



Changing Pattern of Life and Livelihood through Environment at Sonajhuri Village of Santiniketan in Birbhum District of West Bengal

Subrata Guha¹ and Md Ismail²

¹Department of Geography, Netaji Subhas Open University, Study Centre, Barasat Govt. College, Kolkata, WB, INDIA

²Department of Geography, Aliah University, Kolkata, WB, INDIA

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Abstract

Environmental Changes and their impacts are the unwanted of physical and as well as socio- economic activities. Environmental process change the acidity of soils, natural soils composition, the nutritional status of soils content, properties of surface water, , and food chains system in the World. Due to humans need man convert forest to industrial land, settlement, marketing place, multiplex, pasture land and grassland to cropland or parking, but the consequential habitat change and biodiversity loss is still undesired. Environmental change the social structure of civil societies and due to environment number changing occur likes social and cultural changes as well as physical and biological. It is caused for air pollution, water pollution, social pollution as well as various problem arises every daily for environment change. The paper is based on field survey and tries to find out changing pattern of rural life with reference to sonajhuri village in Birbhum district. It describes various related pressure as consequential from monetary behavior. These activities are mainly performed for a purpose, to satisfy various consumptions. The environmental changes are normally tied to the extraction and change of materials and energy.

Keywords: Environment, livelihood, impacts, occupational change.

Introduction

The way of standard of living and common custom of each indigenous group of people is exceptional and is related to the utilization of particular natural resource and concentrated to specific type of activities. They had been collecting their essential need and resources from forest without causing any damage to it. The forest provides them with food and livelihood. But due to changing pattern of environment their common habits also change day to day. Livelihood may be referring to group of requirement which is essential for active and healthy life and it is change from time to time due to requirement of people. Primitive's societies fully depend on nature and their surrounding environment. Today society made artificial way of alternative culture for better living as well as create various type of organized working sectors for their development. In spite of this, numbers of communities are not enjoying such kind of facilities due to their lack of education as well as their lack of awareness. Due to the development, environment are facing various type of fatal problem which is directly or indirectly create by man and affect on man. Livelihood are the way of living in way population fulfill their requirement, or get all kinds essential commodities, opportunities for a living. ¹ Livelihoods are mainly a mixture of various sources of economic activities, changeable over period. Livelihoods constitute various type of working opportunities for each number of households and it is usually even for each working member during the time of one year. A 'livelihood' is a system in which way people get working opportunities (may be self

employed, permanent working opportunities, temporary, seasonal as well as govt. services) and get money for maintained their life style. The livelihood is the way that always remove the poverty, increase the income of people, reduced the level of dependency ratio, lead to decreased the illiteracy as well as make the socio-economic well planning societies². Social development and well being are the combination of factor which including sufficient amount goods consumption, overcome various problems which is directly or indirectly affects human being which may be related to basic service, amenities, health, occupation, social discrimination, economic discrimination gender bias achievement and many other services, Livelihood is the common method of how people make a way of life and whether their occupation are more vibrant or vulnerable over time. Livelihood refer to stable and socially secure condition in term of access to existing resources, ownership of properties, secure occupation, secure income as well as household's assets and various things³. Therefore, it is referring to occupation protection rather than just food security, which are the mainly based on rural households because attainment of food security is just one of the objectives of livelihood security⁴. When people or household has considered livelihood security only if there is a basic services is essential that could lead secure future. Actually livelihoods means combination of works comes from a mixture of sources and activities, changeable by day to day⁵. Households obtained their livelihoods from multiple sources; alteration measures are estimated to influence them in a number of ways. These evaluations offer a detailed problem description and discussion of the causation of various types of

environmental pressures and thus supply required information for reducing environmental impacts. Environmental change refer to physical changes as well as it is also things to changes of each and everything likely various types of species⁶. Literacy is one of important factor which is the greater instrument of socio economic development. Level of higher education and literacy enhance greater awareness and lead to upgrading of quality of life⁷. Due the development of Hydro power project are occurred large destruction environment and loss of the unique culture and religious practices of the Lepchas⁸.

Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data, but more attention given on primary data which are collected by author through personal interview with questionnaire. Considering on random sampling basis number 40 households was approached with help of a direct questionnaire-responder method. The secondary data have been collected from BDO (block development officer) office and Gram Panchayat. Lastly all the data are arranged in the suitable table form and prepare chart and diagram for better understanding through analysis. At last all the data are represented through some graphical method like bar chart, pie chart, flow chart etc and used statistical method.

Study Area: Sonajhuri is a unique rural area in Shantiniketan of Birbhum district in West Bengal that makes the Tourist enjoy the lost charm of Shantiniketan as one journey across the winding village roads, untouched, unspoilt forests, Adivasi Villages, the Kopai River and the Khoai region. With an assortment of blushed greenery along with Santhali settlements and the famous Khoai region a canyon that is created by water and wind erosion this is an idle place to look out for peace that one otherwise misses in the busy city life. The traditional life of the Santhali community with their local art and culture make Sonajhuri a heritage destination. Moreover, one can find the local crafts along with the traditional delicacies being sold at the famous Shonajhuri Haat (weekly market) on every Saturday. The famous Baul singers of Shantiniketan also perform in this Haat.

The main attraction here is the Sonajhuri jungle that offers a serene atmosphere and is the perfect place to take a leisure walk. This is probably the cleanest forest area on earth. The Khowai region-canyons created by wind and water is worth experiencing here. The hanging trees and the view of the roots at the edges of these rifts within the forest area will make one fall in love with the region. The slow flowing Kopai River (Rabindranath Tagore's Amader Choto Nadi) and the Baul songs of the singers along the banks are special attractions (Wikipedia).

Study Area

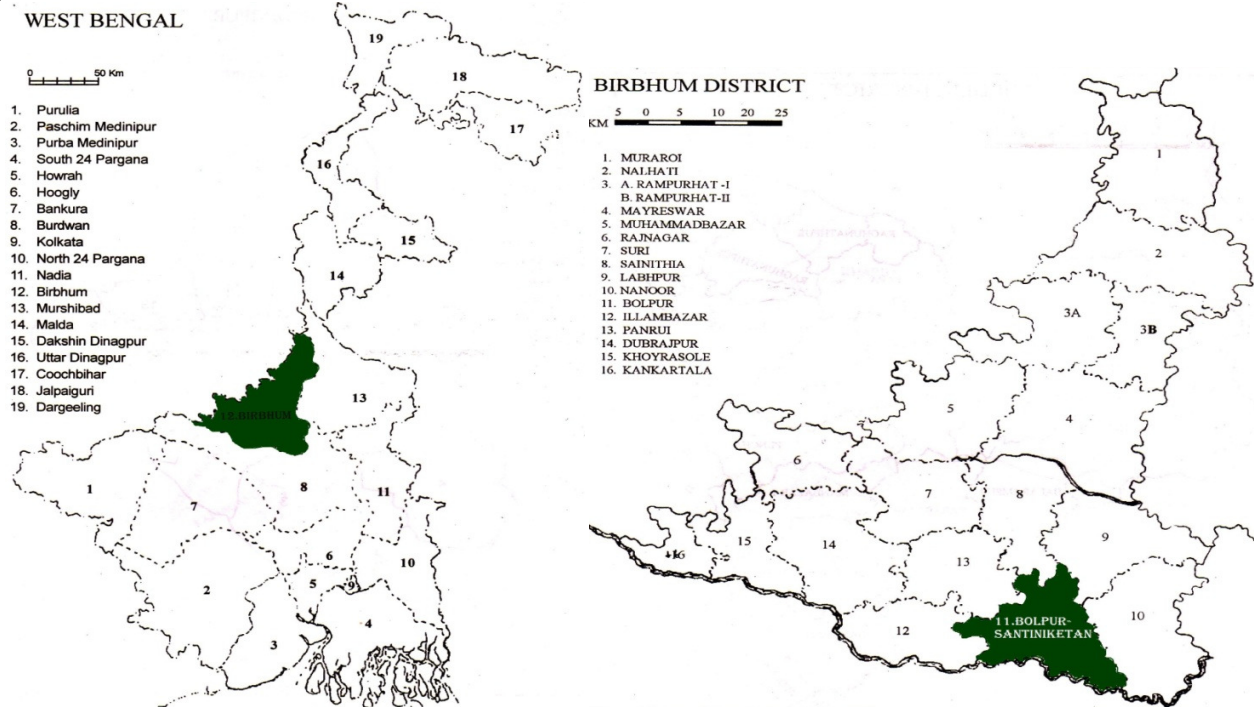


Figure-1

Results and Discussion

Society is a reflection of human characteristics as it presents uniquely human contribution to the ecological condition of nature. Sonajhuri is an example of small rural clustered settlement. Its house types and demographic profile were studied in the field by meticulous observation and collection of data in the field by door-to-door survey.

