



**CHAPTER 6**  
**AN OVERVIEW OF LODHAS**  
**UNDER THE STUDY**

## CHAPTER 6

### AN OVERVIEW OF LODHAS UNDER THE STUDY

#### 6.1 TRIBAL COMMUNITY

The word “tribe” means the descendants of those who were the original settlers of this country. But they do not belong to one group; in fact, they are separate groups of people who live in different places in a region in India, having similarity in their social, economic and cultural affairs (Baskey 7).

Tribal community is a socio-political group of men, with genuine or artificial bonds of kinship, speaking common dialect, possessing a common culture and occupying a common territory (Risley 61).

**According to D. N. Majumdar**, the tribal community is a combination of a number of families forming a separate group of their own, living in a specific area and speaking the same language. They abide by the same marital, professional and religious rituals among them (Majumdar 241).

**In Dr. Rivers’ opinion**, the tribal community is a separate community without any complex in their life. They speak the same language. They have affinity in their physical and cultural features. They have their own Panchayat and unite themselves with common spirit or mentality to continue their traditions or to fight against those conditions which they consider inimical to their interest (Baskey 1).

**Pidington** also defines tribal community as a separate community speaking the same language, residing in the same region and having homogeneity in their social and cultural life (Baskey 1).

No accurate definition is cemented though many anthropologists, administrators, authors, social thinkers, and writers have tried to do so. Then the question comes in

the mind that what is the criterion to define the word “tribe”? By summing up several discussions, the definition of tribals can be said as the poorest and most exploited class in India. They are socially, historically and economically backward. They have a common habit, interest, occupation, descent, and culture (Reddy 1571). In India, they are known by many names such as ‘Adivasi’ (original settlers), Girijan (hill dwellers), Vanyajati (forest caste), Adimjati (primitive caste), Jan Jati (folk communities), and Anusuchit Jan Jati (Scheduled Tribes) (Panda 36).

The tribal population of India is second in the world next to Africa (Elwin 5). The Census 1951 reported 5.6% of the total population of India belongs to tribal community (“Schedule Tribe”). The percentage of tribal community in India rose to 8% of the total population and 573 different tribal groups as per 1991 census (“Final Population” 38). It again continued to rise to 8.2% in the 2001 Census. The 2011 Census recorded 10,42,81,034 as Scheduled Tribes in India comprising 8.6% of the total population. During 2001-2011 the population growth of India was 17.64% whereas it was 23.7% in the case of the Scheduled Tribes (“Schedule Tribe”).

### **6.1.1 BACKGROUND**

Tribes are separate ethnic groups. They have their own cultures, customs, lifestyles which are different from the other people. They are considered as the most neglected and backward class of people. The laws of the Central and State Government are in their favour but still, they do not get all the benefits of those laws. They even do not know that such laws exist for them. Due to the illiteracy of society, they are not aware of the legal provisions and their implementations. It is very much sad that though the laws were made for them, they are still in the dark about the provisions of the laws and its implementation (Simhadri 2).

The tribal groups (573 in number) are subdivided into several subgroups (“Final Population” 38). Among them are 9 tribal groups namely, Gond, Bhil, Ho, Khond, Mina, Munda, Naga, Oraon and Santal are most numerous (Roy Burman 2). They are called major or large groups. The Bhils and Gonds with their subtribes constitute more than 25% of the tribal community in India. Gonds are mainly found in Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh whereas the Bhils mostly inhabit in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Next to these two major tribal groups come the Santals. They are the third largest community among the tribes in India. They are mainly found in Santal Paraganas of Jharkhand, Jhargram, Paschim Medinipur, Bankura, Purulia, Birbhum district of West Bengal and Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. Mina of Rajasthan, Munda of Bihar and Odisha, Oraon of Odisha are the other tribal groups exceeding one million population. Ho and Khond are found in Bihar and Odisha and Nagas are found in Nagaland. In contrast, there are other 109 tribal groups having a population of less than 1000. There are also 43 tribes which have less than 25 persons. Most of these small tribes are seen in Arunachal Pradesh, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and South India (Panda 36-37).

