DISPLACEMENT, REHABILITATION AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM OF THE KUTIA KANDHAS OF LANJIGARH

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Development induced displacements of human communities is one of the major social destructive processes happening in all over India. Among the various impacts of large development projects, the displacement by several industries in forested and tribal areas is a devastating one. Keeping this in mind, the present research work tries to explore and understand the changes that have taken place within the indigenous knowledge system of the Kutia Kandha tribe who have been displaced due to the Vedanta Aluminum industry in Lanjigarh of Odisha. As the research problem of the study aims at a descriptive understanding of the Kutia Kandha knowledge system using an ethnographic approach, the main objectives of the study are: (1) To understand and describe the Indigenous Knowledge System in the realm of their socio-economic, political and religious organizations and (2) To examine and describe the changes occurred in the Ethno-medicine, livelihood, occupational pattern as well as informal education system of the Kutia Kandhas after their rehabilitation in a new place. The methodology that justifies the stance is qualitative whereas intensive field work along with direct observation, semi-structured interview technique and case histories have been used as the main sources of field data. Significant changes have been noticed in Kutia Kandha traditional knowledge system in terms of disruption in ethno-medicine, healing practice, believe system and occupational pattern after their rehabilitation in a new place. Tree feeling, waste disposal, water and air pollution have resulted negatively to the traditional knowledge system of the Kutia Kandhas.

Key Words: Indigenous Healing Practice, Kutia Kandha tribe, Displacement, Rehabilitation, Illness and Diagnosis.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Impacts of development projects are varied and complex and pose great challenges to administration. Empirical researches have shown that those who have sacrificed their lands and livelihoods have largely remained as losers, more so, those belonging to the vulnerable sections of communities such as the indigenous population and women. Ineffective R&D Planning and implementation have been considered to be significantly responsible for the plight of the affected communities. While the institutional factors have been studied by many, the financial and economic aspects have thus far been underresearched ones. During the last two decades of the previous century, the

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magnitude of forced population displacements caused by development programmes was 10 million people each year, or some 200 million people globally during that period (Cernea 2000: 3659). The increasing construction of development projects consistently displaced a massive number of tribal and weaker sections. In India, it is found that the country's development programmes have caused an aggregate displacement of more than 20 million people during roughly four decades. 40 per cent of these Oustees or Project Affected Persons were tribals and another 20 per cent were from the Scheduled Caste. In fact, one in every seven Indian tribal is a displaced person (Fernandes 1998: 265). Estimates show that hydro-electric and irrigation projects are the largest source of displacement and destruction of habitat. India is one of the largest dam building nations in the world. There are 4,291 dams in India. 3,596 have been built and 695 are under construction (Agarwal, Narayan and Sen 1999). Even when India has invested enormous capital, effort and resources in building large industrial projects, there is a total absence of systematic evaluation of it. Official database is particularly dismal when it comes to reliable number of people who have been displaced and affected by mines and industries. Though estimates vary significantly, there is an agreement that mines have caused displacement of 21,00,000 population until now, among which 5,25,000 have been rehabilitated where as 15,75,000 have been left in backlog. Similarly, displacement caused by several other industries and infrastructural projects till 1991 are 13,00,000, among which 3,25,000 have been rehabilitated and 9,50,000 left in backlog. (Fernandes, 1995).

AN OVERVIEW OF DISPLACEMENT IN ODISHA

The state of Odisha occupies a unique place among the underdeveloped states of India, because of its large concentration (22.13%) of tribal population. The most striking fact about Odisha is that while it is rich in natural resources, its people are extremely poor. 47.15 per cent of its population is living below the poverty line, which is the highest in the country (Census of India 2001). Odisha, though a relatively backward state in terms of standard of living indicators, possesses a vast amount of mineral, water and forest resources. The state is richly endowed with minerals like coal, iron ore, bauxite, chromites, manganese ore, graphite and rare earths. A. B. Ota says,

"A good number of Business houses also have been attracted to this state because of its bountiful natural and mineral resources for harnessing them and in the process have established development projects in different regions. Statistical figures indicate that till 2000, about 20 lakh people been directly affected by development projects in varying degrees out of which about 5 lakh have been physically displaced losing their home and hearth from their original habitat. Statistical figures further indicate that the dam/irrigation projects alone have displaced nearly 3.5 lakh people, which is roughly 70 per cent of the total displaced persons" (Ota 2001: 1).

