

PROBLEM OF ADAPTATION AND STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE: A CASE STUDY OF MANKIDIA IN ODISHA

*Anupama Rout**

The tribal population is found in almost all parts of India. Odisha has occupied the position of the second largest tribal dominant state of our country. A total of 62 types of tribes inhabit Odisha, out of which 13 come under PVTG (particular vulnerable tribal group). Tribals are known as Adivasi, Vanavasi and Girijan. PVTGs are relatively less acculturated and characterized by low level of literacy, pre agricultural level of technology and declining or stagnant population. Mankidia is one of the PVTG mainly found in Odisha, Jharkhand, and West Bengal. In Odisha they mainly live in Mayurbhanj, Sambalpur, Kalahandi and Sundergarh districts. The reason for their being called Mankidia is that they are skilled in catching monkeys. When the monkeys create havoc in the rural areas and destroy crops, fruits and vegetables, the local people employ Mankidia to catch and kill them. Mankidia are the hunting communities. Some of them have very little contact with other neighbouring communities whereas some others are in contact to some extent to develop a symbiotic relation with them.

Keywords: Tribals Study, Odisha, Mankidia Tribe, Population Study

INTRODUCTION

According to Hill Khadia and Mankidia development agency departmental survey report 2001 census, Mankidia population was 153, which rose to 203 in 2010 at Mayurbhanj District. The sex ratio of Mankidia is 95 females per 108 males. Two villages are covered by Hill Khadia and Mankidia development agency in Mayurbhanj District.

Mankidia tribe largely depends on food-gathering and hunting. They have a very small population size and they possess the pre agricultural level of technology and mostly they are preliterate. 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 group of India.

METHODS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

The present study is carried out with the available anthropological methodology both qualitative and quantitative to generate and to analyze the

* Department of Anthropology, Pondicherry University, Pudduchery.

generated data from the field of inquiry. Questionnaire, scheduled interviews and observation methods are major methods for collecting data from people.

STUDY AREA

Field work was carried out in Jashipur and Karanjia block of Mayurbhanj district. The Durdura and Kendumundi villages where Mankidia tribes live have been studied. These villages are close to Similipal forest which is famous in Asia for tiger conservation. These villages are surrounded by mountain and forest. The Mankidia population according to HKMDA survey is

<i>Year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
2001	80	73	153
2007	94	88	182
2010	108	95	203

LANGUAGE

Mankidia speak almost pure Mundari classed under the Austro-Asiatic sub-family of the Austric linguistic family. Due to close contact with Odiya people they can also speak Odiya language.

DRESS PATTERN

Mankidia does not have a traditional dress. Previously when Mankidia people did not have much contact with other tribal and non tribal people, they used bark and leaves of trees as their dress but after coming into contact with outside people they started using almost every variety of dress which is locally available in the weekly market. The men wear lungi, dhoti, shirt and pant. Women wear cotton and synthetic saree, but traditionally no blouse or petticoat was used; however, now ladies have started using them. Salwar and frock is widely used by girls. The children up to 2 years remain uncovered. Young boys wear full pant, half pant, t-shirt, banian.

FOOD HABIT

The staple food of Mankidia is rice. They also eat seasonal edible roots and tubers, honey, arrowroot, greens, fruits, nuts, berries, flowers, mushrooms etc which they collect from the forest. Roots, tubers and maize are used as major food items during the rainy season. Occasionally they eat meat obtained by hunting animals and sacrificial meat of goats and hen. They drink handia (rice beer) and mahuli (country liquor) from the Kolha and Santal tribe in the weekly market. During rainy season this tribe continues forest collections of

mainly chopped fibres with all difficulty, makes ropes and is able to consume rice throughout the year.

FAMILY

The family type of Mankidia is nuclear patrilineal. Descent is considered through the father line. The married sons or brothers stay in a separate patrilocal residence and continue for some time with joint economic activities and common kitchen. When brothers are separated from each other after marriage, parents usually stay with one of the sons. In case a mother becomes a widow and has no son, she prefers to stay with her son-in-law and daughter.

KINSHIP

The Mankidia although referred to follow the patrilineal descent, practically, equal importance is attached also to the maternal kin. Because of their nomadic habit, association with both the paternal and maternal relatives in the "Tanda" (band) level organization is inevitable. They very much prefer to stay with their bilateral kin for the sake of social security and other conveniences. Frequently, they change the band or 'Tanda' and associate with members of consanguine or affinal kin in the new 'Tanda'.

