

The Monographic Study On Snake Charmer Community In West Bengal

Sanjoy Mura

Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology,
Visva-Bharati University

Abstract: The little community study on snake charmers or sapuria in Purba Burdwan district, West Bengal. The snake charmers communities peoples are belong to the both Scheduled Caste (S.C) and Scheduled Tribe (S.T) and their sub-caste is Bede or Bediya. This communities live style are belonging to the semi-nomads group. The snake charmer communities have a traditional occupations are snake catch and charming. And deadly snakes love and with care for their subsistence lives. The snakes live long life in the baskets for their traditional snake charming or playing work. The snake charmers or (sapuria) to carrying them in the baskets slinging from their shoulders, they wander from one locality to another area to entertain the masses the showing their deadly snakes playing to their enchanting tunes, folk song etc. The village peoples are offer some money, rice and some food etc. for their snake charming work. Both man and some women are engaged to the snake charming work. This common earning are depend on their communities subsistence lives. Their habitations are hut, small type house and some concrete house. The hut and small type house making on plastic paper, mud and bamboos making and some house are brick making. The snake charmer communities food habits pattern are normal type. The snake charmer communities educational status are poor type. The low level income are can't support for their families subsistence lives. The present time to see the snake charmers children's are going to the ICDS centre, Primary and Secondary School. The snake charmers women are variously involved to their children's education and follow the modern health treatment of the family members. The study village connected to the Panchayat Raj Institution. The study areas women are employed to the Self Help Group (SHGs). The research paper focus on their habitation types, economic status and educational status are belonging to the present time.

Keywords: Habitation, socio-economy, and education

I. INTRODUCTION

The study area conducted on the snake charmers community in West Bengal. The snake charmers communities lives are semi-nomads group. And the present time snake charmer peoples are slowly moved on to the permanent habitation in the villages. This communities have a traditional occupations are snake catch and charming. And deadly snakes love and with care for their subsistence lives. The snakes live long life in the baskets for their traditional work. The snake charmers or (sapuria) to carrying them in the baskets slinging from their shoulders, they wander from one locality to another area to entertain the masses the showing their deadly snakes playing to their enchanting tunes, folk song etc. The village

peoples are offer some money, rice and some food etc. for their snake charming work. Both male and some female are engaged to the snake charming work. The snake charmers community belonging to the both Scheduled Caste (S.C) and Scheduled Tribe (S.T) and their sub caste is Bede or Bediya. In last 2011 census report are represent that the total 1.3% Bediya tribes in India.

II. ORIGIN OF SNAKE

The English word *snake* comes from Old English *snaca*, itself from Proto-Germanic **snak-an-* (cf. Germanic *Schnake* "ring snake", Swedish *snok* "grass snake"), from Proto-Indo-

European root **(s)nēg-o-* "to crawl", "to creep", which also gave *sneak* as well as Sanskrit *nāgá* "snake". The word ousted *adder*, as *adder* went on to narrow in meaning, though in Old English *næddre* was the general word for snake. The other term, *serpent*, is from French, ultimately from Indo-European **serp-* (to creep), which also gave Ancient Greek *hērpō* (ἔρπω) "I crawl".

ORIGIN OF SNAKE

SCIENTIFIC CLASSIFICATION

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Clade: Ophidia

Suborder: Serpentes

Linnaeus, 1758

E. Thurston and Rangachari (1909) View that the term 'kela' has been derived from the work 'kela' which means dances or from 'khel' which means 'play' but in common vocabulary it implies those people who along with their family member leave their house and breath and continuously move from place to place showing their snakes and skills in snake charming jugglery and acrobatic teats "(1989).

There are different views as to the origin of the 'Mal'. Singh (1993) notes that the word 'Mal' is derived from 'Malla Khastriya' which means wrestler or soldier caste. Bhattacharjee (1980) notes that the word 'Mal' driven from their original habitat of upland (Manbhum) area in central-east India. However, according to the Mal's are in habitants of hilly area who are expert in catching and charming snakes and also, curing snake bite. Risley (1981) also mentions that the Mal is a "Dravidian cultivating caste of western and central Bengal, many of when are employed as 'chaukidars' or village watchmen and have gained an evil reputation for thieving propensities" (p.41:11). Despite apparent difference in opinion all scholar considered that the "Sapurja Mal" is semi-nomadic occupationally specialized caste like group operating within the broad from work of the agro-economic structure of the caste based Hindu society in rural India.

Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics (1954:412) India has the distribution of being the only country in the world being inhabited by all the known families of living snakes. The abundant distribution of the snakes and the serious loss of life caused by them explain the fear with which they are regarded and worshiped. "The animal indeed and reversed on accounts of mysteries dangers associated with it, its sterility habits the cold fixity of its gaze its serious motion, the protection of its locked tongue and the sudden ness and deadliness of its attacks. It hunts houses old reetns, fields and pools.....it's long life and habits of changing skins suggests ideas of immortality and purification.

According to P.K. Bhowmick & Ray (1986), "one of the Subsidiary occupations of the Lodhas is snake charming They are a landless people who generally collect firewood from the jungle and catch snake. Several Lodhas told the writes that they went far away from their homes in search of snakes. There a gang worked under a trader whose chef occupation was to supply snake-skins to the contractors. However, while

thus employed, they catch occasionally. Many venomous snakes like the cobras etc. Nobody was found by the writer to have adopted the profession of snake-charming as the savara's generally do.

The Institute of Human Relation I keenly aware of the significant role played by such basic derive as longer, thirst, pain, and sex, in forming, instilling and changing habits. Because of the difficulty of studying behaviour under laboratory conditions, our knowledge about the processes of learning has been derived largely from experimental studies of animals. However, the procedure, successfully employed in psychological experimentation, of depriving animals of food suggested that it might be possible to gain further insight into the relationship between the principles of learning and cultural forms and processes by studying a group of per-ennially hungry human beings. It was logical to assume that where the conditions of a sparse and insecure food supply exist in human society the frustrations and anxieties cantering around the derive of hunger should have significant repercussions on behaviour and on cultural forms themselves. Hence, the general problem the investigation of the relation between the economic aspect and other aspects of culture in a society functioning under conditions of a sparse and insecure food supply. More specifically, the problem resolved itself into determining, if possible, the effect of a more or less constant frustration of the hunger derive on such cultural forms as diet, food taboos, eating habits, dream, antagonisms, magic, religion, and sex relations, and upon such cultural processes as integration, mobility, socialization, health, education and change. (Allan R. Holmberg "Nomads of the long Bow", Washington 1950).

Patnaik & Chawodhury According to the nomenclature 'Kela' "... Is derived from the Sanskrit verb kel which means 'to play' "to sport" "to charmer snake" or "to move".

Bediya is a Scheduled Caste community throughout the State except in the district of Purulia where they are considered as one of the Scheduled Tribe communities. According to 1961 Census Bediya population in the State is 4,380. But according to 1951 Census its population is 11,046, of which 8,080 are concentrated in the district of Midnapur. From the above it is clear that the population of 1961 shows 60.35% decrease over the population of 1951

OBJECTIVES

- The study areas objectives are given below:
- ✓ To study the habitation pattern of snake charmer community.
 - ✓ To study their traditional economic status.
 - ✓ To study the present time child educational status of the community.

III. METHODOLOGY

Purposive sampling method used for data collection purposes. The study areas both primary and secondary method used for data collection. The primary methods are observation, interview, census survey, questionnaire, case study, photographic, and group discussion method etc. apply for the

field areas data collection. The secondary methods are book review, article, journal, Indian census report, local administrative support, and local peoples co-operation and share proper information for the research report work.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The little community study on snake charmers or sapuria in Purba Burdwan district, West Bengal. The snake charmer communities have a traditional occupations are snake catch and charming. And deadly snakes love and with care for their subsistence lives. The snakes live long life in the baskets for their traditional work. The snake charmers or (sapuria) to carrying them in the baskets slinging from their shoulders, they wander from one locality to another area to entertain the masses the showing their deadly snakes playing to their enchanting tunes, folk song etc. The village peoples are offer some money, rice and some food etc. for their snake charming work. Both man and some women are engaged to the snake charming work. This common earning are depend on their communities subsistence lives.

