemma but this study shows that the modern Santhal youth have now come out of this conflict and have reached a state of 'active coordination'. The Santhal youth of urban Bengal are using modern technology to promote their culture by creating rap-songs, music and fashion reels of Santhali language on social media such as YouTube, Instagram and so on.

Table No. 06: Is cultural preservation necessary?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, highly necessary	38	76%
Partially necessary (with improvements)	09	18%
No, modernity is the priority	03	06%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field work, 2025.

Table No. 06 explains cultural preservation. Despite rapid modernization, 76% of respondents strongly believe that the preservation of their cultural heritage is of utmost importance. This is a testimony to the fact that urbanisation has changed the economic structure but cultural consciousness has not weakened. This is reflected in Geertz's (1973) theory of 'primordial attachments' and Bourdieu's (1986) theory of 'cultural capital'. The Santhal community considers their script namely Ol Chiki, folk-art and Sarna religion to be valuable cultural assets, which gives them distinct identity and self-respect in a multi-cultural urban society. Contrary to the apprehension expressed in the studies of Vidyarthi (1977) that industrialization and modernization would cut the tribes from their roots, this study proves that their identity has been preserved through 'cultural revivalism'. The activism of social organizations like 'Adivasi Gaonta' and the movement to preserve the land of 'Jaher Than' make it clear that urban Santhals are highly conscious of their cultural wealth.

Sociological analysis

The overall analysis of the data obtained from the urbanized Santhal community of West Burdwan district has been done on the basis of six major sociological theories as follows:

1. Robert Redfield: Folk-Urban Continuum

Redfield (1956) concepts of 'folk society' and 'folk-urban continuity' provide the primary basis for understanding the shift of the urbanized Santhal community. The data (64% socio-economic change, 76% nuclear family, 68% formal relations) confirm that the community is moving away from 'folk' characteristics to the 'urban' pole. However, they have not fully merged into the urban society, as they retain their 'Jaher Than' and 'Sohrai' (72% regular participation). Thus, their life reflects a mix of tradition and urbanity.

2. William F. Ogburn: Cultural Lag

Ogburn (1922) theory explains that when the pace of material culture is faster than that of non-material culture, imbalance arises in society. Physical technologies such as industry (24%), urbanisation (18%) and mobile/internet (24%) are increasingly being adopted by the Santhal community. In contrast, the slow changes in traditional dress (14%) and language in daily life reflect the pace of change in non-material culture. This has resulted in a cultural gap of between the young and the old, which is a direct manifestation of cultural lag.

3. M. N. Srinivas: Modernization & Acculturation

Srinivas' (1966) framework elucidates the social dynamics of the Santhal community and their contacts with the non-tribal society. Education (28%) is considered to be the biggest reason for the change and 56% of the respondents participate in non-Santhali festivals. With the influence of modern education and industrial jobs, Santhal youth are breaking free from the traditional division of labour and gaining a new middle-class identity and the process of acculturation has accelerated among them due to co-existence with the non-tribal population.

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4. Yogendra Singh: Modernization of Indian Tradition

Singh's (1973) main argument is that modernisation in Indian society does not abolish the traditional structure but establishes 'systemic adaptation' with it. The data confirms this principle with 52% of Santhal youth adopting a 'hybrid identity' and 76% of respondents considering cultural preservation as essential. For example, the traditional self-governance system 'Manjhi-Pargana system' is now functioning as a cultural and welfare platform rather than an administrative body.

5. Pierre Bourdieu: Cultural and Social Capital

According to Bourdieu's (1986) concept, economic capital is not the only basis for determining status in society. The urbanised Santhal community uses its script Ol Chiki, folk art, 'Jaher Than' and 'Sohrai' as its 'cultural capital'. They showcase this cultural capital to maintain a self-respecting identity in a competitive urban environment, while organisations such as 'Adivasi Gaontas' build their 'social capital'.

6. Anthony Giddens: Postmodernity & Self-Identity

According to Giddens (1991), in modernity, traditions become a matter of reflexive modernity rather than being self-evident. The impact of digital media (70%) and the attitude of the youth is evident. The Santhal youth are promoting their language and music through social media. This is not de-traditionalization but 're-traditionalization' in Giddens' words, where modern technology is being used to re-establish traditional identities.

