

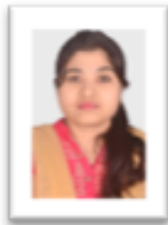
An Anthropological Study On Socio-economic, Political and Educational Situation of Lodha Tribe of Mayurbhanj District in Odisha

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Abstract

This article attempts to study the socio-economic, political and educational situation of the Lodha tribe of Mayurbhanj district in Odisha. This study was conducted among the Lodha communities of Patharnesa and Sansasol village in Suliapada block of Mayurbhanj district. In Odisha there are Sixty two Tribal communities, among them Thirteen P.V.T.G (Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups) are there. These groups are among the Scheduled Tribes, who have declining and stagnant population, low level of literacy, pre-agricultural level of technology and are economically backward. The Lodha tribe of Odisha, who resided in Morada and Suliapada blocks of Mayurbhanj district is one among the Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups. Although certain constitutional safeguards are provided, no significant social, economic and political mobility has taken place across this community. Therefore, it is important to analyse the situation of Lodha tribes in every sphere of their life. Through this study of Lodha community, we found many informations about their present situations, problems and prospects.

Keywords: Lodha tribes, Situation, Morada, Suliapada, Mayurbhanj, P.V.T.G, Pre-agricultural level of technology.



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Introduction

The antiquated individuals who keep on occupying their customary residences in distant regions in the profound woods and uneven insides underwrite the relic of Odisha. Saturated with the secret of that encompasses their antiquated ways, the clans of Odisha keep on being a wellspring of profound interest for the Anthropologists. Of the relative multitude of provinces of India, Odisha has the biggest number of clans, as numerous as 62 endogamous clans advised by Govt. of India. Among the Sixty-two endogamous gatherings, diverse sub-clans keep up with their fortitude. Since the time of Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Tribals involve a recognized job. The Jagannath clique of Odisha is interlaced with the ancestral religion, which has offered beginning to a worldview of absorption. The Tribals of Odisha are known as Adivasi, Vanabasi and Girijana. In Anthropological writing, they are otherwise called Aborigines of Odisha

The Adivasi (aborigine), Vanabasi (forest dweller) and Girijana (Mountain dweller) constitute 22.13% population of Odisha. In Odisha out of thirty districts, nine districts are known as tribal districts. The Tribes mainly inhabit the Eastern Ghats hill range in the state running in the north-south direction. More than half of their population is concentrated in three districts of Koraput, Sundergarh and Mayurbhanj. It is noteworthy to mention that the P.G.T constitute 22.13% population of Odisha and almost 44.25% of the total land of Odisha is Scheduled area. There are certain tribal groups who are techno-economically backward and are relatively less acculturated. Keeping eye upon their development, Government of India has classified and declared certain tribal groups as Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups (P.V.T.G). Low level of literacy, Pre-agricultural level of technology and declining or stagnant population are the parameters, based on which certain groups have been declared as P.V.T.G. Though out of Sixty-two notified Scheduled Tribes, there are Thirteen Primitive Tribal Groups namely, 1. The Birhor, 2.The Bondo Paraja, 3.The Didayi, 4.The Dongria Khond, 5.The Juang, 6.The Kharia, 7.The

Kutia Khond, 8.The Lanjia Soura, 9.The Lodha, 10.The Mankidia, 11.The Paudi Bhuyan, 12.The Soura, 13.The Chuktia Bhunjia, (Hasnain 1992;Verma 2002). In the state of Odisha, the Govt. of India declares only Eight Scheduled Tribes as Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups. These tribes are Juang, Bondo, Poraja, Lodha, Didayi, Mankidia, Birhor, Kharia, and Soura.

