

# Ground Realities of Development among the Lodhas in West Bengal

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**ABSTRACT:** The Lodhas are regarded as a marginalized and economically backward tribe of eastern India and both the Central and the State Governments have allocated funds under various development schemes to improve the socio-economic condition of the tribe since the Independence of the country. The condition of the tribe however has not improved considerably although, various development inputs were given to the tribe. This field-based study done by anthropologists and voluntary social workers revealed that the Lodhas remained poor and marginalized as compared to other tribal communities of the region. Under this background, a research was carried out to make an assessment of the ground realities of the situation regarding the utilization of the development inputs given to the Lodhas in three administrative blocks of Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal.

## INTRODUCTION

The first women graduate among the Lodha community (a small marginalized tribe in West Bengal and adjoining States) named Chuni Kotal committed suicide on 16 August 1992 in Midnapore. She was a student of the anthropology department of Vidyasagar University. Chuni Kotal had alleged that a teacher of the department had often used to harass her and insult her by casting aspersions on her lower caste origin. The West Bengal Government had constituted an one man enquiry committee at that time which had acquitted the teacher (Ganguly Commission of Enquiry, 1992). The suicide of Chuni had created an uproar in the media and the political circles and which often reappeared in the academic literature (Chanda, 2005: 130-141; Devi, 1992: 1836-1837).

As we are trained in anthropological studies and also member of the academic community of the department of anthropology at Vidyasagar University, the aforementioned event aroused our interest to *South Asian Anthropologist*, 2013, 13(1): 75-84

conduct an anthropological research on the efforts of the governmental and non-governmental agencies for the socio-economic development of the Lodhas in Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal.

Opportunities came to us when in the month of November 2005, we had to conduct a social anthropological fieldwork in connection with a research project on "Socio-economic Impact Assessment of Development Programmes. Among the Lodha / Sabar of Binpur-II & Nayagram Block of Paschim (West) Medinipur District", under the *Rastriya Sama Vikas Yojana* scheme of Paschim Medinipur district sponsored by the Planning Commission of India, New Delhi. The project was sanctioned by the then District Magistrate of Paschim Medinipur. Data on the development inputs given to Lodhas were collected for this project and an impact assessment report was also submitted to the District Magistrate in 2006. We have written this article based on the data collected for the project and also on further

research done by the first author of the paper for his doctoral dissertation in anthropology submitted to Vidyasagar University in 2012.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The primary data for the research have been collected from three hundred thirty two (332) Lodha households (the total population is 1382) in the three blocks, viz., Binpur II, Nayagram and Narayangargh of Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal through intensive anthropological fieldwork conducted for about two consecutive years. These data included qualitative and quantitative information collected through household census, structured and unstructured questionnaire scheduled and also with the help of genealogy, case study, participatory observation, focus group discussion, and panel interviews.

#### THE LODHAS

The Lodhas are now classified as one of the 'denotified communities' by the Government of India. In West Bengal, Lodhas are mainly concentrated in the districts of Paschim (West) Medinipur and Purba (East) Medinipur. In the pre-Independence period they were treated as a 'Criminal Tribe' by the British Government of India till the revocation of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1952. In the first Census of India after Independence the Lodhas were recorded as a scheduled caste and their total population was returned to be 8,346 souls only in West Bengal (Mitra, '53: 89). According to the Census of India 1951, the Lodhas were found to be distributed in the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore, Hooghly, Howrah, 24 Parganas, Calcutta (now Kolkata), Murshidabad and Jalpaiguri. In 1951, they were not found in the North Bengal districts like Nadia, Maldah, West Dinajpur, Darjeeling and Cooch Behar. In the same Census report, the total number of Lodhas in erstwhile Midnapore district was 7040, that is 84.35 per cent of the then total population of Lodhas in West Bengal. (Mitra, '53: 89-90). Lodhas are also found in the Singhbhum district of Jharkhand and the Mayurbhanj district in Orissa. They live near the fringes of forests and also near the villages of hindu caste groups. They are basically a group of food gathering people and mainly subsist on the collection of wild roots, tubers and edible leaves from jungles.

They also practice the killing of the wild games, like birds, lizards and alligators to consume their flesh as food and sell the skins and hides of these animals in the market. (Narayan, '88: 37-38).

