

CULTURAL CHANGE AND ADAPTATION OF MUNDA TRIBE OF BANGLADESH: A SOCIO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Although Bangladesh is a small land area, there are dozens of small tribal groups living alongside its mainstream population. The Munda tribe is one of them. They live on plain land in the western and south-western parts of Bangladesh. Hunting and gathering was their main occupation but recently they have been changing their lifestyle. They are trying to live in harmony with the people living around them. Now they are becoming agriculture workers, rickshaw/van pullers, and product makers in small cottage industries. They are in the obscure process of adaptation to the mainstream Hindu communities. The Mundas are coming out of their predecessor's hill forest dwellers hunting life and adapting to the agrarian life of the plains. There have been many changes in their language, dress, cooking system, and rituals. They may take a few more generations to complete their adaptation process.

KEYWORDS: Culture, Change, Adaptation, Munda Tribe, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION:

Bangladesh is one of the agriculture-based countries in South Asia. Its area is 147,570 sq. kms. and its population is around 162.7 million i.e. 1115.62 hundred people per sq. km. (BBS, 2018), and 2.3 million people are currently being added to the existing population every year (Mabud, 2004). Most of the people of Bangladesh depend on agriculture. Farming is the main source of livelihood for the people of this country. Various natural economic conditions are also visible here. The mainstream population of this country is Bengali speaking and their anthropological identity is 'Bangali'. There are also dozens of small ethnic groups which were close to 1% of the total population at the time of the 1981, 1991, and 2001 censuses (Census, 2006). Present Bangladesh is a part of the ancient Bengal Delta. There are a good number of sub-racial people among them and a few dozen ethnic groups (Risley, 1891).

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In this region, the influx of people from different places has continued to arrive more or less until yesteryear. As a result, different small and marginal tribal groups still live in almost all areas of Bangladesh (Maloney, 1977). This unending process of exodus or access has continued through the ages. Particularly, in the last epoch of time, several small ethnic groups with religious and cultural identities have entered the Barind region of north and north-western Bangladesh. Mostly, Orao, Ho, Malpahari, Mahali, Santal, and Munda are notable of these ethnic groups (Siddiquee, 1998). Munda is one of the well-known tribal communities of this region. It is said that these Munda people used to live in the north and southern parts of Bangladesh, but now their existence is almost defunct. Bakhdip was another name for the Gangetic Delta. It was called Bagri during the Sen and Pala dynasties towards the end of the ancient Hindu kingdom. The Munda community is one of the tribes living in the Bagri region, those who belong to the Proto-Australoid sub-races (Jalil, 1967). In the last century and a half, these aforementioned small communities established permanent residences alongside the Hindu and Muslim local inhabitants. So, no one is the original inhabitant of their existing settlement area (Bassaignet, 1960; Siddiquee, 1998). However, they have already become an integral part of our society and national life. In a very short period, they have become closely associated with our larger nationality.

These small ethnic groups live in both the plain and hill area of the country. Although the hill tribes are somewhat isolated due to geographical reasons, the ethnic groups of the plains such as; Santal, Munda, Oraon, Ho, Malpahari, etc., almost live together with the mainstream population (Baskey, 1987). There is a tendency to simplify this process by imagining some direct line of cultural or racial descent (Aryan, Sanskrit, Arab, Roman, Han, etc). But in reality, the formation of the way large peasant population is forming the amalgamation of the pre-existing “tribal” population with trickles of influence from surrounding stronger populations and cultures, first from one side, then from the other (Maloney, 1984). The essence of this article is how the Munda tribal group lives on the plains in the changing environment.