### **6.1.2 ORIGIN OF THE TERM ‘TRIBE’**

‘Tribe’ is derived from the Latin word ‘Tribus’ designating a particular kind of social and political organisation existing in all these societies. Originally, it was used to imply 3 divisions in the early Romans. Later on, it meant the ‘poor’ or the ‘masses’. The term ‘tribe’ first appeared in English language in the sixteenth century. It meant a community having a common ancestor. In British India, the term was used by officials and anthropologists to mean a social group for the purpose of enumeration. Government of India Act, 1935 used the term ‘Backward Tribe’ for them. The Indian constitution noted them as ‘Scheduled Tribe’ and they were listed in a schedule but the

constitution did not give any definition of the term ‘Scheduled Tribe’ (Biswal 14) (Parvathama 4-5).

The term ‘tribe’ means, according to anthropologists, a group of people usually living in a particular region, speaking the same dialect and maintaining cultural similarity and integrity of their organisation (Bhowmick 1).

### **6.1.3 TRIBE AND INDIAN HISTORY**

The anthropologists and the Prehistorians show great anticipation by arranging chronologically the race in a multicultural, multiracial and multilinguistic country like India. The tribal people of India are not a homogeneous nature or class. One group of these people differ vastly from others in various aspects e.g., place of living, the languages, dresses, physical outlook, modes of leading their life, geographical terrain they live in, community size or population, their work culture, etc. Despite all these differences they are truly designated by the name “tribes” (Baskey 2).

According to their physical features, Indian tribes may be broadly classified as-

- 1. Negroito** - They are thought to be the oldest tribe of India. They have similarities with the Negro people of Africa. They are the descendent of Kadar, Irular of the Deccan and Jaroa and Onge of Andaman Nicobar Island.
- 2. Proto-Australoid** - They are found in the middle, the eastern and the southern part of India. Oraon, Munda, Santal, Birhor, Kol, Bhil, Lodha, Savara live in the middle and the eastern part of India whereas Chechu, Kurumba, Badama and others generally live in South India.
- 3. Mongoloid** - Lepcha, Rabha, Toto, Chakma, Mog and others belong to these Mongoloid groups. They are found in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur in the foot hills of the Himalayas.

According to language group these tribal people are sub divided in 4 groups-

- 1. Austro-Asiatic Language Group** - The tribes speaking this language generally live in North-Eastern Himalayan states, Middle and Western part of India and also in Nicobar Island.
- 2. Dravidian Language Group** - The tribes of this language group live in Middle and South India. Irula, Toda, Oraon, Gond and Khond come under this language group.
- 3. Tibbati China or Sino Tibbati Language Group** - The tribes of this language group are generally found in the Himalayan region. Lepcha, Toto, Bhutia, Abor, Angami, Dafla, Miri, Garo, Lusai, Thado, etc. belongs to this language group.
- 4. Indo-Aryan Language Group** - The tribes of this language group live in different regions of India. They have no mother tongue of their own. They speak in 'Sadri' or 'Indo Aryan' colloquial dialect akin to Bhojpuri language. Chik, Boirik, Bedia, Lohara and Kharoar belong to this language group (Baskey 3-5).

The historians and anthropologists got assistance from some written records and some important scripts to draw a historical background of the tribes through the ages. The issue can be discussed in few phases as follows:-

**PHASE-I:** (2500-1600 B.C.) - The Indus Valley Civilisation may be conceived as a gradual growth by immigrant foreigners establishing a colony in India (Fuchs 25). The Aryan invaders, the early forerunners of the Rigvedic Aryans might have destroyed the centres of Harappan Civilisation and killed or dispersed its population. Wild Aryan tribes and Non-Aryan tribes fought against each other. The fighting between the Aryan and Non-Aryan may be traced in the ancient texts where the Non-

Aryans were described as Savara, Kinnaras and Kiratas. Many Puranic stories depict the Aryan tribes as a hostile tribe. The killing of Parvatas by Goddess Saraswati and the demolition of the Dasa's fort by Indra with his bolt, at this period, are the examples of their hostility (Hasnain 25).

