

Original article

## THE SAURIA PAHARIA OF MALDA DISTRICT IN WEST BENGAL: A STUDY ON THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

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### ABSTRACT

The tribe Sauria Paharia, also known as the Maler was the original inhabitants of Rajmahal hills. They migrated to West Bengal during British period either for clearing jungle or for working as tea garden labours. A small portion of the tribe lives in Malda district. They are dispersedly settled in some villages of the district. The present study is based on the 77 Sauria Paharia families found in Malda district. To understand the socio-economic situation of the tribe primary data was collected through field work. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The study included their economic condition, educational status and availability of assets. The Sauria Paharia of Malda are mainly dependent on agriculture. But due to non availability of land most of the male and female work as labours in other's land. It was found that the Sauria Paharia tribe is living in marginal situation as most of the families suffer from economic insecurity. A number of men work as migrational labour. They are educationally backward. Lack of awareness is another reason for backwardness.

**Key words:** Sauria Paharia, economy, education, backwardness

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### INTRODUCTION

Five decades ago L. P. Vidyarthi documented the life of the Maler living in Rajmahal hills and developed the concept of nature-man-spirit complex. The Malers who are enlisted as Sauria Paharia in West Bengal are in the people who have migrated to Malda district of West Bengal long back. The main concentration of the Sauria Paharias is found in the districts of Santal Parganas and Purne. In the state of Jharkhand they are regarded as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal groups (PvTG) and enlisted as Souriya Pahariya. They are distributed in Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. After that in British administration, Mr. Augustus Cleveland (1778) took the charge of the hill crops. He was able to pacifying the Paharias by giving them cash allowances and making them law abiding people.

The Sauria Paharia myth tells that 'Beru gossaiyan' after creating the universe created the first man (Maler) and sent him to the hills to live. He also asked the Maler to utilise the hills and forests for his livelihood. Till then they are living on the hills and practising shifting cultivation (Khalu / Kurwa).

As per 2011 Census there are only 3480 Sauria Paharias in West Bengal constituting 0.07% of the total tribal population of the state. Major population of the Sauria Paharia was found in Malda and Darjiling districts. In Darjiling district they were mainly dependent on the Tea Gardens, while in Malda their livelihood depended on agriculture.

They used to speak the Dravidian Language Malto among themselves in Bihar. In West Bengal they speak in Bengali. The Sauria Paharia of Malda can also speak in Santali language as they are living in concomitance with the Santals.

#### **Literature review:**

Risley (1891) noted that people of the Rajmahal hills are called Maler. In other words "Maler and Malhar seem to be merely a plural form—may possibly be a branch of the great Saurian family to which the Rajmahal Paharias, the Oraons, and the Sabars all belong, and which Colonel Dalton would describe as Dravidian".

According to O'Malley (1938) Sauria Paharia's original home was in Carnatik, from this place they went to settle in Bihar on the banks of the river Sone. But again they were driven away from this area by Muhammadans and finally settled in Rajmahal hill areas. They are the progenitors of the Maler. During Mughal period, they were known in the area as robbers. In Rajmahal they were left under the control of Mansabdars who belonged to Khetauri family upto 18<sup>th</sup> century.

L.P. Vidyarthi's (1963) study on the Malers of Rajmahal hill is a pioneer work regarding nature-man-spirit complex. He tried to find out the relation between their economy and life style in forest ecology. He also discussed their cultivation in slash and burn technique (*Khalu*), domestication of animals, their lineage, family, spirits, beliefs and practices which surrounds their life.

A recent study on the Souria Paharia of Godda district, Jharkhand by Manna and Ghosh (2016) shows how their culture and society is undergoing changes due to impact of globalisation. Their traditional forest based economy, shifting hill cultivation and custom of crafts making are undergoing changes. Now they are gradually being involved in agriculture.

A study was commenced by Social Research wing of Foundation, Badlao institute of Training and Management (BITM) in Paharia Villages of Godda District has come up with these findings.

