

Primitive Tribal Groups of Orissa : An Evaluation of Census Data *

Dr. Abhaya Narayan Nayak

The tribal population is found in all most all parts of India and Orissa claims as the second largest tribal dominant state in the country. Since the age of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the tribals occupy a putative role and the Jagannath cult of Orissa is interwoven with the tribal religion which has given genesis to a paradigm of assimilation. The Sabaras of Orissa are the early worshipers of Lord Jagannath and till today they have been performing dominant role in the religio-cultural norms of Jagannath temple. Tribals of Orissa are known as *Adivasi*, *Vanabasi*, and *Girijana*. They are described as aboriginals of Orissa in anthropological literature. The *Adivasi* (aborigine), *Vanabasi* (forest dweller) and *Girijana* (mountain dweller) constitute 22.13% population of Orissa. Government of India has notified 62 endogamous tribal groups of Orissa as Scheduled Tribes. Among these 62 endogamous groups different sub-tribes maintain their endogamous solidarity. Government of India and census of India have been enumerating all tribal population and classifying them into 62 tribal groups. But there are certain tribal groups who independently claim themselves as separate tribe, still, they are merged in a general tribal group.

For instance the Dongaria Khonds, Kutia Khonds and Desia Khonds are independent endogamous groups but they have been enumerated as Khonds in general.

Against this backdrop, there are certain tribal groups who are techno-economically backward and are relatively less acculturated. Keeping eye upon their development, Government of India has classified and declared certain tribal groups as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). Low level of literacy, pre-agricultural level of technology and declining or stagnant population are the parameters on the basis of which certain groups have been declared as PTGs. Thus, for two broad way of classifications of tribals as general tribe and primitive tribe, the tribals are divided on the basis of acculturation, occupation, retention of tradition and geographical distribution. In the national context there are some tribal communities like Onge, Bondo, Abujhamaria or Madia Gonds who are caught at a niche representing an earlier stage of economic development (Deogaonkar, 1994). They largely depend on food-gathering and hunting. They have a very small population size and they possess the

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pre-agricultural level of technology and mostly they are pre-literate. Therefore, in the new strategy of development, they have been treated as a separate group and termed as Primitive Tribal Group in the 5th plan (1974-78) period (subsequently they have been redesignated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs). There are 75 Primitive Tribal Groups in India and Orissa houses 13 Primitive Tribal Groups namely (1) The Birhor, (2) The Bondo Poraja, (3) The Didayi, (4) The Dongria Khond, (5) The Juang, (6) The Kharia, (7) The Kutia Khond, (8) The Lanjia Soura, (9) The Lodha, (10) The Mankidia, (11) The Paudi Bhuyan, (12) The Soura and (13) The Chuktia Bhunjia (Hasnain, 1992; Verma, 2002). Out of 62 notified Scheduled Tribes, only 8 Scheduled Tribes are declared as Primitive Tribal Groups by the Government of India. Those tribes are Juang, Bondo Poraja, Lodha, Didayi, Mankidia, Birhor, Kharia and Soura. The remaining 5 tribal ethnic groups are returned with greater tribal communities and the number of tribes like Kharia and Soura are not published independently. The Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India is not publishing the figures and data of 5 Primitive Tribal Groups, namely Kutia Khond, Dongria Khond, Lanjia Saura, Chuktia Bhunjia and Paudi Bhuyan. So far development is concerned these tribal groups are still trailing behind and continue to be techno-economically backward, therefore, their demographic information are worthy of being included in Govt. publications.

Geographical Distribution of PTGs:

Mostly the Primitive Tribal Groups are returned from particular geographical areas of the state, still, their sporadic distribution is also reported from different districts of Orissa in Census reports. In census reports the Birhors, Bondo Poraja, Mankidia, Lodha, Didayi and Juangs are

not reported from Boudh, Kandhamal and Bhadrak districts. In 2001 Census Birhors are dominant in Sambalpur. The lion share of the population of Bondo Poraja is returned from Malkangiri and in case of Lodha it is from Mayurbhanj. The Didayi are numerically dominant in Malkangiri and majority of Juangs are reported from Kendujhar and Angul districts in the last census.

Economic Pursuits:

The economic life of the Primitive Tribal Groups revolve round the forest and the PTGs of Orissa are not out of it. Forest nurtures their life and the biotic and abiotic components of forest ecology fulfill their socio-economic, bio-social, religio-cultural and psycho-social needs. They collect their basic amenities from the forest and their economic life is interwoven with the forest eco-system.

According to the Census 2001 in Orissa, 12.8, 25.3, 7.3, 45.6, 1.3, and 3.3 per cent males are reported as cultivators among Juang, Bondo Poraja, Lodha, Didayi, Mankidia and Birhors respectively. Whereas 31.4% (Juang), 24.9% (Bondo), 15.7% (Birhors) males are reported as agricultural labourer. The highest percentage of female cultivators are reported from Didayi (29.1%) and agricultural labourer from Bondo Poraja (34.3%). The number of household industry workers is higher in case of Mankidia (23.6% male) and (27.0% female). The lowest percentage of household industry workers is reported from Bondo Porajas (Below 1%) and it is also less than 2% among the Didayis.