**PHASE-II:** Later Vedic Period (1000-600 B.C.). In this period, the relationship between the aryaans and the tribes was very strained which we found from different stories in two great epics of India i.e. the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. These two epics played a great role in familiarising the tribals like Savara, Sudras, Abhiras, Dravidas, Pulindas and other with the so called social and cultured people. The only tribe existing today whose earliest references could be traced to Aittareya Brahmana are probably the Savara (Hasnain 25).

In the words of Verrier Elwin, a tribal woman Sabari offered fruit to Lord Rama which symbolises the contributions that tribe can make to the life of India. We found another tribe i.e. 'Bhil' in the story of Ekalavya, who offered his thumb to guru Dronacharya as '*Gurudakshina*', showing the mark of honour and strong ideology that existed among those tribes. Chitrangada, wife of Arjun, was a Naga princess. Ghotatkacha, son of Bhim married a tribal woman. This also depicts the assimilation of tribals with the Aryans at that period. Then we see a period of destruction by Aryans as invaders who destroyed many tribal sects for their imperial powers like the tribal demolition of Republic of Vaisali by Ajatsatru, destruction of the tribals on the North-Western border of India by King Alexander, threatening by Asokas to the North-Western tribes if they revolt against the King, and many other historical instances prove the destruction of these sects (Hasnain 26).

**PHASE-III:** Age of Dharmasutras (600-300 B.C.) and Manusmriti, the period is the continuation of Phase II along with few new castes and tribes like mixed caste.

According to Sharma (1961), they were the supposed progeny of male of one caste and the woman of another caste. Example of few more tribes like, Nishadas (probably Brahmanised tribes) whose main occupation was hunting; Medas Madgas, Andhras, Chenchus famous for hunting wild animals, Ksahlas, Pukkakas used to catch different birds and animals, Margavas (boatmen), Veras (play drums), Sarendhas, lead their life by acting as servants and well skilled dressers, also make the tribes in this phase more prominent. Even, the Puranic tales present the tribes like Gonds as the children of Dashanan-Ravana (Hasnain 26).

**PHASE-IV:** Muslim Period (12th-18th Century) - Many tribes were brahmanised and sanskritized post 400-1000 A.D. period. The Muslim Ruler started to destroy the aboriginal sect i.e. tribals replacing them with the Muslim Rulers. Many tribal areas across the country were conquered by the Muslim Rulers e.g., Raja Khulra of Chota Nagpur area subjugated, tribal regions of Assam. Around 1661 A.D., the Cheros of Palamu were subjugated by Daud Khan. The conversion of tribals to Islam was seen in the North West frontier regions. People from Hindu religions also converted many tribals such as Munda, Oraon, Bhuinyas into their path of Bhakti movement (Hasnain 29).

**PHASE-V:** In this phase, the British Colony started in India. The British administrators found their vested interest of exploitation in the tribal areas of Bengal and Bihar. The Grand Trunk road constructed during the Muslim period made it easy for many outsiders like traders, merchants, money lenders, artisans, and peasants to enter in the tribal areas. As a result tribals were converted to Christianity and they were subject to exploitation by those people. But the tribal people revolted against this exploitation as we find in the movements by the tribals such as Paharia uprising (end of 18th century), Munda uprising (1789- 1901), the Santhal insurrection (1855-56),



the Bhil rebellion (1879-80), Bastar uprising (1910-11), Gond rebellion (1940). The tribals showed their fighting ability to regain their own identity. Again Christian penetration into tribalism also led to movements like Kherwar (1871-80), Sardari (1881-95), Birsa (1895-1901), Tana Bhagat (1920-25), etc. begins in India. The journey of tribals is developed by the above-mentioned movements (Rath 20).

