

Term Paper Based on Literature Review Changing Socio-Economic Conditions of the Lodha Community with Special Focus on Mechanisms in Chronic Poverty Reduction: A Case Study in Mokrapur Gram Panchayat of Narayangarh Block, Paschim Medinipur District, West Bengal, India

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Abstract: *Livelihood is the dynamic term with respect to time and place, its meaning vary from place to place and depend upon availability of recourse in particular geographical area, people culture and practice. The depletion of forest Changes in the external environment can affect assets, activities or outcomes. The livelihood sources are changes in behavior are known as coping strategies.*

Keywords: Lodha, Tribal, PTGs, Agri-labourers, Socio-economic.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the age of Ramayana & Mahabharata the tribal's occupy a putative act. India is one of the few nations in the world with a thriving tribal population in different parts of the country. India being the second largest tribal dominated area after Africa. They occupy around 18.7 per cent of the total geographical area of our country. The tribal's are children of nature and their lifestyle is conditioned by the ecosystem. India with a variety of Eco-system, presents a varied tribal population throughout its length and breadth. The tribal populations of India are recognized as socially and economically under privileged.

Low levels of literacy, pre agricultural level of technology and stagnant population are the parameters on the basis of which certain groups have been declared as PTGs.

Lodhas also collect minor forest produce including Babui-grass for making. They also hunt wild animals, birds & reptiles which are consumed as food while their skins & hides are sold. Lodhas are preliminarily a hunting gathering community. Whose main subsistence depends on collections of wild roots, tubers, & edible levees from jungles? Some of them are engaged in rearing poultry and livestock's (pigs, goat, cow). A considerable number still migrate to neighboring states and districts for labor jobs. They are semi-nomadic, denitrified community who are gradually becoming settled agriculturists nowadays.

Other point of view Lodha people work of many sector like agri-labourers (seasonal workers), day laborers, cultivators, other services and out of these are non workers.

Traditionally, they were forest dwellers but now they have started cultivation either as owner or agricultural laborer and are also engaged in hunting and fishing. Thus, they belonged to the low socio-economic class.

The area inhabited by the tribal's constitute ,a significant part of the under-developed area of the country. The tribal's live mostly in isolated villages or hamlets. A smaller portion of their population has now settled in permanent villages as well as in towns and cities. These Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups are domiciled in Paschim Medinipur ,



Purulia, Jalpaiguri & Sagar Block of South 24 Parganas districts. i.e. Lodhas in Paschim Medinipur and Sagar Block of South 24 Parganas; Totos in Jalpaiguri & Birhors in Purulia.

Mainly, Lodha (PTGs) is one such primitive tribe resident in Paschim medinipur district of West Bengal, India. Narayangarh block (of Paschim medipur district) has largest concentration of Lodha tribe. In West Bengal, the total population of Lodha was 84,966, almost 2% of the total population of West Bengal & the proportion to the total ST population was 1.9 percent.

But in Narayangarh block 57,012 Lodhas live in approximately 14783 families. There are an estimated 29,360 males & 27,652 females. Of the Mokrapur Gram Panchayat total villages was no.48 & the total population has been 23230 of this 9804 persons are STs Constituting 3.3 percent of the total population of the block. Lodha population was 6343 and There are an estimated 3325 males & 3018 females.

More than 95 per cent of Lodhas reside in rural area. Their mother tongue is Lodha, which is close to Savara, an Austro-Asiatic language.

Overall literacy rate 30.49 percent where as state literacy rate 68.64 percent respectively against female literacy 23.52 of those villages where as state literacy rate 59.6 percent.

Trends of the Lodhas enrolment scenario to education at present time primary level (1-4 years) are noticeable but middle level (5-8 years), secondary & H.S. level (10-12 years) are too very low.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to determine the socio-economic status of Lodhas tribe and to suggest suitable remedies. The present study has been made to examine the rate of literacy and quality of education, occupational and employment pattern, size of landholding, level of income and expenditure with other socio-economic characteristics of Lodha tribe. The existing literature on the socio-economic and living conditions of Lodhas provided several factors that are directly and indirectly responsible for the socio-economic backwardness, poverty and financial obligation in this Primitive Tribal Group (PTG). The main problem in the Lodha tribe is that they are diminishing due to lack of population compared to other migrant population; consequently, they have become minority in their own land. The study focuses that this minor primitive tribal group needs much intensive development policy package for their socio-economic transmission.

The study was under taken with the following major objectives ----

- To find the change in socio-economic condition of the lodhas (PTGs) in last 10 years.
- To find out the different sources of livelihood of the Lodhas
- To observed the impact of development intervention on the selected Lodhas community in the study area.
- To provide suggestions to alleviate poverty and to take the Lodhas to main system.

III. DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

Data for this study has been based secondary sources. The sources of secondary data are the published and unpublished reports. Data from secondary sources were gathered from books, articles, journals, published report, census reports and Government documents. Quantitative information with regard to demographic aspects was also collected from Panchayat profile & District Statistical Hand Book. The secondary sources like book, journals, articles' etc. also provided a picture of traditional source of socio-economic conditions and their management system of Lodhas.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since tribal communities live in close proximity with biodiversity rich landscapes, they have evolved local specific and novel livelihood strategies based on their indigenous knowledge. This knowledge was passed on through generations and it played an important role in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. By and large, they were depending on nature for their survival. Thus, there always existed an organic unity between humans and their surrounding environments in the traditional societies. As a result, there existed an intricate relationship between their



culture and nature. Social and cultural diversity, coupled with the environmental complexity, have generated diverse approaches and technologies in the management and use of different natural resources (Mishra, 2007).

It is pertinent to note that, traditionally villagers, specifically the tribal, managed their affairs and resources on a sustainable basis (Roy Burman, 1993).

Their village councils ensured strict observance of institutionalized rules and cultural practices for the sustainable use and management of natural resources. They also regulated the use of natural resources more prudently. Studies have shown that most of the tribal communities are well aware of the value of conserving biological resources, and had devised effective methods to conserve them (Gadgil and Berkes, cited from Singh et al., 1996).

Indigenous peoples' knowledge, conservation beliefs and values, environmentally adaptive and sensitive land use, resource management practices, and determined defense of territory and natural resources have enabled many of them to inhabit in the natural habitats for centuries without destroying their ecosystems and biodiversity (Sterens, 1997).

Since the ages tribal communities live in the lap of the nature. Their economy and culture are closely associated with nature and the nature is like the womb of the mother. The life style and tradition of each indigenous community is unique and is related to the utilization of particular natural resource and particular type of work. The interaction between human being and nature has always been reciprocal. This evident in tribal communities where there always exist a symbiotic relationship between their livelihood pursuits and the surrounding natural resource base like the forest, land, water bodies, mineral resource and other flora and fauna. For tribal people land is important source of livelihoods. Around 90% of tribe's populations in India were depending on land directly or indirectly for their survival (Verma 1995).

Their economy was primarily agro based. Land is the only tangible asset for them. Apart from the land forest is the second source of their livelihood. They used to collect various minor forest products from forest their survival. There economy was subsistence in nature.

Natural environment, surrounding the people, provides several goods, services and amenities to them, but using the environmental resources for one purpose always reduces its ability to supply them with other services. This limited natural resource base surroundings, the tribal societies being scarce and many conflicting demands placed on it from other sectors and other areas of society reduces their availability to the tribal communities and affects their livelihood (Mukherjee, et. all, 2012).

Sometimes, the outsiders use the tribals of the locality to destroy the resources especially forest resources by encouraging overexploitation of timber, grazing lands and crop lands. Sometimes, the people in the communities are aware of the dangers of this sort of habitat destructions but they badly can influence and arrest the exploitations. They have little knowledge and little power to influence the direction of change taking place due to broader changes in society. Though their livelihood were mostly depending on forest resources, the resource was not sufficient to meet the demands of growing population. Traditionally, the options for livelihood were not much diversified. The tribal communities had no much opportunity to go out.

Since independence Government of India and Government of various states have taken lots of initiation for development of tribal livelihoods. Lots of programmes are implemented for sustaining their livelihoods. The development policy for the tribal's has changed its strategy continuously in search of sustainability. The social scientists have laid emphasis on the importance of cultural fabric of the tribal world to accelerate this process (Upadhyay, 2000).

The social and economic conditions of the people belonging to the Scheduled Tribes have been the concern of Indian political and social movements in pre-independent India. Indeed to Gandhiji, the father of the Nation, freedom was not a mere political objective but the of raising the mass of people from poverty and degradation. The mainstream political and social movements, which were profoundly influenced by Gandhian approach, emphasised the imperative need to transform the Scheduled Tribes.

Soon after Independence, the basic principles for the development of the Scheduled Tribes were clearly enunciated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, in the form of five principles known as 'Tribal



Panchasheel', which was later endorsed by the Renuka Roy team (1959), Dhebar Commission (1961) and Shilu Ao Committee (1969).