In volume III of the *People of India* (1994) edited by the Director General of the Anthropological Survey of India, it was reported that the Lodhas are mainly concentrated in the western part of Midnapore district in West Bengal and their traditional rights of access to forest have been curtailed. The *People of India* volume added ...they make surreptitious forays into forests, which result in criminal cases being filed against them. Consequent to the colonization scheme, some have taken to agriculture. Besides, they supplement their income by working as daily-wage labourers, when hunting or fishing yield little return (Singh, '94: 695-696).

The Census of India 1981, showed that the total population of the Lodhas including the Kharias and the Kherias of West Bengal was 53,718. The Lodhas were concentrated in erstwhile Midnapore District and their total number according to the Census of India 1981 was 16,534. Besides West Bengal, they were also found in the Mayurbhanj and Baleswar districts of Orissa. Originally, they inhabited hilly rugged terrains covered with jungle. Their mother tongue is Lodha, which is close to Savara, an Austro-Asiatic language. They are fluent in Bengali language. Traditionally, they were forest dwellers but now they have started cultivation either as owners of land or as agricultural labourers, and are also engaged in hunting and fishing. More than 80 per cent of them follow Hinduism with traditional belief in spirits and nature (Mandal *et al.*, 2002: 32).

The Lodhas of Midnapore are said to be identical with Savars and Sahars, 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 firewood collectors and sellers (Mitra, 1953:77). According to Danda (2002) a 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 Orissa and Midnapore district of West Bengal, which is also

known as 'Jungle Mahal' since the colonial period that were found to inhabit mainly in the three aforementioned states of India. They speak a dialect composed of distorted Bengali, Oriya and words of Mundari origin (Danda, 2002: 103).

The Government of India repealed the 'Criminal Tribes Act' in 1952, established by the Colonial rulers. Even after 'denotification as criminal tribes', the Lodhas continue to suffer from the social stigma and the non-tribal neighbours who still behave unsympathetically towards them. Over the decades, the Lodhas gradually have changed their occupation from hunting gathering to agriculture as an alternative means of livelihood owing to deforestation (Danda, 2002: 110-111).

#### *Activists on the Welfare of the Lodhas*

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. According to Bhowmick ('63: 29-30) the Lodhas of erstwhile Medinipur district depended mainly on food gathering and hunting and some of them were found to be engaged in agricultural as well as non-agricultural activities as hired labourers of the higher caste and wealthy families of the villages. By and large, since dependence on forest produce is not sufficient for them, the Lodhas were also found to be engaged in a variety of occupations to sustain their livelihood. In one of his earlier articles, P. K. Bhowmick ('66: 68) described the socio-economic transformation of the Lodhas since the British colonial period. Bhowmick's study was based on the Lodhas of present day Paschim (West) Medinipur. He observed that the Lodhas have never been incorporated in the mainstream Hindu society and culture, although since the withdrawal of the Criminal Tribes' Act of 1952, many governmental schemes had have been introduced to improve the socio-economic condition of this marginalised community. Bhowmick also observed that the Lodhas in many cases were found to be exploited by the powerful sections of the rural society in illegal activities like theft, burglary and robbery. According to him, these local elite groups developed a vested interest to obstruct the developmental programmes earmarked for the Lodhas since economic upliftment

of the Lodhas, might endanger the clandestine activities of the local power elite (Bhowmick, '66: 70).

In a paper written much later in the *Newsletter* of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain, Bhowmick explained the socio-psychological processes which created a vicious circle of underdevelopment, poverty and mistrust among the Lodhas. We quote him as follows: "The chronic poverty and low aspiration level and lack of zeal of these people have created socio-cultural and economic constraints which, in turn, have made them lazy and lethargic. This has also made them unresponsive to any sort of change or innovation introduced for their uplift" (Bhowmick, '81: 7).

In this empirical and policy focused study, we have made an attempt to observe the Lodhas in three different locations (including the one in which Bhowmick did his fieldwork and action oriented studies) in the context of the development efforts undertaken by the Government.