HABITATION TYPES

The snake charmers communities habitation are hut type, small house and some concrete house present in the study villages. Their house making on the plastic paper and mud and bamboos making and some house are brick making and roof covered by the plastic paper, thatched, terracotta tiles, asbester or tin and some house concretized.

Village Name.	No. Of Family	Habitation Land Type					
		Own Land	%	Land Less	%	Share	%
Nimo-Malpara	144	33	22.91	110	63.58	1	0.57

Table 1: Habitation Land Types Of Snake Charmers Community

Only 144 household survey for the research report writing. In this total families habitation land types are different types. To examine the villages total own landed habitation making are 33 (22.91%) and other total land less habitation are 110 (76.38%). To see the others cases one family is share with their kin family. This communities approximate habitation types are land less. The present time snake charmers peoples are continue moved on the permanent own land habitation.

Category	Male	%	Female	%
Snake Charmers	174	29.14	32	5.36
Day Labour	9	1.50	5	0.83
Begging	4	0.67	7	1.17
House Work	11	1.84	168	28.14
Others	1	0.33	4	0.67
Total	199	33.33	216	36.18

Table 2: Occupational Status Of Snake Charmers Community
Total Population= 597

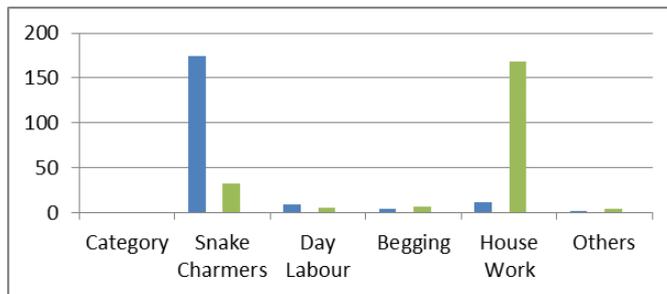


Figure 1

Table No.2 shown that the snake charmers communities primary occupation are different types in the study area. The traditional snake charming work total male are 174 (29.14%) and total female are 32 (5.36%). Day labour work total male are 9 (1.50%) and female are 5 (0.83%). Begging work total male are 4 (0.67%) and female are 7 (1.17%). House work total male are 11 (1.84%) and female are 168 (28.14%). And other (Tea shop, agriculture labour, leaf mat making and selling) work male are 1 (0.16%) and total female are 4 (0.67%).

V. RELATIONSHIP WITH SNAKES

The snake charmer communities people are engaged to the deadly snakes based occupation work. Their traditional occupations have one side life and other side death. So, the snake charmers lives are standing point on the life and death situation. The snake charmers peoples are belief that the snakes catch only the hand technique, practice and concentration. The snake charmers communities life and death practices occupation are fully depend on the deadly snake charming work. Identify the snake bite and snakes name and treatment by the snake charmers. The snake bite treatments are traditional type of the snake charmer peoples. The present time snake charmers peoples are refers that the snake bite patient are immediately to admit the hospital treatment. Because, the snake charmers peoples are not interest to another people snake bite treatment. And snake charmers people are fear and relief from the public hazard. Only follow the own purposes are used the traditional snake bite treatment. The traditional snake bite treatment and material used are given below:

- ✓ First time identify the snake bite place and from the snake bite place to the upper portion three step binding. The three step binding are slightly binding around the portion. Which the binding principle reason are the snake venom are not spread to the whole body.
- ✓ The snake charmers peoples are used the hot water and blade or weapon. Hot water used from the snake bite place to the three step binding lower portion and blade or weapon used the slightly injure to different sides, and came out venom or snake poison. This is the basic methods used for the snake bite treatment.

SNAKE CATCH AND BROKEN VENOM TEETH

The snake charmers catch the snake from the agricultural field, and broke the venom teeth for snake charming work.

