

## Livelihood strategies of Lodha Woman: A Case Study of Paschim Medinipur district, West Bengal

*Rubi Adak Panda and Dr. Santanu Panda*

### Abstract

*In this paper, I have made an attempt to find out the survival strategies of Lodha in the Paschim Medinipur district. The study deals with the implementation of various types of development inputs among the Lodha community (a Primitive Tribal Group in West Bengal) in the study village. Lodhas who were designated by the British colonialists as a “Criminal Tribe” and later this nomenclature underwent interesting evolution in the postcolonial period. This poor, marginalized community was later put under the category of “Denotified Community” and at present has been reclassified as a “Primitive Tribal Group” (PTG). The condition of the Lodhas have changed but not in the hopeful direction. And after sixty years of Independence of the country their socio-economic condition has improved little. The present study is an empirical evaluation of the survival strategies as marginalized community. The study revealed that the Lodha woman are survive themselves by the SHG, Forest Produce Collection (FPC), hunting, domestic animal and poultry bird rearing. Their landlessness and poverty is the major constraint of the Lodhas. It was found that the distribution of poultry bird and cattle by the*

*Government was not done properly. On the other hand they survived themselves through vegetable cultivation and day labourer.*

### Introduction

**The first women graduate** among the Lodhas ( PVTG of West Bengal and adjoining states) **named Chuni Kotal committed** suicide on 16 August 1992 in Midnapore. She was a student of the Anthropology. The suicide of Chuni created uproar in the media and the political circles which reappeared time and again in the academic literature (Chanda 2005: 130-141; Devi 1992: 1836-1837). She wrote an article on the survival strategies of Lodhas during 1984. According to her the Lodhas were deprived from various sections to survive themselves, the Lodhas were hunger to the forest produce collection and hunting. She was written that “when you entire the Lodha village, you will see most of the doors are closed and some naked children moving here and there, when they are suddenly see you in their village, at that time they run away from the village and some dog roaring to you”. The survival strategies of the Lodhas based on Lodha woman SHG, live stock rearing and economic activities for their day to day life.

A Self Help Group (SHG) is a village-based financial intermediary usually composed of 10-15 local women. Most self-help- groups are located in India, though SHGs are also found in other countries. All members have regular savings contributions over few months until there is enough capital in the group to begin lending. It has been realized in many parts of the world that an effective way to tackle poverty and to enable communities to improve the quality of life is through social mobilization of disadvantaged people, especially into Self Help Groups (SHGs). The concept of Self Help Groups is based on the idea of community participation, as sustainable community development requires the active participation of the entire community. 'Popular participation ensures that the benefits of development are equitably distributed. To further this, proposals are made for the decentralization of the authority so as to ensure redistribution of wealth, improved access to education and other social services. Consequently the focus of self-help groups is to develop the capacity of the disadvantaged, particularly women, and to organize them, so that they can deal with socio-political and socio-economic issues that affect their lives.

### **About the Lodhas**

The Government paid special attention to collective criminal actions which were taken as a direct threat to the British colonial authority. The Criminal Tribes Act (Act xxvii of 1871) was promulgated 'to provide for the registration, surveillance and control of certain tribes' who had

remained un-reconciled to colonial rule for long. The Criminal Tribes Act (henceforth expressed as CTA) empowered the local governments to define any community or tribe or any part of a tribe, gang or class, indulging in a systematic commission of non-bailable offences as a 'criminal tribe'. The main aim of the Act to "control and reclaim" communities "addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences". The Criminal Tribes Act dates back to various successive pieces of legislation enforced in India during the British rule. The legislation was first enacted in 1871 as the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 which applied mostly in North India. The criminal tribes seemed to belong to a definable caste of hereditary criminals within the Hindu social system based on the notion of crime as a profession being passed on from one generation of criminal caste to another. As a carpenter would pass on his trade to the next generation, it was assumed that the hereditary criminal caste members would pass on their profession to their offspring. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criminal\\_Tribes\\_Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criminal_Tribes_Act)).

After the Independence, about 153 communities in India who were designated as 'Criminal Tribes' by the British colonial administration were re-designated as 'De-notified tribes'. The Lodhas are now classified as one of the de-notified communities by the Central Government. In West Bengal, Lodhas are mainly concentrated in the districts of Paschim (West) Medinipur and Purba (East) Medinipur. In the pre-Independence period they were treated as a Criminal Tribe by the

colonial Government till the revocation of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1952. In the first Census of India after Independence the Lodhas were recorded as a scheduled caste and their total population was returned to be 8,346 only in West Bengal (Mitra 1953: 89).

The social category generally known as the Denotified and Nomadic tribes of India covered a population approximately of six cores. Some of them are included in the list of Scheduled Castes, some others in the Scheduled Tribes, and quite a few in Other Backward Classes. But there were many of these tribes which did not find a place the above categories. What is common to all these De-notified and Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) was the fate of being branded as 'born criminals'.