The socio-economic situation of the Scheduled Tribes in India varies in accordance with the regional variation. There are studies on the Sauria Paharia of Jharkhand, but there is lack of studies in West Bengal.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The present study aims to find out the socio-economic situation of the Sauria Paharia tribe living in West Bengal.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Most of the researchers believe that socio-economic status (SES) of a group is best represented by education, occupation and income. Standard of living indices (SLI) depend on type of house, possession of agricultural land, irrigated land, possession of livestock, separate kitchen, source of fuel used, source of lighting, toilet facility, source of drinking water and household assts like television, telephone etc (Guru Raj, Shilpa and Maheswaran, 2015). These parameters were considered during the study.

The socio-economic situation of the Sauria Paharia tribe of West Bengal was studied on the basis of their economic condition through occupation, income - expenditure, savings habit, and indebtedness, availability of assets, educational status and living style.

The Sauria Paharia is a small tribe of West Bengal mainly concentrated in Malda district. More than fifty percent of the total population of the state lives here (59.45%). The following table shows the population of the Sauria Paharia tribe in West Bengal.

**Table no. 1: District wise population of the Sauria Paharia, West Bengal (2011Census)**

District	Persons		Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Darjiling	546	15.69	273	50.00	273	50.00
Jalpaiguri	13	0.37	7	53.85	6	46.15
Uttar Dinajpur	91	2.61	44	48.35	47	51.65
Dakshin Dinajpur	238	6.84	108	45.38	130	54.62
Malda	2,069	59.45	1,018	49.20	1,051	50.80
Murshidabad	49	1.41	16	32.65	33	67.35
Barddhaman	23	0.66	12	52.17	11	47.83
Nadia	205	5.89	104	50.73	101	49.27
North Twenty Four Parganas	43	1.24	25	58.14	18	41.86
Hugli	4	0.11	4	100.00	0	0.00
Bankura	35	1.01	15	42.86	20	57.14
Puruliya	128	3.68	67	52.34	61	47.66
Haora	4	0.11	3	75.00	1	25.00
Kolkata	12	0.34	6	50.00	6	50.00
South Twenty Four Parganas	12	0.34	7	58.33	5	41.67
Paschim Medinipur	7	0.20	5	71.43	2	28.57
Purba Medinipur	1	0.03	1	100.00	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>3480</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>1715</b>	<b>49.28</b>	<b>1765</b>	<b>50.72</b>

The sex ratio of the Sauria Paharia tribe in West Bengal is 1029 higher than the state's tribal sex ratio. The decadal growth rate of the Sauria Paharia was negative during 1991 to 2001 (-4.92), but in the decade 2001 to 2011 the population of this tribe increased largely. The decadal growth rate is recorded to be 4.92.

### **Studied areas and population:**

The study was done in two blocks of Malda district; English Bazar and Old Malda blocks under Malda Sadar Sub Division. Four villages of these blocks have been covered under study. These are Ajimpur Vivekananda Palli under Kajigram Chandipur of English Bazar Block, Bhootkilla, Khayerbani and Jatakuri under Jatrada Gram Panchayat of Old Malda Block.

**Table No. 2: Distribution of the studied population of Malda**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Name of the village</b>	<b>No. of family</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1</b>	Bhutkilla	20	55	53	108
<b>2</b>	Jatakuri	5	16	14	30
<b>3</b>	Khoirbani	8	15	20	35
<b>4</b>	Vivekananda Polly	44	102	119	221
<b>Total</b>		<b>77</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>394</b>

Among the four studied areas maximum numbers of families were found in Vivekananda Polly. This settlement was established by the Ramkrishna Mission long back. There were 20 families in Bhutkilla village. Other two villages had only 13 Sauria Paharia families. Altogether 77 Sauria Paharia families have been studied in Malda district. Vivekananda Polly is situated near urban set up. Other villages are situated in rural set up. Dominance of the Santals was observed in three villages of Old Malda Block. Snow ball sampling technique was applied to find out the Sauria Paharia settlements.