MARRIAGE

Different types of marriage are found in Mankidia society i.e. marriage by negotiation, marriage by capture and love marriage. Marriage by negotiation is a highly expensive type marriage, as a result of which poor persons prefer marriage by love or capture. In most of the love marriages the rituals and marriage feasts are also not organized because of poor economic condition.

DEATH

There are some rituals performed by the Khadia after the death of a person. All the restrictions are observed by all the members of blood relatives. When a person dies, Mankidia people bury the dead body and dig in such a way that the head can be kept in the south-west direction. Thereafter the trench is filled up with soil. Big stones are kept on the pit so that the jackals and other animals may not dig out and eat up the corpse. The family observes mortuary pollution for a period of ten days. After nine days, people take a purificatory bath. In the ten days the deceased person's family members give feast to their relatives.

HILL KHADIA AND MANKIDIA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (HKMDA)

Primitive tribal communities live more or less in isolation with a very simple life style. Most of these communities are small in size and their growth rate is

low. They have been referred to as constituting the “lowest layer” among the scheduled tribe communities by Dhebar Commission(1963).Till 1st June 1989, seventy four scheduled tribal communities have been identified as ‘Primitive’ and separate Micro-Projects have been established for each of them. As the coverage of a Micro-Project has been limited to 500 families, there is more than one Micro-Project for large primitive tribal communities.

Micro-Projects have undoubtedly benefited the Primitive tribal groups in varying degrees. But all the families among the larger Primitive tribal groups have not been brought within the purview of Micro-Projects.

Hill Khadia and Mankidia development agency has a greater role to play to develop this tribe. The agency that started functioning on 1st December 1986 has been working for both the Hill Khadia and Mankidia. This office is giving loan for fishery, goat rearing, horticulture, agriculture, small business and also to SHG group. It is giving training in driving, rope making, bee keeping, and leaf- plate stitching, conducting health camps and distributing free medicine. It is also constructing houses, school, cc road, MPC, tube wells, pond, wells etc. In addition, it is also providing BPL card, Antyodaya yojana card, pension to widows and distributing land to them to maintain a settled life. This agency is striving to transform this tribe from nomadic life to settled life. Due to the personal contact with people, timely supervision of the programmes after their implementation and gathering knowledge about the culture and basic needs of the people, most of the programmes become successful. But it has faced failure in the field of small businesses, maintaining honey bee boxes, and goat keeping. However, in comparison to the rate of success, such failure is negligible. Nowadays, Mankidia are going out of district or out of state in search of work. Though SHG groups for Mankidia women have been set up with the help of Hill Khadia and Mankidia Development Agency, due to lack of interest and awareness among the Mankidia women, these SHG groups are not functioning. The SHG groups are limited in paper only.

PROBLEMS FACED BY MANKIDIA

Housing Problem

Though Mankidia are a hunting and gathering tribe they are nomadic in nature. Around the year they move around the forest in search of food. For food collection they used to move from one forest to another and sometimes to other districts and states also. So they always made temporary houses of wood and leaves which are easily available in the forest. They call their house *kumbha*. Their house consists of only one room which functions as bed

room, store room, kitchen and guest room. But such houses provided very little safety for them. The houses were easily destroyed by fire; heavy winds blew away the roofs, and they could also be destroyed by wild animals. The rainy season was also very painful for them. After establishment of Hill Khadia and Mankidia development agency in 1986 it provided each family a house and established a colony for them close to the forest, having one room made of cement and the roof made of cement tile, pherochrome tile and asbestos. The provision of these houses has ensured them a settled life. These houses cannot fulfill all their cultural needs, but have partially helped them and brought about big changes among them. Previously when they were moving around the forest, they built houses wherever they wanted, but after Similipal was declared a wild life sanctuary in 1973 it restricted their free movement. Hill Khadia and Mankidia development agency has given them houses, but since every year their population is increasing, the requirement for houses is also increasing. However, the agency has failed to meet this requirement and also not repaired the existing houses which are ruined. These houses are therefore unsafe for living, and consequently, people are not showing interest in staying in these houses.

Food Problem

Mankidias are forest dwellers. For their food they fully depend upon the forest. They move around the forest and collect food. But when Similipal declared a National Park as well as wild life sanctuary since 1958 and a tiger Reserve since 1973, restrictions were imposed on the collection of food. The government is giving them 30 kg rice and 4lit kerosene every month, which is not sufficient for them. Mankidia people generally eat rice with green leaves which is available in the forest. They purchase vegetables only once a week and utilize it for the whole week. Only for the preparation of meat Mankidia people use spice. Previously they were drinking Handia (rice beer) at the time of festivals, but these days, people are drinking it regularly. Some people are drinking Mahuli and wine also. Each Mankidia village has wine shops, due to which youth and old people have taken to drinking regularly, and consequently, it has created disturbance in their society. The little that the men earn each day is spent on wine.