Another important observer of the marginalized condition of the Lodhas in West Bengal is Mahasveta Devi who is a celebrated Bengali litterateur and a human rights activist. Mahasveta Devi not only wrote on the abject poverty and exploitation of the Lodhas, she also worked for decades to fulfill the various demands of the community as regards their socio-economic condition. Although, not an anthropologist, Mahasveta Devi has firsthand personal experiences of the failures of governmental schemes and shortcomings of the government policies directed towards the development of the Lodhas in erstwhile Midnapore, and the adjoining districts of West Bengal. Unlike trained anthropologists, she practiced activism through the publication of a literary magazine in which many literate tribal persons including some Lodhas contributed and wrote about their living conditions, violence committed to them by the state and higher classes of the society and the demands of the different tribal communities. Mahasveta Devi herself also wrote a number of articles in Bengali and English in which she depicted the ground realities regarding the problems of the implementation of development inputs and schemes among the Lodhas. In one of her articles published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* in 1983, Mahasveta Devi cited examples of some Lodha villages in the present Paschim

Medinipur district in which government schemes have failed to reach the beneficiaries, although they were badly in need of the development programmes. In this article Mahasveta Devi categorically had pointed out “Usually the schemes are made by people not knowing or caring to know what the tribals really need. The plan is then, after the usual procedures, left to the contractor.... I have seen contractor-made construction works meant for the Lodhas. It is better to make spacious earthen huts. With a structure of cement, brick and sand, the inevitable contractor is bound to enter the scene. To whose benefit? Not the Lodhas’ .Over three decades, huge sums have been spent in the name of the Lodhas and the community has gone much below the poverty lines” (Devi, ’83: 948).

Mahasveta Devi’s long experience of working actively for the cause of the Lodhas led her to recommend certain concrete solutions which she thought should have been adopted by the policy makers and government functionaries for the development of this small and marginalised community of West Bengal. According to her, plans with big budgets may not work for the real development of the Lodhas and secondly, development inputs for the community should be executed and managed by the Lodhas themselves. In another article published in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, Mahasveta Devi narrated her experience of observing the enthusiasm created among the Lodhas when in 1982-83, they revived their own community organisation (*Lodha-Sabar Kalayan Samiti*). We quote from the author’s article, “The Lodhas had revived the Samiti in sheer desperation for physical survival. The awakening of the Lodhas surprised the state government. The sluggish serpent eternally in winter hibernation covering the Lodha name seemed to stir a little. Six Lodhas were appointed as Lodha cell social workers, including Chuni Kotal. And three boys were appointed as village welfare supervisors in Chakua, Chandabila and Pranabpalli, on contingency basis, at ten rupees a day. All were employed in September 1983. .... This encouraged the Lodhas, through their devotion and dedication, Lodha and some non-Lodha children came to the community centre for studying. These workers could persuade the Lodhas to give up drinking, to

save from their wages, to live hygienically. They felt that the state government was coming forward with schemes for development and the Lodhas should be prepared to reap the full benefit of such schemes” (Dev, ’85: 1467).

The above narratives from the articles of P.K. Bhowmick and Mahasveta Devi provide the broader context of our findings on the efforts of the Government towards the socio-economic development of the Lodhas in Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal in which Chuni Kotal was born and educated.

#### GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE OF DEVELOPMENT INPUT AMONG THE LODHAS

After independence the main aim of the Government was to put off the stigma of criminal tribe designation of the Lodhas, and at the same time the Government also wanted to uplift the socio-economic condition of this tribe who mainly depended on forest produce and daily labour. Another important component of the governmental perspective centering round the development of the Lodhas was to settle this tribe as agriculturist. For this reason every effort to improve the condition of the Lodhas consisted of giving them land, permanent houses, domestic animals and poultry birds. There was virtually no effort on the part of the government and the NGOs to improve the economy of the Lodhas with the use of the forests which the members of this tribe knew best. The traditional and intimate knowledge of the Lodhas about the forest and the animals on which the community sustained its livelihood were rarely studied and used by the governmental and non-governmental developmental agencies. Even the anthropologists, who were working on the Lodhas, did never study the relationship of the Lodhas with the forests in detail. One striking fact in this regard is the virtual neglect of the Lodhas by the Forest Department of the Government of West Bengal. For example, in the Joint Forest Management movement the participation of the Lodhas is still very much negligible. Most of the benefits gained through the activities of the Forest Protection Committees are enjoyed by the members of the economically and socially dominant castes and tribes. This truncated approach towards the