### **Data collection:**

The present study is based on primary data collected through field work in the selected villages of Malda district. All the villages have dispersed Sauria Paharia population only except Vivekananda Polly. The study includes both qualitative and quantitative data. Household census was taken through structured schedules which included information like age, sex, marital status, educational status, primary and secondary occupation, income, expenditure, savings and loans of the family members along with available assets in the family. Interviews were taken from the villagers regarding their economic life, savings habit and socio-economic problems. Case studies were also taken to understand economic and educational situation of the tribe. Observed details like house type, toilet facility, electricity etc were documented systematically.

Data processing, analysis and tabulations were done through SPSS software and MS Excel.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The Sauria Paharias in the studied areas could not memorize the actual time and reason of migration of their forefathers. Among 44 Sauria Paharia families residing in Vivekananda Polly 41 families have received Patta, during 2010. On the other hand the three villages under Jatradanga Gram Panchayat the Sauria Paharia are found to form a separate hamlet at a corner or farthest end of the villages which are commonly known as Paharia Para. They are residing here with the Santals and other communities like Lohar, Chai Mandals, Ghosh, Fulia (Sarkars), Namasudras like Chamars and Muslims. The economies of the villagers are mainly based on labour works like working in agricultural fields and as contractual daily labourers in different places of India.

In the studied areas 84.42% of the houses were kachha having either thatched roof, tiled roof or tin roof. Roofs were often made up of Tal leaves. The floor and wall was made up of mud in most cases. Semi pucca houses have cemented floor or cemented wall. No pucca house was found in the studied areas.

### Population profile:

The population of the Sauria Paharia in the studied areas of Malda is 394 including 188 males and 206 females. The sex ratio of the population is 1096.

**Table No. 3: Age and sex wise distribution of the studied population**

Age Groups (In years)	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0-4	22	11.70	23	11.17	45	11.42
5-9	28	14.89	29	14.08	57	14.47
10-14	26	13.83	38	18.45	64	16.24
15-19	23	12.23	26	12.62	49	12.44
20-24	8	4.26	15	7.28	23	5.84
25-29	18	9.57	14	6.80	32	8.12
30-34	13	6.91	12	5.83	25	6.35
35-39	7	3.72	11	5.34	18	4.57
40-44	11	5.85	8	3.88	19	4.82
45-49	7	3.72	7	3.40	14	3.55
50-54	7	3.72	9	4.37	16	4.06
55-59	7	3.72	4	1.94	11	2.79
60+	11	5.85	10	4.85	21	5.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The age group wise distribution of the population shows that at the age group 20 to 24 years and 35 to 39 Years the male population suddenly decreases. This is because at this age men

mostly go out for working as migrational labour. Women also go out for work, but they do not settle outside the state.

**Marital status:**

The Sauria Paharias are endogamous tribe. Marriage between two different Khoms is permitted. The Sauria Paharias are monogamous. Incidence of polygamy was found in Malda.

**Table No. 4: Marital Status of the Sauria Paharia**

Status	Malda District					
	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Married	81	43.09	81	39.32	162	41.12
Unmarried	102	54.26	104	50.49	206	52.28
Widow/ Widower	5	2.66	17	8.25	22	5.58
Divorced/ Separated	-	-	4	1.94	4	1.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Number of widows is more than the widower in the studied areas. The cases of divorce was found in Malda. Separated or divorced males are not found, but females are found from Malda. In case of love marriage inter-caste marriage was common in the studied areas. In this case marriage ties are made mainly with the Santals.

**Age at first marriage:**

It is stated earlier that the sex ratio of the Sauria Paharias is high in both the studied areas. It may be assumed that the status of women is high among them. The age at marriage is a good indicator of social situation of the women.

**Table No. 5: Age at first marriage of the Sauria Paharia**

Age group	Male		Age group	Female	
	No.	%		No.	%
<b>Up to 14+years</b>	2	2.33	<b>Up to 14 + years</b>	26	25.49
<b>15-20+years</b>	40	46.51	<b>15-17+years</b>	44	43.14
<b>21+years above</b>	44	51.16	<b>18+years above</b>	32	31.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100.00</b>

It is observed that age at marriage for the Sauria Paharia females is much lower in Malda in comparison to the males. It was found that 26 females got married below 15 years of age. Not

only in case of arranged marriage, but love marriages are also held at early age. Majority of the females in Malda married within 15 to 17 years of age (43.14%). Most of the males in the studied areas got married after 18 years. Majority of the married men got married above 21 years of age.