According to the Census of 1951 the Lodhas were found to be distributed in the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore, Hooghly, Howrah, 24 Parganas, Calcutta, Murshidabad and Jalpaiguri. In 1951, they were not found in the North Bengal districts like Nadia, Maldah, West Dinajpur, Darjeeling and Cooch Behar. In the same Census, the total number of Lodhas in erstwhile Midnapore district was 7040, that is 84.35 percent of the then total population of Lodhas in West Bengal. (Ibid: 89-90). Lodhas are also found in the Singhbhum district of Jharkhand and the Mayurbhanj district in Orissa. They live near the fringes of forests and also near the villages of hindu caste groups. They are basically a group of food gathering people and mainly subsist on the collection of wild roots, tubers and edible leaves from jungles. They also practice the

killing of the wild games, like birds, lizards and alligators to consume their flesh as food and sell the skins and hides of these animals in the market. (Narayan 1988:37-38).

In volume III of the *People of India*(1994) edited by the Director General of the Anthropological Survey of India it was reported that the Lodhas are mainly concentrated in the western part of Midnapore district in West Bengal and their traditional rights of access to forest have been curtailed. The *People of India* volume added

....they make surreptitious forays into forests, which result in criminal cases being filed against them. Consequent to the colonization scheme, some have taken to agriculture. Besides, they supplement their income by working as daily-wage laboureres, when hunting or fishing yield little return (Singh 1994: 695-696).

The Census of 1981 showed that the total population of the Lodhas including the Kharias and the Kherias of West Bengal was 53,718. The Lodhas were concentrated in erstwhile Midnapore District and their total number according to the Census of 1981 was 16,534. Besides West Bengal, they were also found in the Mayurbhanj and Baleswar districts of Orissa, Originally, they inhabited hilly rugged terrains covered with jungle. Their mother tongue is Lodha, which is close to Savara, an Austro-Asiatic language. They are fluent in Bengali. Traditionally, they were forest dwellers but now they have started cultivation either as owners of land or as agricultural labourers and are also engaged in hunting and fishing. More than 80 percent of them

follow Hinduism with traditional belief in spirits and nature (Mandal, H.et.al. 2002:32).

### **Anthropologists and Activists on the Lodha**

In one of the pioneering anthropological study, the Lodhas were depicted as a semi-nomadic community who used to move from one place to another in search of livelihood (Bhowmick 1963:1). According to Bhowmick, the Lodhas of erstwhile Medinipur district depended mainly on food gathering and hunting and some of them were found to be engaged in agricultural as well as non-agricultural activities as hired labourers of the higher caste and wealthy families of the villages. By and large, since dependence on forest produce is not sufficient for them, the Lodhas were also found to be engaged in a variety of occupations to sustain their livelihood (Ibid: 29-30).

In one of his earlier articles, P.K.Bhowmick (1966:68) described the socioeconomic transformation of the Lodhas since the British colonial period. Bhowmick's study was based on the Lodhas of present day Paschim (West) Medinipur. He observed that the Lodhas have never been incorporated in the mainstream Hindu society and culture, although since the withdrawal of the British Criminal Act in 1952, many governmental schemes had been introduced to improve the socio-economic condition of this marginalised community. Bhowmick also observed that the Lodhas in many cases were found to be used by the powerful sections of the rural society in illegal activities like theft, burglary and robbery. According to him, these local elite

groups developed a vested interest to obstruct the developmental programmes earmarked for the Lodhas since economic upliftment of the Lodhas, might endanger the clandestine activities of the local power elite (Bhowmick 1966: 70).

According to Ajit Danda, the Lodhas belong to Mundari speaking population who are mostly found in the forest covered areas of Singhbhum District of Jharkhand, Mayurbhanj District of Orissa and Midnapore District of West Bengal, which is also known as Jungle Mahal since the colonial period that were found to inhabit mainly in the three aforementioned states of India. They speak a dialect composed of distorted Bengali, Oriya and words of Mundari origin. (Danda, 2002: 103)

Another important observer of the marginalised condition of the Lodhas in West Bengal is Mahasveta Devi who is a famous Bengali litterateur and a human rights activist. Mahasveta Devi not only wrote on the abject poverty and exploitation of the Lodhas, she also worked for decades to fulfil the various demands of the community as regards their socio-economic condition. Although, not an anthropologist, Mahasveta Devi has firsthand personal experiences of the survival strategies "How they survived themselves day by day, she has tried to bring them particularly for woman through some economic activities in rural areas. (Devi 1983:948).