The magnitude of displacement in Odisha caused by different industrial projects is very high. Odisha is one of the backward States of the country. It however possesses vast deposits of various valuable minerals and other resources, which remain unutilized and underutilized due to various reasons. The State saw the setting up of large development projects like multipurpose river valley projects- Hirakud Dam, Rengali, Upper Kolab, Indravati, Subarnarekha etc., large industries – Rourkela Steel Plant, NALCO, HAL and the like. Besides, several private sector projects have either been set up or signed MoUs with the State Government to start their units which include industrial giants Tata, Jindal, Birla, POSCO and others. But what is painful is the large-scale involuntary displacement of weaker sections, particularly the tribals. The findings of many studies relating to displacement and resettlement present a dismal picture. However, most of them have not been able to present an accurate picture of the socio-economic status of the oustees in the postdisplacement period vis-à-vis their position in the pre-displacement era. Statistical data indicates that a large portion of the project-affected families belong to the tribal group. Since the tribal belt is invariably rich in mineral deposits, they are affected much by the ongoing power, mining and industrial projects. Conservative estimate reveals the percentage of tribals among displaced families in the ongoing and pipeline development projects will be as high as 80%. Different studies put the number of already displaced at more than 10 lakhs and those adversely affected in varying degrees at 50 lakhs. Table-1 displays the magnitude of displacement in various development projects in Odisha during 1950-1993.

The involuntary displacement caused by the different development projects results in many impoverishment risks for the affected people. According to Areeparampil, dispossession not only in the economic sphere but also in social, political and cultural spheres is one of the major consequences of development-induced displacement. Social structures of the indigenous societies are breaking down. Their family life is being disrupted. They are loosing their traditional social controls and social tension is increasing among them. They are becoming more and more vulnerable to disease and emotional disorders. Many indicators of social anomie such as alcoholism, crime, suicide, prostitution, delinquency and despair have gone up suddenly (Areeparampil 1989). Further, the displaced people often experience a loss of self-esteem. They are feeling the deprivation of their sense of personal worth and a devaluation of their social identity. Because of all the above factors, the culture of those societies is also gradually disintegrating. As rightly pointed out by Michael Cernea, social and cultural disarticulation is one of the major risks caused by the development induced displacement. Social integration of the indigenes is composed of their kinship system, socio-economic, political and religious organization. It disperses and fragments communities, dismantles pattern of social organization and interpersonal ties. The life sustaining informal networks of reciprocal help, local voluntary associations, and self-organized mutual services get disrupted (Cernea 2000).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Keeping in view the above facts, the present research work seeks to explore and understand anthropologically the changes that have taken place within the Indigenous Knowledge System of the Kutia Kandha tribe of Kalahandi district who have been displaced because of Vedanta Aluminium Pvt. Ltd. In 2003, Vedanta Resources signed MoU with the State Govt. of Odisha for construction of a refinery for Aluminium Production. M/s Sterlite Industries (India) Ltd. set up a refinery with a capacity of 1.0 million tonnes per annum for processing aluminium for export. The Vedanta Industry has occupied 660.749 ha of the forest land with an additional 33.73 ha of village forest in the Niyamgiri hill of the Kalahandi and Rayagada districts which was largely inhabited by the Kutia Kandha people. Mining operations of the intensity proposed in this project spread over more than 7 square km which has severely disturbed this important wildlife habitat. The entire Niyamgiri hills will suffer major ecological damage if mining is allowed in the Proposed Mining Lease (PML) area.

The present research work describes in detail the above situation in the Kalahandi district of Odisha. The study aims at an anthropological impact assessment as well as the changes resulted in the indigenous knowledge system of the Kutia Kandha tribe. It attempts to deal with the questions: What is the impact of displacement upon the Kutia Kandha social structure? What are the consequent changes found in the occupational practice and traditional ethno-medicinal knowledge? Have the Kutia Kandhas succeeded in re-establishing or reorganising their social integration in an alien place when they are being relocated after displacement?