## **6.2 ABOUT THE LODHA COMMUNITY**

The Lodhas are the primitive tribe of India who lives mainly in West Bengal and Odisha states. In West Bengal, they mainly live in the districts of Jhargram, Paschim Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia. In Odisha, they mainly live in the districts of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar. They are of great interest for the anthropologists and social workers who work in the rural areas for the betterment of backward and downtrodden people. They seem to be from Mundari group of people and their dialect is broken Mundari mixed with Bengali, Oriya, and Hindi. They have assimilated themselves into the Hindu fold but still maintain distinct features of their own (Bhowmick 7).

‘Lodha’ means a piece of flesh named after their ancestor. In early British period the tribal people of Jungle Mahal, originally dependent upon forests were ruthlessly exploited by the British who revolted against them. As a result, they were driven away from their habitats and they resorted to criminal ways of life and were subsequently branded as a criminal tribe by the British Administrators. They believe to the descendants of Jarasandh from the Mahabharata (Bhowmick 11). Their titles are Nayek, Paramanik, Mallik, Digar, Sardar, Bhukta, Kotal, Dandapat, Bhuinya, Ari (Bhowmick 53). They are basically uprooted people from Jungle Mahal and mainly live by gathering roots, shoots, fruits and leaves, honey, etc. They work as day labourers and agricultural labourers on other’s fields (Bhowmick 29).

### **6.2.1 ORIGIN OF THE LODHA COMMUNITY**

The term 'Lodha' is possibly derived from the Sanskrit word 'Lubdhaka', meaning a trapper of fowl. Again there is a landholding group in Madhya Pradesh named Lodha. They have migrated from Ludhiyana district of Punjab via Uttar Pradesh. There are differences between the Lodha, the tribal community and the 'Lodh' or 'Nodh' or 'Ludhi' of Madhya Pradesh (Russel and Hiralal 160-165).

The Lodha people feel pride in calling them as Savara, a generic group in ancient literature for forest-dwelling communities. But Savaras are different from Lodhas. Savaras are descendants of Kalketu, the hero of Mangal Kavyas (Bhowmick 11). They are basically snake charmer group of people of Bihar, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh. But the Lodha community are one of the Criminal Tribes since 1871 under the Criminal Tribes Act. Both Lodha and Savara were designated as Scheduled Tribe (ST) in states of West Bengal in October 1956. Lodha tribe were ST throughout West Bengal but the Savaras were ST only in Purulia district till 1976. Lodhas are regarded as Primitive Tribal Group but the savaras are only Scheduled Tribe community (Ghatak 126).

The Lodhas belong to an Austro-Asiatic Group but they rarely have a characteristic of their own. The colour of their skin and hair are brown to dark brown. They have a medium face and medium to flat nose. Both male and female of the Lodhas have normal height. They normally possess good health. Of late some social workers went deep into the social, economic and cultural life of this Primitive Tribe.

### **6.2.2 POPULATION**

According to 1951 census, total Lodha population was about 8348 in West Bengal. They were then called 'Criminal Tribes'. In the next census of 1961 Lodha population was not separately found. They were mixed with 'Kheria' or 'Kharia'. But they are

different in origin and culture. The total population of the Lodhas and the Kherias was about 40,898. In the 1981 census the number increased to 53,718 among which 27,751 were male and 25,967 were female (Baskey 40). According to the 2001 census the Lodha people increased to 84966. The current census of 2011 shows the total Lodha population to be 108,707 among which 54,692 are males and 54,015 are females in the state of West Bengal (“Statistical Profile”). According to Employment and Backward Class Welfare, Paschim Medinipur, Zilla Parishad total Lodha population of Paschim Medinipur is 60,136 (approx.) constituting 15000 families. They are residing in 20 blocks of this district (“Employment and Backward”).