Demography: A statistical simulation of data presented in Table, showing various aspects of demography of this village is presented through table and diagram. According to primary survey average family size is 5.05 people per family. Sex ratio is 107 female members for per 95 males. Literacy rate of Sonajhuri village are very low due to low level of development. It is nearly 30.69 percentages and level of education is not satisfactory only 0.5 percentages of people are only graduate pass.

Age- Sex Composition: A thorough survey in the field was carried out by door to door survey to explore the Age-Sex distribution in the families of Sonajhuri Village. The following table gives details of data generated through the field survey.

The above table and the supporting diagram as given below show that a large proportion of both male and female population in this village belongs to the age group of 15-35 years of age.

Caste and Creed: In a separate investigation system of caste and creed among the people of this village was worked out. The following diagram gives an account of this study. According to study more than 81.68 percentage people belongs to Schedule Tribe followed by Schedule Caste (14.82%) and only 2.97 people are general caste population in the Study area.

Table-1
Age-Sex Distribution in the families of Sonajhuri Village

Age Group	Male %	Female %
0-4	5.26	2.80
5-9	6.32	7.48
10-14	8.42	4.67
15-19	9.47	12.15
20-24	11.58	9.35
25-29	17.89	14.02
30-34	10.53	11.21
35-39	11.58	16.82
40-44	5.26	6.54
45-49	4.21	4.67
50-54	4.21	3.74
55-59	3.16	3.74
60+	2.11	2.80
Total	100	100