DEVELOPMENT AND DISPLACEMENT: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The word 'development' is a holistic concept. Development cannot and should not be restricted to a narrow meaning but assume a wider connotation. Vidyarthi observed that development means growth and change which includes both the material and human – the socio-cultural factors which are

an integral part of the dynamics of growth. He felt that while striving for the development of a group or an area, due emphasis has to be given to their traditional values and historical experiences (Vidyarthi 1970). There is a growing realization that development can no longer be understood in terms of statistical indices, political symbols or economic parameters. For an integral development of a community, the developmental strategies should be formulated in accordance with the locally felt, culturally conditioned individual and group needs. In fact economists also agree that development does not start with goods; it starts with people and their education, organization and discipline. Amartya Sen is of the view that in the world today, we live both with 'unprecedented opulence' and 'remarkable deprivation', 'destitution and oppression' (Sen 2000). According to him, "the central exercise of development is to overcome these problems and to achieve this, the 'various types of unfreedoms' have to be removed. It concentrates particularly on the roles and interconnections between certain crucial instrumental freedoms including economic opportunities, political freedoms, social facilities, transparency guarantees and protective security" (Sen, 2000: 12). Development is a multi-dimensional process and is interdependent on various parameters. "It is not based purely on economic parameters promoting only the earlier concept of 'growth', by the transfer of finance, technology and experience from the developed countries, but encompasses within itself a whole range of social, economic, institutional, environmental, cultural and other parameters" (Sebastian 1997: 329).

However, development in Indian context shows unfortunately a different picture. After independence, the Government of India introduced many plans and programmes, which envisaged two major components: poverty alleviation and rapid industrialization. The poverty alleviation programmes were meant for the economically backward communities, the major chunk of which comprised Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. Though these programmes had tribes and other backward communities as their target groups, they were never formulated in accordance with the felt needs of the individual and cultural nuances of the group. As a consequence, these programmes were mostly rejected or at best evoked lukewarm response (Dube 1958). The other component of the planning of the Government of India involved installation of plants and industries in the resource rich areas which are known for the inhabiting places of *Adivasis*. Such Projects (heavy industries and big dams) became the symbol of modernization and development and primarily due to the advocacy they received from the political leaders. It was this grand promise that prompted Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of India, to call dams "secular temples of modern India". Though these projects were envisaged for the welfare of the entire society, they affected the local population in an adverse way, unleashing devastating consequences for them. Installation of these projects in tribal inhabited areas required a vast tract of land to be colonized, thus leading to the displacement of the local population. Displacement of these people has affected their social structure. The so-called development (for a particular section of the society) brings out destruction for these communities, virtually resulting in the breakdown of social network and creation of cultural dysphoria.

Anthropologists have not paid attention to the issues pertaining to displacement, rehabilitation and social structure. There are very few anthropological studies that have been done in this area. To quote Beteille: "It is an area which is relatively unexplored not only in Indian anthropology but also in anthropology anywhere" (Beteille 1990: 12).

Studies of displacement and resettlement conducted in many third world and developing nations such as Brazil, Indonesia, and Kenya report disappointing experiences. The development of Sao Francisco river basin in Brazil included the construction of several major dams such as Sobradinho, Paolo Alfanso, Itaparica and other dams. Lake Sobradinho, which displaced 65,000 people, had particularly disastrous socio-economic consequences. Studies on Itaipu dam resettlement (Kohlhepp 1987) and Tucurui dam resettlement (Mougeot 1986) have also reported similar findings. In Indonesia, the Kedung Ombo dam and irrigation project located in central Java carried unrealistic assumptions about the transmigration of the reservoir inhabitants (World bank Report 1983). In Kenya's Kiambere reservoir area, the post relocation impact study found that resettler's average landholding size diminished to less than half and their livestock were reduced by more than a third and more than thirty three per cent of the resettlers were still without new house by the end of the project (Mburugu 1988). Similar experiences are also reported from other countries.

Anthropological studies on displacement and rehabilitation started in India around the late 50s, and early 60s. Two important studies of this period are worth mentioning. Roy Burman's study (1962) of displaced tribes of Sundergarh district in Odisha due to the construction of Rourkela Steel Plant highlighted various factors affecting the process of displacement. Karve and Nimbker's study (1969) of Koyna Dam Project dealt with the impact of displacement and rehabilitation on the family and kinship system of the uprooted communities of Maharashtra. In addition, anthropologists also paid attention to the rehabilitation of nomadic and denotified communities during 1950-1970 (Majumdar 1951; Biswas 1954; Bose and Bharara 1967; Bharal 1968; Bhowmick 1968; Mishra 1969). After the 1970s, there was a resurgence of tribal studies in Indian Anthropology. In the 1980s, other social scientists such as economists, political scientists, human and social geographers, social activists and students of law became interested and involved in the academic issues and practical problems of tribal communities. It was mainly because of the fact that the question of dam building and the associated displacement of the indigenous people from their traditional habitat was linked up with the issue of human rights. The primary concern of these studies was the issue of economic vs. social cost, the antagonism towards big dams, the state policies on displacement and rehabilitation, and macro-level evaluation of the large dams in India (Shatrugna 1981; Joshi 1987; Reddy 1988; Paranjpye 1988; Iyer 1989; Dhawan 1989; Fernandes and Thukral 1989; Singh 1990; Baboo 1991).