### **6.2.3 SETTLEMENT AND HOUSING**

The Lodhas live in villages either separately or with other communities maintaining distance from them. Most of the Lodha villages are located in dense forest, far away from human reach. They live in small huts with mud wall or with a thatched roof of straws or palm leaves/kend leaves of the forest. Each of the hut bears a distinct sign of poverty of the inmates. There is only one door made of either structure of bamboos or palm leaves or date leaves. Their kitchen is inside the hut and sometimes outside the hut. Beside the fireplace/hearth there lies a heap of mud called ‘*Esan*’ dedicated in the name of their forefather. The Lodha families having good agricultural production live in a better mud house having more than one room with a separate kitchen in them. They also have a courtyard in front of their house and kitchen garden beside/back of their house (Bhowmick 17-18) (Baskey 41).

### **6.2.4 FURNITURE AND DRESSES**

Lodhas have few furniture in their huts. They have mud pots and jars and plates and glasses made of aluminium. A few of them use utensils made of brass or aluminium. The other instruments they use are spade, axe, shovel and bows and arrows and

bamboo sticks. They use mat made of palm leaves or date leaves and kantha stiched with old clothes. They rarely use mosquito net and cot or khatia that made of sal wood structure with babui nets.

They wear very simple dresses according to their financial capabilities. The males wear dhoti, kurta, pant, shirt, lungi, ganji, etc. and females wear saree, blouse, different types of metal (iron, brass, and silver) and non-metal (glass and shell) ornaments in ear, nose finger, hands and toes. The children wear dress to cover only their genital portion (Bhowmick 48) (Baskey 41) (Bhakta 82).

### **6.2.5 FOOD, DRINKING AND SMOKING**

Lodhas prefer rice as their main food. They take meals twice and thrice a day. As breakfast, they take soaked water rice of the previous night. They eat it with burnt potato and tomato with salt. They take boiled rice with different vegetable items at lunch. They take roasted fish with salt. At night they eat the same food prepared for lunch. They grow vegetables like potato, tomato, chilly, cauliflower, cabbage, bitter gourd, ladies finger, brinjal, etc. and cook them for food. They also take chicken, mutton, fish and dried fish besides vegetables. Consumption of liquor is a part of their food habit. Both male and female drink country liquor and betel leaves along with tobacco. Men smoke bidi and cigarette for pleasure (Bhakta 38) (Hansdah 37).

### **6.2.6 PROFESSION**

Lodhas are mainly food gathering people who subsist by collecting wild roots, tubers and edible leaves from the jungle. They also hunt wild animals, birds and reptiles which they use as food and sell their skin in the market. They also collect tussore, cocoons and they are sold to the weaver community for preparing clothes. Many of the Lodha families live by collecting kend leaves and sal leaves for selling in the market. They also catch fish, collect firewood from the forest and sell them in the

local market to earn their livelihood (Bhowmick 6) (Baskey 41) (Bhakta 90). At present some of them work as agricultural labourers and some work as labourers in construction work. The educated Lodhas are employed in government services, teaching profession, railways etc.

### 6.2.7 FAMILY AND CLANS

Lodhas are patriarchal family. The family comprises of parents and unmarried children. Father is the head of the family and maintains relationships with other families and the clans. Both male and female members have some responsibility in maintaining the family. But the household work is completely done by the female population. While selling forest produce in the locality and purchasing daily necessities from the shops, the female population play the dominant role. They take the decision in major cases and the male population only accompany them. Lodhas have 9 clans. Each clan has separate God and therefore they follow the restrictions related to that clan. The different clans along with Goddess of the clan are given below –

Sl. No.	Name of the Clan	Goddess of the Clan
1.	Bhakta or Bhukta	Chirka alu
2.	Mallick	Makar
3.	Kotal	Moon and Grasshopper
4.	Nayek or Layek	Sal fish
5.	Digar	Porpoise
6.	Paramanik	A kind of bird
7.	Dandapat or Bagh	Bagh or Tiger
8.	Ari or Ahari	Chanda fish
9.	Bhuinya	Sal fish

Among the Lodha clans Bhukta clan is the highest. They are again grouped into – Great and Small Bhukta. Great Bhuktas consider themselves as superior to Small Bhuktas, even marital relationship is not established in between the two clans (Baskey 42) (Bhakta 36-37) (Bhowmick 52-53).