Another famous Bengali litterateur and novelist Nalini Bera described in his Novel "*Sabar Charit*" the real socio-economic life of Sabar. He was

narrating the Lodha woman's activities in whole day. In his ward:

.....the Lodha woman went to forest in early morning to collect sal & kendu leafs, around 10.00 am the husband of that woman entire into the forest with cow, goat and bullocks, during grazing the animal at that time both of them were spent whole mid day behind the shadow of the forest tree. After sunshine both of them came back to the home and prepared food for evening.

**Materials and Methods**

The primary data for the research have been collected from three Blocks of Jhargram district. The primary data for the research have been collected through intensive anthropological fieldwork conducted for about two consecutive years. These data included qualitative and quantitative information collected through household census, structured and unstructured questionnaire scheduled and also with the help of case study, participatory observation, focus group discussion, and panel interviews.

**Objective of the study**

This is a problem focused and applied study regarding survival strategies among the Lodha woman in the three administrative blocks of Janglemahal district. The main objectives of the study are:

1. To know the socio-economic life of the Lodha woman in the selected study area.
2. To enumerate livelihood strategies among the Lodhas.

3. To study the present survival strategies among the Lodhas

**Findings of the study**

The study revealed that we have found seven types of economic activities among the Lodha woman. We have also found six exclusive Lodha SHG's in the study area, these SHG's run by only Lodha woman. Through these groups they are survive themselves to smooth running their day to day life. Most interesting aspect they told that 'collection of fire wood' from various places by the Lodha woman is very comfortable livelihood activities. According to the Lodha woman as/when or during free time they were went to collect fire wood from either nearby forest or road side. Forest product collection was one of the major economic activities among the Lodhas. Sal plate making, Mahul liquor, domestic animal rearing, vegetable cultivation, fishing, business, Biri making are various types of economic activities foer survive themselves.

**Economic activity wise depended woman**

<b>Name of economic Activities</b>	<b>No. of who are Dependent</b>	<b>No. woman who fully Engaged</b>	<b>No. of woman Who are partial engaged</b>
<b>Forest Produce collection</b>	273	221	52
<b>Agricultural day labour</b>	222	153	69
<b>Non-Agriculture day labour</b>	184	120	64
<b>Owner cultivator</b>	24	15	09
<b>Selling of FPC</b>	128	36	92
<b>Domestic animal rearing</b>	123	32	91
<b>Poultry bird rearing</b>	88	21	67

<b>Sal plate making</b>	188	133	55
<b>Biri Making</b>	132	89	43
<b>vegetable cultivation</b>	23	00	23
<b>fishing</b>	30	06	24
<b>Business</b>	43	40	03
<b>Mahul liquor making</b>	36	30	06
<b>Begging</b>	12	06	06
<b>Hunting</b>	22	00	22

The distribution of the economic activities of the Lodha women showed that they started to work as agricultural and non-agricultural labourers from an early age, i.e. 10-14, and we have also found them collecting forest products to earn their livelihood from young age. We found women engaged either fully or partially among fifteen types of economic activities. The major and important activity are analysed through age group wise. The Lodha women were found to work up to 55-59 years and even beyond, although the number of economically active persons declined substantially after the age group 55-59 among female.

- Most of the individuals were found to be engaged to earn their livelihood from the forest. However, the proportion of persons engaged in forest product collection rose consistently with age among the women from 10-14 to 30-34 years and then it declined with a sharp fall, and continued up to 55-59 years. All the aforementioned facts suggested that a major part of the livelihood opportunity creation among the Lodhas should be planned around forest product collection and they should be empowered through participatory joint and

/ or community forest management programmes of the forest department.

- Although a small proportion of the women were found to be engaged in animal husbandry as an economic activity, this should be identified as one of the encouraging signs as regards the creation of livelihood opportunity, since most of the animal husbandry efforts were the results of government initiated programmes
- The third important sign of hope as regards the economic activity of the Lodha population was the presence of owner-cultivators among females. The popular notion sometime shared by government officials that viewed Lodhas as a community of habituated forest produce collectors should be critically evaluated against this particular finding. The fact of the presence of Lodha owner cultivators should be viewed in the context of the distribution of land to landless Lodha families by the Land and Land Reforms Department. ?}
- The attachment of the Lodhas to agriculture as an economic activity was also revealed by their engagement as agricultural labourers. Such kinds of gainful economic activity which would empower them to become self-reliant instead of working for other owner cultivators in their agricultural fields.
- Forest produce selling and sal plate making are the very enthusiastic work of

the Lodha woman. We have found 188 woman who are depend on sal plate making and Most of them are fully engaged. They survive themselves through sal plate making and selling.