Mayurbhanj locale is one of the 30 regions in Odisha state in eastern India. It is the biggest locale of Odisha by region. Baripada is the settle of the locale and other significant towns are Rairangpur, Karanjia and Udala. Starting at 2011, it is the third most crowded region of Odisha after Ganjam and Cuttack. The name of the district is a portmanteau of Mayura (meaning peacock in Odia) and Bhanja. It is believed that Mayura was the name of another dynasty, that merged with the Bhanjas, sometime around 40th century. The peacock motif was later adopted by Bhanjas and featured on the Mayurbhanj coat of arms. The Bhanja family who ruled the district are closely associated it. Mayurbhanj is a tribal dominated district in Odisha and according to 1961 census 45 tribal groups including Lodha residing here. The district of Mayurbhanj is located between 21 17' and 22 34' north latitude and 85 40' and 87 10' east longitude. It is land-locked with a geographical are of 10418km square (4022sq mile) and lies in the Northeast corner of the state. It is bordered on the Northeast by Jhargram district of West-Bengal and East-Singhbhum district of Jharkhand, to the north by Seraikela, Kharsawan district of Jharkhand, West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand on the west, Kendujhar district on the Southwest and Balasore district on the Southeast. The geography of Mayurbhanj is defined by Simlipal National Park located in the centre of the district.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the socio-economic, political and educational situation of Lodhas in Mayurbhanj district.
2. To analyse the problems and challenges faced by the Lodha tribes.

Review of Literature

Due to improvement of the communication facilities, many changes seem to have been taken place in the economic and political life of the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj.(Dr. Ratnakar Mohapatra ,2021)

Recently it has been observed that non-tribal impact is increasing in the Lodha society. Gradually they are falling into the trap of craving for the object of consumerism.(Madhumita Setua & Dr, Sajjilul Islam, 2021)

The people of Lodha tribe perform different types of traditional rituals and festivals, out of which some are found to be changed due to the impact of neighbouring Hindu culture.(Dr. Ratnakar Mohapatra, Hutasan Majhi, 2020)

The Lodha were categorised with other people who were involved in petty theft, burglary and dacoits, cattle lifting, swindling and pilfering. (Gandhi 2009)

The Lodhas of West Bengal are scattered in the jungle tracts of Midnapore and have spread

out in some of the contiguous districts like Hooghly, Purulia etc. They also spread in Mayurbhanj (Orissa) and Singhbhum (Bihar). (Basu et al.2004)

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

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 are found to be engaged in agricultural and 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 occupation to sustain their livelihood.(Ibid 29:30)

The Lodhas of Midnapore are said to be identical with savars and saharas, but in Orissa, they are different. They marry young but they do not allow widow remarriage or divorce. Their traditional occupation is collection of jungle produce. But in Midnapore they also work as agricultural labourers and fire wood collectors and sellers. (Mitra 1953:77)

Methodology

An Ethnographic and holistic approach has been used for collecting the qualitative and descriptive data. The present study mainly relies on different Anthropological method like Participant observation, interview, questionnaire etc. Both the primary and secondary source have been used in the writing of this paper.

Study Area

This study has been conducted in Sansasol and Patharnesa village of Suliapada block in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. As many as 300 Lodha respondents were selected for the study. They live near the forested areas. Because they totally depend upon the forest for their livelihood practices.

Table-1 Total No of Respondents of The Study Area

Sl.No.	SEX	NO OF PEOPLE	PERCENTAGE
1	MALE	190	63.33
2	FEMALE	110	36.67
3	TOTAL	300	100

About Lodha Tribes

Lodha people are an Adivasi group living primarily in the Indian states of Odisha and West Bengal. Lodha means piece of flesh named after their ancestors. Anthropologists and social activists have been interested in them. The British

Government of India repressed the tribal inhabitants of Jungle Mahals, who were traditionally reliant on the forests for survival, during the early years of their rule. They had revolted, but they had been brutally suppressed. Because they were deprived of their livelihood and had no other options, they turned to criminal activities and were labelled as a criminal tribe. Lodha was known as Criminal tribe until the revocation of the criminal tribes act in 1956. It is widely accepted that the tribe derived its name from the word Lubdhaka meaning the flower or trapper. They claimed their ancestry to Byadha or Kirata, the Savara king Viswabasu and consider lord Jagannath as their supreme deity. They take pride in giving their identity as Lodha Savar. They have exogamous totemic clans like Bhotda, Malik, Bag, Nayak, Dandapat, Paramanik, Ahoi, Bhuria and Kotal. Lodhas do not mind living in multi caste and multi-tribal villages. The population of this tribe is very small in number in this district. Lodhas are mainly found in few villages of Morada and Suliapada block of Mayurbhanj district in Odisha. It is found that they have partially changed their way of life by imitating the other tribal groups of Odisha. According to 2011 census, the overall population of Lodha tribe was 9088 in Odisha. The Central govt. had taken special initiatives for improving the living condition of Lodhas by providing facilities for housing, agriculture, cottage industries and education through Ashram hostel from the primary level (Bhowmick, 1985:15). However, the traditional life of the Lodhas has not changed much. Still they are dependent on forest produce collection and hunting some jungle animals for livelihood. (Bhowmick, 1963:26). Lodhas are mainly found in the Suliapada and Morada blocks of Mayurbhanj district in Odisha.