According to the government estimate, 27 ethnic/tribal groups live in Bangladesh, and Non-government bodies put the number between 40 and 50 (Rahman, 2006). About 20 ethnic/tribal communities live in the southwestern regions of Bangladesh. The Mundas are popularly known as the people of lower caste in the social fabric who are generally deprived and downtrodden in Bangladesh society. Among the tribes, some have their religion, culture, customs, and language for which they are identified as a section of people with some facets of the tribe. Munda is one such tribal community (Mallick, 2008). They are also locally known as 'Buno' 'Kooli' and 'Sardar'. No one can say exactly when and how they came to former East Bengal. According to different sources, the Mundas were brought to former East Bengal (today's Bangladesh) from Ranchi of Jharkhand, Bankura, Nagpur, Birbhum, Purulia, Santal Pargona, and Midnapur districts of West Bengal of India by the local zamindars, Indigo planters, and contractors of a railway construction company (Siddiquee, 1984; Mallick, 2008).

According to other sources, the British government introduced the Indian forest policy (1894) in the Indian subcontinent and the tribal people lost their forest rights and spread to the surrounding areas as well as different parts of Bangladesh in search of food and livelihood (Dattagupta, 2000; Karim, 1979). Thereafter, gradually they entered into partial agricultural life. From the outset, they remained intact in their culture, but later they changed many aspects of their culture in accordance with the surrounding society and culture. The Birhor people of Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and Maharashtra of India are examples of such adaptations (Adhikari, 2001).

CHANGE AND ADAPTATION

From the very beginning of human society, man was dependent on nature for food and shelter. They collected their food from nature and also found their shelter in nature. At present mankind reached the peak of civilisation. But some people continue their traditional way of life and partly depend on nature. Some tribal groups collect their livelihood from nature but gradually they are losing such opportunities. In the true sense, they have lost their traditional way of life. All of these happened due to socio-economic change and adaptation (Siddiquee, 1998). The Mundas, Santal, Kol, Bhil, Sabor, etc., were the early groups to enter the northwestern part of Bangladesh

and settle there. Most of the Mundas and Santals settled in the greater Rajshahi or Maldah areas in the early 20th century. They are small races who migrated to the land and later got permanently settled (Qureshi, 1984). Hence the Mundas are one of the early tribal populations settled in Bangladesh. They are found largely concentrated in the greater districts of Rajshahi, Rangpur, Kushtia, and Dinajpur (Anwar, 1984; Ali, 1980). This article tries to discuss the change and process of adaptation of the Mundas in the northwestern region of Bangladesh. There is some similarity between the Mundas and the Santals in their physical structure. Their skin colours are dark, their hair is black and smooth to wavy, they have a broad nose with thick lips, and they are of medium height (Samad, 1984).

Cultural change is a multifaceted process. It seeks to change the society by changing the entire culture of an established society such as knowledge, attitudes, ideas, behaviour, religious beliefs, values, and morals of populations. In this case, adaptation is one kind of a change because people make structural changes in society through adaptation. It is natural human behaviour to adapt them to the surrounding natural environment in order to preserve their existence and livelihood. This process is called adaptation. Humans have adapted to their geographical environment since time immemorial. They gradually tried to adapt wherever they found themselves such as— deep forests, rugged sea terrain, desert, mountains, or plain land. When this adaptation process fails, human existence turns out to be imperiled. And those who have successfully adapted to their environment, they survive in the struggle for existence. When men appeared from one geographical setup to another, they necessarily had to change their way of life; and then they changed their food types, food collection methods, and materials, even their housing arrangements (Sahlins, 1974). Coping with new natural environments and surviving has always been a vital life process for all human groups. Along with the change in natural environment, climate, and even social status, people have to change their lifestyle. In that sense, there is a deep connection between adaptation and social change. Adaptation becomes essential when hill or island people seek to settle down on the mainland. Even with a sudden intrusion of modern technology into traditional society, a kind of re-adaptation becomes significant (Cohen, 1974).

Over the last 4/5 decades, many studies have been done on various aspects of such changes and adaptations in different parts of the world including India. Sources and indications of such changes and adaptations can be found in the writings of social anthropologists. Among them Morris E. Opler (1959), J.H. Hotton (1964), C. Mukherjee (1962), N.K. Gupta (1963), M.N. Panini (1972), I B.R. Nayar (1962), Sachchidananda (1964), Marriott (1955), Singer (1972), Sahlins (1960), Alland and McCay (1978), Sharmeen (2013), SAMS (2016), Roy (2013), T.C. Das (1962), S.C. Sinha (1981) are notable.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

STUDY AREA

The study area was a remote village of Mohadevpur Thana in the Naogaon district of Bangladesh. This village was selected purposively for this study where 49 Munda households were identified. Besides, this tribal population, 70 Muslim households, and 11 Hindu households also live in that village. The Krishna Pur village is 51 km away from the Naogaon district town and 36 km away from the Joypurhat district town of Bangladesh.