- We have also found 132 Lodha woman earn money through Biri making among them 89 woman fully depend on Biri making to survive themselves.
- Only vegetable cultivation and Hunting the Lodha woman did not depend fully. They used as supplimentary work or income. Most of the woman fully depend or engaged Forest produce collection and selling, Agricultural day labour, non-agricultural day labour and sal plate making very few are partial engaged.
- Busness is the another important strategeis to survive themselves. A sound number woman (40) in the study area are survive themselves through Business. The Lodha woman were collect local vegetables, fish, forest produce everyday and sell it in local Hut or market.

weak as well it was brought from neighbouring state and couldn't acclimatize. Moreover, I have not been provided with any training regarding the rearing and proper upkeep of the domestic animals.' In 2015, his wife got two bullocks from SHG. They have no training to rear the cow but still now the bullocks are alive and they earn by renting the bullocks for ploughing at a daily rate of Rs. 300/- . He also possess hen. These hens are purchased by him. According to him, long back he received some chicken (hen) from govt. but sooner they died.

### Case study-2

Name of the Informant: Pratima Bhunia

**Age:** 53; **Sex:** Male; **Village:**Palasia;**GP:** Baranigui;**Block:** Nayagram

According to the informant he is a farmer. He has 1.32 acre own agricultural land and 0.40 acre home state land. He told us 'we have to depend on forest produce collection; we collect various items from forest through the year. We collect fire wood, sal & kendu leaf, Piyal & Bahera fruits, various roots, Kaju nuts, sal gum for selling. Forest is our main earning resources for better livelihood opportunity. We went forest throughout year engaging all members of the family.' The female goes to forest in the very early morning to collect the sal leaf; it is the daily duty or as usual observable fact. After coming back to the home the collected leafs stitched with two leaves. Then it will be dried in open sun shine. After three days it is ready for selling in the market. We also collect Piyal fruits and dry in the sun shine for five days after that it is be ready for selling. In the same way fire wood are also collected.

### Case Study-1

**Name of informant:** Sumitra Bhakta **Age:** 43

**Sex:** Male

**Village:** Parasia, **JL. No:** 106

**Block:** Nayagram

According to Srimanta they are dependent on forest produce collection and daily labour for their survival. The informant received (i) financial assistance for house building under Lodha development cell of Paschim Medinipur District and (ii) domestic animals from Panchayat Department through SHG in 2009. He further added: 'I also received six goats in 2009 but after seven days all the goats died because the goats were not vaccinated and the goats were also very

We have found 6 Self Help Groups constituted by Lodhas. The members of each group is 10 and the monthly subscription for each member is 40/- in four groups while it is 50/- rupees in case of two groups. The six SHGs have their own names. The Netaji and Khudiram SHGs were established in 2005 and the other four groups were established in 2008. All groups are very active. Each member of every group took active part for their development. The educational qualification of

SHG members was very low; only 23 women

extended any help or cooperation for the

Name of the SHGs	Total No. of members	Year of formation	Total receive loan	Source of loan	Monthly Subscription	Nature of work
Netaji	10	2005	25000/-	BDO Office	Rs. 40/- each member	They are making basket and cooking midday meal at Bidisha High School.
Khudiram	10	2005	25000/-	Do	Rs.50/- each member	They are cooking midday meal at Daharpur Sabar Palli Pry. school
Binoy	10	2007	They did not receive any loan.		Rs.50/- each member	The members of this group were participating in the monthly meeting and attend the Party Programme.
Badal	10	2007	They did not receive any loan.		Rs.50/- each member	The members of this group were participating in the monthly meeting and attend the Party Programme.
Denesh	10	2007	They did not receive any loan.		Rs.50/- each member	The members of this group were participating in the monthly meeting and attend the Party Programme.
Makali	12	2007	They did not receive any loan.		Rs.50/- each member	The members of this group were participating in the monthly meeting and attend the Party Programme.

were educated out of 62 nos. 61.29% group member are belongs to can sign status, 16.19% members are belongs to I-IV class status and 17.74 % members are belongs to V-VIII class status. I found their family size category are three type like (1-3), (4-6) and (7-8). In this category 67.74% members are belongs in (4-6) category. Their socio-economic background is very poor; most of the members however have own home stead land. Some of them have agricultural land. Only ten members of SHG got Patta Land from Govt. before established our group. Our inferiors with the Lodha SHG members revealed that for the last four years the local Panchayat did not

promotion of the SHG which have made them marginalized. These SHGs were formed totally by the own initiative of the ladhas because when the SHG s were established at that time they could not any help from Panchayat Department and Local leadership.

#### **Only Lodha Woman SHG**

In this table shows that the two Self-help group were established in 2005 on the other hand the four Self-help group were established 2007. Each group has ten members except Makali SHG. The Netaji and Khudiram SHGs had received Rs. 25000/- in each group as loan from BDO office where as another four groups they did not receive



any loan in 2007. In 2012 all groups have received Rs. 50,000/- as a domestic animal loan. All the group members contribute 50/- rupees as monthly subscription. Netaji Self-help-group cooked midday meal at Bidisha High School and earned Rs.1200/- in every month. Khudiram self-help-group cooked midday meal at Daharpur sabar palli primary school and they get Rs. 1000/- per month.

