

Promotion of Sustainable Livelihood Through Skill Development of Dongria Kondh Communities During Lockdown

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ABSTRACT

A tribe is a group of people who are residing within their group in a specific geographical area. India has approximately 700 distinct tribes that are notified under the Article 342 of the Constitution of India. Each tribe differs from each other in terms of language, ethnicity, history, etc., but all tribes have a same thread of customary practices. Schedule Tribe (ST) is cited as categorical indigenous people whose status is recognized by national legislation with some formal degree and due to the most vulnerable category, the government has made several plans for the upliftment of inaccessible people of the society. There are 75 vulnerable tribal communities in India. Dongria Kondh or Dangaria Kandha is one of the vulnerable tribes in India. Dongria Kondh is the sub-section of the Kondh tribal community and is a PVTG section of the tribe. Dangaria is only found in Odisha and is residing around the Niyamgiri Hill to which they worship as their God. During the pandemic, they came up with their signature tag handwoven embroideries Kapdagonda work with new ideas in the form of a "cultural" mask under the guidance of Dongria Kondh Development Agency (DKDA) of Rayagada district of Odisha. It was a step ahead skill development work of Dongria Kondh women that went beyond the normal fabric working to revive their income during the lockout. The objective of the paper is to cover the status of the Dangaria Kandha or Dongria Kondh tribe and how the skill development programme of women SHGs during the lockdown helped to revive their income. It is necessary to frame a skill development pick of Dongria Kondh tribal. The paper is a qualitative in nature and also follow the available literatures as well as a grassroot study to make this paper as a valid content study.

Keywords: Dongria Kondh Tribes, Dongria Kondh women SHGs group, Skill Development programs, Kapdagonda Mask, Lockdown.

INTRODUCTION

A tribe is a group of people who are residing within their group in a specific geographical area. India has approximately 700 distinct tribes that are notified under the Article 342 of the Constitution of India. Each tribe differs from each other in terms of language, ethnicity, history, etc., but all tribes have a same thread of customary practices. According to the 2011 census of Odisha, the total Scheduled Tribe population is 9,590,756. Out of this, the urban areas' Scheduled Tribe population is 595,789 and 8,994,967 in rural areas. The decadal growth of the Scheduled Tribe population is 17.7 percent. The highest Schedule Tribe population has been recorded in Mayurbhanj (1,479,576), and the lowest is in Puri (6,129). Scheduled Tribe (ST) is cited as categorical indigenous people whose status is recognized by national

legislation with some formal degree, and due to the most vulnerable category, the government has made several plans for the upliftment of inaccessible people of the society. In Odisha, there are 62 types of schedule tribes. Among these 62 tribes, again there are 12 vulnerable tribes are living in Odisha. Dongria Kondh is one of the vulnerable tribes and are living in Rayagada district of Odisha. Still now they did not completely assimilate themselves with the modern society which is good in other way to preserve own values and customs of the communities. Their simple and traditional attires is much attractive.

Dongria Kondh is a one of the important schedule tribe of Rayagada district. This tribe basically residing around the Niyamgiri Hill. Though they have the limited population but the major population can find in the Bissamcuttack, Muniguda and Kalyanpur blocks of Rayagada district, like this they are also extended to Lanjigad of Kalahandi district of Odisha. Rayagada district region famous for longest human glorious historical records. It came into existence on 2nd October 1992. The total population of the district is 8,32,019, out of which the tribal population is 4,73,379. In other words, the tribes constitute 57.52% of the population. All 11 blocks of this district are covered under a tribal sub-plan, which is in the operation of 3 micro-projects for pre-literate local tribal communities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the paper is to cover the status of the Dangaria Kandha or Dongria Kondh tribe and how the skill development programme of women SHGs during the lockdown helped to revive their income.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The proposed study is based on secondary data. Due to the transportation problems and Covid 19 issue, it was not suitable to go for the field survey. The village community in the Niyamgiri hills was not allowed to enter the village, which made it difficult to obtain household data. So, for better convenient point of view, Dongria Kondh Development Agency (DKDA) of Rayagada district helped to available the overall data on Dongria Kondh of Bissam Cuttack block, Rayagada.

