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ইন্টারন্যাশনাল বাইলিঙ্গুয়াল জার্নাল অফ
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(সাহিত্য-সংস্কৃতি-নৃত্য)

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Survival strategies of the Lodha through the forest: An empirical study of South Bengal

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ABSTRACT

In this article, an attempt has been made to find out the relation between forest and Tribal. In India, nearly 10.4 million tribes which constitute 8.6% of its total population. The study was conducted among the Lodha community at forest villages in Paschim medinipur Districts, West Bengal. The Lodhas, who were designated as a 'Criminal Tribe' by the British administration and later this classification underwent in the postcolonial period. This marginalized community was later put under the category of 'De-notified Community', and then reclassified as a "Primitive Tribal Group" (PTG). Now it is re-designated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG). The study revealed that they are surviving themselves by the SHG, Forest Produce Collection, hunting, rope making, domestic animal and poultry bird rearing. But they are surviving themselves through forest produce collection and day labourer. Forest is the main economic resources of Lodhas to continue their livelihood strategy. They are collected various items from forest like fruit, medicinal root, Chihar Lata, leaf, wood, animal, herbal/medicinal plants. A strong relation has been found among the Lodhas & forest. "When Tribal has not found any job as day labourer at that time they went to forest. During lean period the Lodhas prepared various handicraft products with the help of forest produce. They are also selling the various medicinal roots, leaf, skin to the village medicine man and mahajon. So forest is the economic asset of Tribal.





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1.0 Introduction

India is an amazing amalgamation of various races and cultures, with a landscape as diverse as its population. Among more than 2,500 people groups in the nation, about 80 percents are considered unreached, though, the county has largest concentration of the tribal population in the world. According to 2011 survey census, 84.33 million persons were counted as belonging to scheduled tribes in different States or Union Territories in India constituting 8.2 percent of the total population consisting of 567 different tribal populations.

The tribes in India are perceived as 'different' socio-cultural groups living in separation since the Aryan invasion of the Indian sub-continent. It has been imagined that the tribes were pushed by the invaders the 'pure races' with superior military strength into the interior hilly and forest abodes and since then the tribes have been leading a life of seclusion. In this context social exclusion issues in India are gaining more relevance by the day primarily because while India as a country is growing at a economic growth rate, not all sections of society have been able to take advantage of this growth. A large majority of people are yet to enjoy the benefits of this development and still remain excluded. Social exclusion has got at its centre the idea that some individuals are outside the society in one way or the other.

Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India are referred the Scheduled Tribes or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities, who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. The essential characteristics (first laid down by the Lokur Committee) for a community to be identified as Scheduled Tribes are: (a) Indications of primitive traits (b) Distinctive culture (c) Shyness of contact with the community at large (d) Geographical isolation (e) Backwardness.

Tribal are the most vulnerable sections of the population in India. They are exploited by the most age-old social and cultural handicaps coupled with environmental factors. The age old development and oppression of the tribal have significantly cut them off from the mainstream of





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economic development of the country as a whole. During the British rule in India by passing the “Crown's Control over Forests Act” in 1865 the colonial administration took away the autonomy of tribal over the forests making them “encroachers” on land that had been theirs for ages. They became intruder in their own forests victimized by externally motivated systems of forest management that directly violated various surface of their economic & cultural survival. The forests and other resources were increasingly expropriate as private property and their growing dependence on money lenders. Some times it depends on powerful feudal landlords and local politicians which led to massive land alienation, and permanent or seasonal migration. Added to this environmental transition was the imposition of an alien judicial system and “law and order” machinery that subjugated them further compounds their vulnerability. Their own, highly slight and physically embedded systems of conflict resolution were undermined. As a result of all these changes the tribal lost their self-respect and dignity to a considerable amount, and are in an identity crisis at present. Before Independence the tribal areas were loosely administered with a very little or no accent on development. After Independence, the central and state governments have given adequate thrust on developing the living standards of tribal in parity with that of other citizens. Accordingly the constitution of India has made definite provisions for the welfare and uplift of the tribal people.[1]

1.1 Five years plan and tribal development

During the first Five-year plan onwards the Governments implemented various special Programmes for the Tribal Development. During the second Five-year plan, few multipurpose tribal projects were created in selected tribal areas. The Varrier Elwin Commission’s recommendations for tribal development block had been implemented under the third Five year Plan. During the fourth Five-year Plan ‘land colonization schemes were established’ ‘co-operative societies for tribal development were introduced’ and ‘a number of concessions were offered to the tribals by forest, excise, and revenue departments in their respective fields’. A Tribal sub plan (TSP), which emphasized on area development for areas of tribal concentration and family oriented programmes for dispersed tribals was implemented during the fifth plan.