### Case Study 3

**Name of informant:** Sunita Kotal  
**Age:** 44 **Sex:** Female **Name of SHG:** Binoy Self Help Group **Secretary:** Sujata Kotal **President:** Sunita Kotal

According to informant 'her family members are 8, they are belongs in joint family. The family is little bit educated than the other Lodha family. They are dependant on day labourar, they have got patta land from govt. only 10 katha before 7 years ago. Their need mechanical training for earn some money and free education system. She did not like any political work like meeting, conference and michil which is harmful of my children's future. As a member of SHG by presser many times to attend only the meeting of CPIM. In this reason some members will be regain from the group. If they will get any type of help from PRI like loan, training and kinds etc. their condition will more better in future and any members cannot regain from group.

### Case study 4

**Name of informant:** Mukti Bhakta **Age:** 34 **Sex:** Female **Name of SHG:**

Netaji Self-help group **Family Type:** Nuclear family  
**Secretary:** Mukti **Bhakta**  
**President:** Bharati Digar

Her family is consisting of 5 people; the informant is the head of the family and has studied up to VI standard both of her sons in Bidisha High School. Her total land is 15 Katha.

According to him "This SHG was established on 2005. Our members monthly subscription is 40/-, the total no of group is 10. We are organized meeting two times in a month but in winter and rainy season one times. Our members are very active for their group related work like meeting, subscription and deputation etc. Our group got 25000 rupees as loan from Panjab Bank in 2006. We have submitted our demand copy to the District Magistrate, Sabhadhipati and BDO of our District and Block. Last two years we have not any help from Bnak, Panchayat Department and Ruling Parti, but Pradhan, LCM and Sachib were present in our meeting in a month. Our group members cooked mid day meal at Bidisa High School for earn some money to improve their family. Sometimes our members were angry with me because they have not got any kind of help to improve our group. So their opinion is 'what is the value of group? We are reign from our group.'

### Village wise Minor Forest produce collection

Village name	No of villagers who are responded	No of villagers who are satisfied	No of villagers who are not satisfied	Total
Fulgeria	39[15.48]	(30.49)25[9.92]	(8.24)14[5.55]	39[15.48]
Muradhak	13[5.16]	(2.44)2[0.79]	(6.47)11[4.37]	13[5.16]
Parasia	101[40.08]	(39.02)32[12.70]	(40.59)69[27.38]	101[40.08]
Bansiaole	21[8.33]	(3.66)3[1.19]	(10.59)18[7.14]	21[8.33]
Tiakathi	40[15.87]	(15.85)13[5.16]	(15.88)27[10.71]	40[15.87]
Kalinagar	13[5.16]	(1.22)1[0.40]	(7.06)12[4.76]	13[5.16]
Sarisabasa	12[4.76]	(3.66)3[1.19]	(5.29)9[3.57]	12[4.76]
Dodra	13[5.16]	(3.66)3[1.19]	(5.88)10[3.97]	13[5.16]
Grand total	252[100]	(100)82[32.54]	(100)170[67.46]	252[100]

( ) represent percentage out of column total [ ] represent percentage out of grand

Lodhas are traditional forest dweller and until recently their main income comes from collection of leaves and fallen tree branches. They are also the onewho worship the nature. It is therefore alarming to have such feedback. Over exploitation of the forest, unauthorized cutting of trees lead to diminishing of forest. Unscientific way of exploitation of forest even by the locals including tribal people who reside at the forest land is also to be blamed.

Involvement of forest department is also far from praiseworthy and the activities of Joint forest protection committee are also utterly unsatisfactory failing to imbibe a sense of ownership among the local.

Diminishing marketability of the forest produce and lack of value addition is probably also the reason of such response. One of the main MFP is sal leaves and a collector hardly get Rs. 50-60 per

1000 leaves but finished product as plate of sal leaves can cost Rs. 1.00 per plate i.e Rs. 160-170 for 1000 leaves. This profit of value addition can easily be provided to the leaf collector by providing them a plate making machine.

Forest produce other than sal leaves like honey, mushroom, medicinal plant parts are hardly been explored in a organized way and remain largely unexplored.

