



## Sustainable Development of Kandh Tribe: Some critical issues in Kandhamal Perspective.

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### ABSTRACT:

Tribals are the aboriginal community in India. Initially they were depending upon nature for their day-to-day life and livelihood by the way of harmony with nature. So, anthropologists opines that they are the caretaker of nature. After introduction of modernization process in the name of inclusion of tribal people in mainstreaming of development, the life and livelihood of tribes are in threat and trouble. The culture, religious practice and social governance system of tribal people which represents their identity, are in the process of decay. There is enormous impact of external agencies on the life and livelihood of tribal people which need to be verified and corrected. Sustainable Development is a global concept of development, a happy and happy situation with maintaining the intergeneration and intrageneration equity where local knowledge and skill are given most care while formulating plan and policies. This study is based at Kandhamal District of Odisha a tribal dominated district where Kandh tribal people are living since long. Here some critical issues relating to tribal development are presented for sustainable development of Kandha tribe. There is need of revision of developmental plan and policies with respect to sustainable development of tribal people. The local knowledge, skill and values are to be incorporated while formulating and implementing the tribal development plan and policies.

Key words: Culture, Harmony, Livelihood, Nature, Sustainable Development, Social governance, Tribe.

### Introduction:

Anthropologist opines that tribal people are initial dwellers on the earth. They used to live on the lap of nature by adopting ecofriendly practices. There was a strong bond between human civilization and nature to maintain harmony with each other. Forest plays an important role in maintaining the life and livelihoods of the tribal people. India constitutes 9.7 percent of tribal population with seven hundred types of tribal groups including seventy-five types are identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG). In Odisha there are sixty-four types of tribals including seventeen PVTG groups are residing in various parts of the state. The different tribal groups are identified with respect to their unique mode of life, livelihood, distinctive culture and values. The Kandhs are the aboriginal community in Odisha. "They are called the Khond or the Kandha or the Kond, according to usage of the term in vogue in different places in which they live. But whatever the terminology used; it refers to the same tribe". According to the way of life and livelihood the Kandhs are divided in to three types like Dangaria Kandh who lives in top of the hills, Kutia Kandh who lives in the hole that means their home is designed little below the surface of the earth and Desia Kandh who lives in plane area with other section of people. Dangaria Kandh and Kutia Kandh are treated as Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) due to their backwardness and low economic status. The indigenous knowledge on management of forest is providing opportunities to the tribes for their survival with ecosystem. The integration of tribes into mainstream of Indian society is one of the development agenda since independence. The international agencies have also suggested their opinion for development of tribal people through management of natural resources by adoption of indigenous knowledge system.

### Aims and objectives of the study:

- To study the critical issues on tribal development, adopted by various external agencies like government, non-government and others for the development of tribes.
- To study the role of forest and sacred groves in maintaining the cultural practices and social governance in the tribal society.
- To study the indigenous knowledge and practices which facilitates the natural resource management system.

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### Methodology:

This study is based on both primary and secondary data which are presented for discussion. The primary data includes the interview with the local tribal people and secondary data comprises with the data available in various records and in published reports & journals.

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### Area of the study:

This study is based on Kandhamal district of Odisha which is tribal populous district. Here the majority people are from Kandh tribal community. They used to live in forest and depend upon nature for their sustenance of life and livelihoods.

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### Review of literature:

Here initiatives have been taken to highlight the issues on identity of tribal people and tribal development by various authors in different period of time. Some of the points are presented for discussion.

The World Bank(1991) defines <sup>ii</sup>“Indigenous people can be identified in particular geographical areas by the presence in varying degrees of the following characteristics :

- a) Close attachment to ancestral territories and to the natural resources in these areas;
- b) Self-identification and identification by others as members of a distinct cultural group;
- c) An indigenous language, often different form the national language;
- d) Presence of customary social and political institutions; and
- e) Primarily subsistence-oriented production”.