development of the Lodhas operated in such a manner that the socio-economic condition of the Lodhas did not improve appreciably in the long post-Independence period. As a result of the failure of the Government to improve the condition of the Lodhas and other tribes under similar conditions, the Government of India coined a new designation in the year 1971 for their development, which was 'Primitive Tribal Group' or PTG. The Lodhas of West Bengal were put under this new category. The overall approach towards the development of the Lodhas however, did not change much even after the introduction of this new designation, except for the fact that more funds for the development of the Lodhas were allocated. In later period another new idea for the development of the 'backward districts' came into existence. This scheme was launched by the Planning Commission of India, New Delhi, and it is known as the Rastriya Sama Vikas Yojna (RSVY).

The scheme aimed at focused development programmes for backward areas which would help reduce imbalances and speed up development. Under the RSVY scheme, the Central Government aimed to cover 100 backward districts in India. Already 50 backward districts have been covered during 2003-2004 and a sum of Rs. 15000 crore per year was provided to each of the district for a period of three years, that is a total of Rs. 45.00 crore per district have been released to the State Governments on hundred percent grant basis in installment. The Paschim Medinipur district was identified as a backward district and a grant from the RSVY scheme was released during the annual plan period 2003-2004 (Planning Commission, 2004). The plan document revealed that the main objective of the RSVY scheme would be to address the problems of low agricultural productivity, unemployment in the rural areas, and to fill in the critical gaps in the physical and social infrastructures of the 'backward region'. There is a scope in the scheme to make plans to improve the socio-economic conditions of the 'poorer pockets' and/or specific disadvantaged groups and communities. Accordingly, Paschim Medinipur district was identified as one of the 'backward district' of West Bengal under the RSVY scheme and the district administration decided to target the Lodhas of the district for the implementation of the scheme.

The RSVY plan document has mentioned the special focus areas of development which should be undertaken in the district plan. These special focus areas are: (i) Land and water management including check dams, revitalization of traditional water structures, small lift irrigation projects, mini diversion weirs, etc. (ii) Health infrastructure, particularly strengthening of women and child development centers and provision of facilities for institutional deliveries. (iii) Educational infrastructure, which would aim towards vocational training and skill development. (iv) Increase in income from agriculture and allied activities through intensification of agricultural and horticultural practices. (v) Rearing of domestic animals, poultry birds and pisciculture, etc. through back-up of veterinary facilities and marketing infrastructure.

Under this general background of the governmental perspective on the development of the Lodhas, we began our research in Binpur II and Nayagram blocks of Paschim Medinipur district during 2005-06 firstly, by identifying the different types of development inputs given to the Lodhas by the district administration under the RSVY scheme. Later, in course of our fieldwork, it came to our notice that apart from the RSVY scheme various other schemes were also being implemented for the socio-economic development of the tribe. At a much later period of our research, we selected the third Lodha settlement in the Narayangarh block in Paschim Medinipur district. During our fieldwork at Binpur II and Nayagram, we have found that although the plan of the Government was to bring the Lodhas into the fold of agriculture and settle them like a group of farmers, the distribution of land by the Land and Land Reforms Department to the landless Lodha families largely remained an unfinished task. Our findings in the field showed that the distribution of land to the Lodhas was rarely taken up seriously as one of the major and fundamental tasks towards their socio-economic development, although in Narayangarh block the distribution of land to the Lodhas were found to be in better condition. In the following section we would present our empirical findings as regards the distribution and utilization of various developmental inputs among the Lodha families in the three blocks of Paschim Medinipur district who were found to

struggle to sustain their livelihood in the context of acute poverty and marginalization (Planning Commission, 2004: 29-30).

#### DEVELOPMENT INPUTS AND UTILIZATION

In the following tables we have identified all the development inputs given to the Lodha community in terms of their source and percentage of the beneficiary families. Most notable finding is that only 41 per cent of the Lodha families in the study area received some kind of development inputs from the Government which means that despite the launching of various kinds of schemes, more than half of the Lodha families were not being covered by any kind of development input of the government. The next important finding is, of all the thirteen types of development inputs, the distribution of land to the landless families occupied only nine per cent of the development inputs given to the Lodha families in the study area. The third notable finding is the lack of government initiative towards skill development through training among the beneficiary families, only six persons were given training by the Panchayats.