Starting from the Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks of 1956, the measures taken for development of Scheduled Tribes are multifarious. The creation of separate Tribal Development Blocks in the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) and of a Tribal Sub-plan (TSP) within the State plan in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79), and formation of the Large-scale Multipurpose Cooperative Societies (LAMPS), Tribal Development Agencies, Integrated Tribal development Area Projects (ITDA), Modified Area Development Approach (MADA), Micro Projects for Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) reflected the course of tribal development administration in the country (Rao, 2001).

A Variety of approaches and strategies like top-down approach, regional planning, target group approach, integrated development, participatory development, Joint Forest Management, watershed Management, and poverty alleviation programmes have formed part of the development approach.

In order to assist tribals enjoy their existing rights without any hindrance from others through summary process and to protect and promote their interests, the first President of Independent India had issued two orders, i.e., the Schedule Areas (part A States) order, 1950 and the Schedule Areas (part B States) order 1950 (as amended). These two orders of Scheduled Areas which are included in the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution (Article- 244) declares certain tribal areas as Schedule Areas in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan. Similarly Article 244(2) provides various provisions under Sixth Schedule for the administration and control of Schedule Tribes in the North-Eastern States. On the basis of expert advice, as contained in the Bhuria Committee Report, 1995, an Amendment to the Act was enacted in December 1996 enabling extension of the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, in a modified form to the Schedule Areas. The Act extends Panchayat to the Scheduled Areas of eight States namely, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh (including recently formed State of Chattisgarh), Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Bihar (including the recently formed State of Jharkhand), Maharashtra, and Rajasthan, which intends to empower the Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat in tribal societies to preserve their customs, values and traditions and ensure their traditional rights over natural resources. The main motto of all these initiatives is to bring sustainable development in tribal areas and, especially, to sustain the livelihoods of tribal communities.

The concept of sustainable development has acquired the central theme of any tribal development. The concept of sustainable development emerged in the 1980s. It propelled a paradigm shift in development thinking, and continues to dominate the development-discourse at various levels, from the local to global. The best explanation to sustainable development was given by the World Commission for Environment and Development (The Brundtland Commission) in its 1987 report, 'Our common future', as, 'the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs' (Mitra,2005: 127). The concept of livelihood is rapidly gaining acceptance as a valuable means of understanding the factors that influence people's lives and well-being. 'It is comprised of capacities, assets, and activities required for means of living. A livelihood will be sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capacities and assets, both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base' (Carney, 1998:4). Sustainable livelihood is a way of thinking about the objectives, scope and priorities for development, in order to enhance progress in poverty elimination. Sustainable livelihood aims to help poor people achieve lasting improvements against the indicators of poverty that they define.

In spite of all these development initiatives the tribal in our country are still threatened by severe poverty (Mishra 2007). During the last 50 years the planning process in India has failed to reduce the disparity between the tribal and non tribal populations. Today, the first and foremost problem before tribal communities in India is how to earn and sustain livelihoods. There are varieties of livelihoods practices by the tribal communities in different part of India and elsewhere, such as by the hunter-gatherers, pastoralist, shifting cultivators who live in different environments. A number of changes have been taking place with regard to the land use, access, control and utilization of their resource and these changes in term have largely affected the sustainable livelihoods of the people without any sustainable replacement (Siva Prasad and Eswarappa, 2005). In tribal area this problem has assumed alarming proportion because



the traditional means of obtaining livelihoods threatened. Since independence, however the access to land and control over the natural resources has under gone drastic changes. On the one hand, the state was monopolized and consolidated its ownership over nature; and the other hand non-tribal have began to use premium resources without considering the ecological balance so, the ecological degradation has continued with large volume. The present paradigm of development, emphasizing on urbanization and industrialization has not only accelerate this process but also caused displacement of tribal population from their habitats (Siva Prasad and Mishra, 2007). The forest, which was the home of many tribes, was taken out their control and in most case the tribes were even evicted in the name of development. Along with this it was noticed that the depletion of forest recourse and illegal cutting of the tree in the forest by non-tribal is affecting the tribal livelihood. (Siva Prasad and Eswarappa, 2005, 71)

The growth of industrialization, urbanization and cash economy has greatly affected tribal livelihoods. The destruction bio-mass to meet the urban and industrial needs leading to deforestation is having a major impact on the lives of peoples who live within the non-monetized, biomass based subsistence economic (Mishra, 2005). A village case study carried out by Westergaard and Hussain in Bangladesh provides the real example of changing livelihoods. The first study 1975 -1976 noted few job opportunities outside agriculture, with only a few traders and artisans. Since then the agriculture landscaped by the local government structure in the area has under gone great change resulting demand for agricultural labor and labor in the service center (1996).