The explanation of World Bank describes the characteristics of indigenous people which are popularly known as tribal people and their way of life in the present society.

After India got the independence from Britishers, the first policy on tribal development was adopted in ‘*Tribal Panchasheel*’ the idea of first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. This ideas on tribal development is quoted by Renuka Ray team(1959), Dhehar Commission(1961), Shilu Ao Committee(1969) and G.V. Sarma(2009) has mentioned in his article ‘Some critical issues in tribal Development’<sup>iii</sup>. The ideas on Tribal Panchasheel ie, five principles on tribal development are as follows:

- The tribal people should develop along the line of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them, but rather try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
- Tribal rights on land and forest should be respected.
- We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do administration and development.
- We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with multiplicity of schemes; we should work through and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.
- We should judge the results not by statistics or the amount of money spent by the quality of human character that is evolved.

The above statements states that the tribal people are to be respected and encouraged to maintain their own traditional, cultural institution and self-rule; and no external agencies are to impose their ideas on them. The tribal development is not monitored by quantity and statistics as it is related to quality of human character.

UNESCO (1994) defines that the local culture and value system are to be acknowledged and integrated to substance of development. This approach indicates that development should be more culture-specific and hence more participatory and emancipatory (Mangaraj, 2000, Mangaraj & Upali,2005)<sup>iv</sup> .

The knowledge on social dimension and sustainable management of natural resource by the indigenous people are the emerging topic for discussion now a days. In 1987 the Norway Prime Minister Brundtland has presented a report to the United Nation General Assembly (UNGA) on sustainable management of natural resource in his book “*Our Common Future*”<sup>v</sup>, where he stressed on indigenous knowledge, sustainable use of natural resources and it’s management by the indigenous people.

Jena Mihir( 2006) explains in the book *Forest Tribes of Orissa* that <sup>vi</sup> *Restricted access to the social and political institutions of the non-tribal mainstream society, and limited access to essential forest resources, make indigenous knowledge the last stronghold of tribal ecosystem, for they are neither compelled to adopt middle class values nor “economic development”*.

So, all authors have presented their views to protect the tribal culture and values for a happy and happy situation in present and also in future. The learning of the literature review is to find the gaps and way for further study on tribal culture and tribal development.

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### Sustainable Development of tribes:

Development is a continuous process, where tribal people have adopted it from the very beginning of the human civilization. Nature and forest play important role for the sustenance of tribal people. Development is defined by many authors, where most of them have focused on the holistic approach of action to achieve development by involving all section of people in planning and monitoring and evaluation stage. Sustainable development is

something different from development because in development the issues on environment, climate change, peace and harmony were not taken into consideration, but in sustainable development the above issue are judiciously given importance. When it is realized that the economic development is not the only the indicator of development the concept of sustainable development arises.

The Norway Prime Minister Brundtland has submitted a detailed report on sustainable development in his book **“Our Common Future”**<sup>vii</sup> at the United Nation General Assembly(UNGA) during 1987 where he defined Sustainable Development as **“development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”**. It means that for meeting our present need and demand we should adopt the development process where the future generation members will not be disturbed and negatively affected to maintain their life and livelihood. Here ecological equity and harmony with nature are given priority during taking the initiatives for development. In real sense the tribal people are in the process of sustainable development, as their living style, livelihood and culture are ecofriendly and harmony with nature. India being the signatory of member country along with other 192 member countries have adopted seventeen (17 Nos) Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) which are to be adopted for the period from 2015 to 2030. NITI Ayog is the nodal agency for implementation of SDG in India. For localisation of SDGs in India, Ministry of Panchayati Raj ( MoPR) is the authorised ministry to up the SDG activity with Panchayati Raj & Drinking Water(PR & DW) department in rural areas and Housing & Urban Development (H&UD) department in urban areas. Accordingly, the govt of India and govt of Odisha have mapped their developmental programmes to achieve the SDGs.