#### Case study 5

Name of the Informant: Nuli Bhunia

Age: 41 Sex: Male Village: Parasia, GP: Baranigui, Block: Nayagram

According to the informant his economic condition is very poor. His family member is five. He recounted 'I have no agriculture and homestead land. My family depends on forest resource collection and non-agriculture day labour. Every day my wife goes to jungle to bring the fire wood and leaf. After gathering a heavy amount of firewood, we cut the wood and prepare for selling. 3 days are required to collect such amount of firewood which can be carried by cycle to the nearest market.. In very early morning I go to Kharika Market for selling. It is sold between Rs. 200/- to 300/- per cycle. Every day I have to cover 20-30 KM distance up & down from my home for selling the fire wood'.

#### Villager's response towards livestock rearing as livelihood opportunity

Village name	No of villagers who are responded	No of villagers who are satisfied	No of villagers who are not satisfied	Total
Fulgeria	(5.63) 4 [5.63]	-	(10.81) 4 [5.63]	4 [5.63]
Parasia	(45.07) 32 [45.07]	(47.06) 16 [22.54]	(43.24) 16 [22.54]	32 [45.07]

Bansiasole	(9.86) 7 [9.86]	(2.94) 1 [1.41]	(16.22) 6 [8.45]	7 [9.86]
Tiakathi	(9.86) 17 [23.94]	(32.35) 11 [15.49]	(16.22) 6 [8.45]	17 [23.94]
Kalinagar	(7.04) 5 [7.04]	(5.88) 2 [2.82]	(8.11) 3 [4.23]	5 [7.04]
Sarisabasa	(2.82) 2 [2.82]	-	(5.41) 2 [2.82]	2 [2.82]
Dodra	(5.63) 4 [5.63]	(11.76) 4 [5.63]	-	4 [5.63]
Grand total	71	(100) 34 [47.89]	(100) 37 [52.11]	71 [100]

( ) represent percentage out of column total [ ] represent percentage out of grand total.

Higher level of livelihood satisfaction compare to MFP collection and agriculture existed among those who opted livestock rearing as their occupation. It is presumed that better possibility of return and the traditional knowledge of lodhas in animal rearing is the reason for this. It is however surprising that only 2.91% of the total survey population are into this occupation. Availability of good quality of breed, high mortality rate, scarcity of vet nary doctors, irregular and unplanned govt support system are also to be blamed.

#### Case Study-6

**Name of informant:** Srimanta Bhakta **Age:** 42

**Sex:** Male

**Village:** Parasia, **JL. No:** 106

**Block:** Nayangram

According to Srimanta they are dependent on forest produce collection and daily labour for their survival. The informant received (i) financial assistance for house building under Lodha development cell of Paschim Medinipur District and (ii) domestic animals from Panchayat Department through SHG in 2009. He further added: 'I also received six goats in 2009 but after seven days all the goats died because the goats were not vaccinated and the goats were also very weak as well it was brought from neighbouring state

and couldn't acclimatize. Moreover, I have not been provided with any training regarding the rearing and proper upkeep of the domestic animals.' In 2015, his wife got two bullocks from SHG. They have no training to rear the cow but still now the bullocks are alive and they earn by renting the bullocks for ploughing at a daily rate of Rs. 300/- . He also possess hen. These hens are purchased by him. According to him, long back he received some chicken (hen) from govt. but sooner they die

#### Case study 7

**Name of the Informant:** Bulu Sabar **Age:** 46

**Sex:** female

**Village:** tiyakati **Block:** Jhargram **Dist:** Paschim Medinipur

According to informant his family members are six. He was a handicap person. He told me 'we are depending on forest generation wise. We are collected wood, shal leaf, fruit, root, skin of tree from the forest season wise.' According to forest right act 2006, Jungle depended tribes and others traditional forest dwellers will collect everything from jungle except cutting the big trees. Now he narrated a recent fact. In his version 'One day I went jungle (16.12.2014) to collecting firewood for selling. After collecting the firewood I came to Lodhasuli Market for selling. When I was selling the firewood at that time a female bit officer came to me and physically tortured on me and kept my bicycle. After that she ordered to me 'next day you bring Rs. 500/- otherwise I will send you Jhargram Police Station.



The Lodha woman collects fire woods



The Lodha woman making Biri



The Lodha woman collects Sal Leaf



After collecting firewood from forest



Sal plate making by the Lodha Woman

**Overall economic activities of females in Lodha community**

SHG women are to organize and empower. The group provides a good deal of psychological

