

## Marwari Community and Their Contribution in Socio-Religious and Cultural Aspects of North-Eastern Bihar

Jay Lakshmi<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor (Guest), Department of Political Science, BSS College, Supaul – 852131, Bihar, India

DOI: [10.36347/sjahss.2024.v12i07.005](https://doi.org/10.36347/sjahss.2024.v12i07.005)

| Received: 02.05.2024 | Accepted: 14.06.2024 | Published: 26.07.2024

\*Corresponding author: Jay Lakshmi

Assistant Professor (Guest), Department of Political Science, BSS College, Supaul – 852131, Bihar, India

### Abstract

### Original Research Article

Marwaris are one of the most important leading business communities who dominate in business and industries in whole India. They are immigrant traders from Marwar, Shekhawati and adjoining regions of Rajasthan and Haryana. They have been migrated to different parts of the country and abroad too to establish and spread their business and now they have been permanently residing there. Their migration started since 19<sup>th</sup> century mainly due to conflicts between Rajput and Mughal emperors which were affecting their trades badly. In this connection they also reached to North-Eastern (N-E) regions of Bihar for trade purpose mainly. They put their concentration to establish themselves in trades in this region. After feeling secured they brought their families, relatives and neighbours too to establish in this new area. Their main aim was to bring these known people to flourish in trades. Slowly they became mixed with the local people and gradually started to play an effective role in commerce, trades, culture and politics too of this region. They have been well adapted to the local languages, customs, dresses, religion and culture besides maintaining their own cultural identity. Besides establishing various trades and industries and raising economy of the areas, they are also contributing a lot in the social upliftment of the society. The present paper deals with the role of Marwari community in the socio-religious and cultural development of N-E Bihar.

**Keywords:** Socio-religious, Cultural, Development, Marwari community, N-E Bihar.

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

## INTRODUCTION

From ancient and classical India, Bihar has been considered as the centers of power, learning and culture. Its north-eastern (N-E) part is very beautiful and situated in the lap of the Ganga, Koshi and Mahananda rivers. The people of this region are outstanding and still maintaining itself a religious, historical, social, economical and political patrimony. Various merchant communities such as Bihari, Bengali, Marwari, Sindhi, Khatri, Punjabi and others came and settled in this area in search of commercial pursuits but it is the Marwari community that played a pioneering and pivotal role in the development of commerce, industry and business in Katihar, Purnea and other neighbouring districts of N-E Bihar [1-3]. The word Marwari is a cultural as well as occupational identity. Mainly it refers to a commercial and industrial community originating from Marwar, an old state of Jodhpur in Rajasthan [4] and Haryana. About 85% of Marwaris belong from Rajasthan. They have migrated to different parts of the country and abroad too to spread their trades. In conversational usage outside of

Rajasthan, Marwari is used to refer to emigrant businessmen from the vicinity of Rajasthan [5].

The industrial adventure of Marwari community is world famous. This community has the credit to set up many industrial units in the world based on new modern techniques [3]. Starting from small thrones, their industrial journeys by establishing sovereignty over more than 50% of economic resources of private sectors in India have reached up to international level [6]. Presently they are found in all parts of India and known not only for its business acumen but also for their charitable, soft spoken and reliable behaviour. Now they have become the highly successful business community first as inland traders and later on as investors in industrial production and other sectors. Ever since the time of Akbar due to conflicts between Mughal and Rajput emperors Marwaris started to establish their business houses outside Rajasthan particularly in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa [4]. Adjacent to the international boundary of Nepal and Bangladesh and India's West Bengal, thousands of Marwari families residing in N-E

part of Bihar have established their specific identity. Katihar, Purnea, Araria, Kishanganj, Madhepura, Saharsa and Supaul are such N-E districts of Bihar where richness, affection and culture of these Marwari families have not only thrown the fragrance of Marwari / Rajasthani culture in the soils of N-E Bihar but also established a new culture and brotherhood in this area by their presence. These Marwari families are so much happy and prosperous that they have shown their active participation in every cultural, social, religious, political, trade affair, disaster management and other sectors [3]. Now they are playing a very important role in balancing the economic scenario and turning the economic wheel of the nation. Besides their contribution in trades and industries they are also playing a pivotal role in maintaining the social, religious and cultural harmony in north-eastern Bihar. So it was thought necessary to evaluate the role of the Marwari community in the socio-religious and cultural development of N-E Bihar.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A survey was undertaken during 2013 - 2018 to explore the role of Marwari community in the socio-religious and cultural developments of N-E districts of Bihar including Katihar, Purnea, Araria, Kishanganj (Purnea Division), Supaul, Madhepura and Saharsa (Saharsa Division). The survey was based on empirical