The total population of 49 households in the study village is 225. Among them 83 are males (36.89%), 88 are females (39.11%) and 54 are children (24%). Considering the age range of men, women and children, it was observed that the population of age range 20-30 years was the highest i.e., 67 (29.78%) for both males and females in the 5 age ranges, and the population over sixty years was the lowest i.e., 14 (6.22%). In terms of children of 1-12 years, the total number was 54 (24%), 29 male and 25 female children. Here the total population was male 112 (49.78%) and female 113 (50.12%). The male-female ratio was 112:113.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the present article is to obtain a complete idea about the fact that why, and how the Mundas are adapting to the existing culture around them. However, the specific objectives are:

1. To explore and analyse the social, and cultural adaptation of the Mundas to the new environment.

2. To understand the socio-economic condition of the households, and how the Munda people preserve their uniqueness, surrounded by the larger society and culture.

METHODOLOGY

The core concept of this study was based on sociology and anthropology. But the Munda tribal population under this study belongs to Hind-limb illiterate society. Conventionally, anthropological methods and meditative techniques are more applicable to the study of such populations. Along with that, ethnographic methods have also been used equally. Necessary data were collected and analysed using methods/techniques followed by contemporary sociologists and anthropologists.

For the present study, the participant observation method was used for collecting data, and to enrich the information ethno-historical method was also adopted. Besides this, an intensive survey was also conducted. Secondary sources (books, journals, magazines, etc.) have been used to approve the primary data. 49 Munda households were taken in totality without any sampling in the data collection. Krishnapur village is inhabited by Hindus and Muslims. 49 Munda families live next to them (Hindu and Muslim). In this study, the integrated form of both these types of research methods has been used as a mixed method.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

In the case of any sociological or anthropological study, comparing relevant information from previous research and the tangibility of the current study helps create significant outcomes. In this continuation, the hill-forest dwelling life of the Munda people and their state of adaptation to the present life has been studied.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADAPTATION

It is known from the obtained information that the Mundas were nomadic forest dwellers till the recent past. The nomadic life was highly preferred by this hunter-gatherer Munda society. They entered into agricultural life after settling in this region. The Mundas of the study area mainly contain their livelihood by selling agricultural labour on the land of Hindus and Muslims. It has been observed that some people of this Munda community are also involved in non-agricultural occupations and trying to earn money by going beyond their boundaries. These include shop workers, van helpers, carpenters, bus/truck workers and construction workers, and so on. The daily income of the Munda community of Krishnapur village was divided into 11 income categories and analysed. It was observed that the number of households with daily income of TK150-200 was the highest i.e. 19 out of 49 (38.77%), and with income of TK 550-600 was the lowest i.e. 01 out of 49 (2.04%). However, out of these 11 categories, there were no families with daily income in 4 categories.

Out of 49 Munda families in Krishnapur village, 43 families earned their living through agricultural wages except 6 (six) families. Out of these 6 families, one (1) worked as a peon in Varendra Land Development Corporation (local NGO), one (1) as a medicine shop employee, one (1) as a carpenter, 2 as motor labourers to support their families. Children aged 10/12 years of Munda society were also involved in agricultural labour with their parents or engaged in tending to cows and buffaloes of Muslim or Hindu families. Similarly, Munda girls of 10/12 years also did housework and were involved as maid servants in Muslim or Hindu families.

