

KURUKH.

Kurukh is spoken in the western portion of the Bengal Presidency and the adjoining parts of the Central Provinces. The number of speakers is about half a million.

According to their own traditions the **Kurukh** tribe originally lived in the Carnatic, 'whence they went up the Narbada River and settled in Bihar

Name of the language.

on the banks of the Sone. Driven out by the Muhammadans, the tribe split into two divisions, one of which followed the course of the Ganges, and finally settled in the Rajmahal hills; while the other went up the Sone, and occupied the north-western portion of the Chota Nagpur Plateau, where many of the villages they occupy are still known by Munḍārī names. The latter were the ancestors of the Orāṅs [**Kurukhs**], while the former were the progenitors of the Male, or Sauriā as they often call themselves, whose grammar is closely connected with Orāṅ, though it has borrowed much of its vocabulary from the Aryan languages in the neighbourhood.'

Mr. Gait, from whose Report of the Census of Bengal, 1901, the preceding quotation has been reprinted, further remarks—

'The Caste Table shows the number of Orāṅs to be 652,286, and the tribal language is spoken by 543,505 persons. As in other cases, members of the tribe who have emigrated to other districts are more prone to abandon their original language than those who stay at home. In the north of Ranchi, however, where they are much mixed up with Munḍas, more than 23,000 Orāṅs have given up their language and now talk a dialect of Munḍarī known as Hoṛoliā Jhagar. On the other hand, a few Munḍas (724), Khariās (405), Lohārs (145), and Gonds (75) in that district returned Orāṅ as their language. In Singhbhum also, some members of other tribes speak Orāṅ, including 806 Kurmis, 115 *soi-disant* Rājputs, 74 Tāmariās, and 50 Lohārs. In Manbhum 72 Santāls, 19 Bhumijis and 5 Munḍas were returned as speaking Orāṅ.'

The state of affairs is similar in other districts, and **Kurukh** is accordingly known under several different names.

The tribe call themselves **Kurukh**, and their language **Kurukh Kathā**. Dr. Hahn is of opinion that the word **Kurukh** 'may be identified with the Kolarian *hoṛo*, man, or may be derived from the Dravidian-Scythian word *kuruk*, a cryer.' He compares the Kūrkū word *kōrō*, man, and, with reference to the second derivation, the name Slavonic, from *slovo*, word, voice. I do not know the history of the 'Dravidian-Scythian' word *kuruk*, but the derivation does not seem probable. A people may call themselves 'speakers,' but scarcely 'cryers.' I am not, however, able to give any certain derivation of the word. Another common name of the tribe is Orāṅ, with many slightly varying forms such as Urāṅ, Urāng, Aurang, etc. Dr. Hahn explains this word as the totem of one of the septs into which the **Kurukhs** are divided. According to him Orāṅ is a name coined by the Hindūs, its base being *Orgorā*, hawk or cunning bird, used as the name of a totemistic sept. Compare, however, Kaikāḍi *urāpāi*, man; Burgāḍi *urāpō*, man; *urāng*, men. In a similar way **Kurukh** may be connected with Tamil *karugu*, an eagle, and be the name of a totemistic clan. Compare also names such as Korava, Kurru, a dialect of Tamil, and Kodagu. Hindūs say that the word 'Orāṅ' is simply the Indo-Aryan *urāu*, spendthrift, the name being an allusion to the alleged thriftless character of the people to whom it is applied.

It has already been pointed out that the **Kurukhs** are much mixed with Munḍas. We cannot, therefore, wonder that speakers of **Kurukh** have occasionally been returned as speaking Munḍā languages such as Khariā, Korwā, Kōḍā, Hō, and so on.

In other cases the name of the caste or occupation is used to denote the language. Such names are Dhāngarī, Kisān, and probably also Khendrōi.

Dhāngarī simply means 'the language of the Dhāngars,' a caste whose business it is to dig wells, tanks, etc. The word is sometimes corrupted to Dhanwāri.

Kisān means cultivator, and may, as the denomination of a language, connote any form of speech.

I do not know anything about the names Khendrōi and Kachnakhrā which are used in Jashpur and Ranchi respectively.

None of these names properly denote the language. Some details about their use will be found under the heading Number of Speakers, below. They should all be discarded, and the language will hereafter be throughout spoken of as Kurukh.

The bulk of the speakers of Kurukh are found in the Chota Nagpur Plateau.

Area within which spoken. About three-fifths live in the Ranchi district, especially in the north and north-west. They are further found in considerable numbers in the south of Palamau and in the Chota Nagpur States. More than 93 per cent of the speakers in the tributary States are found in Gangpur and Jashpur. Speakers are further found in small numbers in the adjoining districts of Hazaribagh, Manbhum, Singbhum, Bonai, Pal Lahera, Bamra, Rairakhol, Sambalpur, Patna, Sarangarh, Raigarh, Sakti, Udaipur, Sarguja and Korca. Emigrants have brought the language with them to Jalpaiguri and the various districts of Assam, where it is spoken by coolies in the tea-gardens.