From the later part of the 1980s onwards and in the beginning of the 1990s, social anthropologists gave adequate attention to these issues (Behura and Mishra 1988; Behura 1989; Sudarsan and Kalam 1990; Baboo 1992; Mahapatra 1992; Sanwal and Saksena 1993; Baviskar 1995). Behura's study (1989) of relocates of Rengali dam in Odisha insightfully analyses the rehabilitation policy and highlights the economic problem and socio-cultural consequences. It provides an understanding of the dynamics of social change with special reference to sibling relationship, nature of cooperation, causes of conflict and the institution of Kinship and marriage. Baboo's study (1992) attempts to reconstruct the socio-cultural life of the oustees of the Hirakud Dam who underwent traumatic experiences in the 1950s because of displacement. Mahapatra (1992) highlights the rehabilitation process and problems of the displaced tribals of Odisha in the comparative perspective of the situation in some other states in India. Nevertheless, very few displacement and rehabilitation studies have dealt with the socio-cultural and psychological components.

A detailed sociological study by Behura and Nayak (1993) on a dam project in Odisha found various manifestations of social disarticulation within the kinship system, such as the loosening of intimate bonds, the weakening of control on interpersonal behaviour, and lower cohesion in family structures. Studies undertaken by the researchers show that there are different types of social disarticulation caused by displacement, such as growing alienation and anomie, the loosening of kinship bonds, the weakening of control on interpersonal behaviour, and lower cohesion in family structures. Marriages were deferred because dowries, feasts, and gifts became unaffordable. Resettlers' obligations towards and relationship with non-displaced kinsmen were eroded and interaction between individual families was reduced. As a result, participation in group action decreased; leaders became conspicuously absent from settlements; post-harvest communal feasts and pilgrimages were discontinued; daily normal social interaction was severely curtailed; and common burial grounds became shapeless and disordered.

Work sharing, based on social reciprocity, is a characteristic feature of most tribal communities. Detailed ethnographic studies of Bhil, Bhilala *Adivasis* in Alirajpur region, illustrate this point (Baviskar 1995; Palit and Mody 1992). Collection of cash for bride price, collection of firewood for the funeral, gathering firewood, building a house, conflict resolution on a consensus basis are some of the important activities which are jointly carried out within the community. Sense of community and kinship bond is one of the most important elements of the socio-cultural life of *Adivasis*. Breakdown in the community destroys many of these support systems which make living meaningful and viable.

The study of the Korba tribe by Dhagamwar, Verma and De (2003) reveals that displacement and resettlement has resulted in an increase of the nuclear families among the people after resettlement, which shows the dismantling of joint and extended families and the loss of family relations and values.

A similar type of study was conducted by Biswal (2000) upon the Oraons of Odisha, who are being displaced by the Rengali dam. It shows that the involuntary displacement and resettlement has caused several changes in their family, marriage and kinship structure. She observes that due to the division of joint families into nuclear ones and separation of married brothers and sons, unity of the old family is lost. In marriage they are not following clan exogamy strictly. In some cases, either by elopement or by negotiation they are marrying within the same clan, which are exceptions. The old clan rules and regulations are no longer abided by the members. Because of the spatial mobility and distribution of kinsmen to other villages, the members are not being able to observe pollution practices arising out of death and birth.

Areeparampil (1989), in his study on the displaced tribes of Chotanagpur Plateau, observed that the tribals are dispossessed of their political autonomy and their communities are being broken up in the name of 'development' and 'national interest'. They are dispossessed of their cultures, their values, and their very identity through well planned policies, such as those of integration and assimilation, of bringing them to the so called 'national mainstream'.