In Munda society, women worked equally with men as agricultural labourers but were always paid lesser wages than men. While a Munda man got TK 300, a woman worker got TK 250. Yet women accepted this discrimination due to the need to support their family. Women's labour was considered as mandatory in the Munda society. The financial condition of the Mundas of Krishnapur village could be easily estimated from the pattern of land ownership. They had no land except one or two houses made of mud and thatch and a small yard. Some of them earned money by making and selling 'Haria' (handmade alcohol), and 'Tari' (handmade alcoholic drink) from palm juice. Almost every house kept cows, goats, chickens, pigs, and so on according to their capacity. Although there was a history of hunting in groups at different times

of the year, it is now just a memory. In addition to their agricultural incomes, almost every family cultivated on sublease the land of ambient Muslim or Hindu lenders, but had to pay half of the produce to the lenders. Two types of families were observed here- Poor and Very poor. Out of 49 families, 16 (32.65%) families were poor in total, remaining 33 (67.35%) families were extremely poor.

SOCIAL STATUS

Social status is a significant characteristic by which the status of people in a society is measured. In this Krishnapur village, the Munda people are living in the Muslim Hindu community with low social status due to their illiteracy, lack of work, and different ethnicity. Older people in these societies try to maintain their traditional religious values as agents of social control in their society. If someone breaks the rules of their community, the Sardar punishes them. The convicts are presented to other elders of the village and a feast is organised at the expense of the accused. As the economic condition of the Munda community is miserable, so they consider the cost of hosting a feast as a punishment.

In this Munda village, men play a role in family decision-making and management. With rare exceptions, women are secondary in this regard. According to 5 household Heads, before marriage, an adult woman/man is dependent on his father or elder brother. But after marriage, a man has to earn to run the family properly. But currently, women are getting involved in family decision-making. The interview revealed that in 9 out of 49 households (18.37%), the role of women in any decision-making was considered to be the vital aspect to the family. 3 women (6.12%) lived as widows so they took their family decisions on their own. In the remaining 37 (75.51%) families, the decision of males was final.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

In this village, another form of adaptation has been observed in marriage customs. Their own marriage festivals were quite traditional which is on the verge of extinction today. The Munda

community living in Krishnapur village follows the exogamous marriage system. Because exogamy is the common feature in Munda society from early times and intra-clan marriage is considered as offence in this society (Choudhury, 1977). But marriage customs have changed a lot compared to earlier. Abandoning the marriage customs of hill forest dwelling life, they adapt themselves to the Hindu marriage customs of the plains. Shivachoron Munda (the Munda Chief of Krishnapur village) said, earlier there was a custom of marking with arrows and bows in their marriage where the bridegroom married the bride as proof of his bravery by hitting the target with a bow and arrow. The bridegroom married the bride as proof of his gallantry by beating the mark with a bow and arrow.

But nowadays eligible Munda boys and girls prefer to play the 'Kori' game (Hindu marriage custom) at Pond Ghat. 'Shingbonga' Puja, 'Pani Kanta' custom, or 'Bonodevi' Puja, 'Dutam Pratha', appeasement of 'Jaher Buri', and so on are now a recent past. Rather, the blessing norm of Hinduism is now popular. Modern bands with microphones and keyboards have replaced Madol, Jaydhak, or 'bamboo flutes' at weddings. Besides, the traditional forest bed of rose for bride and groom is not observed at all. But the decorated bed with paper flowers has taken place as element of modern civilisation. In the traditional system, the 'Shithi' (middle position of forehead) of the bride was dyed with vermilion by the groom's youngest finger blood. But now Hindu wedding item Sindoor is quite popular and accepted. Modern songs are more common in wedding ceremonies instead of traditional songs. However, Haria (handmade alcoholic drinks) still survives during meals. In terms of food, the Mundas imitate the surrounding Hindu and Muslim customs. Even Hindu and Muslim people attend their weddings. At present inter-caste marriage and widow marriage have been introduced among them. But child marriage is not common in Munda society.

FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Descent is uniformly patrilineal, and all the Mundas have patrilineal descent groups. Totemic, exogamous clans are mainly significant for marriage, and lineages. In Munda society, the family is the ultimate socio-economic unit. The daily activities of each member of a family are

significantly influenced by the social, economic, and religious life of the community. There is a significant division of labour in the Munda family (Ahmed, 1970). The males generally do the off-household activities and the females do the on-household activities and take care of children. For the present study, it has been considered that a family is a domestic group whose members live together under the same roof, share a common granary, and cook on the same hearth. The family size in this study village showed that out of 49 Munda families, 3 (6.12%) were joint families, 24 (48.98%) were single, 15 (30.61%) were nuclear families, 2 persons (4.09%) lived alone in unmarried conditions. Also, 2 women (4.09%) were widows and 3 men (6.12%) were widowers.

Family size has an impact on the family pattern. A nuclear family consists of the husband, the wife, and with or without their unmarried children. This also can be a widow or widower's family with or without her or his unmarried children. The joint family, on the other hand, includes the husband, the wife, and the unmarried children as well as the married children and their wives and children (Choudhury, 1977; Siddiquee, 1998). The extended family was not found in this society. Generally, after the marriage, the fusion of the domestic group took place. The newly married couple shifted to a new house within the settlement. The nuclear family was the dominant feature in this society. They used to live in a joint family but now they have adopted a single family as a modern unit of a family. The Mundas have now adapted themselves to the Hindu family systems instead of their traditional systems.

There are several clans in Munda society. They cannot remember the names of all the clans. So far, they have noted 15 clans' names. Those are: Vengra, Hansa, Zirhul, Hordua, Amba, Mundori, Kandur, Gondola, Kerketta, Porti, Kocua, Tomgoria, Votkua, Rojput, Votufua. The Mundas believe that their clans like other Austric language groups are derived from various animals, plants, and fruits. So those are their totems or religious symbols. None of them harm their totem. The clan-based identity and totemic symbols of Mundas are given below.

Clan Name	Symbol
Vengra	Red Horse

Hansa	Duck
Zirhul	Yellow Flower
Hordua	Salt
Amba	Mango
Mundori	Titir Bird
Kandur	Catfish
Gondola	Corn Plant
Kerketta	Black Bird
Porti	Crocodile
Kochua	Squirrel
Tomgoria	Tobacco
Votkua	Crab
Rojput	Black Cow
Votufua	Banyan Tree

Source: Field survey

If there is no male child then the girl gets the property. The Munda clans are patrilineal kinship groups. The members of each clan consider themselves to be related by blood as descendants of a common male ancestor. Descent groups are formed through the male consanguine line. So, in the Munda society, there are unilineal and patrilineal descent groups that play a significant role in the formation of the clan (Ahmed, 1970.). In the question of inheritance, the son replaces the father's position and inherits the property of father. Property transfers from father to son. In the case of more than one son, they get an equal share of the property. But the eldest son gets some more social position or social respect, as he becomes the head of the household. Generally, women get nothing but if there is no son in any family, then daughters inherit the property. Besides, unmarried daughters and widowed mothers get a share of the property to alleviate their destitution (Choudhury, 1977). But after settling in this part of Bangladesh, the Mundas have changed their family and kinship structure like other elements of life for their survival.

SOCIO-CULTURAL ADAPTATION

According to different historical sources, the Munda society was completely forest-dwelling while living in Nagpur, Santal Pargana region. Hunting and gathering fruits and roots were thought to be the only source of their livelihood (Baskey, 1987). But after they migrated to Bangladesh territory, their mode of livelihood started to change and they gradually started getting accustomed to the agro-based life of this land. Both male and female members of Munda society are active and work in the field. Most of the Munda people are engaged in the occupations of agricultural workers, fishermen, porters, and earth-digging labourers. Some of them still lead the life of hunters.

Admittedly, their hunting occupation is almost on the verge of extinction as a consequence of massive deforestation. Many of them earn their living staying indoors by making cottage industry products like mats, umbrellas, etc. from shal leaves, bamboo, and canes. If it is considered from this perspective, their economic structure can be termed as fragile. It was noticed that a section of people in society wanted to stick to the traditional rules, regulations, and values. But within the traditional society, the existence of another new class was noticed and the members of this class wanted to break the old systems of the society and reconstitute the society with a new system. As a consequence, a confrontational situation arises between the traditional and modern courses. At one stage traditional system is defeated by the modern system and gets merged with the new system. This is called adaptation.