METHODOLOGY

In practice, this paper is built on a survey of literature and telephonic surveys. A literature review of this paper is followed by books, scholarly articles, and internet sources related to the topic, areas of research used to provide livelihoods, paper descriptions, summaries, and critical assessments during skill development programs during the lockdown.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India (2013), states that the Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India refers to the Scheduled Tribes as communities defined under Article 342 of the Constitution, and to the specification of Article 342 also provides for tribes or tribal communities or parts of groups within or within tribes or tribal communities that are considered for the constitution of Scheduled Tribes with that state or union territory. Dongria is a major sect of the great Kondh tribe, mostly stay on high hills known as Dongar. The Dongria Kondh is one of the officially designated PTG in Orissa (Sanjeeta K. Devi, 2016). The Kondhs, a tribal community with several sub-groups, inhabit hills tracts of Odisha and parts of Andhra Pradesh. Each sub-group like the Dongria, Kutia, Desia, etc., has a distinct identity (Singh, N., *et. al.* 2018). According to Singh (2016) the main components of community

development are (i) people's participation in local community development projects, (ii) self-help efforts, (iii) transfer of technology, and (iv) democratic decentralisation of the work. According to his study freedom leads to empowerment that came about through changes from the status of beat by skill orientation and sustainable livelihoods. Sustainability in this framework reflects an individual's ability to grow through skills development and work closely with micro finance.

The lockdown had snatched away their shawl business and the Dongria Kondh had been sitting idle, Dongria Kondh Development Agency (DKDA) came up with the idea to embroider masks, instead of shawls (Orissa Post, 4th July 2020). As an effort to support their income amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Dongria Kondh tribals in Rayagada district of Odisha have started producing hand woven and embroidered cotton masks (The Hindu, MAY 25, 2020). The Dongria Kondh tribals hand embroidered shawls were popular in both national and international markets, but the COVID-19 lockdown has reduced sales (The Hindu, May 25, 2020).

BACKGROUND OF DONGRIA KONDH

There are 17 type of Kondh are residing in Odisha. Dangaria Kondha or Dongria Kondh is only found in Rayagada and Kalahandi district of Odisha and is residing around the Niyamgiri Hill to which they worship as their God. Niyamgiri or Niyam Dongar is a dense forest area spread over 250 sq.km and, its height is 1,306m. The tribe sustains themselves through the shifting and horticulture cultivation on Niyamgiri hill. They depend on forests produced products as their primary source. There are 75 vulnerable tribal communities in India. Dongria Kondh or Dangaria Kandha is one of the vulnerable tribes in India. Dongria Kondh is the sub-section of the Kondh tribal community and is a PVTG section of the tribe. The population of Dongria Kondh or Dangaria Kandha of 100 villages is around 8000. The word Dongria Kondh is from "dongar", it means 'agricultural land on hill slopes. Dongria Kondh or Dangaria Kandha is a vulnerable tribe of Odisha. The Dongria Kondh people speaks Kuvi language a Dravidian language. Tribal languages are not written languages its lives mouth to mouth and transfers generation to generation. Like this Kuvi language is not a written language and spoken among the Dongria Kondh community. The tribe is residing around the Niyamgiri Hill to which they worship as their God. The Niyamgiri hill is a sacred place to Dangaria Kondh. Dongria Kandha call Niyamgiri as "Niyam Raja or Niyamraj" and worships Niyamgiri as the supreme deity of the forest. They believe that streams and hills are a major aspect of their life, so they have great respect and reverence for their gods. The art of Dangaria Kondha reflects the devotion of Niyamgiri to their traditional handlooms as well as their ritual activities. For them, Niyam Raja is their leader. Dongria Kondh community is the process of clan division. The title their name is basically followed with animal name so that they can be identified their clan or group. This is helpful to them during the marriage proposal.

Socio-Economic Status of Dongria Kondh / Dangaria Kandh

The Dongria Kondhs' socio-economic background focus on the characteristic like education, family size, and income etc. In Dongria Kondh, each house has medium size of family. They largely belong to medium size families comprising 4 to 5 members irrespective of their socio-economic status (Sahoo and Kalyani, 2015). In the Table 1 shows that 81.3% belong to the nuclear family, and 18.7% had a joint family in Dongria Kondh of Bisam Cuttack block of Rayagada district (Nanda, *et. al.*, 2017).