The principal Aryan language of Ranchi and Palamau is Bihāri. The other districts within which Kurukh is spoken belong to the areas occupied by Oriyā and Chhattisgarhi. The Kurukhs are everywhere intermixed with various Muṇḍā tribes. They are also very often confounded with them. The Kurukhs are relatively most numerous in Ranchi. They are still numerous in Palamau, Gangpur, and Jashpur. In other districts they are as a rule rather thinly scattered.

The Kurukh language is essentially the same over the whole area. There is said to be a separate dialect spoken in Gangpur, called Berga Orāṅ. No information is, however, available about that form of speech. Kurukh has not been reported from Gangpur for the purposes of this Survey. It is not, however, probable that the so-called Berga Orāṅ essentially differs from other local forms of the language, which are in reality no separate dialects but more or less corrupt forms of Standard Kurukh; in fact, 'berga' has been explained as being really the Hindi word *bigṛā*, corrupt. The corruption is usually due to the influence of surrounding Aryan dialects, and sometimes also the influence of neighbouring Muṇḍā forms of speech may be perceived. On the whole, however, Kurukh is uniform over the whole area where it is spoken as a vernacular. Varying names of occupation or caste, such as Dhāngar, Kisān and so on, do not imply any difference of dialect.

The estimated number of speakers in those districts where Kurukh is spoken as a vernacular are as follows:—

Number of speakers.

Orissa Tributary States (Pal Lahera)	295
Hazaribagh	3,934
Ranchi	325,860
Palamau	30,000
Manbhum	1,071
Singbhum	3,220
Carried over	364,380

	Brought forward	.364,380	
Jashpur State . . . . .	.	20,000	
Korea State . . . . .	.	68	
Bonai State . . . . .	.	500	
Sarguja State . . . . .	.	23,430	
Udaipur State . . . . .	.	1,598	
	TOTAL BENGAL	.	409,971
Sambalpur . . . . .	.	41,000	
Sakti . . . . .	.	1,500	
Raigarh . . . . .	.	5,000	
Sarangarh . . . . .	.	1,511	
Bamra . . . . .	.	3,750	
Rairakhol . . . . .	.	547	
Patna . . . . .	.	475	
	TOTAL CENTRAL PROVINCES	.	53,783
	GRAND TOTAL	.	463,754

Outside its proper territory Kurukh is to some extent spoken by emigrants, most of whom are found among the coolies in the tea-gardens in Bengal and Assam. The following are the revised figures supplied as estimates for this Survey :—

Cachar Plains	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,251	
Kamrup	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	200	
Darrang	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,900	
Nowgong	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	475	
Sibsagar	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,850	
Lakhimpur	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3,150	
									TOTAL ASSAM	.	8,826
Jalpaiguri	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	13,184	
Shahabad	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	250	
Champaran	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5,000	
Bhagalpur	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	12,966	
									TOTAL BENGAL		31,400
									GRAND TOTAL		40,226

The estimated number of speakers of Kurukh at home and abroad is, therefore, as follows :—

Kurukh spoken at home by	468,754
Kurukh spoken abroad by	40,226
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TOTAL	508,980

The figures returned at the last Census of 1901 show a considerable increase in the number of speakers, and it will be of interest to add them for comparison. They are as follows :—

[illegible]

	Brought forward	2,397	555,715
Howrah		1,720	
24 Parganas		2,244	
Calcutta		203	
Nadia		82	
Murshidabad		1,430	
Rajshahi		5,485	
Dinajpur		4,573	
Jalpaiguri		53,828	
Darjeeling		7,449	
Rangpur		531	
Bogra		470	
Shahabad		969	
Bhagalpur		2,984	
Purnea		2,250	
Malda		2,157	
Sonthal Parganas		1,744	
Balasore		12	
Angul and Khondmals		1,126	
Hazaribagh		2,930*	
Ranchi		314,778	
Palamau		21,606	
Manbhum		330	
Singbhum		6,973	
Kuch Bihar		4	
Orissa Tributary States		2,941*	
Chota Nagpur Tributary States		103,708*	
	TOTAL BENGAL	544,924	
Central Provinces			54,006
Nagpur		1	
Bilaspur		171	
Sambalpur		30,000*	
Sakti		9	
Raigarh		4,312	
Sarangarh		885	
Bamra		15,704	
Rairakhol		1,402	
Sonpur		805	
Patna		666	
Kalahandi		51	
	TOTAL CENTRAL PROVINCES	54,006	
	GRAND TOTAL		609,721

It will be seen that there is a large increase in Jalpaiguri, and that Kurukh has been returned from several districts where it had not formerly been reported to be spoken. This state of affairs is due to the greater accuracy of the last Census, and probably not to a real increase in the number of speakers. If we compare the figures from those districts where Kurukh is spoken as a vernacular, we will find that there is a marked decrease over almost the whole area.