Two concepts appear to be vital while discussing the adaptation process of the Munda tribal community. These two issues are modernisation and tradition. Modernisation is a changing trend that established a new idea through the changes in bygone social values. On the other hand, tradition is what has been observed and persisted throughout the ages (Kumar, 2020). Now they blame illiteracy and ancient beliefs as the causes of their poverty. As a result, the modern generation bending towards education and trying to cope with the modern lifestyle, is getting aware and flourishing with the modern culture leaving all the ancient beliefs behind.

The Mundas have a distinct culture as well as a political history. They are rapidly disappearing over time (Gupta, 2000). Therefore, it is necessary to explore the nature of Mundas in Bangladesh and also important to expound on the nature of their adaptation process in the larger society and culture. The ceaseless conflict between modernisation and tradition is destined to exist in the Munda society. The effort of adaptation to the changing situation is eternal. Thus, the main subject matter of this study is the adaptation process and the changing patterns of the Munda tribal culture in Bangladesh. The tribal communities like Kol, Vill, Pod, Koibarta, Mech, Koch, Pelia, Chakma, Marma, etc., are continuously adapting themselves to the broader cultural activities of Bangladesh. Many of them are becoming extinct. Sociologically it is axiomatic. This decaying culture and social adaptation process among ethnic minorities is an excellent area of pursuit among sociologists. This conception is more applicable in the context of the ethnic minorities of Bangladesh. For this reason, it can be considered to be a curiosity-arousing area of research.

The aforementioned ethnic communities started to adopt or follow the production technique, mode of living, and different social phenomena of the agricultural society around them while living permanently on the plains of north-northwestern Bangladesh. The agro-based life of this plain land is different from their mountainous or forest-dwelling lifestyle. At that time, they were accustomed to leading nomadic life temporarily in hills and forests. Hunting and collection were the base of their economy and the main source of livelihood. While living on the plains of East Bengal their lifestyle took a new dimension from house building and dresses to food habits, social organisation, etc. during the last century. Currently, they are adapting themselves to new social and natural environments. As a consequence, many changes are taking place in their traditional lifestyle. It is regarded as a natural phenomenon. Similarly, their tendency is to assimilate many things from the society and culture of their surrounding areas. It is noted that no living culture is static. Rules of conduct may be rigid; the strictest sanctions may be invoked to enforce those rules; acquiescence in them may be unquestioning. In a society where even the greatest degree of conservatism is present, over a long enough period, change has taken place (Herskovit, 1967).

EDUCATION

The education system among the Munda community is still at the grassroots level. Their literacy rate is very low, almost non-existent. Earlier the Mundas never came forward to educate themselves, the government or any other social organisation did not come forward to educate them and their social and surrounding conditions also did not make them interested in education. But lately, Munda householders are sending their children to school for getting education because they have realised that there is no alternative to education to survive the changing situation. An NGO named Barendra Development Organisation (BDO), along with the Bangladesh government has established two schools in Munda Para for their education.

Analysis of the obtained data regarding education showed that out of 49 family heads, 38 were illiterate, nine (9) had studied up to class five and two (2) had studied up to class nine. One was working as a clerk in a medicine shop in a nearby town of Mahadevpur Thana, one (1) worked as a peon in Varendra Development Corporation (NGO) after passing class 10th. Only 4 women had studied up to the 3rd standard. But now the situation has changed. Household heads have realised that the need for education is inevitable to adapt to this changing situation. So, they are sending their children to school for education although most of the children join their parents in agricultural labour or other activities. Out of total of 54 children of Munda families, 17 children are going to neighbouring government primary school and two schools run by NGOs. The remaining 32 children are involved in various activities with their parents. Their educational information showed that out of a total of 225 Munda populations, 12.38% had basic knowledge, 10% had secondary school education, 0.47% passed secondary school education and 10.47% had technical education. The rest of the population was totally illiterate.