Water Problem

Like housing problem and food problem Mankidia people are facing water problem also. Hill Khadia and Mankidia development agencies have given a well and two tube wells in each Mankidia colony but the wells become dry in summer season and the tube wells are not functioning properly. So people

are depending upon river or pond water for bathing, cooking, drinking and washing purposes, due to which the Mankidia are suffering from diseases like loose motion, stomach pain, fever etc.

Electricity Problem

Electricity is the most important invention of all time. So it is needless to say how much electricity is useful to us. But Mankidias are still deprived of electricity. They are living in darkness. Electricity has not reached them. Night time they are using torch and *dibi* to be safe from wild animals and reptiles.

Occupational Problem

The economic life of the Mankidia is full of hazards and hardships and barely at the level of subsistence. They live from hand to mouth. The primary occupation of the Mankidia is making of ropes out of the bark of the siali creepers, which are used by the local peasantry for different agricultural and domestic purposes. In addition to these ropes, Mankidia make small baskets (*tupa*) out of the siali bark, which are used for oil pressing. Except the baskets and halters used for tying the buffaloes, which cannot be prepared by women, all other types of ropes are made by both sexes. Mankidia are skilled monkey catchers. They use nets made of siali creepers for catching monkeys. They eat flesh of the monkeys and sell the skin to the local skin traders for cash. A taboo is observed against the use of turmeric paste for preparing curry out of monkey's flesh. It is generally believed by them that the use of turmeric in the preparation of the said curry will make them unsuccessful in their monkey hunting. Sometimes they catch birds, squirrels, hare and deer with the help of traps and nets. The birds and animals caught are generally disposed of in neighbouring villages or at market places for cash. Many Mankidia know the techniques of agricultural operations such as weeding, transplanting and harvesting of paddy. The local people very often employ these people as labourers during agricultural season. The wage earned from this pursuit by both sexes adds to their family income. Although these tribes tap different sources for their livelihood, still they run deficit in their food supply many a times. During scarce period they eat mango kernels, which are preserved at home for use in difficult times. To bring development in the living condition of Mankidia, Khadia and Mankidia development agency is giving training to them in driving, leaf-plate stitching, bee-keeping, arrowroot cultivation, rope making, poultry farm, goat keeping etc. to make themselves financially strong.

Educational Problem

Education is essential for all human beings. No human beings are able to survive properly without education. Education tells men how to think, how to work properly, how to make decisions. Through education only one can make individual identity. It is everyone's right to get educated. Compared with other tribes, the literacy rate among Mankidia is very low. In Mankidia society no one has passed matric. They cannot reach matric level because of their poor economic condition and lack of interest towards education. So they are not eligible for any government official work. Very few girls can get chance to read. But they are not getting chance to complete matric. They discontinue their study because of their poor condition and family pressure for child marriage. To improve the Mankidia life style, the government thought that education is necessary for them; otherwise it is very difficult to bring them into the main stream of society. With the help of ITDA, HKMDA micro project has given one educational complex for girls where the government is giving free education to Mankidia girl children starting from class-1 to class-8. Only Hill Khadia & Mankidia girls are studying in this school. It was established on 1st December 2008. All the facilities are free of cost and Mankidia people need not spend a single rupee for education. So Mankidias are showing interest in sending their daughters to this residential school. Each Mankidia village has a MPC (Multi Purpose Corporation) established by HKMDA. One lady teacher is appointed to take care of MPC. The work of the MPC is to give primary education to Mankidia children. But the school is functioning only two to three times a week because the teacher is not coming regularly. Due to the forest area, teachers are not showing interest to come regularly to the school. MPC is also providing one time food and medicine to the children and pregnant ladies. After establishment of the educational complex maximum girl children from Mankidia villages have taken admission in this school. But for boys there is no educational complex. They are going to the nearest primary school where they cannot mix freely with other tribal and non tribal children. They are feeling inferior in comparison to others. Most of their time is spent at home. In the time of rainy season they never go to school. During the time of their festival they remain absent for a week. Maximum time they are staying at home spending lots of time by playing or food gathering. So the literacy rate of boys is same as it was before. So to increase the literacy rate among the boys the government should open an educational complex for boys with all those facilities which are given to girls.