Situations of Lodha Tribes Socio-economic Situation

The Lodha are the primitive tribes who deserve special mention in the district. The Lodha are nomadic food gathers and hunters concentrated in the area of Patharnesa in Suliapada Block. For their socio-economic development government of Orissa in the year 1987 has established the Lodha Development Agency at Suliapada. The development programmes implement micro projects include soil conservation, horticulture, agriculture, and health services. However, inadequate resource flow to micro project affects the quality of services and their adequacy to the community. At Baripada, Suliapada, and Morada, four Integrated Tribal Development Agencies are working to help Mayurbhanj's tribes improve socioeconomically. As part of the TSP, the ITDAs implement integrated development programmes for tribal people and entire tribal-dominated districts. However, these institutions are faced with various difficulties such as insufficient manpower, lack of adequate and caring mobility, and the parallel development of institutions in these tribal-dominated areas. The lack of single-line management and single-window capital flows, the tribal development of the state also affected the tribal development process of the state. Socially and economically, the Lodha tribe is one of the most vulnerable groups in Mayurbhanj,

Odisha.

Social Systems & Village Structure

The social system of Lodha is characterized by its clan organisation. The totemic objects associated with the clan is considered sacred. These clans are exogamous and patrilineal in nature. Each individual belongs to a particular clan from his/her birth. For men the clan identity remains unchanged throughout their life but in the case of women, it is change after their marriage. After marriage, clans are initiated into their husband clan. Lodhas settled in villages either separately or with other caste groups and tribal communities. Most Lodha villages found far away from the human reach inside the dense forest. Some of them are found living in multi caste villages.

Housing Pattern & Use of Utensils

Lodhas situated at hills and plains surrounded by hills covered by forested areas. They build their houses with bamboo sticks, wood, mu, khar grass, straw and ropes prepared from the tree bark in scattered manner. They build single roomed houses made of mud and straw-thatched. The house consist of one room and verandah (space in front of the house door) with courtyard. The same room is used as bedroom, kitchen and storeroom. The Lodha Development Agency came and aware the people to build two or more than two rooms with wide windows, doors. All families having kitchen garden in front of their houses. The women remain busy for preparing leaf cups, plates and ropes out of sabai grass. They live with their pet animals. In one corner of the house on a raised platform near the hearth, the seat of the ancestral spirit is located. The Lodha families in the past did not know the use of modern utensils; they used leaf plates and cups, mud pots etc. Today they are using steel plates, plastic bags and aluminium.

Family Structure

Lodha family is patriarchal and patrilineal. The head of the family is father. The Lodha family is nuclear in structure. Joint family system is found very rarely in Lodha community. In the nuclear family of Lodha, father, mother and unmarried children reside together.

The Lodha people in Patharnesa village use Lodha, Odia and Santali language. For daily conversation, they use Santali and Odia language, but when they talk with outsiders, they use only Odia language.

Table.2 presented below shows the family structure of the Lodha tribe of the study area. There are near about 40 no of families coming under nuclear family, 30 no. of families are single family, 15 no. of families are found to be extended family and about 6 no. of families are broken family.

Table-2 Family Structure of The Village

SL NO	TYPES OF HOUSES	NO OF HOUSEHOLD	PERCENTAGE
1	NUCLEAR FAMILY	40	43.95
2	SINGLE FAMILY	30	32.96
3	EXTENDED FAMILY	15	16.48
4	BROKEN FAMILY	6	6.59
5	GRAND TOTAL	91	99.98

Dress Pattern & Use Of Ornaments

Civilization and modernization influence the Lodha people to accept the modern culture. The adult Lodha males used to wear short and rough handloom dhotior lungi, ganji and shirt. The boys wear full pant and shirts. Most of the youth wear jeans pant and T-shirts. The women wear saree and blouse. The women in Lodhas used to wear good number of ornaments both gold and silver necklaces, earrings, anklets, bangles, hair-pins.