Almost no development input was found to be given to the Lodhas of the study area as regards marketing, value addition, collection and production of minor forest produce. Some beneficiaries were given loan for *babui* grass cultivation which grows on degraded forest lands. It is revealed from the study of the development inputs that Government's attention was mostly directed to provide house, job card distribution and installation of solar cells to the beneficiary families. More than 30 per cent of the beneficiaries (nearly 13 per cent of the total population) were given financial assistance to build their houses and around 19 per cent of the beneficiaries received solar cells.

The following tables (Table 1 and 2) show the pattern of distribution of various types of developmental inputs given to the beneficiaries in the surveyed population. The developmental inputs under the Rastriya Sama Vikas Yojana (RSVY) and Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) schemes included (i) non-refundable cash loan for building house, (ii) solar cells for domestic use, and (iii) cattle (cow, goat and bullock) and poultry birds, (iv) husking and spray

machine for agriculture purpose, (v) job card and (vi) money for domestic animal etc. We have also included the distribution of plots of agricultural land under developmental input. Our findings revealed that at the time of our survey 402 (29.09%) beneficiary families out of 1382 had received various types of developmental inputs in different combinations. The nature of distribution of developmental inputs by the Government shows that emphasis was given to cash loan for house building and high technology solar cells. Through our observation and interviews with the beneficiaries we have found that most of the houses were built in a hurried manner and seemed to be weak in structure. The beneficiaries also expressed their dissatisfaction with the newly built houses. We have also found that the majority of the beneficiaries who received solar cells either sold them against cash to well-to-do neighbours belonging to other communities or could not use them properly (Panda and Guha, 2009: 69-75).

Little attention was paid to strengthen the economic base of the Lodhas at household level through the distribution of agricultural land and other related inputs like ploughs, irrigation water, manure and pesticide. There was no effort on the part of the agriculture department to train the beneficiaries in cultivation. As regards skill development through training, we have found that only six persons were given training and that too was done in the Narayangarh block. Training was given to middle-aged men in mushroom cultivation and micro-credit. Mushroom seeds were given to persons but no arrangement was made in their houses so that they could grow the seeds under proper condition. The persons trained in mushroom cultivation finally consumed the seeds and the training could not be utilized in future. The same persons however could use the training imparted to them on micro-credit since there were already ten women self-help-groups in the village. The distribution of cattle and poultry birds among the Lodhas of our survey population also revealed that the beneficiaries could not manage their cattle and birds owing to lack of basic knowledge in rearing those animals. As a result, we have found that many cattle, particularly goats have died within a short period of time after those were given to the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries of old age pension

TABLE 1

*Utilisation of development inputs among the Lodhas of three administrative blocks of Paschim Medinipur district*

Name of development inputs	Number of beneficiary who received the inputs	Utilised the development inputs	Could not utilise the development inputs
<i>Patta</i> land given by government	*(3.26) 45 †[7.95]	(1.95) 27	(1.30) 18
Land given by NGO	(0.72) 10 [1.77]	(0.51) 07	(0.22) 03
House	(12.66) 175 [30.92]	(7.38) 102	(5.28) 73
Job card	(8.32) 115 [20.32]	(6.22) 86	(2.10) 29
Pond	(0.29) 04 [0.71]	(0.29) 04	–
Money for domestic animal	(1.01) 14 [2.47]	(1.01) 14	–
Training for skill development	(0.43) 06 [1.06]	–	(0.43) 06
Husking machine and spray machine	(0.79) 11 [1.94]	(0.79) 11	–
Loan (MT and <i>babui</i> cultivation)	(2.46) 34 [6.01]	(1.09) 15	(1.37) 19
Old age pension	(1.16) 16 [2.83]	(1.16) 16	–
Solar	(7.60) 105 [18.55]	(4.63) 64	(2.97) 41
Cattle	(1.95) 27 [4.77]	(1.23) 17	(0.73) 10
Blanket	(0.29) 04 [0.71]	(0.29) 04	–
	*(40.95) 566 †[100.00]	(26.56) 373 [64.84]	(14.40) 199 [35.16]

\*Represents percentages out of the total population.  
†Represents percentages out of the total number of beneficiaries.