#### **6.2.8 VILLAGE ORGANISATION**

In each Lodha village, there is a separate panchayat for only the Lodhas. The Lodha Panchayat settles the small disputes among the Lodhas. The members of the Lodha Panchayat are selected only from the male members, females are totally outside the Panchayat. The head of the Panchayat is called '*Mukhia*'. '*Dakua or Kotal*' is entrusted with the responsibility for informing all the disputing parties the day for settlement of their disputes before the Mukhia. Ordinarily, the meeting for judgement sits at the house of the Mukhia where both the plaintiffs and defendant remain present and deliver their speeches in their favour. The Mukhia consulting the other member gives his judgement. The culprit is punished with money paid to the Panchayat for the feast of the entire village. The Lodha has a priest of their own called '*Dehari*' or '*Dihari*'. They perform the marriage ceremonies in the Lodha community and their social status is high in that community (Baskey 43) (Bhowmick 126-129).

#### **6.2.9 RITUALS AT THE TIME OF BIRTH AND DEATH**

The Lodhas observe certain rituals like the Hindus at the time of birth and death. They offer goats and fowls for smooth birth of the baby and welfare of both the mother and baby born. The mother remains confined in the house for 20 days after the birth of the child. On the 21st day they observe a festival called '*Ekusia*', where both the mother and newborn baby become sacred after the bath. If anything harmful happens to the mother or the child, they call '*Gunin*' for their treatment. When the child in about six months they perform hair cutting and rice feeding ceremony for the child.

Like the Hindus, the Lodhas also observe certain rituals at the time of death also. They generally burn the dead body at a burning ghat near their village. But they also maintain burial of dead bodies in the case of minor or death of an adult by infectious disease. When normal death they burn the dead body. They observe death mourning for ten days. On the tenth and eleventh day after the death purification rituals the family of the dead arrange a feast for the relatives and villagers (Baskey 43) (Bhowmick 79) (Bhakta 106-107).

#### **6.2.10 MARRIAGE SYSTEM**

Lodha families are nuclear in nature with husband, wife and their children. Sometimes joint and extended families are also seen. There is a case of the polygamous union too. Marriage is arranged generally by a mediator, generally the brother in law of the bridegroom. Marriage is forbidden between the same clans. Child marriage is rarely found among the Lodhas. A marriage is arranged by payment of bride-price along with some other presentation for the family members of the bride. The marriage performance is conducted by the priest or '*Dehari*' and the transfer of the bride to the hand of the bridegroom is done by the maternal uncle of the bride. In the Lodha society there is no mantra regarding marriage. Marriage becomes complete when the bride groom gives vermilion on the forehead of the bride in presence of the '*Dehari*' and other village people. After marriage they go to the bridegroom's house for living where a marriage feast is offered for the village people. Divorce is very easy among the Lodha society and no rules or regulations are there for this purpose. If a wife is involved with another male person after marriage, her husband generally leave her. But a wife cannot easily leave her husband. If there is any dispute between them the wife goes to her parent's house and after some days, both of them become free to marry again according to their choice with the permission of the Lodha panchayat.

When a girl is married at a tender age, a second marriage ceremony is performed after she becomes an adult. Widow remarriage is also in vogue among the Lodhas. Sometimes a deceased elder brother's wife is married to the younger brother for whom no bride price is paid or formal rituals are not observed. This type of marriage is called '*Sanga*' (Baskey 43-44) (Bhowmick 68) (Bhakta 107).

### **6.2.11 RELIGIOUS RITUALS AND THE GODS AND GODDESS THEY WORSHIP**

Lodhas worship many Gods and Goddess and they have a deep respect for them. They offer puja themselves only at different '*Thans*'. The prime God of the Lodhas is Baram God who, it is believed, saves them from all dangers at home and in forest. They believe that Baram is a strong God who travels in the forest on the back of a big tiger. Baram puja is celebrated under a big tree in a forest with mud dolls of elephant, horse etc. with pinch of vermilion on their forehead.

