

Socio-Economic Challenges of Bonda Tribe

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Abstract: *This paper aims to identify the socio-economic challenges of the Bonda tribe in recent years and understand the Bonda economy & their livelihood. Field survey is conducted to observe the challenges faced by the aborigines. I found a so many challenges faced by the inhabitants of the land. Perhaps this tribe lives a life close to nature and away from artificial modern life.*

Keywords: livelihood, aborigines, Tribal households, irrigation

I. INTRODUCTION

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES OF BONDA TRIBE

Out of the 75 primitive tribal groups in India we found 13 groups in Odisha. Bonda is one of the primitive tribe known for its ferociousness and unpredictable acts. Therefore, it is important to study the Bonda tribe. They are found in Khairput block of Malkangiri District. The Bonda hill is 14 kms away from Khairput block.

There are two groups i.e. lower Bonda and upper Bonda. The lower Bondas live in the foothills in the multi caste/Tribe villages while the upper Bondas live in the mountain and hilly ranges covering about 50 sq. miles (Approx 230 sq. K.M) well known as Bonda hills with an alleviation varying from 2000 to 4000 in 2 grampanchayats namely Mudulipada and Andrahal.

The Bondas are numbered 2,565 in 1941 census, 3,641 during 1951 census, 4,677 during 1961 census, 5,338 in 1971 census, 5,895 in 1981 census, 7,315 in 1991 census, 9,378 in 2001 census and 12231 in 2011.

The Bonda region is surrounded by dense forests, undulating hilly terrains and high mountain ranges which in most cases are more than 3000 feet in altitude. The land space of Bonda area is well marked with groves of mango and jackfruits. Beautiful garden of plantain, luster, pepper and brinjal are noticed near the villages. Paddy fields are stretched near the streams which are cultivated by the Bondas. While travelling through the Bonda hills are can view the scenic beauty of the forest landscape which is charming and enjoyable.

With a view to improve the socio-economic condition of the upper Bondas one Micro-project named as Bonda Development Agency has been established with headquarters at Mudulipada Since 19th May 1977. The Agency has shouldered the responsibility for various development activities of the upper Bondas. Under individual benefit programs, gradually the Bondas have shown their interest to change their agricultural pattern. In comparatively plain and settled land where irrigation is available the crop intensity has been increased by raising two to three high yielding crops including Paddy, Wheat, Pulses and Vegetable successively. The podu ravaged area are being covered with different fruit bearing trees, inhabitants are assisted to take to subsidiary occupation like goat rearing, dairy, fishing, etc. Water sources including flow water and underground water are being harnessed through mini diversion weirs and dug wells. Pump sets have been supplied to lift water from various sources for irrigation purposes.

Objectives

- I) To examine the socio economic challenges of the Bonda tribe in recent years.
- II) To understand the Bonda economy & their livelihood.

On the basis of the study to suggest some measures for preservation of culture & restoration of old means of livelihood.

Methodology

This study is a part of my M.phil Dissertation and based on field study conducted during the year 2011.

II. SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Health Sector

Bondas have very good health conditions as they are living in a healthy atmosphere but in certain spots like Masaniguda, Kichapada, Ramguda and Bhaluguda you can see the black water there which is the main cause of Malaria. A part from these spots scanty areas near the streams is also one of the reasons where the malarial mosquitoes develop their larva. In addition to this, in times when the season changes the is affected with influenza. Some other factors are also responsible as due to some blind beliefs they shoot arrows to each other for some simple reasons like if somebody is caught red handed at the time of stealing the juice from the pot on the tree, the owner usually loses his temper and sometimes kills the offender by shooting arrows. This creates a major problem and causes the death problems in Bonda tribe.