Along with the introduction of different developmental policies and programmes, changes in the land tenure have brought certain changes in the traditional system of resource management in tribal India. Further, the intrusion of non-tribes into tribal areas has disturbed the age-old organic unity of tribes. All these changes have had a telling effect on the natural resource bases and their management.

The main form of decline is due to privatization of Common Property Resources (CPRs). Under various welfare programmes, CPR land had been distributed to people for private use and had also been illegally appropriated, often with subsequent legalisation. Though the stated intention of such privatization of CPRs was to give land to the poor who were landless or who had very little land, the better off in the villages occupied the CPR lands. Despite environmental imperatives supporting the need for natural resources and quantifiable evidence on their contributions to rural economy, natural resources are on the decline in every part of dry tropical regions of India (Jodha, 1986). The depletion of natural resources and its impact on the local communities are highlighted by many scholars (Jodha, 1986; Guha, 1989; Chambers, 1988, Siva Prasad, 2002).

They clearly point out that a uniform process of development leads to reduction in diversity, which, in turn, leads to depletion of resources, destruction of traditional institutional arrangements and resource management systems, that earlier facilitated the sustainable use of resources (Karanth, 1992; Siva Prasad, 2002). The result is that while the human civilization is being threatened from within by its own internal conditions, the external environment is also being destroyed at a pace that outstrips its regeneration.

Another view, which came to be classified as a result of the scheme of classical anthropology, was that the tribes were homogeneous, undifferentiated groups of people. The view prompted the policy makers and administrators to adopt uniform policies and programmes for the tribals.

According to Ghanshyam Sha the process of change had started long ago. Indeed this process of change is irreversible. S.N. Misra, for example, while speaking about the economic formations and their dissolutions among the tribals of Arunachal Pradesh, maintains that the traditional tribal economic basis is still predominant. One important feature of the tribal scenario in India is its fast transformation. The basic factor for this transformation process operates at the level of economy. The tribals are increasingly giving up their traditional occupations. K.P. Singh pointed out way back in 1982 that the the country.

A striking feature of the voluminous literature on Tribals is the focus on three basic problems that confront the tribals viz. (1) Land alienation (2) Bonded Labor (3) Indebtedness. In a sense, these three are interrelated problems. Many writers hold that law is the principal cause for the structural retrogression of the tribal existence.



Various methods are used by non-tribal's to circumvent the laws to acquire the lands of tribal's. Prabahar Reddy lists them out as (1) Benami transfers (2) Transfer to non tribal's in the form of lease (3) Transfer in the name of tribal servants (4) Marital alliance with a tribal lady for the sake of transfer of land in her name (5) Transfer without any record (6) Encroachment by force. Once they need money, the Scheduled Tribes approach the moneylenders and traders and borrow money from them. When they are not in a position to pay back, the latter exploits them. This results in the dispossession of their lands.

Studying the socio-economic adjustments of tribal's of Tripura, B.P. Misra has found that intra and inter-tribe differences never assumed serious proportions; it is only the contact with the non-tribal's that has always been responsible for the distress of the tribal's.

Another salient feature of tribal existence in India is the problem of indebtedness, which is the natural outcome of the exploitation of tribal's. This fact has been succinctly brought out by N.N. Vyal in his systematic study on bondage and exploitations in Tribal India. Analyzing the socio-economic dimensions of indebtedness and exploitation among tribal and other communities, it has also been observed that massive welfare programmes that are introduced do not reach the tribes. In fact, in many countries the rulers resort to formulating and implementing welfare programmes and thereby they create the impression that they have great concern for the poor. Politicians indeed vie with one another in proposing and undertaking welfare programmes. In view of the above observations a visible and sustaining policy oriented towards the creation of an equitable and non-exploitative social order is essential for development. Development is a constructive and multi-dimensional process stemming from the creative genius of the people. In this sense development programmes should play a catalytic role in activating the latent energies of the society. Since independence the Central and State governments have been formulating and implementing several programmes of tribal welfare.

But, according to Ajit Singh, these programmes have made little change in the life of tribals. Brethern Singh rightly maintains that there must be something wrong either with the development programmes or with the tribals themselves. He points out that these programmes are by and large bureaucratic because they are planned from above and are implemented by noncommitted officials.

The tribals are seldom involved in the formulation and implementation of the programmes. Today, as K.L. Kothari asserts, the tribes are caught between two conflicting problems: (i) a keen desire to retain their separate identity and (ii) willingness to join the national mainstream. Kulkarni categorically states that if the primitive man differs from the civilized man, it is because the primitive community differs from the others in matters such as values and beliefs.