methods consisting of study of district souvenirs, statistical data, reference books, newspapers and personal interviews with a set of questionnaire with different socio-religious and cultural organizations established by the Marwari communities of N-E Bihar.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An appreciable number of the people of Marwari community reside in N-E Bihar. In the later 16<sup>th</sup> century during the era of Mughals, Marwari businessmen started to migrate from their native place mainly Marwar and Shekhavati of Rajasthan to Bengal province. Till the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century they have migrated to almost all parts of the country including present districts of N-E Bihar like Katihar, Purnea, Kishanganj, Supaul, Madhepura, Saharsa etc. suitable to their trades. Firstly they have established themselves as good traders and then as reliable industrialists of the area. Gradually besides maintaining their own culture they have also started to participate in socio-religious and cultural activities of the local area along with the local people. The contribution of Marwari Community of N-E Bihar in the establishment of socio-religious organizations can be envisaged through their activities in public welfare, religious and cultural programmes. The festivals and ceremonies celebrated by the Marwari community in N-E Bihar is depicted in Table-1.

**Table-1: Festivals and Ceremonies Celebrated by Marwari Community in North-Eastern Bihar**

S.N.	FESTIVALS			CEREMONIES
	Special	Adopted	General	
1.	Gangaur	Chhath	Holika Dahan	Marriage
2.	Basia / Basero	Somwari	Holi	Marriage Anniversary
3.	Chana Chhat	Sawan Mahotsav	Ram Navami	Birthday
4.	Hanuman Jayanti Mahotsav	Raksha Bandhan	Janmashtami	
5.	Rani Sati Mahotsav	Nag Panchami	Durgapuja	
6.	Choth	Vasant Panchami	Deepawali	
7.	Menhadi Rashma	Bhaiya Dooj	Shivaratri	
8.	Holi Milan Samaroh	Teej	Vat Savitri Puja	
9.	Deepawali Milan Samaroh	Karva Chauth	Ganpati Mahotsav	

### Festivals:

Due to religious nature by habit and economically affluent Marwaris lawfully celebrate their festivals every year with full faith, devotion, enthusiasm and pomp. The festivals celebrated by the Marwari community of N-E Bihar can be grouped under special, adopted and general.

**(a) Special Festivals:** These include those festivals which are only celebrated by only Marwari Community. The people of other communities usually do not celebrate them:

- Gangor:** *Gangor (God Shiva – Goddess Parvati Worship)* is one of the most important festivals celebrated by the ladies of Marwari community. In N-E Bihar it is celebrated with full pomp and show. In this festival the symbol of Shiv - Parvati, Gangor made from the ash of Holi and cow dung is worshipped under very trustiness. It starts after

second day of Holi festival and celebrated for 16 days by the unmarried women to achieve their desire of good bridegroom. However, married women adore Gangor in the last day.

- Basia/ Basero:** It is an important festival of Marwari community celebrated after eight days of Holi. In this festival Goddess Shitala is worshipped with full devotion [7].
- Chaana Chhat:** It is also an important festival celebrated by the unmarried women of Marwari Community. In this festival Goddess/Mother **Chaana Chhat** is worshipped with full devotion to achieve salvation for them and their families [7].
- Choth:** Choth is an important festival of women of Marwari community. In this festival prayer of Choth mother is done with full devotion and lawfully to achieve the wellness, safety and progress of their grains, wealth, husband, children etc. [7].