Food Habits

The main food of them is rice. They take meal twice or thrice a day. In the morning, they eat soaked rice (Pokhal bhat) of the previous night and green leaf curry (Sag) available in their kitchen garden. They are very much fond of dried fish (Sukhua). It is observed that during death of any members of their family they did not eat non-veg food. Lodha people prepare homemade drink is known as rice beer (Handia). They consume it daily twice or thrice. According to them, it is very beneficial for health. The drink prepared from Mahua is also a favorite drink of Lodhas. A tablet locally known as "Ranu", which is prepared from some roots, jungle shrubs that help in fermentation of cooked rice and prepared (Handia) Rice beer.

Life- Cycle Rituals of Lodhas Birth Related Rituals

Sadakhia-It is celebrated when the mom means the pregnant woman is in the mid days of her pregnancy. This is done between 5th to 9th months. The maternal family bring different kind of delicious food for the pregnant woman. This is celebrated in a very holy manner. The foods are first offered to the God and then eaten by the pregnant woman and other family members. The significance of women can be observed from all these rituals that first after offering foods to God, then the woman only eat and then the whole villagers called for a party. The wife of the village headman served first as a tradition of showing respect. After the party all villagers blesses the lady for her well-being. There are some food restrictions and taboos imposed upon pregnant Lodha women as compulsory.

Name giving ceremony- The Lodha tribes did not have any specific rituals for naming the newborn baby. However, their names are mostly relates to the time, day of birth, festival days, names of animals, flowers, birds.

Marriage (Behaa)

Marriage (Behaa) is found during the research that in the Lodha community marriage is done between the ages of 18-25 years for boys and between the ages of 12-18 years for girls. After marriage, the girl comes to boys home. Different types of marriage in Lodha community includes love marriage, arrange marriage, widow marriage, sangha marriage, marriage more than once, sindur ghunsa marriage (putting vermilion on forehead). Lodha says "Behaa ghare maay raaja", which means the mother of bride or groom are head of the function of marriage. They says "Salasagune Behaa" means the Lodha marriage completes by performing sixteen rituals. These are Sagunsata, Aade ulte dekha, God dhuaa, Bar dekha, Aam behaa (marriage practice during mangoes season), Mahul behaa (marriage during mahul flower season), Pan diaa, Sindraa daan, Lahar khadu pindha, Baandapan, Haldi maakhaa (application of turmeric in the body), Ghati lukaa(hiding pot), Naaghandi sajaa (use of new utensils), Sinaan (bath), Nakh bhaangaa (cutting nails), Ghuraa feraa, Gotra kaat (changing clan), Bidaay(exodus).

Death Rituals

Last ritual after death is performed in a complete traditional way like any other rituals. The death makes the family impious and they perform rituals until 10th day. Lodha tribes follow certain restrictions or taboos till the 10th day of death. If anyone dies, on Tuesday or Saturday the Lodha tribe burnt black cock with the dead body. In many respect Lodhas follow certain rituals, which are similar to larger Hindu society.

Economic Situation

The Lodha is a food-gathering, hunting and laborer community. Few among them are agricultural laborers/agriculturist. Initially Lodhas are found, leading a semi-nomadic life. The stigma of criminality has deep rooted on this community that they are cut-off from other community of the society. The Lodhas are economically very backward and most of them have pre-agricultural level of technology. They are closely associated with forest economy, agricultural cycle and as workers in various development projects of Indian Govt. They collect Kendu leaves to roll bidi, Sal and Siali leaves to make leaf-cups and plates, sabai grass to make ropes, tussar cocoons, sal seeds, honey, lax, resines, mahua flower and fire wood, which they sell in the market for their livelihood. However, it is a matter of regret that rapid deforestation throws the Lodhas out of their age-old sources of livelihood and forced them to live in a pathetic condition. The Lodhas mostly spent on the purchase of food items, dress, ornaments, house maintenance and rice beer (Handia). The primary occupation was rearing silkworm in the host trees of Sal and Asan. It is found from the research that due to the implementation of different development programmes the lifestyle of Lodhas is consistently changing in comparison to their old lifestyle maintained by them.