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During the sixth Five-year plan, 50 percent of the Scheduled Tribe families in the country to cross poverty line was adopted. During this plan period 181, ITDP's 245 MADA Pockets and 72 primitive tribe projects were adopted by the Governmnet of India. [2]

1.2 During the Seventh Five year plan, the tribal development strategy was a judicious mix of area-cum family development. Emphasis was laid on the educational development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. To improve the economic development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, two national level institutions were set up: (i) Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation in 1987 as an apex body for State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations; and (ii) National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSC&STFDC) primarily to act as a catalytic agent in developing schemes for employment generation and financing pilot projects. The Special Central Assistance (SCA) was enhanced during the Eighth Plan so as to strengthen the efforts of States in filling up the gaps under the family-based income generation projects. The SCA to TSP was enhanced from Rs.756 crore in the Seventh Plan to Rs.1250 crore in the Eighth Plan, showing a rise by 65 per cent. The social and economic development indicators are important aspects in which the problems of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are faced day by day. The Scheduled Castes suffer not only from economic backwardness but also from social disabilities.

The programmes during the Eighth Plan were therefore, attuned to meet specific needs of these communities. Efforts were being initiated to fill the critical gaps in providing the basic minimum services to those living below the poverty line. These special efforts are expected to ensure that every environment with concentration of tribal will have access to potable drinking water, nutrition supplements with both macro and micro nutrients, primary health care services, primary education facilities, sanitation and housing for the Shelter less poor.





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The Scheduled Tribes in the Ninth Plan strived to ensure 'People Centered Development' and 'People's Participation, with effective involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions', in pursuance of the recent Constitutional (73rd and 74th) Amendments. Steps were taken for the devolution of financial as well as administrative powers to the local self-governments, so that the marginalized groups were also given the opportunity to participate not only in formulating the need-based programmes, but also in their effective implementation, supervision and monitoring. By this it was expected not only to go a long way in empowering these Groups but also the implementation of various developmental programmes carried out in the true sense of co-operative federalism. [4]

2.0 Lodhas: The Tribe

The concept and study of tribes has been a debate emanating issue among the anthropologists. The term "tribe" finds its origin in ancient Rome, with the application of the Latin word "tribus" which means "one-third" and denotes a political division within the state having a 'distinct name' and occupying a 'common territory'. Cultural congruity and unifying social organization are distinctive characteristics that are attributable to tribes as well. The tribal identity and culture has a close nexus with the geographical territory and resources naturally exuding from such territory. [3] By the mid of 19th Century the use of the word tribe was made by many scholars and anthropologists along with band, chiefdom and state to denote certain periods of unilineal cultural evolution, eventually this theory fell out of credibility and distinctions were drawn not between such words. The latter part of 20th Century found the use of this word problematic as some anthropologists rejected it as being ambiguous and others objected to the negative connotations that the word acquired in colonial context. [5, 17]

The historical evidence establishes the existence of tribes or indigenous peoples in the territory of India. It was during this time onwards the recognition of the term 'tribes' was officially recorded. Various classifications of tribes were initiated by the British administration to nomenclature these people according to their policies objected towards economic exploitation and





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territorial expansion. Some of the tribes were referred as primitive tribes, some as backward tribes and some as criminal tribes.

