

## **Tangible resources, intangible systems: A study on environmental perception among the Lodha community of West Bengal, India**

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**Abstract:** The present study is an endeavor to understand how the indigenous community perceives and interprets the environment that regulates customary practices. The study was carried out among the Lodha community of West Bengal. The study includes 90 key respondents, selected from three different villages (Govindapur, Lohomaliya, and Muchiberia) of Jhargram and Paschim Midnapore districts of West Bengal, India. Interview, both isolational and associational were the principal tools of data collection. The perception of environment involves the understanding of the surrounding environment, classification, and utilization of different environmental resources, recent environmental changes, and its variation across different age groups. This study explores the socio-cultural construction of the environment by Lodha community. It implies that the environment is perceived through the visual and psychological attributes. The visually perceived attributes can be linked with tangible aspects of the environment, and psychological attributes encompassing the pattern of resource identification, utilization, 'local laws' of resource conservation, labour organization in terms of acquisition of specialized knowledge, continuity of knowledge through customary networks and distribution of knowledge in terms of age and gender. Moreover, the article tries to explore the possibilities of endogenous development in the changing scenario by rapprochement of persisting knowledge base of the community and the factors deviating the community from their customary practices that has so far been successful in the local context.

*Key words :* Environmental perception, environmental recognition, environmental change, Inter-generational variation, Lodha tribe