RELIGION

Various deities have a place in the traditional religious beliefs of Mundas. According to their religion 'Sing Bonga' is the main deity who owns heaven and earth. Similarly, among the deities they believe in, 'Hatu Bonga' as the village deity, 'Ora Bonga' for the well-being of every home,

'Acharil Bonga' for special families of their community, 'Buru Bonga' for the happiness and peace of the family, 'Ikir Bonga' for the overall well-being of the society. The Mundas believe in reincarnation like the Hindus (Ahmed, 1970). They consider the goddess, Kali as another form of 'Singbonga'. They also believe in Yamaraj like Hindus. The Mundas have recently become believers in Hindu goddesses such as Durga, Kali, and Lakshmi. Belief in ghosts is strong among the Mundas. Witchcraft, sorcery are practiced among them (Oraon, 2002). Various pujas and festivals are in vogue every month. For example, 'Shanti' Porob for naming, 'Meiz' Porob in Paush month, 'Baha' Porob in the month of Chaitra, 'Karam' Porob and 'Sarhul' in the month of Bhadra, and 'Sarhul' Porob in the month of Kartik (Baskey, 1987). The Mundas of Krishnapur followed the religion of animistic hill and forest-dwelling life as their adoration. After settling in the region, the Mundas adapted themselves to the customs of Hindus instead of Muslims.

The Mundas of this area were more inclined towards Hinduism in their early religious adaptation because earlier the area was dominated by Hindus. The forest-dwelling Munda population settled in this existing area after the migration from the Indian part. But due to the lack of forest predominance in this area, they worked as labourers on the land of Hindu zamindars to survive. As a result, it is natural that Hindus will have more influence on them, wherefore, the Mundas were leaning towards Hinduism because the traditional beliefs of Mundas have an invisible similarity with the Hindus in terms of rituals (Ahmed, 1970).

After arrival in this region, the Mundas came close to Hindus in religious matters but always maintained a distance from Muslims. Although they are living surrounded by Hindus and Muslims, they do not accept anything from Muslims. Unless excessive acquiescence, they avoid contact with Muslims because they have nothing similar to Muslims except some food and clothing habits. However, the dogma of the Muslim religion is the main reason behind it.

For example, a Munda may follow Hindu or Christian ideology while indulging in his own customs. But that is not possible in Islam. If you accept Islam, you have to completely forget your identity and live according to Islamic rules because the essence of Islam is total surrender, which is quite difficult for the semi-nomadic Munda people. For that reason, they are not

attracted to Islam. According to Subodh Ghosh (2000), “Millions of people from the lower classes converted to Islam, but a group of tribes never converted to Islam. The religious practices of Islam have failed to appeal in them. So, all these tribal communities gradually adopted Hinduism”.

At present, the young generation of the Munda community is taking shelter of Christianity in connection with neighbouring Sapahar, Badalgachi, and Najipur Missionary Church. In other words, the attraction of Hindu religion is not able to quardary this semi-nomadic group any longer. Some of the Munda families have already been converted to Christianity under the influence of Christian missionaries and built up their life in the light of Christian point of view. This Christian evangelisation is dividing the traditional Munda society. The cultural pattern that had developed over the ages and its acceptable diverse forms were visible. In the days to come, conversion to Christianity may lead to the destruction of the traditional culture and the advent of new social situations.

It is to be mentioned that mankind has survived through social and natural adaptation for more than a thousand years. The influence of the geographical environment is immense on the culture and lifestyle of man. Man survives and adapts himself to the natural environment of his surrounding areas. In other words, geographical and natural environments have an immense impact on shaping the life pattern of a community. Customs, eating habits, food production, and the different aspects of social organisation or social structure build-up keep pace with the geo-physical environment (Panda, 2018). Arabian philosopher Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) of the middle ages has provided an impressive explanation and analysis as regards how society, state, etc., are built and changed while keeping pace with the natural environment and social circumference.