Some not so well known groups of peoples including nomadic cattle grazers, acrobats, wandering singers etc were for the purpose of territorial expansion and administrative policies been declared as Criminal Tribes and an Act was passed in furtherance of such declaration commonly known as the notorious Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. Those groups which resisted the British aggression were also included within this group of criminal tribes. This Act was intended to even incorporate the children and women under its purview. This was done in an effort to subjugate these tribes and bring in larger areas under the British territorial rule. [6] Even after passing of this draconian law, the British administration faced a lot of retaliation in their process of expansion of territories for the purpose of drainage of wealth. Whenever any sacred or heritage place of the tribals have been encroached, the colonial rulers faced retaliation from the tribes causing bloodsheds on either side. This led to the change of strategy of the British administration as they started to camouflage their objective under the garb of developmental projects.[7]

2.1 Lodha: as criminal tribe

“Lodha” means a piece of flesh named after their ancestor. Lodhas have been in the focus of anthropologists and social activists. During the early period of their rule, the British government in India oppressed the tribal people of Jungle Mahals, who were traditionally dependent upon the forests for a living. They had revolted but were ruthlessly suppressed. Having been deprived of their livelihood and without any alternatives, they took to criminal ways of life and were subsequently branded a criminal tribe. They should properly be labeled as uprooted rebels. Lodhas titles are Nayek, Mallick, Digar, Bhokta, Kotal, Dandapat, Bhunya etc. These titles reflect the social responsibility. They are descendants of Jarasandh from Mahabharata. The Lodhas hold that they are Sabars. Lodhas were designated by the British colonialists as a “Criminal Tribe” and later this nomenclature underwent interesting evolution in the postcolonial period. This marginalized community was later



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put under the category of “De-notified Community” and then reclassified as a “Primitive Tribal Group” (PTG). Lodhas are mainly found at Paschim Medinipur & Purulia districts of West Bengal a population of 1, 08,707 (Including kheria and kharia) with living in families.[8] One of the most important research on the Lodhas was done by a Calcutta University faculty, Professor Probodh Kumar Bhowmick Much later, researchers from the Department of Anthropology at Vidyasagar University have done empirical studies on the development scenario of the Lodha tribe in Midnapore district who were by that time declared as a 'Primitive Tribal Group'(PTG) by the Government of India. [9]

The tribal population has long history of suffering exploitation under the British colonial rule. The British brought in policies which interfered with the use of tribal natural resources and deprived them of their lands. Their Forest Policy was focused mainly on the commercial exploitation of resources neglecting the human considerations.[10] Some forests were declared to be “reserved” giving rights to only authorized contractors to use its resources such as timber for commercial purposes. Such colonial policies uprooted the self -sustained economy of the tribes, which led to widespread rural unrest, tribal armed conflicts and movements. The British with a view to bring these “primitive people” whom they considered to be of “predatory” nature under their control, passed the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871- which attempted to register, control and put under surveillance certain tribes and eunuchs. [11] These tribes were “notified” as criminal and all members irrespective of their criminal history/precedent branded as having criminal tendencies. [11] In the year 1923, The Royal Society of Arts in its Journal published the article, The Criminal Tribes of India” where Federick de L. Booth Tucker, a retired British administrative officer wrote, “Crime in most countries is committed by individuals, In India usually by tribes, communities and gangs, who are highly organized and trained in it from childhood as a profession. The entire family and the relatives are an Indian criminal. Including the woman and children are usually associated with him in the commission of crime. It is looked upon by these tribes very much as we regard to military profession, and is considered to be both honourable and lucrative.” [14]





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An era of statutory stigmatization came to an end as post independence, the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA), 1871 was repealed in 1949 and further replaced by the Habitual Offender Act 1952, where all the “criminal tribes” were de-notified in the year 1952. But there still has not been a substantial change in their social and societal footing. The people from these communities still form the poorest and most undeveloped sections of the society, largely still unaware of their rights and deprived of their basic living necessities. Erstwhile criminal tribes still are branded by the society as well as the law enforcing agencies to be possessing “criminal tendencies.” Even now, whenever any crime takes place in a village, during the investigation all the members from such de-notified tribe including women and children are rounded up, harassed as they are always under suspicion. [13] The National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes constituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in 2005 reported that in present days De-notified and Nomadic Tribes constituted nearly 10 per cent of the population in India as there were around 150 De-notified tribes and around 500 different Nomadic Tribes and their presence can still be found out in the SC, ST and OBC lists. [15]

3.0 Objective of the study: to study the real scenario of the survival strategies of the Lodhas through forest to continue the livelihood.