In one of his earliest studies relating to rehabilitation in Rengali Project, Behura (1990) has analyzed the reaction of the Oustees towards displacement and the changes in their socio-economic pattern after displacement. Some of his important observations were that the social functions were not observed strictly by all the displaced families on the basis of lineage unity as they have been scattered in different resettled villages far from each other. Further, due to weaker economic condition after resettlement, it was not possible for all the displaced families of the same lineage to attend to all common social functions with presentations as before.

The study conducted by Hakim (1995) on Vasava tribe of submergence village of Mapali in Narmada Valley found restructuring of certain social relationships as a result of the increasing physical distance between themselves and people of their social circle. As a consequence of resettlement and the increasing distance between a woman and her pre-marital family it has become a major problem to organize different ceremonies like marriage, birth and death ceremonies. Further, resettlement in a new place has changed the traditional political leadership of the Vasavas.

Tribal way of life, folklore, and religious practices are inextricably linked with their relationship with nature. Culture which is rooted in a particular place cannot be easily 'reconstructed' in another locale. The study conducted by Colchester (1986) shows that integral aspects of Maria culture simply cannot be readily moved, since the tribal's social organization is not merely linked to the forest but rather to specific religious activity. Each clan has its own clan god who, in Maria belief, is the true owner of the land and which is not transferable.

The last two decades have observed a considerable amount of research work by the anthropologists, sociologists, planners, political scientists, NGOs, social activists, government agencies as well as funding agencies like World Bank, Asian Development Bank, etc. to estimate the problems encountered by the project affected persons. The studies have covered one area or the other depending on the context and requirement of the time. However, there are shortcomings and drawbacks in most of the works.

(i) Most of the studies are sectoral in nature and lacking a holistic approach. The studies conducted by economists, planners and engineers have covered a particular aspect of the problem and have left the rest untouched. In fact, a serious study of the problem started only after the World Bank's formulation of law on Resettlement and Rehabilitation. The World Bank made it mandatory for the borrower to become socially aware and undertake Resettlement and Rehabilitation activities to the affected areas of their projects. It is only after the World Bank guidelines that the researches on Resettlement and Rehabilitation have taken a serious mode. But still it is very much based on the cost-benefit analysis of the project. This is precisely the reason why most of the studies conducted earlier are sectoral in nature and mainly based on the study of the economic aspects. Though some others tried to study other aspects also, they were not deeply motivated and penetrated.

(ii) The studies have also suffered due to the non-cooperative attitude of the displaced persons. The Oustees had to face severe mental and psychological trauma at the time of relocation, which created a hidden animosity towards the project authorities. Sometimes, the researchers were confusedly equated with the project authorities by the displaced persons. This created hurdles in approaching the Oustees and getting correct information from them. Displaced persons also go with the assumption that if they give a gloomy picture, they could get some benefits in future from the government, thus hiding and misquoting the reality. In other cases, they were tired of responding to the researchers. Every other day, someone appears to them with a piece of paper and a pen to ask the same painstaking questions.

(iii) Sociological and anthropological aspects like customs, tradition, values, belief system, religion, marriage, caste system etc., have been neglected by most of the studies. Even if they tried to sketch the information, it lacked deep insight. People's attachment to the place, bonding with religious deities, ancestor worship, informal social network, common property resources, etc., have been totally neglected. Very little information is available about what happens to the most vulnerable section of the society, i.e., the Scheduled Tribes, women and children. Health, nutrition and sanitation which are the most vital areas of concern for the society were given very little attention.

(iv) Besides these, studies on the impact of displacement and rehabilitation on the social structure of the displaced community, especially focusing on the process of change, have been rather rare. By examining the impact of displacement and rehabilitation on the Kutia Kandha social structure, the present study attempts to fill this gap.

Many anthropological and sociological studies have already been conducted in analyzing the socio-economic problems of the displaced people and evaluating the Resettlement and Rehabilitation policies implemented by the Government. The studies of Cernea (1995, 1999, 2000), Fernandes (1991, 1995, 1997), Mahapatra (1992, 1995), Thukral (1992), Behura (1993), Baviskar (1995), Parsuraman (1999), Bhagamwar (2003), and Ota (2001), are notable among them. But, the studies on consequent changes in the traditional local knowledge of the displaced tribes are quite inadequate. Similarly, very few studies have been done on analyzing the impact on occupational practices as well as health-medicine of the displaced Kutia Kandhas of Kalahandi district, Odisha. The name and a brief introduction of Kutia Kandha tribe have been mentioned in the first Imperial Census conducted in 1871. The later census reports, district gazettes and district census handbooks also have added to the introduction. Besides this, short papers by Ota (2008), Mohanty (2008), Nayak (1998) and a report of four member committee including Parasuraman, Baviskar, Saxena and Kant (2010) have investigated the Vedanta Aluminium site and its impact on the socio-economic conditions of Kutia Kandhas. Even in these studies many important elements of the Kutia Kandha social structure such as traditional knowledge system and occupational skills have remained unexplored. Thus, the present research work tries to fulfil this gap by adding to the existing stock of knowledge as well as attempts to find out the less discussed people's experience towards the change in a community caused by the development induced displacement.