The Kandh used to live in a community life where the responsibility is shared during agriculture, forestry activities, fishing activities and social & cultural functions and merrymaking. Each member of the community participates and contributes his and her share in shape of labour and material to make the programme successful. It implies their joint responsibility and partnership for taking any development activities. The Kandh people practise the shifting cultivation to maintain their livelihood which is eco-friendly in nature because by this way the traditional seeds and plants which are sown and raised in the different geographic location are preserved for future generation and the indigenous knowledge is preserved for future generations. Their agriculture practice is organic in nature because they never use chemical fertiliser and chemical insecticide on the crop, they use the organic manure and pest which are healthy and suitable for environment. Under National Millet Mission (NMM) and Odisha Millet Mission (OMM) different types of millets are being preserved and promoted for it's sustainable use. Worshipping the trees, forests and hills are the cultural practice they used to follow from the very beginning of their human settlement as trees, forests provide them food, shelter and livelihoods. So sacred groves play an important role in the life of Kandh people in meeting their religious requirements and social governance system. After harvesting they offer the first crop to the mother earth as the sense of gratitude and respect to mother earth. Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), Govt of India and Special Development Council (SDC) is supporting to the tribal people to protect the sacred groves. Vana Sangrakhyan Samities (VSS) are being formed by Forest department for protection of forest and forest periphery development. Under Community Forest Right the sacred groves land and the common property forest areas are provided as the land title and land patta to the user groups to the vicinity of the forest areas. By this way a strong relationship is developed between forest and villagers for protection of forest at present and future also.

To protect the language, song, dance of the tribal people govt is regularly organising the tribal dance and festival at various level from block level to national level. Education is the key of sustainable development, so Govt of Odisha and Govt of India have jointly taken so many educations related programmes for Kandha people out of which residential school for tribal students run by Govt of Odisha and Eekalabya Govt Model School run by Govt of India are exemplary. To check the distress migration by the people from rural areas to urban areas for search of employment opportunity, creation of livelihood assets and providing the better livelihood options to the rural people, Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is introduced by Govt of India during 2006. As it is an integration of various rural development programmes covering natural resource management this scheme has supported the tribal people to maintain the improvement of livelihood of the tribal people. Watershed Development Programme in tribal areas is an important which improves the soil quality and moisture by the checking the run-off water and creating various livelihood options in rural areas. Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihood Programme (OTELP) is implemented by Integrated Tribal Development Agency(ITDA) for holistic development in tribal areas. Apart from that so many other schemes are introduced by govt agencies for the socio-economic development of the Kandh people of the state to achieve the SDGs within the time line. Recently Ministry of Rural Development in association with Ministry of Tribal Affairs have introduced IEC campaign for PM-JANMAN( Prime Minister- Janajati Adivasi Naya Maha Abhiyan) to ensure 100 % saturation of government schemes in PVTG habitations. The “Kui Samaj” (“Kui” is the language of Kandh people and “Samaj” is the society) the society of Kandh tribal people is founded to protect their culture and development of tribal people in association with various tribal groups in the state and also other state. Sri Lambodar Kanhar, the president of this society says “ the Kui Samaj is established by the Kandh people to protect our great culture, values, tradition, and to check the conversion of religion. In each year we assemble at the district head quarter Phulbani to demonstrate our issues before government for taking required measures for our sustainable development”.

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### **Critical issues on tribal development:**

After independence, in spite of introduction of various rural development programmes introduced by the government institution for the upliftment of tribal people, the status of Kandh people is not improved as it is meant for them. Some of the major critical issues are presented here for discussion.