### **Educational status:**

The Sauria Paharia were educationally backward as their literacy rate was low. The literacy rate of the Sauria Paharia of the state was 44.03% including 49.22% male and 38.92% female (2011 Census). Among the studied population literacy rate was 39.62%. It is interesting the find that female literacy rate (41.28) was higher than male literacy rate (37.67).

The education level wise distribution of the studied population is given below.

**Table No. 6: Educational level of the studied population**

Education level	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Can Not Sign	81	43.09	89	43.20	170	43.15
Can Sign only	8	4.26	4	1.94	12	3.05
Below Primary	10	5.32	11	5.34	21	5.33
Primary (Class I-IV)	37	19.68	45	21.84	82	20.81
Middle School (Class V-VIII)	25	13.30	38	18.45	63	15.99
Matriculation (Class IX-X)	7	3.72	6	2.91	13	3.30
Higher Secondary (Class XI-XII)	1	0.53	1	0.49	2	0.51
Not attending school (0 - 4 years age group)	19	10.11	12	5.83	31	7.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Among the Sauria Paharia of Malda district highest level of education was Higher Secondary, although only 1 male and 1 female was found to cross the same level. There were only 3.30% matriculate individuals. Many children of the studied areas were attending ICDS for pre-school education. In Khayerbani and Bhootkilla villages ICDS was inside the village. So many children from these villages attended ICDS. But due to long distance of the ICDS from Vivekananda Polly, the children were not sent. Moreover, on the way to ICDS School monkeys frequently disturbed the children as they had to pass through a mango plantation area. Majority of the population of the studied areas have studied upto primary level.

### **Drop out:**

It is quite clear that many men and women in the studied areas could not complete education due to various reasons. The dropout rate is high among them.

**Table No. 7: Nature of dropout at the different levels of the studied population**

Level	Malda District					
	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Primary</b>	17	48.57	17	48.57	34	48.57
<b>Secondary</b>	16	45.71	15	42.86	31	44.29
<b>Tertiary</b>	2	5.71	3	8.57	5	7.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Primary – I-IV, Secondary – V-X, Tertiary – After Matriculation

Around 70 people in the studied areas of Malda could not continue their education. The dropout rate is maximum at Primary level (48.57%) followed by secondary level (44.29%). There were only 2 males and 5 females to drop at tertiary level. The reasons of drop out are discussed below.

**Table No. 8: Causes of dropout of the studied population**

Causes of drop out	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Marriage</b>	1	2.86	5	14.29	6	8.57
<b>Economic problem</b>	26	74.29	23	65.71	49	70.00
<b>Disinterested</b>	8	22.86	7	20.00	15	21.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Economic problem in the family is the most common reason for drop out. Apart from this early marriage among the females is another reason for drop out. Some of the males and females in the studied areas were found to be disinterested in studies. Some of them said that due to long distance of higher secondary school they lost interest.

***Case study:***

*Sanchalia Paharia (24 years) of Vivekananda Polly got married at the age of 15 years. At that time she was studying in class VI in Mission school. Her father was day labour. He could not help her continue education and negotiated marriage at the early age. Now she works as agricultural labour.*

The education level among the Sauriya Paharia in the village Jatakuri was very low and also dropout rate was high. The reason was unstable economic condition of the family.



The Sauria Paharia girls and boys were getting government facilities for education. A number of students including 38 males and 48 females of the studied areas of Malda received free books, uniforms and the facilities under free and compulsory education. Kanyashree was received by 9 Sauria girls in Malda district. Three boys and 5 girls were getting money through Sikshashree. Post- matric scholarship was received by 2 females in Malda. One girl

student got bicycle under Sabooj Sathi Yojna. Due to lack of awareness they did not apply for caste certificate. Only one male had caste certificate among all.