The major objectives of the study are: to understand and describe the Kutia Kandha tribe in the realm of their socio-economic, political and religious organizations and to find out the changes that have occurred in the indigenous knowledge system, especially to the occupation and traditional medicinal practice of the Kutia Kandha people due to the displacement. Intensive field work with an ethnographic approach was the main methodology adopted for the study.

THE RESEARCH AREA: AMBAGUDA VILLAGE AND VEDANTA REHABILITATION COLONY

The present study focuses on the Kutia Kandha tribe and they cannot be understood in isolation from other communities in relation with whom they live. They have a complex and definite relationship with their habitat and social surroundings. The study was conducted in two different localities - a traditional Kutia Kandha village (Ambaguda) and the newly built rehabilitation colony (Vedanta Rehabilitation Colony). The distance between the two is nearly 10 kilometers and they are completely different in their physical as well as social setting. However, both of the villages are located in the district of Kalahandi which is traditionally known as the homeland of the Kutia Kandha tribe.

Kalahandi (locally pronounced as *Kalahani*), is a district of Odisha in India. The region had a glorious past and great civilization in ancient time. Archaeological evidence of stone ageand Iron Age human settlement has been recovered from the region. Asurgarh offered an advanced, well civilized, cultured and urban human settlement about 2000 years ago in the region. In South-Asia it is believed that the lands of Kalahandi district and Koraput district were the ancient places where people started cultivation of paddy. In ancient time it was known as Mahakantara (meaning Great Forest) and Karunda Mandal, which means treasure of precious stones like karandam (Manik), Garnet (red stone), Beruz, Neelam (blue stone), and Alexandra etc. Manikeswari (the goddess of Manikya or Karandam) who is the clan deity of Kalahandi may also signify its historical name. It was a princely state in British

India and in post independence period it merged with Odisha state in India as Kalahandi district comprising current Kalahandi district and Nuapada district. In 1967, Kashipur block from Kalahandi district was transferred to Rayagada district for administrative reason. In 1980s, Kalahandi name became associated with backwardness and starvation death, which is known as "Kalahandi Syndrome". Despite its backwardness it is one of the richest regions in terms of history, agriculture, forest resources, gemstone, bauxite, folk dance, folk music, folklore, handicrafts and arts.

According to the 2011 census, Kalahandi district has a population of 1,573,054, roughly equal to the nation of Gabon or the US state of Idaho. This gives it a ranking of 317th in India (out of a total of 640). The district has a population density of 199 inhabitants per square kilometre (520 / sq mi). Its population growth rate over the decade 2001-2011 was 17.79% and it has a sex ratio of 1003 females for every 1000 males, whereas literacy rate is 60.22%.

The language spoken by the people of Kalahandi is Kalahandia Language, locally known as Kalahandia. It is officially considered to be a dialect of Oriya language. Local weekly newspapers such as *Arjji* and *Kalahandi Express* publish articles in standard Oriya and Kalahandia Language. Hindi is the second preferred language after Oriya. Other languages include Kui, Bhatri, Parji, and Bhunjia, spoken by approximately 7000 Bhunjia Adivasis.

The district map of Kalahandi is illustrated below.



Map 1: District Map of Kalahandi

THE CASES OF AMBAGUDA VILLAGE AND VEDANTA REHABILITATION COLONY

The Ambaguda village represents one of the traditional village structures of the Kutia Kandha habitation. The village is located in the Trilochanpur Grampanchayat of the Lanjigarh block of Kalahandi district. The approximate distance of Lanjigarh from the District head quarter, Bhawanipatana of Kalahandi is 85 kilometers. The village has 35 households and all belong to the Kutia Kandha group. The total population is 279, including 126 males and 153 females. The village is surrounded by the hilly terrain of Niyamgiri. Being full of mountainous forest resources, Ambaguda is located in the foot hill region.