#### **Social issues:**

It is observed that due to lack of awareness of the Kandh people, the fruit of the schemes are not reached to the beneficiaries. The corrupt practices by the govt machineries the objective of the programmes is being defeated. The Maoist activities are increasing in tribal areas to enforce their claims over govt officials, private parties and political parties. They want a classless society with corruption free. Due to poverty the tribal youth are joining with the extremist group to fulfil their demand in the local areas by creating an atmosphere of fear and horror. The young people do not want to

continue their culture and values day by day. So, it is threat to their identity and culture. Now the youths are attracted towards modern culture of life forgetting their own cultural life, they want to live as like as other general people. As a result, their culture is in process of decay. Day by day gradually, the dowry system is accepted by the tribal groups which was opposite of the “**Kanya Suna**” tradition that means the bridegroom is treated as gold, to get gold the bridegroom pays the bride price to the father of bride. It was the good practice continued since long among the Kandh community, now it is matter of concern.

#### **Political issues:**

The self-governance was the identity of Kandha people as they jointly take decision through community meetings near the sacred groves. It is seen that the social governance system is not practiced among the Kandh tribes as a result the social unrest is continued among the community members. The social unrest reached at the climax point when the govt allowed the ‘Pana’ the SC community to continue as ST community during 2007. The ST community agitated against the govt decisions, finally the govt withdraws this decision of conversion of community from SC to ST. Now the political parties creating groupism among the Kandhs, as a result the village unity and traditional decision-making process are disturbed. Due to backwardness the Kandh people are easily motivated by the political parties towards their favor. The liquor and meat play the important factor to motivate the Kandhs during the election period. The Panchayati Raj plays an important in local area administration as it involves people in different level like Pallasabha at village level and Gramsabha at Gram Panchayat level, but it is seen that government programmes are being carried out without conducting the above meetings although it empowers people constitutionally in 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment at the Indian constitution.

#### **Religious issues:**

Religion is a belief to get the super natural power. India being the secular country it is open for all section of people to acquire it according to their own choice. The Kandh people were practicing the religious activities by respecting the nature. The Kandha people used to sacrifice the human being and animals to satisfy the mother earth for bumper crops. It is seen that the missionaries entered in to Kandhamal to provide the services on health and education in remote areas where govt agencies could not provide it’s services. Gradually the tribal people became motivated towards them and adopted the Christian religion propagated by the missionaries by establishing churches in rural areas. Latter on the religious leaders of Hindu religion have objected the conversion of religion from Hinduism to Christianity and they aware people about the conversion process by demonstrating against the Christianity. This was severely vibrated when the unknown people killed Swami Laxamananada Saraswati, the Hindu monk and Viswa Hindu Parishad leader on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2008 at his Jalespata Ashram, Tumudibandha. On this case seven Catholic Panos (SC people) and one Maoist leader were convicted.

#### **Economic issues:**

The tribal people compel to migrate to urban areas for search of employment. This disorganized migration creating a negative impact on the life of the Kandh people. Turmeric is the main cash crop which was being cultivated from the very beginning of the civilization. Now it is seen that the turmeric crop is replaced with marijuana cultivation. The mafias are supporting the local tribal groups for adopting these types of illegal farming in the forest areas. The excise department is taking anti measures to control these types of illegal farming by cutting the marijuana plants and seizure the vehicles involved in smuggling of this crop to outside district and also state. Marketing of the rural products is an issue because on compulsion the Kandhs are surrendering their products to local shopkeepers in less price against the loan they take from the local shopkeepers in their crisis period. The district Kandhamal is famous for the organic vegetable cultivation which has special taste. As there is no cold storage facility in this locality the tribal farmers sale their vegetables on distress price.

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### **Suggestions & Conclusion:**

Sustainable development is a long-term concept where the present need is fulfilled without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. So far as tribal development is concerned the local knowledge, skill and values are to be incorporated while formulating the development plans and policies. As the Kandh people are lover of nature and their way of life is depending upon nature, so protection of natural resources like land, water, forest, animals to maintain their livelihoods will be the crucial activity of the government and non-government organizations. As practicing of religion is depending upon the freedom and wish of people, so the Kandh people may adopt their religion according to their own choice, no external agency should interfere on their personal matter or persuade people to adopt it. Massive awareness may be undertaken in tribal areas to sensitize tribal people on their rights and duties for a happy and happy situation.

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