TABLE 2

*Profile of development inputs received by the families in the study area*

Only house, House building loan	House, <i>patta</i> land and solar cells	House and <i>patta</i> land	House and solar cell	Cattle and house	Only solar cells	Only <i>patta</i> land	Loan	Old age pension	Job card	Money for domestic animal	Husking and spray machine	Total
52	17	22	57	27	31	06	34	16	115	14	11	402
*(12.94)	(4.23)	(5.47)	(14.18)	(6.72)	(7.71)	(1.49)	(8.46)	(3.98)	(28.61)	(3.48)	(2.74)	[29.09]

*Note:* Four persons received pond, six people given skill development training and ten persons received land from NGO in Daharpur village of Narayangarh block, and four persons received blanket in Binpur-II block.

\*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

scheme complained to us about delayed payment of pension by the concerned department of the Government. The overall scenario of the utilization of the various development inputs shows that the majority of the beneficiaries have utilized the development inputs, although there is large amount of variation among the different inputs in terms of their utilization.

Out of all the developmental inputs the distribution of *patta* land is of crucial significance since it is through the successful utilization of land by cultivation a Lodha family can become self-sufficient at the economic level. In fact, we have found some Lodha families in Nayagram and Narayangarh blocks that were in a much better condition than the

Lodhas of the other two blocks studied in our field survey. But the major bottleneck seemed to lie in the area of land distribution, which revealed the failure

TABLE 3

*Utilization of patta land in three blocks*

Total no. of households	No. of households who received patta land	No. of households utilizing the patta land	No. of households who received the patta land but could not utilize the land
332	45	27	18
	*(13.55)	†[60.00]	‡[40.00]

\*Figures in parentheses represent percentages out of the total number of households.  
†Figures in parentheses represent percentages out of the total *patta* land holder.

of the Government to achieve proper land reforms among this marginalized community of West Bengal. The table below shows the pattern of land distribution among the Lodha families in the study area.

The Table 3 shows that only forty five households (13.55%) received *patta* land out of three hundred thirty two households but 8.13 per cent beneficiary families utilized the *patta* land out of the total number of households, whereas 5.42 per cent beneficiaries could not utilize the *patta* land. In course of our fieldwork we have found two major factors behind the non-utilization of *patta* land by the beneficiary families, viz. (i) in a number of cases it was found that the *patta* landholder has received the official papers but could not cultivate it since the land is being utilized by members of other powerful and dominant communities, and (ii) the *patta* landholder is not being able to cultivate the land owing to lack of agricultural implements, irrigation facilities and training. The following contrasting cases collected from the field would reveal the stories of the significance of land distribution among landless Lodha families in Paschim (west) Medinipur district.

#### *Case Study 1*

*Name of informant: Jiban Sabar; Age: 44;  
Sex: Male*

Village: Amlasole, JL. No.: 25. Block: Binpur-II

According to the informant there are six members in his family. They are dependant on forest resource collection and daily labour. He had received a record of right on *patta* land from the Block Land and Land Reforms Department in 2004. The family has also received financial assistance for house building in 2004. All the family members are living in the house but it is not suitable for living as the roof is damaged. Jiban (name changed) said that 'Our house is in a very poor condition because it was built by bricks with mud and thatched by tin with a single door made by plain sheet of tin and there is neither any window nor any ventilation system. The house was constructed by a contractor under the supervision of some government official and they did not consult us regarding the planning of the house. Moreover, if the house requires repair we will not be able to do it without the help of the contractors who made the

construction.' Jiban also added, "I have received *patta* land on paper in 2004 and the amount of the land is 0.15 acre only, but till now I have not seen the land or the plot which has been allotted under my name. May be some other person is cultivating the land. The government official who gave the *patta* paper to me did not show the actual spot where my piece of land is located."