Key Findings

The following are the key findings of the field study based on response of 50 urbanized Santhal respondents of West Burdwan district (Asansol-Durgapur Industrial Area):

1. **Dissolution of Family Structure and Nuclear Family:** Due to the limitations of industrial-urban space and lack of housing, 76% of the respondents are living in a nuclear family system, leaving the traditional joint family system.
2. **Business Mobility:** The advent of industrial activities, government and private jobs (56%) and trade or self-employment (24%) has led to the emergence of a new middle class in the Santhal community, replacing the traditional agrarian economy.
3. **Formalization in Community Relations:** Urban engagement and multi-ethnic coexistence result in the predominance of formal and personal relationships (68%) over primary and community ties.
4. **Bilingualism and Acculturation:** 72% of Santhal respondents are using Bengali and Hindi along with their mother tongue in daily conversations, speeding up the process of linguistic mixing and cross-culture.
5. **Symbolic Cultural Participation:** Participation in traditional festivals such as 'Sohrai' (72%) and 'Baha' (64%) is high but its nature has changed from 'community agricultural rituals' to 'demonstrations of cultural identity' (Xaxa, 2008).
6. **Dramaturgical Shift:** 62% of people use traditional dress ('panchi'/'parhand') on special cultural occasions, while modern or western wear is preferred in daily public life (Goffman, 1959).
7. **Cultural Lag:** The rapid adoption of technology (smartphones/internet- 70%) and the slow shift in cultural values has lead to a deep intergenerational gap of 82% between the young and the old (Ogburn, 1922).
8. **Hybrid Identity:** The outlook of 52% of Santhal youth reflects the adoption of a modern lifestyle without deviating from tradition, leading to the formation of a hybrid identity (Bhabha, 1994). They are using modern means of communication such as YouTube/social media to propagate their culture.
9. **Determination to preserve cultural identity:** Despite rapid modernization, 76% of the respondents consider it very important to preserve their language, 'Jaher Than' and the cultural capital of Sarna religion (Bourdieu, 1986).

Recommendations

The following are practical tips for the sustainable socio-economic development of the urbanized Santhal community and to keep the unique cultural heritage of this community intact:

1. Language preservation

1. The system of education in mother tongue (Santhali) at the primary level should be strengthened in urban settlements.
2. Oral literature, folklore and songs of Santhali language should be stored in digital form through digital media platforms (such as audio books, mobile apps and dictionaries).

2. Promoting Ol Chiki Script

1. Teachers should be appointed for the study and teaching of the 'Ol Chiki' script composed by Pandit Raghunath Murmu, in urban and sub-urban primary and secondary schools of West Burdwan.
2. Digital publication of Santhali newspapers, magazines and literature should be promoted so that the new generation is connected with the Ol Chiki script.

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3. Establishment of Cultural Centres

1. 'Santhal Culture & Research Centers' should be set up in Asansol and Durgapur Municipal Corporation areas, where training in traditional music, dance, painting (Jadopatia) and handicrafts can be initiated.
2. Legal and administrative protection should be provided to the holy places of the Santhal community such as 'Jaher Than' to protect them from urban development and encroachment.

4. Youth Engagement

1. Youth clubs and cultural forums should be formed to give a positive direction to the energy of Santhal youth. It will act as a bridge between the traditional Manjhi-Pargana system and the modern administration.
2. Technical assistance should be provided to the youth to promote Santhali folk art and music globally through social media and digital platforms.

5. Effective Implementation of Government Schemes

1. Awareness camps should be organized to reach out to the urban Santhal settlements of the benefits of West Bengal government schemes (such as 'Jai Johar Yojana', 'Shikshashree') and central schemes.
2. Special financial assistance should be given to Santhal women to be financially empowered through Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

6. Education & Skill Development

1. According to the industrial demand, special programs of Information Technology (IT), Vocational Training and Entrepreneurship Development should be run for Santhal youth.
2. Scholarships and mentorship cells should be set up to check the drop-out rate for Santhal students in higher educational institutions.

Conclusion

The sociological study based on the urbanised Santhal community of West Burdwan district (Asansol-Durgapur industrial belt) clearly underlines that urbanization, industrialization and digital communication have greatly affected the traditional fabric of tribal life. This effect is not the result of unilateral 'cultural assimilation' but expresses a process of complex and systematic 'cultural transition'. It is clear from the data of the study that the change in economic and material life has been very rapid. The shift from the traditional agrarian economy to industrial, government and private jobs has led to the growth of nuclear families (76%) and formal social relations (68%) in the Santhal community. The increasing influence of education and technology (mobile and internet) has created an inter-generational gap of 82% between the young and the old (Ogburn, 1922). Despite this, the community is firmly attached to its traditions at the level of cultural identity. The fact that 76% of the respondents consider cultural preservation essential and the regular participation of more than 70% in festivals like 'Sohrai' and 'Baha' shows that the Santhal community is not losing its identity in the face of the pressure of modernization. The 'hybrid identity' developed in the youth makes it clear that they are using modern education and social media to re-traditionalize their language ('Ol Chiki' script), music and traditions on the global stage (Bhabha, 1994; Giddens, 1991). In short, the urbanised Santhal community of West Burdwan provides a living example of Redfield's (1956) 'folk-urban continuum' and Singh's (1973) 'Modernisation of Indian Tradition'. They have succeeded in striking a dynamic balance with modern urban society while maintaining their traditional 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986).

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