5. **Hanumaan Jayanti Mahotsav:** This festival is also one of the important 3 days festivals of Marwari community celebrated by both males and females with full devotion, pomp and show to achieve power, safety, wellness, health and to keep away from the ghosts from their deity Hanumaan. Several programmes like Akhand Jyot (Unbroken light), Group recital of Sunderkand, Dhawaja puja (Flag worship), Nishaan puja (Mark worship), Bhajan (devotional songs and hymns) etc. Savamani bhog bhandara (50 Kg religious feast) is organized on the second day. On the last day Nishaan Shobhayatra (Mark Procession and Tableau) is come out in which a large number of Marwari women, men and children and the people of other community participate. Every year in Katihar district Hanumaan Jayanti is celebrated in grand ways under the supervision of a religious organization, Adhyatma Chetan Manch [8].
6. **Rani Sati Mahotsav:** There is a great importance of **Dadi Maa (Grand mother) Rani Sati** in the Marwari community. Rani Sati or Narayani Devi was a devoted Marwari woman of Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan who committed sati (self-immolation / funeral custom) after the death of her husband [9]. In the districts of Purnea (Kasba), Saharsa (Sonbarsa), Kishanganj (Thakurganj and Dalkhola), and Katihar of N-E Bihar temples of Dadi Maa Rani Sati have been established by the Marwari communities. On the birthday of Rani Sati Dadi Maa the temples are decorated in a grand way and the Marwari women worship Rani Sati with full devotion and pray for the wellness of their families. In N-E Bihar Marwaris and some people of other communities visit the temples and bow their heads against the idol of Rani Sati. It is very surprising that even after the complete ban or abolition of Sati Pratha there is a continuance of the commemoration and highlighting the importance of Rani Sati in Marwari communities. This may be due to blind fascination of Marwari communities toward their heritage [2]. Although no such type of widow funeral custom has been occurred till now in Marwari or any other community of N-E Bihar.
7. **Menhadi (Henna):** Women of Marwari community celebrates all their holy rituals like marriage, birthday, Saavan Mahotsav etc. with full devotion and attention. Marwari women also stain the palms of brides of other communities with henna. Menhadi custom is acting as an important connecting link between Marwari and Bihari communities of N-E Bihar.
8. **Holi Milan Samahroh:** It is celebrated after Holi by the Marwari Communities mainly and to some extent by the other communities of N-E Bihar. This festival is celebrated with full enthusiasm and pomp. It gives message of *working together with unity* without any discrimination in the society [10].
9. **Deepawali Milan Samaroh:** Deepawali is celebrated by the Marwari community with full

enthusiasm, faith, devotion and specificity because trades are the basis of their lives and the Goddess of Trade i.e. Goddess of Wealth is Lakshmi who is worshipped on the occasion of Deepawali along with the God Ganesh. After Deepawali Marwari community also celebrates Deepawali Milan Samaroh by the Marwari communities of N-E Bihar. This indicates their solidarity and fraternity among them.

**(b) Adopted Festivals:** Easy mixing with the local people adapt according to time, place, situation and environment is an important feature of Marwari community and this is one of the root causes of their successes. Adopted festivals consist of those local festivals which have been adopted by the Marwari people from the local people [8]. These festivals are celebrated by the local communities from the centuries according to their traditions. These festivals are not the original festivals of Marwari community but due to religious nature and to maintain social harmony they are celebrating them with full devotion, pomp and show. The important festivals among them are Chhath, Somwari, Saavan Mahotsav, Raksha Bandhan, Naag Panchami, Bhaiya Dooj, Teej, Karwa Chauth, Shiva Ratri etc.

**(c) General Festivals:** They are those festivals which have celebrated by the entire with full grandeur. Important festivals among them are Holika Dahan, Holi, Deepawali etc. The Marwari communities of N-E Bihar celebrate these festivals with full devotion and enthusiasm along with the Hindu devotees of the country.

### Ceremonies

#### Marriage:

Practice of dowry system is almost equally followed in both the Marwari and Bihari communities. As per their capacity Marwaris expense extremely in their marriage ceremonies. Thus it has become a means for showing their prosperities. It increases the tendency of dowry system. Due to dowry system some Marwari women have been burnt, some have committed suicide and cases of divorce have increased in the Marwari communities of N-E Bihar [11]. It is estimated that there are about Rs. 2 lakh crores of extravagant expenditures are being done in marriage ceremonies in India [8]. Naturally a large part of this extravagant expenditure is done by the Marwari communities of India. However, some Marwari organizations of North Eastern Bihar are also trying to reduce this huge amount of extravagant expenditure. To stop the social evil like dowry system Agarwal Maitry Sangh of Katihar had organized a Vaivahik Parichay Sammelan (Marriage Information Conference) of Marwari society in 1999 in which a large number of Marwari people were participated from all over the country. This organization and Marwari Yuva Manch of N-E Bihar are still working against the dowry system and also for the welfare of dowry victimized Marwari women [11].

Marriage between Marwari and other communities is quite unusual in N-E Bihar. Marwaris due to social permission inter community marriages between different communities have already been started in this region. This is a good example of changing scenario of society of N-E Bihar.