Sources: Field Survey, 2012

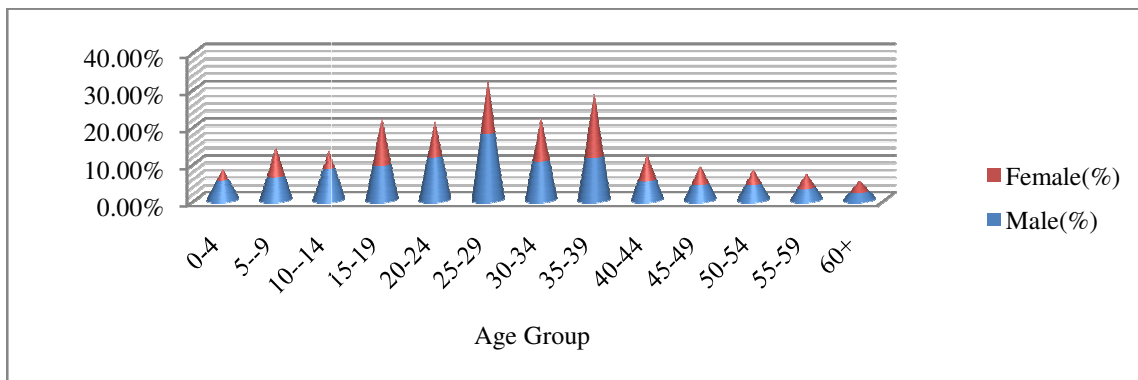


Figure-2
Age-Sex Distribution in the families of Sonajhuri Village

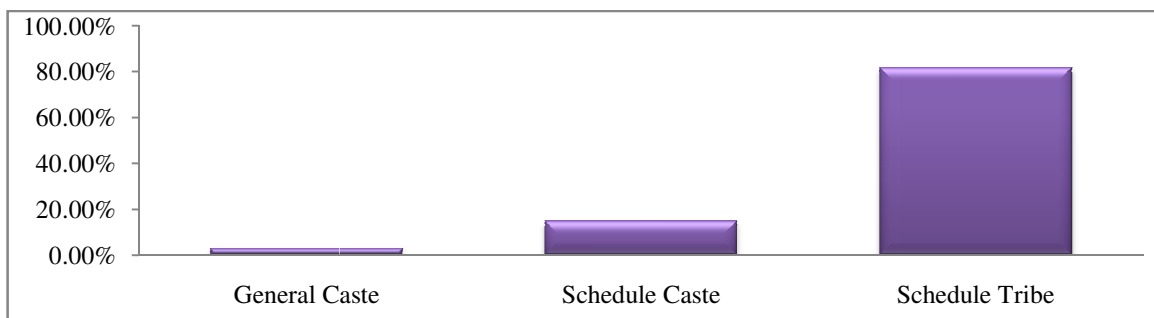


Figure-3
Caste system in Sonajhuri Village

Work force and Occupational Structure: Work force indicates the strength of employed and unemployed persons of a Society. Both family dependency ratio and standard of living of the people depend very much upon this factor. As much as about 56.43% of the total population in this village earn livelihood for the maintenance of their family. The study of economic composition of people remains in complete without its reference to the occupational composition of a people. The occupational structure of the society depends upon both physical and economic land use pattern. The following table and the diagram below it give details of the occupational structure existing among the workforce of this village. Occupational structure and dependency ratio are very important determinants for measures the level of socio- economic development. According to field survey, Daily labourer are the major occupation in the study area followed by other including migrated labourer, agricultural labourer etc. (7.89%), Handicraft (3.51%), Service and business both (0.88%).

In a separate study attempt was made to understand the character of labour force. The following table shows the proportion of male, female and child labour patterns of the families living in this village.

It can be seen that remarkably high proportion of the working people earns their livelihood as daily labour and along with male and female child labour system also exists in this village. This is a clear indication that the village still remains economically and socially underdeveloped.

House Types: In this village the tribal people live mainly in earthen huts having thatched roof. Among the 104 families living in this village 40 families have single earthen hut, 46

families have two or more earthen huts, 18 families have partly brick-built residences and only 2 families have entirely brick built residence.

Houses arranged in clusters with four or five huts surrounding an inner courtyard. The earthen huts are well maintained and look very neat and tidy. The tribal people have a heritage of decoration and artwork on the walls of their houses. They decorate the walls of earthen houses with painting with red and black colours and draw Alpanas on their floors. Decency and neatness have grown to the habits of tribal people.

Table-2
Character of Labour force existing in Sonajhuri Village

Character of Labour force	No. of families (%)
Only male labours	55
Both male and female labours	25
Male, female and child labours	20
Total no. of families investigated upon	100

Sources: Field Survey, 2012

Table-3
No of families occupying difference types of residuals

Classification of residences	No's of family
Does not have any residence	0
One room earthen hut	14
Two or more room earthen huts	16
Partly brick-built residence	08
Entirely brick-built residence	02
TOTAL	104