Table 1. Family Information

Sl. No	Variable	(10-14) years	%	(15-19) years	%	No.	%
1	Type of Family						
	- Joint	1	5.6	13	17.3	14	18.7
	- Nuclear	17	94.4	62	82.7	79	81.3
2	Total Family Member						
	1-3	0	0	0	0	0	0
	4-6	2	11.11	11	11.83	13	13.98
	7-9	13	72.22	53	70.67	66	70.97
	≥10	3	16.67	11	14.67	14	15.05

Source: Nanda, S. et. al., 2017

According to the data of 2001 and SCST RTI, Orissa Data of 2009, the percentage of male literacy is 20.83 and female 3.25 in 2001 and in 2009 the literacy rate of male is 24.78 and female is 12.21 on the basis of available sources, the total literacy changes in percentage is 3.95 male and 8.96, but at present till 2020 according to the DKDA the overall literacy rate has increased by 30 per cent in Dongria Kondh of Bissam Cuttack as compared to 2001 census. Literacy among the Dongria Kondh is less than ten per cent, with female literacy at just three per cent. The Dongria Kondh Development Authority (DKDA) built exclusive schools for this tribe (Asha Hans, 2014). Dongria Kondh earn their livelihood from their weekly production and weekly local haats (Sahoo and Kalyani, 2015). According to Asha Hans (2014), in her study the sex ratio among Dongria Kondhs is 1,352 females per 1,000 males against the state average of 978 females for 1000 males. Girls are highly valued in economic terms, as they gather forest products and help with household chores, and command a bride price on marriage.

Women of Dongria Kondh are very active and dedicated to their culture and tradition. They depend on forests produced products and horticulture. They don't prefer any package foods or process foods that are available in the market. To sell their grains or food items, they go to the weekly market, and this is the external source of income apart from this selling good, now women are also have started few extra traditional activities like the stitching of Kopdaganda shawls and with the help of DKDA. This shawl is used in traditional rituals like marriage ceremony, on any festival occasions, etc. Now making several designs on the shawl is became another source of income to the Dongria Kondh. People of this tribe are not that much literate. Earlier they do not prefer to go to schools, but now people are sending their children to schools. Slowly Dongria Kondh is started assimilating with the external society and, also taking benefits of the modern techniques and government facilities. The Women SHGs group of Dongria Kondh recognized due to their hand made traditional embroidering work on Kapdaganda cloth.

IMPACT LOCKDOWN ON LIVELIHOOD

The Covid 19 pandemic brought a worldwide recession in each income source field. This pandemic effect much to the daily wage labors or the people whose' income is a daily basis. A sudden lockdown has stopped all the works and transactions. The movements of the countryside have been stopped. Generally, the villagers are two types; one who prefers village traditional works generation after generation and another one is preferring to move out of the village for the income generation sources. They have started migration from their village to the other places. The countryside tribals whose income generates through the forest produce products, horticulture, traditional arts, and activities were also affected during the

lockdown. Lockdown Has Pushed Dongria Kondh Tribes in Odisha's Niyamgiri Hills to the Brink of Starvation (The Wire, MAY 12, 2020). The pandemic is making Dongria Kondha's cry as all the local haats have remained closed due to the lockdown and subsequent shutdown (Orissa Post, August 19, 2020).

Dongria Kondh who is coming under the PVTG category is also faced tragic conditions in this lockdown. In the horticulture, except rice Dongria Kondh also cultivates millet, peas, beans, lentils, castor beans, roots, etc., mostly, they harvest their foods in the Niyamgiri hill. Dongria Kondh or Dongaria Kandha are even forest dwellers who depend on forest produced products. During the lockdown, Dongria Kondh faced many problems selling their minor forest produce (MFP) in the weekly market. From March to June, they collect minor forest produce like *Siyali* (*Bauhinia* sp.) use to make plates, *Harda* (*Terminalia chebula*) use to cure skin disorders and allergies, *Bahada* (*Terminalia bellirica*) is a medicinal plant, *Kendu leaf* (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) use to make *bidi*, *Indian gooseberry*, and *tamarind*. Hand embroidered shawls of Dongria Kondh tribals were popular in both national and international markets, but the COVID-19 lockdown has reduced sales (The Hindu, MAY 25, 2020).

Dongaria Kondh Develoment Agency (DKDA), Raygada District

Raygada district is largely constituted with 57.52 % of tribal population. There are 11 blocks and Tahasils that have been working under tribal sub-plan with 3 micro projects for the pre-literate native tribal communities. The Dongria Kondh Development Agency (DKDA) was started in the year 1978. DKDA is a central and state funded agency with 60% and 40% funding participation. DKDA is working for the development of the Dongria Kondh who lives in the Niyamgiri hills, Bissam Cuttack block and also working with other 104 villages.