Growth Rate, Population Distribution and Sex Ratio:

In general, the ST growth rate in the state is declining slowly. The ST growth rate in 1961-71 was 20.08 and it was 16.62, 18.89 and 15.83 in 1971-81, 1981-91 and 1991-01 respectively.

The growth rate of Bondo Poraja, Didayi, Juang, Lodha and Saura etc. is higher than the growth rate of ST in general in 1991-01. The growth rate of Birhor and Mankidia is returned negative and below the state average. The total population of different PTGs is reflected in 2001 census as Birhor (702), Bondo Poraja (9,378), Didayi (7,371), Juang (41,339), Kharia (188,331), Lodha (17,856), Mankidia (1,050) and Soura etc. (473,233). The population of Chuktia Bhunjia, Dongria Khond, Kutia Khond, Lanjia Soura and Paudi Bhuyan is not available in census reports.

As regards to sex ratio of the Scheduled Tribes it is fluctuating from one decadal census to other decadal census. The sex ratio of STs in general was 1018, 1009, 1015, 1006 in 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 census. Though in 2001 the sex ratio of some PTGs are above the state average, Mankidia (937) is found below the state average, still the case of Brihor (939), Lodha (971) and the sex ratio among 0-6 age group of Mankirdia, Lodha and Birhor, Didayi, Bondo Poraja and Juang is 744, 920, 960, 989 and 1001 respectively. Although the preference of male child is not a significant factor among these tribal groups, still declining sex ratio issue should be addressed community wise as such studies may illuminate more on sex ratio decline legend what is now commonly described.

Literacy and Education:

The crude literacy rate of Scheduled Tribe in general in 2001 census was 30.79%. But the literacy situation among all the PTGs is discouraging and below the state average in case of both males and females. The case of Kharia (37.87%), Soura (34.37%) is relatively better than the other PTGs. These two PTGs have better literacy rate during all the censuses. The case of

Didayi (9.88%) and Mankirdia (4.48%) is very discouraging and special education intervention programme is essential for these backward groups. So far female literacy is concerned the literacy rate among females is below the state ST average (19.30%) among almost all PTGs except Kharia (28.98%) and Soura etc. (21.59%). The case of Didayi (4.72%) and Mankirdia (2.17%) need special attention of the planners and administration. In 2001 census the literacy rate of PTGs is reported as Juang (25.4%), Bondo Poraja (14.7%), Lodha (27.0%), Didayi (12.4%), Mankirdia (5.6%) and Birhor (23.3%). The female literacy is lowest in case of Mankirdia (2.6%) and highest among the Birhors (16.2%). The percentage of matriculates among Birhors, Bondo Poraja, Didayi, Juang, Lodha and Mankirdia is below 3% in case of the males and below 1% among the females. The number of graduates and diploma holders are negligible among these PTGs till today.

Work Participation:

The work participation rate among the females is higher than males in case of all PTGs. But in case of Birhor, Lodha and Mankirdia, who are basically hunters and food gatherers have highest female participation than their male counterpart. The data of work participation is not available for Chuktia Bhunjia, Dongria Khond, Kutia Khond, Lanjia Soura and Paudi Bhuyan. In 2001 census the work participation rate of different PTGs is reported as Juang (49.9%), Bondo Poraja (54.6%), Lodha (47.3%), Didayi (51.5%), Mankirdia (55.4%) and Birhor(51.1%). The female work participation is reported in 2001 census as 44.7%, 54.6%, 40.4%, 47.7%, 54.7% and 46.2% among the Juang, Bondo Poraja, Lodha, Didayi, Mankidia and Birhors respectively. In 2001 census the percentage of male non-workers is 44.9%, 45.5%, 45.9%,

44.3%, 43.9% and 44.2% among the Juangs, Bondo Poraja, Lodha, Didayi, Mankidia and Birhors respectively. The highest percentage of female non-workers is reported from Lodhas (59.6%) and lowest from Mankirdia (45.3%).

Conclusion:

The PTGs are the most backward indigenous ethnic groups of Orissa. Government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community based Organizations (CBOs) are working for their development since long, but the fruits of development have not been reflected among the development indicators of these communities as it was expected by the planners. On the other hand data and anthropological literature are also scanty as regards to these groups. Therefore, efforts should be taken to publish socio-economic data about these tribes separately, as a result of which plausible panacea can be developed to address their problems scientifically. In Indian administrative arena the census organization is the only authority who retains socio-economic data of different communities historically. May this organization take care and interest to publish both quantitative and qualitative data on these hitherto poor groups in the ensuing Census.

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