Besides these marriage anniversary, birthday ceremony etc. are celebrated by the Marwari community in which invited people of other society also celebrate.

### Cultural Programmes:

Marwari community of N-E Bihar takes very much interest in organizing different types of cultural programmes. Kavi Sammelan (Poet Conference), Gaayan – Vaadan (Playing Songs) Programme, Music Competitions, Painting Competitions, different competitions for women etc. are being organized time to time by them and several good artists have been honoured.

### CONCLUSIONS

There is a specific historical, social and cultural background of N-E Bihar in which contribution of all religions, castes and communities is praiseworthy. After reaching to this region Marwari community established there and strengthen the socio-religious heritage of N-E Bihar besides maintaining their social and cultural identity. Marwari communities have established several social, educational and religious organizations in N-E Bihar for public welfare.

Marwaris always celebrate their festivals and ceremonies with full enthusiasm and in a specific way. Some festivals are general which are celebrated by all the people of the society. Some festivals have been adopted by the Marwari community according to the local environment. Their participation in these festivals are important too as they do commendable job by serving the devotees during the festivals like Chhath and Saavan Mahotsav. But when they celebrate their own specific festivals like Gangaur, Basia, Chaana Chhat, Hanumaan Jayanti Mahotsav, Rani Sati Mahotsav, Choth, Mehendi ritual etc. then they usually do not like to involve the people of other communities. Holi and Deepawali are general festivals but Holi Milan Samaroh celebrated by them does not involve the people of other communities. Their Holi Milan Samaroh is also celebrated separately by Agarwal and Brahmin Marwaris. Only Marwari businessmen participate in their Deepawali Milan Samaroh. No any participation of other community has been observed in their Deepawali Milan Samaroh. In spite of these till now no any tension or dispute has been observed between Marwari communities in N-E Bihar which is a pleasant experience. But a negative aspect also

appears that Marwaris give very much importance to untouchability although in the present modern society untouchability is reduced day by day. A study on untouchability in Katihar district by Jha, & Kumar [12] also reflects this fact.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Authors are thankful to all the learned Marwaris of N-E Bihar including Sri Prabhu Dayal Agarwal, Sita Ram Chamaria, Chhedi Prasad Gopalika, Bholaram Munka, Satyanarayan Agarwal, Gopi Tambakuwala, Mahavir Prasad Agarwal, Ram Niwas Sharma, Vimal Singh Vaingani, Pawan Kumar Agarwal, Anandi Lal Sharma, Akash Agarwal, Anil Chamaria and others who have provided important informations and literature to complete this research work.

### REFERENCES

1. Sāhā, N. C. (2003). The Marwari community in Eastern India: a historical survey focussing North Bengal. (*No Title*). Decent Books, New Delhi, 328.
2. Lakshmi, J., & Jha, P. K. (2014). North Eastern Bihar chamber of commerce & industries and Marwari community of Katihar. *Time Journals of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 1-4. [www.timejournals.org/tjss](http://www.timejournals.org/tjss).
3. Lakshmi, J., Jha Pawan, K., & Kumar, S. (2019). Marwari community and their contribution in economic development of North-Eastern Bihar. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 7(8), 597-601.
4. Banglapedia. *Marwaris*. 2015; [en.banglapedia.org](http://en.banglapedia.org).
5. Timberg, T. A. (1979). "*The Marwaris from Traders to Industrialists*", Vikash Publishing House Private Limited. 268.
6. Taknet, D. K. (2009). Marwari vyavsayi sahas ke dhani. "*Vaish Sammelan*", A Competent Monthly Magazine of Global Vaish Community, Aga Publications Ltd., Hyderabad, 11, 32-41.
7. Rajagadhiya, C. (1962). Twelve months festival (in Marwari language). Mika House Publication, No. 2, Pretoria Street, Calcutta, 258.
8. Lakshmi, J., & Jha Pawan, K. (2014). *Marwari Samuday and Kshhetriya Vikas*. Novelty and Company, Ashok Rajpath Patna, 302.
9. Wikipedia. *The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation Inc., A Non-Profit Organization. 2010.
10. Hindustan. (2010). *Hindi Daily Newspaper*. 2010 March 13, 18.
11. Agarwal, A. President, *Bihar State Marwari Yuva Manch*. 2020: Katihar.
12. Jha, P. K., & Kumar B. (2005). Pattern of discrimination: A case study of Katihar District. Novelty & Company; 2005: Patna.