### **Economic situation:**

Traditionally the Sauria were dependent on the forest. They migrated to West Bengal from Rajmahal hills for economic purpose. They cleared jungle in plain land and became settled agriculturists. Both male and female of Sauria Paharia families worked for their livelihood. Sometimes the young men and women below 15 years started working for supporting the family.

**Table No. 9: Distribution of workers and non-workers**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>0-14 (NLF)</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>166</b>
Workers	2	2	<b>4</b>
Percentage of workers	2.63	2.22	<b>2.41</b>
<b>15-59 (LF)</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>207</b>
Workers	88	59	<b>147</b>
Percentage of workers	87.13	55.66	<b>71.01</b>
Non workers	13	47	<b>60</b>
Percentage of Non workers	12.87	44.34	<b>28.99</b>
<b>60 &amp; above (NLF)</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>21</b>
Workers	8	4	<b>12</b>
Percentage of workers	72.73	40.00	<b>57.14</b>
Non workers	3	6	<b>9</b>
Percentage of Non workers	27.27	60.00	<b>42.86</b>

Among the non labour force within 14 years 2 males and 2 females were working. Within labour force majority of the studied population were working, although 28.99% of the people were non workers. That means there are some students and a few unemployed person at this age group. The people above 60 years also worked as 57.17% of the people were workers, while only 9 people were found not to be involved in any work.

### **Present Occupation:**

The Sauria Paharia of Malda district were mostly dependent on agriculture. In Malda district the Sauria Paharia males mostly worked as day labourer (48.68%) within the district as well as outside the district. They frequently went to other states for working as day labours or as masonry workers through the job contractors. They earned more outside the state than within

state. Moreover, they got advance payment before going to work. There were migrational labours in almost every family. There were land holding families in the studied villages who primarily depended on agriculture. The landless people cultivated in other's land. In case of business three females earned by selling wood and two females sold country liquor, while a couple had grocery shop in the village. Women were also doing animal husbandry business. In others' category of males, van puller and a mason were included. In the studied areas 1

male and 2 females were getting old age pension. The agricultural labours got Rs. 220/- in agricultural season. Two females from the studied areas were found get widow pension. One unemployed female got *Bekar vata* (unemployed allowance) through government.

**Table No. 10: Primary occupation of the studied population**

Primary Occupation	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agriculture	13	8.55	6	3.35	19	5.74
Agricultural labour	8	5.26	28	15.64	36	10.88
Animal husbandry	-	-	2	1.12	2	0.60
Business	1	0.66	6	3.35	7	2.11
Day labour	74	48.68	23	12.85	97	29.31
Household Work	4	2.63	47	26.26	51	15.41
Others	2	1.32	-	-	2	0.60
Old Age Pension	1	0.66	2	1.12	3	0.91
Student	44	28.95	62	34.64	106	32.02
Unemployed	5	3.29	3	1.68	8	2.42
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>100.00</b>

\*Excluding 0-4 years age group

**Case Study 1:**

*Shibu Paharia aged 15 years was a migrational labour working in different states of India like Rajasthan, Chennai, Maharashtra etc. He got this opportunity through a contractor Maju Seikh. For going out of the state they paid Rs. 6000 to 7000/- in advance for two months. The arrangements of food and accommodation outside the state were made by the contractor. He dropped at class VII due to economic problem in the family.*

**Case study 2:**

*Chirku Paharia aged 35 years was living in Khayerbani village. He was dependent on agriculture. He had 12 bighas of land. He cultivated in 10 bighas of land twice in a year. He mostly cultivated paddy and mustered seed. Sometimes wheat was also cultivated. He gave 2 bighas of land for share cropping called Adhi. In these two bighas of land he planted jute. The fifty percent of the share was taken by him. He gave this land to a non-tribal man. The paddy grown in the field was utilized for consumption purpose. The surplus was sold at the market. He earned Rs. 5000 to Rs. 10,000 per month.*

Although working as migrational labour fetched more money, but it was uncertain, while agriculture was a settled occupation. In case of the families where both men and women worked out of the district, they generally kept their children with the grandparents. This was one reason for living in joint or extended families. Most of the male members of the villages went to Malda town, Delhi and Bangalore to work there as contractual labourers which was called *Dadan* among them.