#### *Case Study 2*

*Name of informant: Ghanashyam Bhakta,  
Age: 55 years, Sex: Male*

Village: Bansiasole, JL. No.: 06,  
Block: Nayagram

Ghanashyam Bhakta (name changed) lives in a joint family. His old father and mother reside with him. He has one daughter and a son. His brother and brother's wife and son also share the same household. Formerly they were dependant on forest product collection and daily labour. In 1993, Ghanashyam received about 0.82 acres of *patta* land with record from the Block Land and Land Reforms (BLLRO) Department and he has been cultivating paddy in the land. Only one crop is grown in this land since there is no irrigation facility. According to Ghanashyam, 'I have received *patta* land and cultivating it since 1994 with the help of my family members. In early stage, I could not procure plough and bullocks, but I have been able to hire them from my neighbours in exchange of money. In 1999, I bought a pair of bullocks. I earned the money by selling paddy grown in my land. Then I also bought a plough. Since 2000, I have been able to cultivate my *patta* land in every agricultural season.' Being encouraged in agriculture he purchased 0.10 acre of agricultural land from a Mahata farmer of nearby Malam village. Ghanashyam received financial assistance for house building under IAY scheme in 2004 from the Government. He had said, "After receiving financial assistance for house building in 2004 I made my house according to my plan and employed some members of my own community for the construction of the house. The officers of the government department came to inspect my house and they were satisfied. I am now living comfortably in my house.' Ghanashyam also received old age pension for his parents in 2005, which is Rs.750/- per month. He receives the pension money twice in a year from the local post office and according to him 'the cash money helps him to cover a lot of expenses for his large family.'



### CONCLUSION

The above field based findings revealed that although the chief aim of the Government was to bring the Lodhas into the fold of agriculture and settle them like a group of farmers, the distribution of land by the Land and Land Reforms Department to the landless Lodha families largely remained an unfinished task.

Secondly, a description of all the development inputs has been given and it was found that 41 per cent of the Lodha families in the study received some kind of development inputs from the Government. Our findings further revealed that at the time of our survey 402 (29.09%) beneficiary families out of 1382 have received various types of developmental inputs in different combinations. The nature of distribution of developmental inputs by the Government showed that emphasis was given to cash loan for house building and high technology solar cells. Through our observation and interviews with the beneficiaries we have found that most of the houses were built in a hurried manner and seemed to be weak in structure. The beneficiaries also expressed their dissatisfaction with the newly built houses. We have also found that the majority of the beneficiaries who received solar cells either sold them against cash to well-to-do neighbours belonging to other communities or could not use them properly. Our findings further revealed that a number of the beneficiaries received *patta* land only on paper. Many beneficiaries received financial assistance for house building but in most of the cases the condition of the newly built houses were not suitable for living owing to the poor planning of the house by the contractor appointed by the Panchayats who did not care to consult the beneficiaries. A number of beneficiaries received solar cells but they had no knowledge about how to use and maintain the high-technology gadgets properly. It was also found that the beneficiaries sold the gadgets to their well-to-do Santal and Mahata neighbours.

Under the background of the findings of this applied anthropological research, we now suggest some recommendations, which may be considered by the concerned departments of the Government and the policymakers for the better implementation of the development inputs according to the specific needs of the Lodha community.

1. The Lodha families to whom *patta* land have been issued on paper should immediately be given the actual right of possession by the district administration and the Panchayat with full protection against all kinds of encroachment.
2. The Government land departments should take an initiative to survey the ground reality of the vest land before giving the *pattas*.
3. The Lodha families who are cultivating on *patta* land but do not possess agricultural implements and bullocks should be given those items with proper arrangement of training by the concerned department of the Government.
4. The Lodha families to whom poor quality of land has been given should be provided with better land with plough and bullocks.
5. Arrangement for supply of irrigation water should be made to the Lodha families who are engaged in cultivation to encourage them.
6. Successful Lodha agriculturists should be encouraged by the district administration through the extension of various kinds of facilities to improve their agricultural outputs.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that some of the recommendations which are stated at the end of this article have actually been developed in the impact assessment report submitted to the District Magistrate of Paschim Medinipur during 2006. We would also like to record the fact that the district administration has also adopted some of our recommendations stated in the aforesaid report (Roy, 2009: 15).

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