The Vedanta Rehabilitation Colony came into existence after the development of Vedanta Aluminium Pvt. Ltd in 2004. It is located within the Vedanta township known as Vedanta Nagri of Lanjigarh block. The distance of the colony is almost 25 kilometres away from the Lanjigarh block. This is new area developed by the industry by cleaning the foot hills. The colony consists of 115 households with a total population of 437, mostly belonging to the Kutia Kandha tribe. 60 households out of the total 115 households are of Kutia Kandha tribe, which shows the majority in number. These people were the original inhabitants of Kinari village which was occupied by the mining area of Vedanta.

Figure 1: Pictures of Study Villages



The pictures of Ambaguda village and Vedanta Rehabilitation Colony

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL PROFILE OF KUTIA KANDHA PEOPLE

The Kuvi-speaking Kutia Kandha tribe is a primitive section of the Kandha numerically the most preponderant tribe of Odisha. They inhabit the lofty Niyamgiri hill ranges in the district of Kalahandi. To a stranger, the Kutia Kandha strikes as a very important tribal community for their simplicity and quickness in observation. The Kutia Kandha villages of Kalahandi are located in the hill-slopes, hilltops or valleys in a tangle of thickly wooded hill ranges. The habitation site is chosen based on the availability of sufficient land for shifting cultivation and a perennial source of water. The Dongrias continue their age old subsistence activity of food gathering from the forest. Seasonal food collection is still an indispensable part of their economic life. Their food is greatly supplemented by a seasonal variety of fruits, roots and tubers. The high dependence of Kutia Kandha on the mountain and forest include several customary practices like agriculture, grazing, ethno-medicine and the collection of minor forest Produce. Major cultivations of the Kutia Kandha are cereals such as Mandia (Ragi, Finger Millet), Kosala (foxtail millet), pulses like Kandlo (tuvar, pigeon pea), biri (black gram), Kolath (horse gram) and oilseeds like castor and linseed. Mostly the foot hill regions are selected for the cultivation and indigenous technologies are adopted to protect the crops.

Figure 2: Traditional Cultivation Practice of Kutia Kandhas



Foot hill regions are being selected for cultivation and proper water channels are made for irrigation

Traditional practice of plant protection and irrigation

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM OF THE KUTIA KANDHAS

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is the local knowledge - knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. IK contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities (Warren 1991). The Kutia Kandhas of Kalahandi are well equipped with their age old traditional skills and expertise. Till date they practise their own unique method and technique of occupational practice, healing practice and management of natural resources. Though the influence of modernity has impacted the age old traditions of the Dongrias, still several local practices of occupation and health care were found among them. It was found that the Kutia Kandhas always select foot hill regions for cultivation and they prepare their own water channels to irrigate their land. Similarly they collect several Minor Forest Produces from the Niyamgiri hills and use those tubers, roots, seeds, flowers, fruits and leaves for medicinal purpose. These MFPs work as medicines for different ailments like scorpion and snake bites, stomach disorders, arthritis, tuberculosis, paralysis, cholera, acidity, diarrhoea, dysentery, eczema, bone fractures, asthmas, wounds and sores.



Figure 3: Ethno-medicinal Products



Root of Neem (Azadirachta indica) tree

Roots of Sal (Terminalia tomentosa) tree



Debsandha (Aegle Marmelos)

Animal remains to deal with black magic

The habitat of Dongrias, the Niyamgiri hills which are a part of the northern Eastern Ghats hill ranges and form Biotic Province 6C of the Deccan Plateau Zone 6 of the Biogeographic Classification of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII). The forest cover in the general area is very dense and consists of a number of ecological communities such as tropical evergreen forests, tropical moist deciduous forests, dry deciduous mixed forests, moist peninsular sal forests, dense bamboo forests, scrub woodlands and open grasslands. In addition, tropical semi-evergreen forests are also found along the stream courses. Several medicinal plants are collected from these forests by the Kutia Kandha people for the medicinal purposes. They are *Terminalia tomentosa*, *Terminalia chebula*, *Xylia xylocarpa*, *Cedrella toona*, *Pterocarpus marsupium*, *Adina cardifolia*, *Syzizium cuminii*, *Grewia taelifolia*, *G. elastic*, *Aegle marmelos*, *Bauhinia retusa*, *Colebrookia oppositifolea*, *Butea monosperma*, *Careya arborea*, *Embelica officinalis*.