During the lockdown DKDA came with the new women empowerment and skill development idea through the SHGs group to available the income source to the Dongria Kondh in the form of cotton mask of Kapdaganda material. After making of the masks the department distributed to all the state government departments. After the use of the masks they taken the feedbacks from the various departments later TDCC collaborated with DKDA for the distribution of the masks in various outlets. The Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation (TDCC) Corporation of Odisha Limited taken the responsibility of marketing of the Kapdaganda Masks and also has placed an order for 500 handcrafted masks with Dongria Kondh Development Agency (DKDA) at Chikikona in Raygada district. These masks are to be sold through TDCC outlets in Bhubaneswar and other urban centers of the state (The Hindu, MY 25, 2020). DKDA has taken the initiation for the Dongria Kondh of Khambesi village of kurli panchayat, Bissam Cuttack Block. Under the Bissam Cuttack Block, there are two Gram-Panchayats i.e. Kurli and Chatikona.

ROLE OF DONGRIA KONDH WOMEN SHGs GROUP

During the lockdown women could not make the Kapdaganda shawl, the business was completely stopped therefore the idea of the making mask generated was the new hope to the Dongria Kondh women SHGs group. In this lockdown, the women of Dongria Kondh, through their self-help group, contributed to the making of Kopadaganda masks. There are 5 SHG groups were involved in this work, it means each SHGs group had 10 members, and a total of 5 SHG groups consisted of 50 women who were contributed in sewing and embroidery work. Three Dongria Kondh Women Self Help Groups (WSHG) of Khambesi, Kurli, Khajuri village under Bissam Cuttack block are making these handicrafts masks. DKDA has decided to involve women of Khajuri and Hundibali villages in the production process to increase its quantity. In addition to traditional tribal embroidery masks, Dongria Kondh women are also designing

simple masks made of hand-woven base cloth called cloth Kapdaganda (The Hindu, May 25, 2020). The DKDA department offered the price of per piece stitches, and design was Rs.50/-. Per day they stitched 4 pieces of mask, and for that, they were getting Rs. 200/-. Sewing masks of 4 pieces a day was not compulsory, as they stitched the masks according to their comfortable working hours. The total women SHG groups were five. They belong to different villages, for example 1 SHGs groups from the Khajuri village, 2 SHGs groups from the Kambesi village, 1 SHGs group from Kurli village, 1 SHGs group from Hundibali. Not only house wife or women were working in this Kapdaganda mask works, the school and college-going girls are also involved in making masks. The number of school and college going girls were 8 who were involved in making the Kapaganda mask. Maximum girls are from Kambesi village. DKDA provided cloth and thread, needle to the SHGs groups so that they can only stitch, do the traditional embroidered works on the masks.

MANY FRAMEWORKS OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

In India, the central government is the policy maker and states governments are responsible for the implementation of those policies. The state government also can formulate schemes towards the development of the society. Skill building may be viewed as a tool to improve the usefulness and contribution of workforce to the overall production (Singh, 2016). There are few schemes of state government of Odisha and central government of India: -

State Govt. Schemes and departments for the tribal developments

- Backward Classes Welfare Section (BCWS) was established in 1948.
- A Tribal Advisory Council was formed in 1950
- Government of Odisha has set up 17 micro projects Primitive Tribal Group (PTG).
- Under Article 275 of the Constitution, Provision for assistance from Consolidated Fund State Government of India for various implementation Developmental programs to promote the welfare of scheduled tribe.
- Odisha Tribal Development Society (OTDS) of SC and ST Development Department.
- There are 22 numbers of ITDAs/ITDPs in Odisha which is highest in India.
- There are 46 numbers of Modified Area Development Approach (MADA) in Odisha.

Central Govt Schemes

- National Mission for Empowerment of Women initiated on 15 August, 2011
- Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission inaugurated in June, 2011
- Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY) launched in June, 2011
- Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana inaugurated on 25 September, 2014
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005-2006
- Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana inaugurated in September 25, 2001
- Mahila Coir Yojana 2015 – Central Government Schemes
- A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE) introduced on 18 March, 2015
- Market Promotion Development Assistance, 2015
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana

- Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood (SANKALP) Approved in 2019
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra, 2014
- National Skill Development Mission and Skill India Campaign inaugurated on 15 July 2015 Etc.