3.1 Sampling Universe

Bengal had an amazing geographical feature with sea on the south and mountains on the north. The influxes of various invaders for centuries have pushed the indigenous and tribal peoples of this part of India into secluded and forest areas. This exclusion from the natural influx of heterogeneous populace makes them unique and different from the former. This state has twenty three districts divided into five divisions.

The primary data for the research have been collected from Nayagram and Binpur II blocks from Jhargram and Narayangarh block of Paschim Medinipur District. The empirical data for the



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research have been collected through survey work during the first three months of this year. These data included qualitative and quantitative information collected through household visits, structured and unstructured questionnaire scheduled and also with the help of random case study, participatory observation, focus group discussion, and panel interviews.

3.2 Findings of the study (Result)

The study revealed that the Lodhas socio-economically backward community in West Bengal. They are standing separate from all other tribal groups. So, their social life is interesting to reveal. Their social life includes their settlement, their house types, their literacy and education, their social organization, food habits, social customs, work participation, their political organization and so on. The villages are either separately or with other communities. It is obvious that most of the Lodhas villages are situated far away from the human reach inside the dense forest separately. But some of them are found living in multi-caste villages. Financial condition of the Lodhas was not successful. It was mostly pathetic. Since the Lodhas are mostly forest dwellers, their economic events centre in and everywhere the forest.

3.2.1 House Types: The house of Lodha has been made in here and there in a scattered manner. These houses appear as a shapeless cluster. They are build houses made of mud and straw-thatched which is single roomed. Few well to do families have multi-roomed houses with country yards and gardens fenced with bamboo poles and twigs. They live with their pet animals. The Lodhas families in the past did not know the use of modern utensils. They used mud pots, leaf plates and cups as their utensils. But today they are using steel and aluminium utensils. The Lodhas prefer to live in nuclear family. The family property is inherited along the male line. After marriage, a daughter leaves her parental house and joins the family of her parents-in-law. This custom shows that the Lodhas family is patriarchal.





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3.2.2 Foodstuff, drinking and Smoking habits: The main food of the Lodhas is rice. They take meals twice and thrice a day. Every morning they eat soaked water rice of the previous night. They take it with burnt potatoes and tomato with mustard oil, roasted drumstick leaf. Few families take boiled rice with different vegetable items in the Lunch. Few families did not took lunch because they went to forest early morning and came back after sun set. In the evening they are prepared the rice and chicken. They prefer to eat vegetables which are grow from their own homstaed land like potato, tomato, drumstick leaf, chilly, cauliflower, cabbage, bitter guard, ladies finger, radish arum and brinjal etc. Besides vegetable food, they also eat non-vegetable food like chicken, fish and dried fish. Sometimes the Lodhas stored the vegetables and chicken as dried for their lean period. Consumption of liquor is more or less a part of their food habits. Men are smoking bidi and *Hunkoo*. Male and female drink country/Mahul liquor when they feel tired and during festival. Both men and women are having the habits of chewing the betel leaves along with tobacco.

3.2.3 Education and Literacy: Education is the only status to achieve the development goal. The literacy situation of the Lodhas is below the state average in case of both males and females. The literacy rate of the Lodhas as reported in 2011 census is 28.0%. The percentage of matriculates among the Lodhas is below 5% in case of males and below 2% among the females. The numbers of graduate's holders are negligible among the Lodhas till today. At present level of education little bit change. Very few of them are completed graduate and post-graduate degree.

3.2.4 Social Organization: Among the Lodhas there are nine different clan groups having totemic origin each who start living as a community under one chief. Subsequently, they are known as Lodhas tribal group. The Lodhas tribe becomes the largest social unit. The village headman is called Mukhia or Sardar. The Mukhia controls over the village panchayat and decides cases relating to breaking of social customs, norms and taboos. The decision given by the Mukhia is to be obeyed in one and all. Dakua, a village messenger helps the Mukhia.