VEDANTA ALUMINIUM PVT. LTD AND DISPLACEMENT OF KUTIA KANDHA PEOPLE

Vedanta Aluminium Limited (VAL), a subsidiary of Sterlite Industries, a major aluminium processor has made major investments by establishing a 1 MTPA Alumina Refinery and 75 MW Captive Power Plant at Lanjigarh. In 2003, Vedanta Resources signed MoU with the State Govt. of Odisha for construction of a refinery for Aluminium Production. M/s Sterlite Industries (India) Ltd. set up a refinery with a capacity of 1.0 million tonnes per annum for processing aluminium for export. It has occupied 660.749 ha of the forest land with an additional 33.73 ha of village forest in the Niyamgiri hill of the Kalahandi and Rayagada districts. The project has caused displacement of homestead and agricultural land of the local inhabitants. Specifically, 1453 Kutia Kandha (20 per cent of the total population of the community numbering 7952 as per the 2001 census) of the Proposed Mining Lease area have been displaced from their homelands.

IMPACT OF DISPLACEMENT ON THE KUTIA KANDHA PEOPLE

(i) From Self-Sufficiency to Destitution: The present well-being of the Kandha, who continue to have access to the resources of the PML area and adjoining forests is in stark contrast with the status of the Dongria Kondh and Dalit households in Rengopali and Bandhaguda villages, whose lands have been acquired by the Vedanta aluminium refinery. In both villages, the Kutia Kandhas have sold their agricultural lands to the company, and are left only with their homestead land. Officially, they are classified as Project Affected Persons (PAPs), who lost their agricultural land but not their homes. Right now their economic situation is in a question where they are not getting full

employment throughout the year. It has been found during the study in Rehabilitation Colony that most of the tribal youths have migrated to Kerala in search of employment to sustain their family.

(ii) Tree Felling resulting in the loss of ethno-medicinal products: According to the assessment of Wildlife Institute of India, 1,21,337 trees have been cut in 2006 towards the building of a refinery in Proposed Mining Lease area. The Kutia Kandha people were fully dependant on the forest resource from which they collect several Minor Forest Produces to prepare their traditional medicinal products. Thus due to this mining, lots of medicinal products have been lost. By interacting with Kusha Majhi, it was found that almost 20 different types of rare orchids of Niyamgiri which had medicinal value have been lost.

(iii) Environmental Pollution and its impact on Occupation: The study discovered several incidences of environmental degradation of the Niyamgiri hills ecosystem by land degradation, geo-hydrological drainage change, air and water quality reduction and public health hazard caused by the Vedanta mining. The hill stream and the river Basumdhara, which is a main source of drinking water and irrigation for the Kutia Kandhas have been polluted because of the mining, as a result of which, the traditional occupational practice has broken down. Simultaneously, new kinds of diseases have also been found which seem incurable by the traditional healing practice.

(iv) Impact of Modernization and Conflict with Host Communities: A negative impact on livelihood and traditional techniques has been found in the rehabilitation colony of Lanjigarh. Inability to access the forest resource is posing a threat to the employment of most of the Dongria youth. Many people have joined as workers in the plant which has negatively impacted their traditional techniques and resulted in loss of hereditary knowledge.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIVE REMARKS

Though the project has received criticism from environmentalists, especially from outside groups, some of the supporters of VAL claim it has brought significant changes in Socio-Economic scenario of Lanjigarh and Kalahandi. The Union Environment Ministry in August 2010, rejected earlier clearances granted to a joint venture led by the Vedanta Group company Sterlite Industries for mining bauxite from Niyamgiri hills making the company to depend on bauxite from outside Orissa. The company's proposal for expansion of the refinery to 6 MTPA, which would have made it one of the largest refineries in the world, was halted by India's environment ministry. Mining, if permitted, will directly affect a substantial section (almost 20 per cent of their entire population in this world!) of the Dongaria Kondh community. An impact on such a significant fraction of the population of the community will have repercussions on the community's very survival, the overall viability of this group and its biological and social reproduction. The question of "Development for Whom?" is still a present primary concern and needs to have an integrated understanding with anthropological perspective. Strict enforcement of Forest Right Act aiming towards protection of the Tribal Rights and prevention of injustice should be the ideal duty of the development planners. Along with that, specific policy enforcement and enactment should be made by the Government towards preservation and protection of the tribal Indigenous Knowledge System.

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