**Secondary Occupation:**

Along with primary occupation some of the Sauria males and females also had secondary occupation. In case of women secondary occupation was household work in most cases.

**Table No. 11: Secondary occupation of Sauria Paharia in Malda District**

Secondary Occupation	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	No.	%	No.
Agriculture	0	0.00	2	3.08	2	1.67
Agricultural labour	9	16.36	8	12.31	17	14.17
Animal husbandry	22	40.00	2	3.08	24	20.00
Day labour	18	32.73	7	10.77	25	20.83
House hold work	3	5.45	44	67.69	47	39.17
Others	3	5.45	2	3.08	5	4.16
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

In the studied areas of Malda most of the men were involved in animal husbandry business. They kept cattle and often exchanged animals for business purpose. The men who were engaged as agricultural labour in agricultural season, they worked as day labour in other seasons. Apart from household work women were found to work as agricultural labour. They also provided labour in their own family land in the agricultural season. In others category men who worked as medicine man, van puller and pension holders were included. A woman sold wood collected from mango plantation areas. One bundle having 30-35 pieces of woods was sold at the market of Malda town at Rs. 10 to 15/-. After selling the woods they brought rice, salt etc. necessary for daily use. In Bhootkilla, a few families depended on Haria (rice beer) making and selling.

**Case study 1:**

*Monju Sauria Pahariya, a 30 years old woman of Malda worked as a Grocer. She has a small grocery shop in her own house. She sold pulses, eggs, biscuits, soaps, shampoo, snacks etc. Villagers purchased items of their daily needs from here only as there was one shop available. But there was a problem due to non availability of money at hand of the people they borrowed things in credit and forgot to repay. For that reason she had to suffer. She earned Rs. 700 to 800/- from her shop in a month.*

So sometimes the situation became odd for the villagers to run a business. Some of the villagers worked as labourer in construction of lateritic roads through job card. But due to some administrative problem, the work remained incomplete and many workers did not

receive their dues. There are a number of job card holders in Malda. Among them 48 males and 39 females have job card.

**Income and expenditure:**

The Saurias living in Malda district did not have any fixed income. The migrant labours earned better than those worked as day labours in the state.

**Table No.12: Family wise income and expenditure of the Sauria Paharia**

Income Group (in Rs.)	Malda District			
	Income		Expenditure	
	No. of family	%	No. of family	%
Rs.1000-Rs.3000	25	32.47	36	46.75
Rs.3001-Rs.5000	44	57.14	36	46.75
Rs.5001-Rs.10000	8	10.39	5	6.49
Total	77	100.00	77	100.0

The family wise income details showed that majority of the studied families in Malda district earned within Rs. 3000/- or Rs. 5000/-. Few families earned more than Rs. 5000/- (6.49%). The

migrational labours got Rs. 6000 to Rs. 12,000/- in advance. Such labours gave the required amount to the family and carried rest of the amount with them. The agricultural labours in Malda district got Rs. 220/- for working from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. So their earning remained meagre. The day labours in Malda got Rs. 170-180 per day, while the job card holders got Rs. 140 to Rs. 150 per day. For the day labours income is not consistent. Sometimes they work for 2 days and sometimes they work for 5 days in a week.

### **Savings:**

**Table No. 13: Savings details of the Sauria Paharia families**

Place of Saving	Malda District					
	Male		Female		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Chit fund	2	5.714	0	0.00	2	4.88
Gramin Bank	12	34.286	3	50.00	15	36.59
Nationalized Bank	20	57.143	2	33.33	22	53.66
SHG	0	0.000	1	16.67	1	2.44
LICI	1	2.857	0	0.00	1	2.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.000</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

At present the tribal people have different options for saving their money. There are nationalized bank in the villages. Grameen bank is also there. The studied Sauria Paharia families had savings habit. They saved in banks, Self Help Groups (SHGs), Life Insurance Policy (LICI) and even chit funds.

