CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

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1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the present information age, information is regarded as a resource. We need information throughout our life which helps us to survive against adverse circumstances. The social, cultural and economic development of a country depends upon the right information at the right time (Bakshi Ghosh 201).

Information is required by all to perform our day-to-day activities. Due to information explosion, massive amount of information generates every single second. In the modern technological era, some people have more information whereas some have no information at all which creates the "Information Gap" and it directly impacts the all-round development of a country.

People of all ages need information. In the present era information is needed by teachers and students alike. Doctors, engineers, lawyers, researchers and people belonging to every profession need information for their professional practice to help their customers or clients who in turn require information for decision making. Ordinary people also need information for their daily basis problem, trauma and crisis to support their interest in cultural heritage, religion and family life. The need of information is equally felt by the specially-abled persons like blind, deaf or dumb and persons suffering from other challenges in life. Thus information need arises when a person recognizes a gap in his/her knowledge (Kamila 94).

Advanced communication technology provides us information through various media. This continuously changing technology promotes our educational activities

throughout the ages (Soman and Sudhier 111). In the technological era, we can gather a vast amount of information within a short span of time. But to use this information technology properly we need strict awareness on our part and discover the ways of utilizing the right one at the right time.

Many communities in our society even do not know the facilities available for their survival and betterment. Sometimes this happens because of their living conditions, social set up and sometimes because of illiteracy and ignorance. This is equally true about the tribal communities, not excluding the Lodhas, an aboriginal tribe mostly found in West Bengal and Odisha. These people lack information needed for their education and socio-economic betterment. Keeping the above things in mind, this research work on the information needs and information seeking behaviour of the Lodhas have been taken up.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Lodhas of West Bengal, an aboriginal tribe mostly originated in the districts of Medinipur, Bankura, Purulia, Birbhum and Burdwan. They are rarely found in the districts of North Bengal (Mitra 89-90). Before independence the British Rulers notified the Lodhas as a 'Criminal Tribe' but after independence they have been denotified by the annulment of the Criminal Tribe Act 1952 (Mitra 89). Lodhas of Medinipur are often identified as Kharias or Kheria, Savara. Lodhas are also originated in the districts of Mayurbhanj and Balasore of Odisha. Originally, they dwelt in the forest or small hamlets near the forest and mainly lived on forest produce. At present they cultivate their own or patta land and also work as agricultural labourers. They are also found in hunting and fishing profession (Mandal et al. 32). They collect wood from the forest for cooking purpose or for selling those in the

nearby urban agglomeration. They collect sal leaves for making plates for selling in the market. They also collect roots, shoots and fruits from the trees of the forest for their own consumption. They also catch snakes and lizards and consume their flesh (Bhowmick 6).

They marry young and do not practice divorce or remarriage (Mitra 77). They belong to the Austro-Asiatic Language Group but at present, they speak in Bengali or Oriya or Hindi (depending on the area they live) with a high accent (Mandal et al. 32).

They suffer from chronic poverty and low aspiration level, lack of zeal for changing their lifestyle due to lack of information about development around the world. This information gap has made them lazy and lethargic and these are the main constraints for their upliftment (Bhowmick 7).

The study is based on the following questions:

(i)   What type of information is needed by the Lodha people in Paschim Medinipur district?

(ii)   What are the sources of information consulted by the Lodhas to satisfy their information needs?

(iii)   Which are those information seeking behaviour model closely fit with the Lodha community?

(iv)   What is the social, cultural and economic status of the Lodhas residing in Paschim Medinipur?

(v)   Do the Lodhas know the welfare schemes undertaken by the Government for their betterment?

(vi)   Do they actually get proper benefit from all those Government schemes?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

- To identify the different information needs like (housing, food and nutrition, clothing, health, education, employment, agricultural and animal husbandry, political, law and order, cultural, government project and economic) of the Lodhas at Paschim Medinipur;

- To find out the different sources of information used by the Lodhas to satisfy their information needs;

- To categorize the socio-economic status of these people living in Paschim Medinipur district;

- To classify the welfare measures provided by Government and Non-Government organizations for the upliftment of this community.

1.4 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is an effort towards studying the information need and information seeking behaviour of the Lodha community, a primitive tribe in West Bengal. This study will help to identify the real picture and to determine the need of the community, their living standards on which we can design different kinds of development projects for them to ameliorate their social standards and also ensure socio-economic development.

1.5 CONSPECTUS

The purpose of this study is to find out the pattern of information seeking of the Lodha community. The study tries to identify the actual needs of information and

existing sources of information that can satisfy those needs. This study is a multidisciplinary one covering Sociology, Social Anthropology, Social Psychology and Library and Information Science. The present study comprises of eight (8) chapters.

Chapter 1 entitled 'Introduction' covers 5 sections. The background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study and importance of the study has been dealt with in this chapter.

Chapter 2 entitled 'Review of Related Literature' covers 5 sections. The Literature is segregated into the following sub-topics like information need and information seeking behaviour, community information service, community study and the Lodha community. Research gap is identified and discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 entitled 'Information Need and Information Seeking Behaviour' focuses on the definition of information need and information seeking behavior. Information seeking behaviour models are also enumerated in this chapter.

Chapter 4 explains the 'Methodology of the Study.' The methodology is depicted under two sub-headings scope and coverage and methods used.

Chapter 5 entitled 'An Overview of Medinipur District' depicts all aspects of the background, location, origin, literacy and education, climate, rivers, land, occupation, agriculture, communication system, industry and banking system of the Medinipur District.

Chapter 6 entitled 'An Overview of Lodhas under the Study' focuses in details about the tribal community, their life, culture and socio-economic environment.

Chapter 7 reflects 'Data Analysis and Findings' of this study.

Chapter 8 devotes the concluding version of the whole research effort, suggestions and scope for further research work.

Bibliographical references have been added according to MLA standard. For convenience, references are appended to each chapter and arranged sequentially according to their appearance in the text. Citations are used in the text of the thesis as per the MLA citation style. At the end of all the chapters, full list of references has been given and arranged according to alphabetical order. It must be mentioned here that only for referencing and citations MLA standard manual has been followed. For other arrangements in the thesis MLA style has not been followed.

Lastly at the end of the textual part different maps, photographs, questionnaires, indexes are included in the appendices.

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