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3.2.5 Economic Life: The economic life of the Lodhas depends of forest produce collection and day labour. Since the Lodhas are mostly forest dwellers, their economic events centre in and everywhere the forest. Their main work was childhood the *tussar* silkworm in the host trees of Sal and Asan. As well tussar cultivation they pursue hunting, food gathering, and collecting forest products in the forest. The collection of fruits and roots for their own consumption and collect Kendu leaves to make bidi. They used to collect Sal leaves to make *Bati* and plates, collect *Sabai* grass to make ropes. They also collect forest products like honey, Laxa, Seeds, roots, Gum, Mahua fruit & flowers and firewood which they sell in the local market or hut to earn for survive them. Though it is a matter of regret that determined deforestation throws the Lodhas out of their old-style source of living and turns their financial condition pathetic. Few families depend on domestic animal rearing and fishing. After 70 years of Independence begging is the source of income among the Lodha in undivided Midnapore district.

4.0 Discussion

At the outset, it should be mentioned that the table 1 on the age-sex wise distribution of the economic activities of the Lodhas in the study population represented frequency data in the rows of the table since individuals were found to be engaged in more than one economic pursuit across age groups. Thus, the row totals in each age group were not the total number of individuals in that age group but summation of frequencies of the different economic activities undertaken by the Lodhas. The column totals under each economic activity however, represented the actual number of persons and it had also exposed the impoverished condition of the families in the study population. We have found very few number of men and women who owned some agricultural land. A substantial number of the men & women (Lodha 36.84%) were found to be engaged in forest product collection. A large number (29.95 % & 24.83 %) of population are engaged in agricultural & Non-agriculture day labour among the Lodhas. Animal husbandry and business occupied a miniscule portion of the economic activities among the population. We have found about 25 % have own agricultural land, but due to





lack of proper irrigation and agricultural implements did not cultivate every year. Some Lodha families have MGNREGA job card but they did not get hundred days work through the job card.

Age group	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]
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

Table 1 Age group wise pattern of occupation among the Lodhas



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Village name	No of families who are responded	No of families who are satisfied	No. of families who are not satisfied	Total
Fulgeria	39[15.48]	(30.49)25[9.92]	(8.24)14[5.55]	39[15.48]
Muradchak	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]
Bansiasole	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 total

Table 2 Village wise Minor Forest produce collection and their opinion

Table 2 Lodhas are traditional forest dweller and until recently their main income comes from collection of leaves and fallen tree branches. They are also the one who 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. So, we have found that about 67% families are not satisfied to collect the minor forest produce or as a earning sources and about 33% families are satisfied to collect the minor forest produce. This data has been collected from 252 families out of eight villages. Minor forest produce is still their main source of income. Their dis-satisfaction came from harassment by the forester during forest produce collection.



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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 shal leaves and a collector hardly get Rs. 50-60 per 1000 leaves but finished product as plate of shal 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 shal leaves like honey, mushroom, medicinal plant parts are hardly been explored in a organized way and remain largely unexplored. We have found village wise forest produce collection and who are satisfied and not satisfied that FPC is one of the major economic resources. About 68 percent are not satisfied to collect forest produce and sold it as well as entering into the forest and deforestation. According to them the Lodhas are not a member of JFM and sometimes they are arrested by the forest guard.

Some representative case studies

Case study 1

Name of the Informant: Rabi Bhakta

Age: 38 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'.

Case 2





Name of the Informant: Rahul Sabar Age: 70 Sex: Male

Village: Rimradanga GP: Vulaveda Block: Binpur-II Dist: Paschim Medinipur

According to the informant he lived in this village since his born. Rabi told me 'I have no agricultural and home stated land; I maintained my family depend on forest produce collection and day labourer.' He was born before independence but not yet get any help from government. Before came the Left front government usually they survive their family through cow grazing. He also told me 'Every day morning my wife, son and daughter collected some cow from neighbouring villages for grazing and came back in the evening with basis of sixteen kilogram paddy or Rs. 200/- per month.' According to his wife 'we were collect rice, vegetable, and salt from some families after tide the cow in every house; then we consumed some of the collected food all together in the every evening and rest stored for the next day morning'. At present his family fully depends on forest produce collection. They were collected *patsha sikar, Dhuna, Dhudh skin, haritaki, valuk sukti* form jungle and sold these in our local hat or market. We also collected various shak (kachu, Chakura, pat, letus etc) for consumed.