The catch snakes are keep them in the basket. These image are given below:



Figure 2: Snake catch and Venom teeth broken by blade



Figure 3: Snake charming or playing pattern

NAME OF SNAKE POISONOUS

The snake charmers peoples are engaged to snake catch and with deadly snakes charming i.e., cobra, king cobra, Russell viper etc. These are:

Common Name	Local Name	Scientific Name	Poisonous or Non poisonous (Tpe of Venom)
Common Cobra	Gokhro or Kharis	Naja Naja Naja	Poisonous (Neurotoxic Venom)
Monocled Cobra	Keote	Naja Naja kaouthia	Poisonous (Neurotoxic Venom)
Ipera Russell	Kalachti	Bungarus Caeruleus	Poisonous (Nurotoxic Venom)
Russell's Viper	Chandrabora	Vipera Russeli	Poisonous (Haemoloxic Venom)

Name of Snake Species Caught and Charming by Snake Charmers

SNAKES CARE BY THE SNAKE CHARMERS

The snake charmer peoples are engaged to the dangerous life and death practices of snake catch, charming and snake care etc., and catch snake keep them in the basket love and with care. The snake charmers catch from agriculture field or pond or canal's fish, frog, cicada and grig etc. These are some kids (food) are apply for baskets bounded snakes for their long lives. Weekly two times clean the snake baskets and transparent to another baskets. The basket bounded snakes are used or charming for their communities subsistence life.

Members of Family	No. of Parents	No. of Students												
		ICDS		I-IV		V-Viii		IX-X		XI-XII		Dropout		
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	38	7	2	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
4	41	5	4	8	17	9	4	3	2	1	2	2	4	
5	25	2	4	5	6	2	5	1	0	0	0	3	1	
6	12	1	2	2	4	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	
7	5	3	1	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
8	3	2	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	
9	3	0	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	148	20	14	25	36	19	13	6	3	2	2	6	7	

M= Male, F= Female, (I-IV)= Primary, (V-VIII)= Junior, (IX-X)= Secondary, (XI-XII)= Higher Secondary

Table 3: Family Wise Children Education

The present time child's education are mainly depend on their families activity. Table no. 3 are represent that the one and two members of households total family are 2 and 17, and which have not student shown in the table.

3 to 9 members of household total family numbers are 38, 41, 25, 12, 5, 3, and 3. In which every families students (male 20 and female 14) are go to ICDS centre. Primary school going total male are 25 and female are 36. Junior school going total male are 19 and female are 13. Secondary school going total male are 6 and female are 3. Higher Secondary going total male and female both are equal 2. The dropout total male and female students are 6 and 7.

VI. REASON OF DROPOUT

- ✓ Family economic problems.
- ✓ Parents are do not proper care for their education.
- ✓ When their parents are go to the far area snake catching and charming then that time child are security their home. And female child's are engaged to the cooking and with care own little brother or sisters.
- ✓ Day by day child's are engaged to the house work and employed to the other occupation based work for their families subsistence lives. So, the child's are elimination from their education.
- ✓ Mainly the children's are engaged to the snake charming to the local area, village market and other nearest rail station platform. The entertaining peoples pay to the some rupees for their snake charming work.

VII. DEVELOPMENT POLICY FOR EDUCATION AND OTHER PURPOSES

The present time Sarba Sikhsha Abhijan are provide to the many schemes for rural villages educational development. The first starting from the 3.5 years child's are compulsory go the ICDS centre. From the ICDS centre are provide some cooking foods, boil egg, and other health related foods facility for their child's health and pregnant women proper nutritional health status growth and development. Another primary and junior high school section students are getting to the Mid-Day-Meal facility for their health and educational development. Education related many books, dress, shoe, note books, pen, pencil, and others sports implements free to provide for their educational development in rural areas. According to Article-