The Mundas are accustomed to leading a mountaineering semi-nomadic life. These groups which are segregated from the main Austric life pattern followed their ancient traditional culture till the late nineteenth century. A noticeable start took place in their habitation and culture in the early 20th century. They started getting scattered on plain lands beyond forests and mountains keeping

the forest-dwelling near-nomadic culture at a distance. At the time, their way of collecting food and ideology started changing. In a word, they started to come out of the ancient structure of adaptation in which they led their lives by breaking it. Many of them were scattered on plain lands among the advanced peoples even in the remote areas. The necessity of adaptation to the new environment emerged and the transition to a new phase of adaptation took place. At the same time, geo-natural and cultural adaptation became urgent (Jalil, 1991; Siddiquee, 1998).

It has been mentioned earlier that culturally Bangladesh is a diverse country. The culture of this region has been built up through various ups and downs of history during the last two thousand years. But culture has been thought to have no unchanged and eternal form. The subtle change in culture through unending acceptance and rejection has been taking place. In the case of Bangladesh culture, it has been thought to be completely true. The demographic feature of Bangladesh is not homogenous. Rather, there are many ethnic minorities in it being somewhat unnoticed. These ethnic peoples have been living here for many centuries. Given ethnicity, they are distinctive, and similarly, in the case of culture, each ethnic group is different from one another. In the same way, they are different from Bangladeshi culture. These ethnic groups are surrounded by Bengali society and culture. Although they live within the Bengali society, their cultural distance from this larger community was very noticeable. They have continuously been living in a different atmosphere. But naturally ethnic minorities may get merged with the large community through adaptation and in a similar way; their mode of living may be changed through continuous cultural adaptation. As per rules, ethnic minorities complete their adaptation process by imitating or receiving different cultural elements of the large community surrounding them. Again, they subtly adopt the dominant society's culture and lifestyle. Sometimes they assimilate those subconsciously.

CONCLUSION

It is known from different sources that the Munda tribe was absolutely forest dwelling while living in Nagpur and Santal Paragon. They used to live only on hunting and gathering. But after migration to Bangladesh territory, they began changes in their livelihood and gradually began to

get accustomed to the farming life of this land. Both the males and females of the Munda community are active and used to working in the fields. Though some of the Munda people still live by hunting, most of them now work as agricultural day labourers, porters, etc. Their hunting practice is almost extinct due to indiscriminate deforestation. Although many of them still live by making some domestic products like mats, and umbrella with shal leaves. Considering this, it may be said that their economic fabric is not strong enough. Almost all of them live in poverty.

The Munda society is divided into two parts. Aged people of this community want to live traditionally and the new generation abandons the life of their predecessors and is eager to assimilate the modern life system around them. Every other ethnic group has got their own religion, language, rituals, customs, and cultural heritage. Just a few decades back these ethnic communities were mainly hunters and gatherers but now they are changing their patterns of livelihood and seeking new ways and means to survive. Mundas are no exception to that. From the Opinion of the elders of their society, this new environment of adaptation did not initiate any positive change in their lives. Rather they have been gradually thrown into starvation and poverty; because they were isolated from the forest and nature-dependent simple life. Virtually hill forest-dwelling life was an unrestricted system of life. Munda people have been forced to accept this new adaptation to survive.

In fact, as a distinct tribal group, they do not feel any urge to retain their endurance. Rather, they are taking a new cultural position by leaving their traditional culture by adopting the lifestyle of diverse religious groups. Hence, the Mundas are willingly losing their tradition similar to some other small ethnic groups living in Bangladesh. They are involved in a new adaptation process in their sphere. In the analysis, adaptation from the hill-forest dwelling life system to an agrarian life of the plain land was found. Changes have been done in various aspects of the internal social structure to survive in changing situations. Hinduism was followed due to its first nearness to the animistic religious beliefs. Later the Mundas were attracted to Christianity for their overall development and became averse to Islam. In combination with all these aspects, the Munda community living in Krishnapur village is going beyond a transitional period. Finally, it can be concluded that the Munda people, living in Bangladesh, are involved in a silent and continual

effort to adapt to the surrounding society. They are passing through a multifarious transitional phase of economic, social, cultural, political, educational, and religious adaptation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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