The number of speakers has increased in Singbhum, the Chota Nagpur Tributary States, Bamra, Rairakhol, and Patna. It is not, however, possible to decide whether the increase is real or only apparent. The speakers of Kurukh have formerly been often returned under various Mundā dialects, and it has not always been possible to correct the old figures. Thus, no speakers of Kurukh were returned for this Survey from the

* After adjustments.

Gangpur State, whereas, in 1901, 93 per cent. of all the speakers of Kurukh in the Chota Nagpur States were found in Gangpur and Jashpur. The revised figures from Bamra were 3,750 for Kurukh, entered as a form of Kōrā, and 13,569 for Muṇḍārī. In 1901 the corresponding figures were 15,704 for Kurukh and 6,023 for Muṇḍārī. We can safely infer that several speakers of Kurukh were formerly entered under Muṇḍārī, and that the same is certainly the case in other districts. On the whole we are apparently justified in saying that the number of speakers of Kurukh is decreasing.

In the preceding tables no reference has been made to the various names under which Kurukh has been returned.

The name Dhāngarī has been returned from the following districts :—

Shahabad	250
Champaran	5,000
Bhagalpur	12,966
Manbhum	1,071
Sakti	1,000
Raigarh	5,000
Sarangarh	604
TOTAL	<u>25,891</u>

In Bhagalpur the speakers are also locally known as Kols.

Kisān is the name under which Kurukh has been reported from the following districts :—

Sambalpur	22,000
Sarangarh	907
Bamra	3,750
Rairakhol	547
TOTAL	<u>27,204</u>

The 20,000 speakers of Kurukh in the Jashpur State have been returned as speaking Khendrōl. Finally in the Census of 1901, 465 speakers of a language called ' Malhar ' were discovered, of whom 414 were returned from the Orissa Tributary States, 50 from Hazaribagh, and 1 from the Chota Nagpur Tributary States. The very meagre materials which are available and which are not worth publishing seem to show that Malhar is only a corrupt form of Kurukh, and the figures have therefore been included in the above table.

Kurukh is, to some extent, spoken by Muṇḍās and others, and in the old returns it has continually been confounded with various Muṇḍā dialects.

We find Kurukh returned under the name of Khariā from—

Pal Lahera	295
Bonai	320
Sambalpur	6,000
TOTAL	<u>6,615</u>

From Sambalpur we find 9,000 Kurukh speakers returned under the name of Kōrā, and similarly 2,950 Kōrwās in Hazaribagh have turned out to speak Kurukh. The same is the case with 475 individuals in the Patna State who were reported to speak Hō.

It is of no use to enlarge upon the distribution of the speakers of Kurukh between the various so-called dialects. The different names do not connote different forms of the language, but are due to the fact that the names of castes and occupations have been entered as connoting various dialects. The table 407 and ff. therefore includes all the figures entered under the various headings mentioned above.

I am not aware of the existence of any old authority dealing with Kurukh. The following is a list of those which I have come across :—

Authorities.

- MASON, F.,—*The Talaiing Language*. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. iv, pp. 277-288. Contains a list of words in Oraon, etc., reprinted in the *British Burma Gazetteer*, and in the *Revue de Linguistique*, Vol. xvii, pp. 167 and ff.
- BATSCH, REV. F.,—*Brief Grammar and Vocabulary of the Oraon Language*. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. xxxv, 1866, Special Number, App. E, pp. 251 and ff.
- CAMPBELL, SIR GEORGE,—*Specimens of Languages of India*. Calcutta, 1874, pp. 94 and ff.
- FLEX, REV. O.,—*Introduction to the Urāun Language*. Calcutta, 1874.
- HAHN, REV. FEED.,—*Kurukh Grammar*, Calcutta, 1900.
- „ —*Kurukh (Orāō)-English Dictionary*. Part I, Calcutta, 1903.
- „ —*Kurukh Folk-lore*. *Collected and transliterated*. Calcutta, 1905.

Kurukh is not a literary language and has no written character. The gospels in Kurukh have been printed in Dēvanāgarī type in Calcutta.

Language and Literature.

The translation is due to the Rev. F. Hahn, who has also published a biblical history, a catechism, and other small books in the language. His Kurukh grammar has already been mentioned in the list of authorities. It is the principal source from which the remarks about Kurukh grammar which follow have been taken.

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