45 (Indian Constitution), education should be free and compulsory up to the age of 14. Steps should be taken to ensure that child who is enrolled in the school should successfully complete the course.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The present time snake charmer peoples habitation are permanent and long lives stay in the same areas. This communities peoples have a common occupational status are snake catch, snake charming and keep them snakes in the basket with love and care. The snake based earning are mainly depend on their family lives. The snake charmers communities have a common socio-economic life and their social organizations pattern are continue moved on the present generation. Their low level income are can't support to their child's education. And Government's organization many scheme are applied for their communities health status and education development. To observed the latest time snake charmers women are variously involved to their child's education. To see the snake charmers people are employed to the secondary occupational work for extra earning. From the all sources common earning are help for their families development status. This educational system are can change their mind and own justice used for their communities development. The analytical result are represent that their families boys and girls are go to the ICDS, primary and secondary school. And some cases to see the child dropout from the both primary and secondary school. Dropout major problems are low level income of the family. To see the some families social organization and life style pattern are moved on to the modern culture or civil society. Like that their family structure, livelihood status, social organization pattern, life cycle, food habits, language pattern, education, health status and inter caste relationship system etc. The traditional snake based culture is present in the rural village Nimo-Malpara in Purba Burdwan district in West Bengal.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bose, N.K (1966): "Religion and society" In: Man-in-India, vol.46, no-1, Ranchi.
- [2] Bose, N.K (1953): "Cultural Anthropology and other essays" Culcutta.
- [3] Bose, J.K (1985): "Cultural change among the Garos" Calcutta.
- [4] Bose, J.K (1985): "Social Organization of the Animal kukis" Calcutta.
- [5] Beteille, Andre (1966) "Caste class and power changing patterns of stratification in a Tanjore, Village" Bombay.
- [6] Bhowmick, P.K (1963): "The chirmars of Midnapur, in: Man-in-India" Ranchi.
- [7] Bhowmick, P.K (1953): "The Lodhas of West Bengal" Calcutta.
- [8] Bhowmick, P.K (1955): "The Savaras of Midinapur," Vanyajati, vol. III. No.2 Delhi.
- [9] Bhowmick, P.K (1973): "Functioning Secret Institutions", 60th Session of the Indian Science congress, Chandigarh.
- [10] Bhowmick, P.K (1976): "Socio-Cultural profile of frontier Bengal". Calcutta Bhattacharya, J.N.
- [11] Bhowmick, P.K (1896): "Hindu Caste and Sects" Calcutta.
- [12] Census of India (1961): "Vol.I, Part Y-B(IV)
- [13] Crooks (1896): "Tribes and castes of N.W. Part, vol. IV.
- [14] Dalton. E.T (1872): "Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal" Calcutta.
- [15] Das, N. & Choudhury, B (1966) "A study of Marriage and family customs of the kela (snake charmers) of Village padmakesharipur in cuttack District Adibsi, vol. VIII no.2, PP-33-47
- [16] Dube, S.C (1955): "India's changing village" New York.
- [17] Dube, K.C "Vanyajati". Vol.XXII, no.1.Delhi.
- [18] Hastings, J (1954): "Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics" vol.xi,p.p.411-19
- [19] Majumdas, B.C. (1927): "The Aborigines of the Highland central India" Calcutta.
- [20] Naik, T.B (1956): "The Bhils. A study" New Delhi
- [21] Patnaik, N & Choudhury (1989) "Sapukela" THRTI.
- [22] Rishly, H.H (1891): "The Tribes and Castes of Bengal" Vol.II
- [23] Roy, S.C (1912): "The Mundas and their country" Ranchi.
- [24] Roy, M.H. (1976): "A Note on the Socio-economic stratification among the savars of West Bengal,in Man and life" vol.2. no.1&2. Calcutta.
- [25] Roy, H.M. (1981): "Socio-Economic profile of the Savaras of West Bengal". In the profiles of the Marginal and farming tribe of Central-Eastern India. Calcutta.
- [26] Sankalia, H.D.(1962): "Pre-History and proto-History of India and Pakistan. University of Bombay.
- [27] Thuston (1909): "Castes of Tribes of South India" Vol.6, part-II.
- [28] Vidyarthi, L.P & Rai, B.K "The Tribal cultures of india" Ranchi.