The studied people mostly saved their money in nationalized banks like UBI and SBI. In Malda some of the males and females have saved their money in LICI. One female from was found to save money in SHG. In Butkilla one SHG (Self Help Group) namely Nilanjona Mahila Samity was very active. Women from 3 studied families were associated with this SHG. This was a mixed group with Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe People. Every month, each of them deposit Rs. 60/- in the SHG.

They utilized the saved money during emergency in the family. They also took loan from bank and other sources for economic purpose. Two males took loan in the studied areas. One of them took loan from a Nationalized Bank for agriculture purpose and the other person took loan from the money lender for animal husbandry.

### **Household assets:**

The household assets included agricultural and homestead land, livestock and household assets.

### Land holding:

The Saurias of Malda are dependent on agriculture and they possess land as 22% of the families had agricultural land in the studied areas.

**Table No. 14: Agricultural land holding pattern of the studied families**

Amount	Number of family	Percentage
Below 1 bigha	1	5.88
1 bigha to 4 bigha	8	47.06
5 bigha to 9 bigha	3	17.65
10 bigha and above	5	29.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Most of the families in Malda owned 1 to 4 bighas of land (47.06%). There were 5 families having more than 10 bighas of land (29.41%). Paddy, wheat, mustered seed and jute were cultivated in these areas. Most of the lands had irrigation facility (11 nos.). They cultivated twice in a year. They generally cultivated paddy, wheat, mustered and jute. Jute was a cash crop and for jute cultivation the land owners generally gave a small amount of land in *Adhhi*, i.e. share cropping. Most of the families got patta for land (15 nos). Only 1 family owned agricultural land and one family had vested land.

**Table No. 15: Ownership pattern of agricultural land**

Ownership pattern	Number of family	Percentage
Own	1	5.88
Patta	15	88.24
Vest Land	1	5.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.00</b>

All of the families of the Vivekananda Polly received Patta in the year 2010 which was donated to them by the Maharaj of Ramakrishna Mission. Before settling here permanently they used to lead a half nomadic life inside the mango gardens and banana gardens. Before settling here they were living in the vested land of a Muslim owner namely, Miyandul Khas. After being evicted from this land they were rehabilitated in Vivekananda Polly.

**Table No. 16: Homestead land areas of the studied families**

Amount of land	Number of family	Percentage of family
Below 3 decimal	3	3.90
3-6 decimal	63	81.82

7-10 decimal	6	7.79
11-14 decimal	1	1.30
15 and above	4	5.19
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Most of the families in the studied areas owned 3 to 6 decimal homestead lands (81.82%). Majority of the families received patta for homestead land (93.90%) in Malda.

**Table No. 17: Ownership pattern of homestead land**

<b>Ownership pattern</b>	<b>Number of family</b>	<b>Percentage of family</b>
Own	2	2.60
Patta	72	93.51
Others	3	3.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Apart from own land and patta land, one family was found to reside in vested land, one family was living in his father's land and one family was residing in relative's house. These were included in others' category. Eleven families in the studied areas were benefited by the Indira Awas Yojna for construction of house.

### **Livestock:**

The presence of livestock was a common scenario of almost every tribal household. Among the Sauria Paharia they were source of primary or secondary income.

**Table No. 18: Livestock of the studied population**

<b>Live stock</b>	<b>Malda District</b>		
	<b>No. of cattle</b>	<b>No. of families have</b>	<b>Average</b>
Fowl	81	16	5.06
Cow	47	21	2.24
Goat	58	25	2.32
Pig	7	4	1.75
Sheep	7	4	1.75

Cows and goats were mostly reared by the Sauria Paharia families. Pig was also found in 3-4 families in both the districts. Fowl was most common. In Malda system of rearing animal on sharing basis was found. In these cases mostly goats and pigs were bought by one person, but reared by someone else. After birth of kid or piglet, they were evenly divided among the two owners. In case of one baby, it was sold and the money was equally divided. This was locally called *Posani*.