*Chandi* is another strong Goddess worshipped by the Lodhas. She is worshiped as *Joy Chandi*, *Baram Chandi*, *Bhoirabi Chandi* etc. She has three eyes one on her forehead and the other two are normalised. She saves them from ferocious animals and poisonous snakes in the forest. She is offered dolls of horses, elephants, etc. along with rice and fruits to satisfy her. They also sacrifice goats and hens before her. They burn incense, use *tulsi*, *durba*, vermilion and a few other items like the Hindus. Another Goddess, the Lodhas worship is the Goddess Sitala who saves them from infectious diseases. They also worship *Chandi*, *Manasa* and *Kali* who are generally worshipped all over the Eastern India and form a great tradition of the Hindu community. They generally worship *Basumata* and *Dharamadevata* before any family functions for their welfare.



Lodhas believe in Ghosts and Spirits. They believe that Ghosts and Spirits are everywhere and they try to harm them. 'Yuguni Spirits', is the most powerful among the Spirits. When a man or women die by infectious diseases or accident, she becomes Yugini Spirit. To appease Yugini they offer puja at a place from the village with the sacrifices of hens. Among the Ghosts 'Kundra', 'Pretasini', 'Gomua' are also powerful Spirits. They also have faith in the magical power of the 'Ojha' or 'Gunin'. When in trouble, the Lodhas visit the Gunin's house and ask for a remedy from him. He gives those roots, leaves, and barks of trees along with other things for their recovery. It is believed that they have knowledge of 'Ayurveda Shastra' and recover their patients with Ayurveda medicine (Baskey 49) (Bhakta 39) (Bhowmick 127).

#### **6.2.12 SOCIAL FESTIVALS**

Lodhas do not have any important festival of their own. So, they take part in the festivals of their neighbour's like the other tribal groups viz Santals, Mundas etc. and the Mahatas also. They perform in the 'Badna Parab' during Kali puja and 'Tusu Puja' during Pous Sankranti. They lack cultural aptitudes for songs and dances as they find little time or taste in their struggle for existence. To speak about the dance and songs of the Lodhas, we may mention a dance with the beating of 'Changu' or 'Changal', an instrument made of wood covered with leather. They dance and sing songs of the miseries of daily life. The song is sung by the male person only. Lodha female rarely participates in it. They perform a few devotional songs in the name of Hindu Gods and Goddess. There are few 'Baramasi' songs telling the episodes of twelve months in connection with the heroes of the epics (Baskey 50-51) (Bhowmick 199) (Bhakta 39-49).

### **6.2.13 EDUCATION AND LITERACY RATE**

During the British period Lodhas did not visit any school as they were marked as Criminal Tribe. No efforts were made by anybody to educate them. At the same time, they were reluctant to attend any school. It is only after independence that some facilities were extended to educate them.

The literacy rate among the Lodha community being significantly low, adult education centre and Ashram Hostel for Lodha children were introduced in some Lodha Villages. In villages having no Ashram Hostel, Lodha children were encouraged to get admission into nearby primary school. But with all efforts, the number of dropout students increased.

The first Lodha Ashram Hostel was started by Bharat Sevashram in 1958 at Dhol kat-Pukuria, Jhargram. The Sannyasi of the Ashram tried their level best for the education of the Lodha children. Thereafter in 1965 a Lodha Ashram Hostel was introduced at Bidisha by Prabodh Kumar Bhowmick for the education of the Lodhas. At present, the school is upgraded into a high school with various facilities for the Lodhas. Bamunmara Lodha Colony, Choto Jhuri Development Centre and Santigarh Lodha Colony, were started with usual zeal and enthusiasm, but did not succeed so much (Baskey 53).

Separate Census Report for literacy rate among the Lodhas is not available as the literacy rate includes literacy of tribal people at large. From an organization of the Lodha community it is known that in a report of 2002 there were 16 Graduates, 34 H.S, 127 M.P and 528 VIII passed. The number may have increased at present to some extent (Bhakta 142).