Health Problem

Health is wealth. Such a simple sentence, but its sense and meaning is so tremendous and deep. Through the years, in all societies around the world,

health has become synonymous and equivalent to the value of wealth. Mankidia, who inhabit inside and around the forest, are suffering from lots of diseases because of unhygienic environment. They are frequently suffering from malaria because they do not use mosquito net and forest is the most suitable place for mosquitoes to breed. Dysentery or diarrhoea, fever, cold and cough, headache, small-pox is also very common among them. In addition to these diseases they suffer from chronic skin diseases like scabies, itches and eczema because they do not use pure and clean water for drinking, cooking, and washing purpose. Many times they suffer from stomach pain. The women prepare food in hearth so they are suffering from breathing problem because of the smoke from the hearth. Illness of any kind is believed to be caused by malevolent deities and spirits. As soon as one falls ill, the common practice is to consult the traditional witch doctor-cum-medicine man (Raulia) who practices herbal medicine. He prescribes the medicine to them, and if the medicine fails, then the Raulia conducts divination to identify the evil spirit responsible for the malady and then prescribes the required therapy. Though hospital is far from their colony, every month, the doctor makes one or two visits to Mankidia colony to check their health condition, but Mankidia people are not showing interest in telling their health problem to doctors. They do not come near the doctor. Even today, at the first stage of any health problem, they consult with their traditional village medicine man and use herbal plants. Only in case of serious condition they come to the Jashipur or Karanjia hospital. By that time it becomes very difficult for the doctor to save the patient's life. The Mankidia people do not like tablets. They say it is bitter in taste. This small tablet cannot cure us. Painful injection is better than small tablet. Government is giving them some medicine free of cost for some diseases through ASHA workers and Anganwadi workers but Mankidia people think that these medicines are less powerful than those which are available in private medicine stores. Because of their illiteracy and ignorance they are the enemy of themselves.

SUGGESTION

HKMDA should provide a residential school for boys. It will help to increase their literacy rate. Keeping in view the present situation of Mankidia, the government should make programmes. Otherwise programmes will not achieve success as per the expectation. Awareness should be created among the Mankidia. Mankidia people should also make some effort towards development. Good communication is necessary for their village. So government should make metal road to their village. Monthly two times regularly doctor should visit these villages. Good water facility and electricity

is needed in all Mankidia villages. Mankidia girls should not marry in the age of 12 or 14. They should go for marriage after the age of 18. Government should ban the liquor shops opening in these tribal villages which are spoiling the life of this tribe. Government should encourage them towards saving. The houses provided to them through HKMDA should be repaired from time to time and more houses should be built for them due to their increasing population.

CONCLUSION

Mankidia population is increasing every year due to the good effort of Hill Khadia and Mankidia development agency. But their primary occupation hunting and gathering is going to vanish. Their source of income is going to stop. So they are adopting unfair way to earn money. They are cutting big trees from the forest and selling it to the outsiders without the knowledge of forest guard. They are killing animals for their skin and teeth. They are not aware that they are destroying not only the beauty but the life of the forest also. Due to their poor condition the day will come when they will not hesitate to join the naxalites. It is the primary duty of our government to engage this tribe in any other occupation and to check that the amount they are getting from their work is sufficient for their livelihood or not.

Bibliography

- Dash, Jagannatha. (1999), Human ecology of foragers: a study of the Kharia (Savara), Ujia (Savara), and Birhor in Similipal Hills.
- Hasnain, N., (1992), Tribal India, Delhi, Palaka Prakashan.
- Kumar, Sudhir. (2004), The Birhors of Chotanagpur Region (A Study in Tribal Geography). New Delhi: Rajesh Publications.
- Mukherjee, Mohua. (2000), The Birhor towards the next millennium: glimpses of a primitive tribal group at Kodarma in Bihar. With a foreword by Proboodh K. Bhowmick. Calcutta: Sujan Publications.
- Osada, Toshiki. (1993), "Field Notes on Birhor." In: Tsuyoshi Nara (ed.): A Computer-Assisted Study of South-Asian Languages. Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa. 30-40.
- Patnaik, N., (2005), Primitive Tribes of Odisha, New Delhi, D.K. Print World (P) Ltd.
- Roy, Sarat Chandra. (1925), The Birhors: a little-known jungle tribe of Chota Nagpur. Ranchi.
- Sahu, Chaturbhuj. (1995), Birhor tribe: dimensions of development. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons.
- Sen, B. K. (1955), "Notes on the Birhors." In: *Man in India* 35: 110-18.
- Verma, R. C., (2002), Indian Tribes Through the Ages, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi.