Table-2 Monthly Income Level

SI No.	Income In Rupees	No. of Household	Percentage
1	500-1000	31	34.08
2	1100-3500	23	25.28
3	3600-5000	15	16.48
4	5100-7500	11	12.09
5	7600-9000	5	5.49
6	9100-10000	4	4.39
7	10100-15000	2	2.19
8	TOTAL	91	100

The table presented above shows the monthly income of Patharnesa and Sansasol village in Suliapada block of Mayurbhanj district.

Political Situation

The Lodhas have their own traditional village panchayats, which is called "Desh". Village ward member and adult persons are the members of this panchayat. They decide offences relating to the violation of tribal customs, norms and taboos. The village headman is called as Mukhia or Sardar. The Mukhia controls the proper administration of village panchayat. The village messenger, the Dakua or Chatia, assists the Mukhia. The decision given by the Mukhia is to be obeyed by all The Lodhas depend upon Political institution for proper administration, maintain discipline and to run the society in a smoothly manner. Recently these have been changed in the composition and activities of the traditional village council of the study area. Due to the introduction of the Panchayat Raj, a good number of Lodhas are being gradually associated with the village administration (Bhowmick, 2015, p.688). A few of them have affiliated themselves with some political parties of the locality and contested in the election. Naturally, this gave them the opportunity of mixing with the other sections of the society, this bringing up the hiatus prevailing so long among this community(Bhowmick, 2015, p.688). Before independence Lodhas are not conscious about their political rights, moral, demands, values etc. Now the Lodhas are politically very conscious regarding their rights and demands. For which Sarpanch and ward members are conducting some developmental work for the betterment of villagers of Lodha community, through the different schemes of Govt. of India. The modern political involvements have created more tensions and fraction in a few Lodha villages based on party ideologies (Bhowmick, 2015, p.688).

Educational Situation

The educational situation of Lodha children in Mayurbhanj district is very pathetic and poor. In

the past Lodha, children did not like to go to school for receiving education, which are located on far distance areas. Now they are very much interested to gain some modern knowledge. It is observed during the research that a number of factors responsible for poor educational situation of the Lodha children in the study area. Some of the main obstacles that are noticed in the study area are - 1. Lack of awareness among the Lodhas regarding the value of education in the society, 2. Parents of Lodha families completely ignorant with regard to the future of their children, 3. Acute financial crisis of Lodha families, 4. Lack of landed properties of Lodhas, 5. Most of the Lodhas are forest life oriented, 6. The lifestyle of Lodhas is very pathetic, 7. The Lodhas are in neglected condition due to lacking of technical knowledge in different works, 8. Demoralization of Lodhas for drinking of rice beer (Handia) daily, 9. Most of the Lodhas do not like to change, 10. The local representatives do not like to express the real grievances of Lodhas before the Govt. for their moral and physical development, 11. All the tribal development schemes have not sufficiently reached before them. Low rate of enrolment and high rate of dropouts is the root cause of poor educational situation Lodha tribe. Each Lodha village of Mayurbhanj has an Anganwari school or centre. An Educational Complex has been setup in the village Chikitamatia of Morada block in the year 2008-2009.

Conclusion

The Lodha tribe maintain a simple social life, which is unique and distinct from all other Tribal groups of India. Lack of awareness is the main reason for poor literacy rate of the Lodha children. Lodha tribe express their cultural identity and distinctiveness language, organization, language,

rituals, dress, ornaments, art and craft. They have nine clan groups, which are locally said as Gotra. The Lodhas manage their health complications by the help of different local healers and institutions. It is noticed that about 32% of Lodha families avail health services by the traditional healers, 52% by the ASHA workers, 12% by ANMs and only 4% Lodha households avail health facilities from the Primary Health Centre (P.H.C). The higher prevalence of under nutrition, hypotension, and anaemia among Lodha women is mostly due to poor economic condition, illiteracy, improper food habit, poor sanitary condition and unequal food sharing in the families etc. The economic life of Lodhas in Mayurbhanj district is very pathetic. The Lodha people are completely neglecting their education, for which their standard of living is inferior in comparison to other Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Mayurbhanj, Odisha. In recent days, a drastic change is seen among the Lodha tribes because of the impact of Hinduism. The traditional economic system is changed due to the impact of modernization. The participation of Lodhas in Panchayat election indicates that the current political life of Lodhas is more developed than the earlier period. Overall, the socio-economic, political and educational situation of Lodhas of Mayurbhanj district are found to be improved in comparison to other tribal communities in Odisha.

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