Sources: Field Survey, 2012

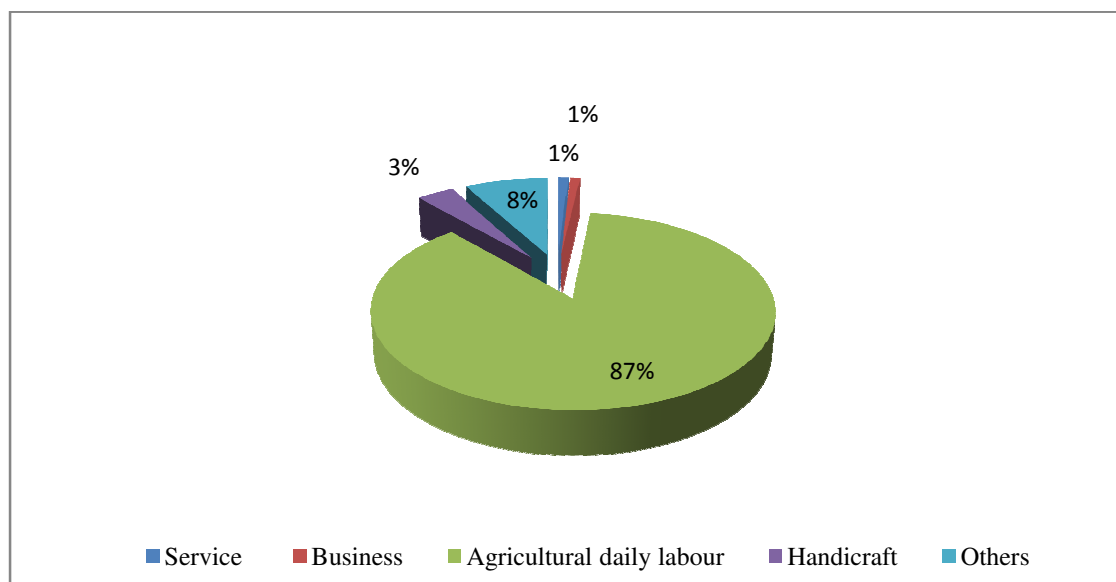


Figure-4
Occupational Structure of the Working Population

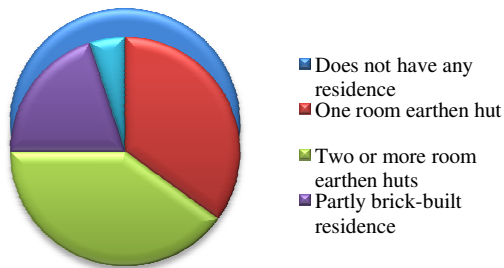


Figure-5

No of families occupying difference types of residuals

Health and Hygiene: People living in rural environment often lack facilities of medication and thus are found to suffer from various diseases. The following table and diagram show the extent and types of diseases among people of villagers normally suffer from. This is again based on a survey of opinion over 40 household. Nearly 62.5 percent people suffer from Fever with temperature among disease affected people of the sampling followed by Diarrhea (15%), Skin diseases (5%) and more than 17.5 percent people unknown for their own diseases.

Table-4

Types of Diseases the people normally suffer from

Types of Diseases	Nos. of respondents	%
Fever with temperature	25	62.5
Diarrhea	6	15
Skin diseases	2	5
Undetected	7	17.5
Total nos. interviewed	40	100

Sources: Field Survey, 2012

Environmental Changes and Their Impacts: In common with that of other places small tribal villages have been undergoing rapid changes in the present day, both in physical, socio-economic and cultural environments. The reason is particularly due to increasing influx of tourists. Santiniketan at a distance of only one and a half kilometer receives huge number of tourists almost round the year and many of them come to visit these tribal villages. The villagers come in contact with them and accept many behavioral matters in their society and life which are not in conform to their traditional cultural heritage.

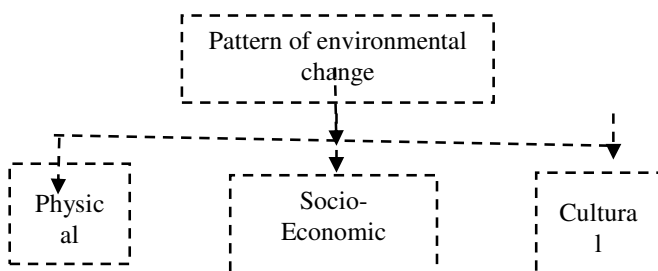


Figure-6

Type of Environmental changes and their impact

Types and extent of changes occurring in around the village was studied in detail and results have been summarized below.

Pollution and their impacts on Sonajhuri village: Sonajhuri is located near district head quarter of Birbhum town and due to the rapid urban expansion this village is going to under various social, environmental as well as physical threats. The main causes of this environmental degradation have been discussed below:

Air pollution: Any toxic matters generated by human being who will create the noxious situation in air are called Air Pollution. World Health Organization (WHO) has defined air pollution as united to situation in which the ambient atmosphere contains concentrated materials which are harmful to man and his surrounding environment. Various sources of air pollution which affect the atmosphere of Boner Pukur Danga are as follows: i. Pollution from their domestic life: - The most important source of air pollution in Sonajhuri village is the domestic sources. Most of the families of Sonajhuri use fire wood, cow-dung cakes, coal and kerosene oil for cooking purpose. These materials generate large quantities of smoke and dust. Particles consisting of carbon monoxide, carbon-di-oxide, sulphur etc. are generated in considerable quantities. ii Small Scale industrial effect: - Different household industry is located in this village and most of the tribal people use various type of chemical colour (likes, fly ash, wood, dust, smoke chimney etc.) to create more attractive product to get maximum benefit. This is the cause of air pollution.