In fact, as Nirmal Sengupta maintains, the process of rapid industrialization since independence has added another dimension to the problems of the tribals as the majority of the tribal concentrations in the country are in areas endowed with natural resources.

According to Geethamenon, the impact of the loss of common property resources is very severe on tribal women. In an article appropriately titled "Tribal women victims of the development process",

Amiya K. Kishan, a tribal leader, educationist and a former Union Minister, says that today tribes are being decimated by both genocide and ethnocide. When the tribal's are uprooted from their forests to make way for modern industries, it is genocide and when their culture is systematically destroyed, it is ethnocide.

In the foregoing paragraphs, we have made an attempt to review the important works on tribal development. A significant fact that has emerged from the review is the lack of consensus regarding the perception of the problems and the solutions thereof and the judgment on the outcome of the developmental efforts made so far. It seems that the tribal's like to be upwardly mobile. This being so, the crucial question would be whether the development agencies have properly played the facilitating role expected of them. Therefore, the present study will be helpful in providing information on the questions taken up for discussion. It is hoped that such a study would be helpful to planners, policy makers, administrators, N.G.O's, self-help groups, development agencies and social organizations in implementing the welfare and developmental programmes for Tribal upliftment in a useful way.



V. CONCLUSION

Livelihood is the dynamic term with respect to time and place, its meaning vary from place to place and depend upon availability of recourse in particular geographical area, people culture and practice. The depletion of forest Changes in the external environment can affect assets, activities or outcomes. The livelihood sources are changes in behavior are known as coping strategies. If coping behavior is constantly necessary, then the livelihood strategy becomes a survival strategy, leading to erosion of assets. Poor households in risky environments adopt coping strategies to protect their livelihoods. These strategies include, intensification of existing income activities, diversification into new activities, migration, drawing upon social relationships and informal credit networks, drawing upon assets and adjusting consumption patterns etc. Many of these strategies are noticed among tribal of the present study area. Rani and Dodia (2000) considered the evidence on coping strategies in rural India. It shows that one of the most favored mechanisms is that of diversifying into non-farm activities and seasonally migrating to other areas. Diversification into non-farm activities is of a temporary and permanent nature depending upon the severity of the situation. Like the present situation, the households that are badly hit are those of small, marginal farmers, landless households are diversifying first. The better-paid of non-farming works and concluded that there are constraints on access to non-farming employment in Sundergarh. In diversifying into non-farm activities, households simultaneously draw upon social relationships and informal credit networks. The social relationships and the traditional support system along caste lines continue to serve as a means of support in various ways, though these networks are weakening. The consumption needs of poor villager for whole years are partially met by drawing upon the reserve assets, which they build up during peak seasons. As we know nonagricultural sector work are not available in whole year. These may take the form of savings in cash or in-kind (e.g., stored grains), productive assets (such as livestock or land), and non-productive assets (such as jeweler). In unemployment period, households also reduce their consumption intake and expenditure on social and religious commitments. The reduction in consumption is more prominent among the women, land less and smaller farmers. Thus it is clear from the data that the tribal households experience quite different pressures and opportunities that adopted as livelihood and coping strategies. However many factors, which are to be studied in - depth, influence the choices of these opportunities made across the households.

The rapid changes at the macro level that India witnessed since the early nineties has contributed to the instability of the livelihood pattern of the poorer section of both rural and tribal households. While the benefits of globalisation process have largely accrued to the urban sector growth the tribal and rural sector has not been left behind. Degradation of forest resources due to industrialization have forced the villagers to look for alternative source of livelihoods. The a gold symbiotic relation between nature and human being got disturbed. In study area it was observed that not even a single house hold is completely depending on forest resources for their livelihood now days. Forest has become a dream for them. The villagers who used to sell the forest product in market earlier has become the buyers of same. Agriculture, which was the most labor absorbing field for the villagers are no more a profitable business. Introduction of various development programmes by government and emergence of new industries in locality have given an alternative source of livelihood for the villagers. The rural non-farm sector has become a major source of livelihood for the poor households. It has become a primary source of income and employment for many of tribal households.

Some tradition patterns are still flow at present time but lots of changes comes in livelihood pattern of tribal people. The geographical situation and conditions of the study area like low land holding size, low fertility of land, no irrigation facilities and human factor are near to urban landscape and railway station, well communication system play an important role in influencing the trends of livelihood sources.

The villagers who were fully depending on traditional methods are coping with new technology with their traditional knowledge. Tribal people are still use levees cup and plats in their family faction. Carpet and mats are made in home by using available natural row material. Some extend they have adopted the modern life.



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