Case 3

Name of informant: Chandan Nayek & Namita Nayek Age: 56/43

Village: Bircanrd Block: Narayangarh Dist: Paschim Medinipur

Chandan Nayek lives in a nuclear family with his wife and two sons. They are dependent on daily labour and cultivation for their survival. He did not receive any development input from the Government except Job Card He said: 'I have received a Job Card in 2008 and did not get any work through the job card'. He added: 'some of our villagers got the opportunity to work through the Government job card but they did not get money after the work every day. The money is paid by the contractor after completion of the whole work after six months; so how we will



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maintain our family? For this reason we did not work under MGNRGA scheme'. His wife further added: 'Our family depends on daily labour and in every evening we need money and through this money we purchase basic food items. For this reason we go outside the district or state to work as an agricultural or non-agricultural day labour. Under the Job card system we do not get money every day.

5.0 Conclusion & Recommendation

Lodhas are traditional forest dweller and even our study recorded almost 32% working force are engaged in minor forest produce (MFP) collection. Our study also pointed that MFP collection is becoming less remunerative. Degradation of forest overexploitation is the reasons. We also noticed that MFP is mainly confined in collection of *Saal* leaves and fire woods. Even these products are sold through middlemen and leads to under payment. We could find huge potential in these MFP which to an extent been explored by the Lodhas of Nayagram where in addition of two previously mentioned common forest product collection of mushroom, herbs, wild fruits with medicinal values were fetching money. Cultivation of Tasar (*Antheraea mylitta*) silk is another promising option. Our recommendation is therefore coordinated towards diverse and sustainable use of forest produce and scientific training of the Lodha women and men in the use of forest as a resource. Special attention should also be given to create value added products out of these forest produce with the simultaneous efforts towards marketing by the governmental agencies to prevent exploitation by the middlemen.

Cultivation Tasar moth and preparation of tasar silk by these people itself can be a lucrative option if these people are trained. Joint Forest Management Committee is in vogue now days but sadly enough we could find no activities of these committee except some irregular forest cutting. We strongly recommend strengthening of this committee and we strongly recommend the inclusion of the Lodha women and men as members in the Forest Protection Committees Forest department should take pro active steps to increase their developmental activities in these areas.





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Our empirical findings have shown that the livelihood option of the Lodhas as Owner Cultivator was less than 10% whereas about 30% of the population was working as agricultural labiurers.'that agriculture as 'owner cultivar' is the livelihood option for less than 10% of the population but working as agricultural labours covered another 30% of the population. Lack of ownership of land followed by acute shortage of water was the main constraint in accepting agriculture as livelihood option. We could also find no special initiative from department of agriculture to make agriculture lucrative to Lodhas. Our recommendation is to encourage the Lodhas of this area for vegetable and pulse crop cultivation which requires lesser amount of water as well as profitable. We also urge department of agriculture and department of agri irrigation to join hands for upgradation of irrigation facilities in these areas with proper training and motivation to Lodhas to take up agriculture as livelihood option along with proper training on 'water efficient agriculture', supply of agricultural equipment, high yielding varieties of seed and fertilizers. We are also of the opinion that taking up agriculture as one of the livelihood options shall greatly reduce the out-migration of these people in search of menial unskilled work.

We therefore strongly recommend special mission mode approach in MGNREGA aiming at these Lodha people in particular. Asset creation under these project and involvement of forest department to open avenue for work in forest area should also be explored. Women job card holders should be encouraged and convergence with other departments should be explored under MGNREGA to include horticulture activities, livestock shade repairing, plantation, *Tasar* cultivation under permissible work.

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7.0 ANNEXURE

Representatives photo plate of forest produce collections by the Lodhas



Chiharlata use to prepare rope



Kendu leaf use to prepare *biri*



Mahul fruit use to prepare mahul liquor



Shal leaf use to prepare *shal* plate



Dried Satamul root for sale



Dried animal for future consumption