Education

The spread of education among the Bondas is equally essential like their economic development. The percentage of literacy is very low that is 12.82%. Since several decades attempts have been made in one way or other to make the Bondas literate and educationally developed. All the efforts made by the Government for educational development has no impact on them to the extent desired. The formal education, process of study teaching methods and persons entrusted with the job did not suit to the culture and people of the area. A residential Sevashram of primary standard was functioning at Mudulipada since 1960. It has been upgraded to Ashram School of M. E. standard in the year 1979 and subsequently to High School standard but the number of the Bonda students reading in the High School are quite meagre. The condition of the school building and staff quarters and other problems of the Institution deserve special attention. All the lower primary schools exist in paper but in practice teachers posted there in rarely stay in the area. In some schools the posts of teachers lie vacant for a pretty long period. The teachers recruited from outside are ignorant of the customs and cultural values of the Bonda tribe. The institutions established by the SC and ST development Department are functioning. Keeping in view the inaccessibility of the area, aggressive personality of the people, present condition of the educational institution, constraints of the students, condition of the school houses, unrealistic methods of teaching, late supply of reading and writing materials, constant absenteeism of the teachers etc. suitable action plan for the development of education is in urgent need.

Food and Drinks

The staple food of Bondos is gruel (*Entra*) prepared from ragi and other minor millets. It is generally taken along with boiled green leaves or vegetables or roasted dry-fish. Ordinarily two principal meals are taken by them, one at mid-day and another in the evening. In addition to this they often take gruel at breakfast when they have to work in the field or to go out. On such occasions chilli or onion with a little salt or tamarind is taken along with the gruel. The mid-day meal is taken at noon in the field along with boiled green leaves, vegetable curry or roasted dry-fish.

Beef, pork, chicken and flesh of the buffalo are their favorite non-vegetarian items. Flesh of kites and hawks are very much relished. White ants, red ants, large grass hoppers, are also eaten. Crabs, snails and fish are relished. Blood of the sacrificial animals is boiled in water and eaten as a sort of soup. Only the flesh of monkey, crow, lizard, and snake and of unknown birds and animals considered unclean is not taken.

They usually prepare and take four types of alcoholic drinks. These are, safung (sago-palm juice), Pandom (beer prepared from cereals), Boun-sagur (ardent-spirit of Mahua flower) and Ulinsagur (spirit prepared from mango). Of these drinks, Safung (sag-palm juice) which is the most common and favorite drink is taken both as a beverage and as food. Sago-palm trees (Salap) are planted and owned as private property by the respective families. It is seen that each family owns a number of such trees which can provide alcoholic drink round the year. At the time of partition, such tress are distributed among the sons and sometimes sold or mortgaged.

Culture

The Bondas have some practices which are completely their own. They have a unique cultural affinity. Some of their important festivals are paus a parba (pus arke), Magh parba (susu gige), chait parba (giag – gige), Dasahara Parba

(Kumboda gige) celebrated in the oriya months of pausa, magha, chaitra and aswina respectively. But after globalization due to the effect of other cultures some changes can be experienced in recent years. Regular visit of foreigners and outsiders an undisturbed change we can see in their behaviors and food habits.

Erosion of identity and threat to their habitat

We might not expect to see the Bonda culture in museum in future. Preservation of their culture is the urgent need of the day. More or less the govt. is taking steps to develop the socio-economic condition of Bondas but due to the degradation of the environment that is the destruction of the forests is the biggest threat to their habitat.

In addition to this there is another challenge to the tribe. Some institutions are trying to diverting them from their socio-religious beliefs by helping them financially. This leads to social disintegration between them and it might lead to the erosion of their identity in future.

III. ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Major Agricultural dependence

Bondas are mainly agriculturists. It is heard that the first paddy cultivation was developed by the tribe. The Paddy which is cultivated in Bonda hills is harvested after a period of 10 months and it has a very sweet smell. A part from that the scented rice which is developed there itself the smell is not less than the genuine scents. The practice Podu cultivation by cutting the forest. They collect wild vegetables, bamboo shoots, mushrooms. Gruel of ragi and rice are the chief food of the tribe. They keep cattle, goats, pig and poultry. The Bondas are the expert cultivators. The irrigated and terraced paddy fields on the high hills prove their skill in rice cultivation. Here every little stream is turned into beautiful rice beds where water is channelized carefully to the transplanted paddy fields.

Besides these, they have their hill clearings where they practice Podu. As per their customary practices these clearings become individual property. The bushes and the grass of the podu land are burnt in the months of March and April. The Bondas sell a very little of their produces in the market. In summer they sell a good quantity of jack-fruits in the Mudulipada market. They also sell a large quantity of broom sticks in the nearby markets. They purchase a few articles from the market such as ornaments beads and cooking pots. There is high degree of Economic self sufficiency.