Lodhas have lower literacy rate as compared to literacy rate of other ST communities in West Bengal. As per 2011 census, Lodha literacy rate in Paschim Medinipur is

65.23 % compared to 76.26 % in West Bengal. Lodha Male literacy rate in Paschim Medinipur is 81.76 % and female literacy rate is 54.56% (“Lodha Population”).

Prahlad Kumar Bhakta, Officer Incharge, Lodha Development Cell (LDC), Jhargram and now retired was the first graduate. He is resident of Chak Sahapur village in Debra Block under Paschim Medinipur (Mahasveta Devi 947).

The first woman graduate among the Lodhas was Chuni Kotal of Gohaldihi village, Salboni block who worked as social worker under Scheduled Caste (SC) and Tribal Welfare (TW) Department, Paschim Medinipur (Report of the Ganguly).

#### **6.2.14 ECONOMIC STATUS**

Economic condition of the Lodhas is very pathetic. They live in villages surrounded by forest. So, their economic activities also depend on forest. They collect fruits, roots, seeds for their own consumption and kendu leaves for ‘*Bidi*’ making. They also collect sal leaves, logs and branches to sell in the town or urban agglomeration. They gather forest produce like honey, lax, mahua flowers and firewood to earn their livelihood by selling these articles in the local market. They grow Tussor silkworm in the host trees of Sal and Asan. They work as a daily labourer in agricultural field of other cultivators and also work as construction labour in urban areas. But doing all these they cannot earn their livelihood to maintain their family (Baskey 51-52) (Bhowmick 8-9) (Bhowmick 6).

#### **6.2.15 DEVELOPMENT**

After independence, various types of developmental inputs were distributed among the Lodha families. The scheme includes non-refundable cash loan for building houses and for purchasing agricultural land (patta land) and domestic animals like cow, goat, bullock and poultry birds. But all these schemes could not give them much benefit as they were reluctant to use them fruitfully. For the welfare of this

community, the Government at present provides different schemes like IAY, IRDP, IGNOAPS, IGNWPS, ITDP, PMGSY, ICDS, MGNREGA, SHG, and Janashree Bima Yojana. These development programmes are implemented by the Backward Class Welfare Department (BCW) through Block Development Office (BDO) and Panchayat Office. LAMPS was launched for the tribals to bring them within the folds of the co-operative movement and to save them from the exploitation of the moneylender, middlemen and labour contractors. SC-ST financial corporation was also started for providing loans at a cheap rate to the tribal including the Lodhas (Bhowmick 7-8).

#### **6.2.16 COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

The Lodhas generally live in a very poor condition and communication system is very poor. Their villages are in the midst of the forest far away from main road to bring them to the urban areas for selling their forest products (Bhowmick 7). They can not avail the opportunities of public transport system and have to walk a long distance through forest to catch a public transport system. Most of the villages have no drinking facilities, electric connection, health centres etc. They rarely attend public health centres for treatment. They have their own tribal medicine to cure them.

#### **6.2.17 LIBRARY CONSCIOUSNESS**

Literacy rate enhances library consciousness. Library consciousness among the general caste of ordinary people is very poor. Not to speak of Lodha Community among whom literacy rate is very pathetic. Lodhas generally do not visit libraries for any information. Students of colleges and upper classes of schools sometimes visit campus libraries to collect text books or story books.

They do not generally use mobile phones or smartphones. They rarely listen to radio or TV news as such they are totally disconnected from civilized world.

Libraries are rarely found in Lodha villages or in their vicinity. They do not even know what the libraries are and what functions they do for them. Under these circumstances, it may be said that the library consciousness is almost zero among them. The libraries, on the other hand do not do anything to make them conscious.

Of course, there are some exceptions. Bidisha in Narayangarh Block, primarily a development project by Dr. P. K. Bhowmick has a school mainly for the Lodha students along with other communities. It has a well organised library and students under the guidance of the teachers use it for their benefit (Bhowmick 8).

Another library at Chaksahapur in Debra block with an Ashram Hostel and a high school and also a library. This is also used by the students under the guidance of the teachers (Bhakta 141-142).

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