**Household assets:**

Cot, bicycle, mobile were the most common assets for the Sauria Paharia. A few families in had television and motorbike.

**Table No. 19: Household assets of the studied population**

Type of assets	Quantity	No. of families have
Almirah	2	2
Cot	55	28
Cycle	33	28
Mobile	47	42
Motorbike	3	3
Television	8	8

The Sauria Paharia families possessed almirah, cot, mobile, motorbike and television. They also wear silver jewellery. Most of the houses had cot. Bicycle was used by the students for going to school. This was the most common vehicle for communication in the villages.

Motorbike was also found among a few families. Mobile was used by at least one person in the family.

**Water, sanitation and electricity:**

In Malda district major source of drinking water was tube well (76.62%) and 18 families used water from boring pipe line (23.38%) for drinking purpose. In Vivekananda Polly people used water of marshal, and governmental tube well for drinking purpose and in case of Bhootkilla, Khoirbani, and Jhatakuri as they lived in river side and they used river water for domestic purpose and some governmental tube wells for drinking purpose. The villagers of Vivekananda Polly faced problem regarding water. According to the villagers the available four tube wells in the area were not sufficient for them, especially during the summer season. During the summer the water sources dried and water contained iron.

Toilet facility was not available with 98.70% of the houses in Malda. Most of them still practiced open defecation system. Some of the informant said that they preferred to use natural toilet than



the concrete toilet as it was really shameful to go to the toilet at home in front of the other family members or guests.

In Malda district all the houses in Vivekananda Polly had electricity, but in other villages some of the houses did not have electricity. Although majority of the studied houses had electricity (77.92%). Some of the complained of huge electricity bills received by them. They were unable to clear the bills and so the office disconnects the electricity.

### **General observation and conclusion:**

It was found that nearly 60% of the Sauria Paharia families of Malda district belonged to Below Poverty Level (BPL) and they had BPL card. The Sauria Pahria tribe living in Malda district were backward in terms of education and economy. The literacy rate was very low. There was lack of higher education among them. Rate of drop out was also very high. Long distance of high school from the rural settlements was one of the reasons for this. The main reason for drop out was economic, while in case of females early marriage also lead to drop out. Most of the families depended on agricultural labouring or they migrated to out of the state as labour. Men mainly migrated to Rajasthan, Bangalore, Kerala and other parts of the country. Both men and women remain engaged in work. For this reason parents cold not able to support education of their children. Girls were often involved in household chores and could not give time in studies.

The dependence on agriculture and animal husbandry was more among the Sauria Paharia of Malda district. The land holding families generally cultivated twice in a year. Paddy was commonly cultivated along with mustered seed and jute. But a very few families had agricultural land. The families had a very small quantity of land. Other families depended on labouring. Animal husbandry supplemented their income. Most of the families earned within Rs. 5000/- per month. Most of the families got patta for homestead land only except Vivekananda polly which was resettled by the Mission.

In Vivekananda Polly the Sauria Paharias were helped by the missionaries. Different types of helps and subsidies were frequently provided by Ramakrisna Mission during winter and rainy seasons. One of their dedications was serving a mobile clinic inside the village on every Friday from where free of cost medicines and general physical treatments were provided.

There is reluctance among the Sauria Paharia to use latrine and toilet as they were uncomfortable to use those. For this reason they were not constructing toilets even with the aid given through Swachh Bharat Mission. Although some of the families got government facilities under development programmes like in education, job sector or even house construction, but still there is lack of awareness among them.

It was observed that the Sauria Paharia tribe of Malda district are living in marginal situation. They live in small pockets of the villages which are dominated by the other tribal groups or non tribal people. Their culture is also undergoing transformation due to inter-community marriages. Men and women hardly have economic security and stability of income. They are migrating to other areas in search of occupation. Awareness generation regarding government programmes and importance of education may change the situation.

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**Photo of the Sauria Paharia tribe of Malda district:**



A Sauria Paharia man showing his job card



Sauria Paharia woman preparing mat



A Sauria Paharia family in Malda



Sauria Paharia hut at Khairbani village