Age group (in years)	Owner cultivator	Agricultural labourer	Non-agricultural labourer	Forest product collection	Business	Animal husbandry	Fishery	Beggary	Total
10-14	0	(2.70) 6 [0.80]	(1.63) 3 [0.40]	(5.12) 14 [1.88]	0	0	0	0	23 [3.10]
15-19	(4.16) 1 [0.13]	(9) 20 [2.69]	(7.60) 14 [1.88]	(6.59) 18 [2.42]	0	(3.44) 1 [0.13]	0	0	54 [7.28]
20-24	(20.83) 5 [0.67]	(13.96) 31 [4.18]	(14.67) 27 [3.64]	(11.35) 31 [4.18]	0	(13.79) 4 [0.53]	0	0	98 [13.22]
25-29	(12.5) 3 [0.40]	(17.11) 38 [5.12]	(15.76) 29 [3.91]	(13.91) 38 [5.12]	0	(13.79) 4 [0.53]	(100) 2 [0.26]	0	114 [15.38]
30-34	(4.16) 1 [0.13]	(16.66) 37 [4.99]	(20.65) 38 [5.12]	(16.11) 44 [5.93]	(33.33) 2 [0.26]	(20.68) 6 [0.80]	0	(100) 1 [0.13]	129 [17.40]
35-39	(8.33) 2 [0.26]	(8.55) 19 [2.56]	(9.23) 17 [2.29]	(9.15) 25 [3.37]	0	(6.89) 2 [0.26]	0	0	65 [8.77]
40-44	(8.33) 2 [0.26]	(9) 20 [2.69]	(7.06) 13 [1.75]	(8.05) 22 [2.96]	0	(10.34) 3 [0.40]	0	0	60 [8.09]
45-49	(8.33) 2 [0.26]	(9.90) 22 [2.96]	(7.60) 14 [1.88]	(8.79) 24 [3.23]	(16.66) 1 [0.13]	0	0	0	63 [8.50]
50-54	(12.5) 3 [0.40]	(6.30) 14 [1.88]	(8.15) 15 [2.02]	(6.59) 18 [2.42]	0	0	0	0	50 [6.74]
55-59	(8.33) 2 [0.26]	(6.30) 14 [1.88]	(5.97) 11 [1.48]	(7.69) 21 [2.83]	(16.66) 1 [0.13]	(27.58) 8 [1.07]	0	0	57 [7.69]
60-64	(8.33) 2 [0.26]	(0.45) 1 [0.13]	(1.63) 3 [0.40]	(3.66) 10 [1.34]	(16.66) 1 [0.13]	(3.44) 1 [0.13]	0	0	18 [2.42]
65-69	0	0	0	(1.83) 5 [0.67]	0	0	0	0	5 [0.67]
70-74	(4.16) 1 [0.13]	0	0	(1.09) 3 [0.40]	(16.66) 1 [0.13]	0	0	0	5 [0.67]
75-79	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
80-84	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
85-89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand total	24 [3.23]	222 [29.95]	184 [24.83]	273 [36.84]	6 [0.80]	29 [3.91]	2 [0.26]	1 [0.13]	741

( ) represent percentage out of column total [ ]

represent percentage out of grand total.

**Conclusion**

The Self-Help-Group is one of the platforms where the women can come together for a meaningful purpose and share their feelings, problems, grievances and miseries. Through the

solace. The elderly women among the groups act as a friends and counselors. The women can safely give a vent to their suppressed feelings and relieve themselves of much familial and social burden. They earned money the money to survive themselves. The Panchayat did not extend any help or cooperation for the promotion of the SHG which have made them marginalized. So in my

study lodha SHG more better position without any help from PRI.

Lastly, I think if we want to see more success of the SHGs, in future we have to take more initiative on cohesiveness among the group members, regular group meeting, rotation of leadership and participation in different training programmes.

It was true that our case studies have also revealed a number of failures in the utilisation of domestic animals given to the Lodhas owing to various lacunae on the part of the governmental agencies and the beneficiaries themselves, there were also some success stories. A sound number of Lodha individuals who were engage themselves in rearing domestic animals as an economic pursuit and this activity should be further encouraged.

The Lodha collect forest produce for their survive and they hunting gathering community. They were collect non-timber fire wood, leaf and consumable items. They did not collect timber wood though they faced critical situation by the forester. According to the forest act -2006 law they have every right to collect non-timber fire wood. (Case 7)

Non-agriculture day labour is another vital sector for earning under this section they were went to work as road work under the contractor, brick worker, labour under mason, pond excavation under MGNRGEA. They are not satisfied to work under MGNREGA work for late payment. Without job card non- agricultural work very

much comfortable. Most of times, the Lodhas have not get non-agricultural job because they are not competent than other tribes.

Sometimes they went to neighbouring state, districts for migrant labour as agricultural day labour. Few of them worked day by day and received payment every day, on the other hand some of them worked as monthly or weekly.

### **Suggestions**

Skill development through training programmes related to *sal* leaf plate making and manufacturing of value added products from *babui* grass (*Eulalopsis binata*) may be initiated with coordinated efforts by the appropriate government departments and non-governmental agencies.

Our recommendation in this regard is that there should be special coordinated efforts on the part of the concerned government departments (e.g. B L & LR, Minor irrigation, Principal Agricultural Office etc) to empower the Lodhas so that they can retain and utilise agricultural land as a development input.