Figure-7

Deforestation is posting a major threat of environmental degradation

Water Pollution: water pollution refer to changing the natural composition of water or it may be change the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of water, which have great impacts on human being and aquatic life. Pollution of water has now become a serious problem in every corner of our country. Even a small village like Sonajhuri is facing the problem of water pollution. There are several sources of water pollution in this village. The causes are briefly described here.

Poor drainage and sanitary system: This area is characterized by open drainage system. So, the improper untrained system is the causes of water pollution in one hand and during rainy season,

water overflows through them and enters into localities on the other hand. And due to this there should be originate mosquitoes which are the causes of different disease.

Lack of proper drinking water management: Through the survey another part of social life that is drinking water system has come out. For drinking water this village depends on two tube wells, two wells and two ponds. But now one well is completely unusable due to lack of proper use of it. In respect context due to lack of proper groundwater, during the summer season the fluency of water availability of well and tube well become adversely affected. On that time some people of this village use pond water.

Solid Waste Pollution: The solid substance which becomes useless after being used is known as solid waste. Although this village is free from modern solid waste pollution but the rate of increasing pollution by solid waste concept has been increasing day by day.

Modernization and its impacts on Sonajhuri village: Modernization is inevitable in every society but the trend and growth of modernization has been remarkable in this small tribal village Sonajhuri. Some of the changes, identified by this researcher, have been discussed below.

Impacts of modernization are noticeable among Sonajhuri villagers and they may be culturally born in tribal culture but now a days they use various type of modern elements such as television, electric fan, pressure cooker, cycle, radio, mobile, dish TV are being used in this village. More than 60 percent of people having mobile, cycle, electric fan, radio but they came to became of modernization.

Infrastructural facilities among village are very poor. Today, most of the people changes their sources of needs, they use Tube well water (dug well is rarely found).

Among the villagers developed the concept of organized grouping by means of "club" is also a part of modern culture their life which acts as a functional improvement of the particular community as well as societies.

Due to the settlement pattern their improvement of village road condition is very bad and it does not touch the modernized wing.

Level of education and literacy rate in this village is not satisfactory because only 30.69 % people are only literate and out of them, most of the people are educated up to the level of primary pass. The village located near the world famous university VVSV Bharati which is founded by first Indian Nobel winner (Rabindranath Tagore). Only few numbers of people found who educated up to school pass and among sample only one people is graduate pass.

Migration is another important feature among tribal people of Sonajhuri village in Birbhum district and remarkable numbers of people are seasonally migrated from village for their occupation and they doing work as van pullers, rickshaw puller, daily labourer, house keeper due to honesty, construction labourer as well as agricultural labourer. Tribal people are very skillful especially in handicrafts product and they have good passion and mental coolness that is essential and suitable labourer for cottage industries.

Changes on the basis of cultural environment: their traditional background has slightly changed from its deep rooted due to adaptation of modernization behavior. But most of the families still depended on the old fashionable internet cultural scenario. For example, still in this modern period some of them enjoy their old cultural dresses, drinking procedures in daily life art and craft associated on their house wall, dancing procedure during festivals period, sketching on the courtyard during festivals period, structuring of their housing pattern in inner side and outer side also. They also their own made bow and arrow during this modern period also. But whole generalization and surveying processes it has been came out that some people of this village move far away from their own cultural background. For instance, some Santhal people of this village do not wear their own traditional dresses during festivals periods and also do not follow the cultural behavior during special occasions in their life.

Changes of their daily life due to the growing intervention by the outsiders: Due to coming of outer people as a temporal-tourist or as a permanent residence in this village affect the local people's socio cultural behavior severely. And local people are also interest to adopt their carrying cultural and in this way they are facing the outer advanced life.

Direct and Indirect Impact on People: Due to changes of physical Vis-a-Vis socio-cultural landscape various dimensional impacts have occurred on the villagers. These changes have both positive as well as negative dimensions.