Demand of Dongria Kondh's Kapdaganda Embroidery works in fashion

The Dangaria / Dongria men wear a long and narrow down piece of loincloth, the design of the cloth is in such a way that the two embroidered of the cloth ends and hang in the front and back. This cloth is called Drili, which sets them apart from others. The women use two pieces of clothes locally called Caoada-Ganda / Kapdaganda. The Kapdaganda shawl is much fascinated by both national and international markets. It is one of the costly cotton materials that is selling in the market. The design of Dongria Kondh is highly attractive and demanding in the fashion market. The market price of the Dongria Kondh design materials is starting from 1200 to 25,000/- both in national and international market. There lots of online marketplace of various franchises that offer various apparel with Dongria Kondh designs. The online website companies are like, Artisan Clothing, OrissaHandloom.com, Sanskriti Cuttack, Portland USA Sarishop, Dongria Kondh Saree at uttariya.com, indiamart.com, and many more are there.

The prestigious handwoven shawl of Dongria Kondh has a fear of losing their original designing tag of Kapdaganda work. Kapdaganda, the prestigious handwoven shawl of Dongria Kondh tribe in fear of copycats (The New Indian Express, 07th July 2018). The new Indian Express (2018) also wrote that the administration of Rayagada is seeking geographical indication (GI) tag for Kapdaganda, the prestigious handwoven shawl of Dongria Kondh tribe, efforts are being made by dishonest traders and private organisations to create its cheap replicas. Rayagada collector Guha Poonam Tapas Kumar seek help of the handloom, Science and Technology departments to get geographical indication (GI) tag for Kapdaganda, the prestigious shawl of Dongria Kondh tribe (Incredible Orissa, November 2, 2017).

According to the study of Sethi and Naik (2020) the shawl represents Dongria Kondh heritage and rich culture. It is a craft that is not only limited to the state, the nation, but is also widely popular in foreign countries. For this, there is a chance of copying skills and misusing knowledge and making profit by selling fake cloth by any agency. Hence, there should be geographical indication (GI) tag for Dongria Kandhas' Kapdaganda work.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The work of Kapdaganda mask of Dongria Kondha during the lockdown is appreciated by Tribal Affair India in its official tweeter handle page. It is high appreciation of DKDA of Rayagada district of Odisha, which has taken a constructive idea to increase the income source of Dongria Kondh. The DKDA department offered the price of per piece stitches and design Rs.50/-, per day to stitch 4 pieces of masks, and they are getting Rs. 200/-. But while it came to the market its prices became high, the per piece of mask sold at the cost of 200-300 rupees. It is like four to six times of their wages on the per piece of the mask. Making the Dongria Kondh masks take extra time and effort for production. A Dongria Kondh family is able to produce around 10 masks in a day (The Hindu, MAY 25, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to increase their per day wages as its demand and sales were increased during the lockdown. In the future, there is a high chance of its sustainability trends of the cotton mask in the market and a sustainable livelihood support needs strategic plans without any type of restrictions, in keeping with changes in people's attitudes for working, investing and hiring (Singh, 2016).

According to Sahoo & Kalyani (2015), the tribal skilled people have no financial strength to hold the product for proper price. Because of their livelihood and style of living they go for zero net profit selling. The skill development programs given to them are not enough. There is a high chance furnish their skills through the various programmes, there is also a high chance of self-employment or entrepreneurship on Kapdaganda clothing work. On the other side, Dongria Kondh has a fear to losing the originality tag on their traditional design work on Kapdaganda, hence, it is highly recommended to identify their signature work and government should consider for the GI tag to the Kapdaganda. Government should give more attention on GI tag of the handloom and also should investment more on training, marketing, advertisement of the product so that, it will help to increase their sources of livelihood in future.

This article also recommend for further more study and work on Dongria Kondh and their work. Another drawback found during the study is now DKDA is not an autonomous agency anymore. The agency is working under the Odisha PVTG Empowerment and Livelihoods Improvement Programme (OPELIP) for the past three years, which makes DKDA less empowered to focus on the overall development of a particular PVTG group that is Dongria Kondh. Now OPELIP works on a generalized basis that will work only for PVTG all over the districts of Odisha.

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