Without any training, should not be given any domestic animals to Lodha beneficiaries for rearing and the animal should be vaccinated and environment friendly.

The local Pachayat should take initiative that to provide them actual job through their Job card because the contractor deprived them.

If the Government take initiative to selling or marketing of their handmade production and

forest produce like sal palte making, biri, various root, skin, lata, kendu leaf, sal leaf, gum, jharu, rope etc for better economic life and/or motivate them for their survival strategies.

The Government should proactive to the actual rights of the forest produce collection according to the law. The Government should take initiative to improve the SHG's by some handy craft preparation training and financial assistance with support.

## References

- ❖ Bhowmick, P. K. (1963): The Lodhas of West Bengal. Kolkata: Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology (ISRAA).
- ❖ Bhowmick, P.K. (1981): Rehabilitaion of a 'Denotified Community' The Ex-Criminal Lodhas of West Bengal. Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.44: 6-8. Source: Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3032233>.
- ❖ Bhowmick, P.K. (1966): in 'Proceedings of the summer school in Anthropology' Ed by N.C. Choudury. Darjeeling: Anthropological Survey of India.
- ❖ Chanda, A. (2005): "Tribal Women", in The Changing Status of Women in West Bengal, 1970-2000 the Challenge Ahead. Edited by J. Bagchi, pp.130-141. Sage Publications: New Delhi.
- ❖ Chowdhury, S.C & Sengupta, M. 'Development of PTGs through NGO: A case study with Savars of Jharkhand' in Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute, 2012;Vol. XXIV. Nos 1&2.
- ❖ Danda, A.K. (2002): 'Predicaments of a marginalized community: The Lodha' *Journal of Anthropological Survey of India*. 51: 103-111.
- ❖ Devi, M. (1985): *The Savara Tribals of West Bengal I- Shavaras of Midnapur. Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 20. N0. 35: 1467-1469.
- ❖ Devi, M. (1983): *Lodhas of West Bengal-I. Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 18. N0. 22: 947-949.
- ❖ Devi, M. (1992): "The story of Chuni Kotal". *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XVII, N0. 35, P-1836-1837.
- ❖ Mandal, H. et.al. (2002): 'West Bengal', in *India: An Illustrated Atlas of Tribal World*. Anthropological Survey of India: Kolkata.
- ❖ Mitra, A. (1953): *The Tribes and castes of West Bengal: Census 1951. Calcutta: Land and Land Revenue Department Govt. of West Bengal*.
- ❖ Narayan, S. (1988): *Indian Anthropology*. Delhi: Gain Publishing House.
- ❖ Panda, S. and Guha, A. (2009): Development Inputs among the Lodhas in a District of WestBengal: Problems of Implementation and Recommendations. *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society*. 44: 69-75.
- ❖ Panda, S. (2011) Problem of Self Help Groups (SHG) among the Lodhas of Daharpur village of Narayangar Block in Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal in a edited volume *Ecology of Bio-Cultural Perspectives in India* edited by S. Mandal, et.al. Mahishadal Girls Collage, Purba Medinipur. Vo.1. pp.59-72 [ISBN No. 13.92 3979-8-1-7].
- ❖ **Panda. S** and Adak. R. 2014 'Status of Women Self Help Groups Among the Lodhas of Daharpur Village in Paschim (West) Medinipur, West Bengal, India: An Anthropological Perspective' in *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 2014, Vol 1, No.3, 21-29.
- ❖ Panda, S. and Guha, A. 2015. "'Criminal Tribe' to 'Primitive Tribal Group' and the Role of Welfare State: The Case of Lodhas in West Bengal, India" NOVA Science Publishers Inc. New York, USA.
- ❖ *Report on the Assessment of the Impact of Developmental Programmes on the Socioeconomic Condition of the Lodha/ Sabar Community of Binpur-II & Nayagram Block of Paschim*

*Medinipur*, (2006): (Unpublished): Department of Anthropology, Vidyasagar University.

- ❖ *Report of the Ganguly Commission of Inquiry*, (1992): unpublished (place not mentioned).
- ❖ Roy, S. (2009). 'What good is Independent India for the Lodhas?' *The Statesman*, 04.12.2009, p.15.
- ❖ Singh, K. S. (1994): 'People of India' *The Scheduled Tribes*. Oxford University Press: Anthropological Survey of India.
- ❖ Study on SHG & Microfinance in West Bengal by Dr. Manab Sen
- ❖ .Women's Empowerment through Self-Help Group- a Research Work by DST team in Maharastra.
- ❖ Women SHGs in India: A Rural View by Kabitha. N & Ramachandran. A published in India MBA.com  
([www.indianmba.com/Faculty\\_Column/FC554/fc554.html](http://www.indianmba.com/Faculty_Column/FC554/fc554.html))