Positive Impact: i. Reforestation programs taken up from the Government level has given a better natural environmental for the people living here compared to the past time when this village environment became very harsh after mass deforestation. ii. Under the social and cultural influence of the recently developed areas around this village this tribal community has obtained opportunities to exchange views with the people of other communities which have helped them to improve their own culture through emancipation from their previously maintained orthodox views. iii. Social and economic development in the surrounding areas has given them various job opportunities and thus scope of improving their standard of living. iv. Encouragement from Government administrative level by setting up of a primary school in the village premises has helped the villagers to get the light of education. Other higher school in the adjacent palaces like Goal Para and Bolpur

also gives the villagers opportunity to have higher education. v. With the comprehensive survey conducted upon the present education status of this village it has been revealed that 62 people out of 202, i.e. 30.69% of the total population of this village is now literate. This is quite remarkable as compare to the situation of two decades ago. vi. Under the Government enterprise (10 day's work opportunities) many people have now absorbed in various jobs and their economic level has become improve a lot. With the regular exchanges with visiting tourists in this village the products of indigenous tribal arts and crafts have got some market, thus encouraging them in further development and production of their commodities of these kinds.

Negative impact: i. Most important questionable part of this village is related with changing pattern of traditional cultural identity. Due to adaptation of modern culture and also mixing culture affect the initial traditional socio-economical and cultural scenario of this village. Originally this village had a remote nature-based unique identity. Hence under the growing impact of urbanization and modernization from the nearby area of Bolpur its traditional identity with its nature-based remote social life come under threat of extinction. ii. The new and young generation of this village, has come under regular contact with the civilized world with advance education and job attachments, are gradually deviating from the practices and heritage and ethical values of their tribal cultural. iii. The people as a whole have a growing tendency to copy the so-called urban life style ignoring their cultural festivals and rituals, which were once very colorful and attractive. iv. The handicrafts and art work of this village in the past were very attractive and lucrative. Some villagers are still engaged in this profession but since they do not get good value of their products they are losing their interest in craftsmanship and energy of work day by day. v. Money appears to have become more important than ethics and social values earlier the villagers were proud of. This change tends to create a detrimental effect upon the life and cultural of this tribal society as a whole.

Conclusion

In this globalized arena Sonajhuri, a purely tribal village of Santhal community still exists with its own identity of distinguished economy, culture and lifestyle. Natural beauty of this village and its adjoining Khoai landscape attract people not only from different parts of this geographical region but also from foreign countries whoever come to visit Santiniketan. Most of the people are engaged as agricultural Labourer and more than 88.67 percent are landless agricultural labours. Some of the inhabitants of this village are engaged in handicraft industry, and also in pottery and other cottage industries. Before impact of globalization, the village livelihood and way of life style was fully depend on nature and almost all the people were collect wood, leaves, varieties of fruits and various type of wild animals for their livelihood. Now a day's, most of the people change their occupation due to restriction of forest rules

and regulation as well as scarcity of forest resources. Still housing condition is very bad and most of the family lived in huts which are made by bamboo, leaves and wood. They often boast of their own language Al-Chiki, but it has been found that even among the educated people a very handful can really read, write and create literature in this language.

Recommendations: In all respect Sonajhuri can be considered a model village with unique physical as well as cultural environment of the people of Santhal tribe. On the basis of the above observations on the village and findings through interpretation of information and data as collected and generated the following recommendations have been made for sustainable development of Sonajhuri village as well the tribal community living here. i. To preserve the unique tribal culture developed amidst the nature this village should be declared a heritage village and plans should be formulated accordingly. ii. Aforestation programme should be initiated among tribal population and government should be taken special programme for sake of tribal culture under social forestry programme. So that the real forest environment, as it existed in the past and has been degraded in recent times, can be regained. Under this programme people of this can be encouraged and taught to make active role in the maintenance of the regained forest environment. iii. Restriction of forest law should be minimize and launch alternative programme for the Sonajhuri tribal inhabitants so that they can live happily and enjoy their desire occupation. iv. Forest based industries should be set up in this village which can help the protection their own culture and occupation likely bidi making industry, Leaves plate making industry because of availability of Sal leaves and kendu leaves. It may lead to improve of standard of living as well as development of socio-economic status. v. Self-help group are to be formed among the tribal of Sonajhuri villagers and govt, should be launch minimum support programme which can help to change their attitude and adapt new occupations. NGOs can play important role in this venture as is seen elsewhere. vi. Government should be established various type of permanent training and awareness programme with involve of village educated people and given special attention to improve their social status for protection of forest as well as nations progress. vii. Due to presence of middle man, they do not get faire price for their own products because various unique type of production produced by tribal people which is specially made by forest products. viii. Besides, minimum infrastructure should be provided for leading of better life likely transport, medical facilities and others.

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