Small and uneconomical land holdings

A part from the major agricultural dependence another challenge before the tribe is they is they hold a very small patches of land which yields less.

Banking facilities

It is a very most important aspect to be discussed that there is no such banking facilities at Bonda hills. They depend upon the banks at Khairput, Govindpalli and Machkund for the loans, deposits and every money transactions what they need. They are exploited by the local money lenders which further leads to Goti System. In times of demonetization they had faced a lot of problems.

Know how potentials of Bondas vs Govt ongoing polices

Govt. is initiating lot more schemes for the development of the tribe. But it is very much important to study the potentiality of the tribe first. They are not accepting the Govt. policies fully because they have a different way of living. They believe in rituals, indigenous way of development in agricultural practices, forest collection, etc. So they have less faith upon the Govt. schemes.

Unfair distribution of Agricultural implements

Another challenge that the tribe faces when they are provided the agricultural implements under Govt. schemes few capitalists hold all those and never give it to anyone , this creates a greater problem between them.

Controlling of Excavation works by the contractors

Another economic challenge in the area is the contractors control the excavation works in Bonda hills. In addition to this, they control Water Harvest Structured Schemes (W.H.S), Small canalization of waters, etc. It creates problems in Bonda tribe.

IV. SUGGESTIONS TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES:

Health

- Awareness programmes should be carried out by the Govt. to check the blind beliefs of the tribe regarding their fights and etc.
- The P.H.C. should be strengthened with additional staffs who are committed to serve in tribal areas.
- The Project Leader, B. D. A. and Project Officer, I. C. D. S. should monitor and evaluate the feeding programme taken up under I. C. D. S.

Water-Supply, Sanitation and Electrification.

- Safe drinking water should be supplied by constructing deep tube-wells in order to check many diseases.
- All the Bonda families may be provided with safety type latrine by the Govt.
- One Assistance Executive Engineer may be posted in the area to look into all the road work and complete those in the time frame.

Education

- Efforts should be made to completely liquidate illiteracy without any reference to the time limit. The number of non-formal teachers working in the area should be increased and they should be entrusted with the responsibility of adult education.
- The Anganwadis of the Bonda project area working well but the pre-school education component of their activities is extremely weak. This has to be strengthened

Agriculture

As Bondas are not acquainted in applying the chemical fertilizers and pesticides, so:

- Policies should be developed to strengthen their indigenous way of development.
- Efforts should be made to develop their techniques.
- Efforts should be made to develop store houses for the Bio-fertilized agricultural outputs.
- Markets should be developed and a minimum support price should be fixed by the Govt. of these products
- Scope should be provided to these Bio-fertilized products for exports having export quality.

Irrigation

- Govt. should take steps for creation of new minor irrigation projects where possible by connecting concern hills for better irrigation and for the better use of perennial water sources.
- Govt. should take steps to create tanks for the storage of water having substantial depth and check dams having permanent in nature in perennial water sources areas and in the rain fed areas only the earlier one is proposed.
- Govt. should take steps to reach these benefits to the general public.

Horticulture

- Markets should be developed for the kasu, jackfruit, papaya, tamarind and special size bananas which are especially developed at Bonda hills.
- In local terms Char-koli, Padeikoli are some the sweet plums should get good markets.

- Markets should be developed for the very rare herbals like Ram kanda (which you can find in Jeypore markets) and kalija kanda is used to control Blood Pressure.
- In Sadhu danger you can see the Grapes and Apples developed by a farmer Sadhu
- (Belongs to Bonda tribe in his name the place is named) should get financial assistance from the Govt. for larger scale of production.

Floriculture

- Markets should be developed for the most scented flower like Kamini, Mahua flowers and also for the Night Jasmine.
- A good number of brooms are produced by the tribe and it should get a good market.

Training Programmes

- A pilot survey should be made in the villages regarding their need and activities and accordingly the training should be provided in their concern villages.
- Incentives should be provided for weaving their traditional clothes for better preservation of their tradition and culture

We all should try to develop these tribal lives not by dragging them into mainstream but by boosting them Economically, Socially and Politically to preserve their Culture.

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