

Tribal Economic Management System of the Kutia Kandhas of Odisha in India

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Abstract:

The economic system of the Kutia Kandhas of Odisha is a fascinating aspect of the primitive tribal economy of Odisha. The Kutia Kandhas of Odisha is identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of Odisha in India by considering its characteristic features. The economic life of Kutia Kandhas are really connected with their forest economy, agricultural cycle and other sources as labourers in various developmental works / schemes of the Government of India. Their income is spent in the purchase of daily food items, dress, ornaments and house maintenances. Most of their expenditure is found for the purchase of rice beer (handia). The Kutia Kandhas of Odisha mostly depend upon their verity of forest product things and few shifting cultivation on hill slopes and different forest areas. The Kutia Kandhas constitute a primitive section of the great Kandha tribe of Odisha. They are found in a contiguous pocket comprising the Belghar area or Baliguda sub-division in Kandhamal district and Lanjigarh area of Kalahandi district. They lead an isolated life of poverty and indigence. They had been doing various kinds of agricultural activities, only in transplantation of rice seedlings and in harvesting. The main occupation of the Kutia Kandha is agriculture. As the settled cultivation land is limited, they mostly depend upon swidden land. Due to improvement of the communication facilities, many changes seem to have been taken place in the economy life of the Kutia Kandhas of Odisha. The article attempts to focus on the economic system of the Kutia Kandhas of Odisha in Eastern India. Methodologically, both the primary and secondary sources have been used by the authors for the writing of this article.

Keywords: Tribal, Economic , Management, Kutia Kandha , Koraput, Kandhamala, Odisha , India.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Kutia Kandhas of Odisha is recognized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of the state of Odisha in India. Odisha is the second largest tribal dominated state of India with the largest number of tribal communities. All the tribes mainly inhabit in the Eastern Ghats hill range, which runs in the north-south direction. Generally, the cultural pattern of the tribal community is certainly associated with its economic structures. Economy is a significant essential of the community life and it acts as the vital role in the establishment of the cultural and social structure of the tribal community/society. The economic life of the Kutia Kandhas supports us to know the chief features of their culture (Sharma, 1981). The tribal culture is associated with the tribal economics and the economic structure of the tribal can be presumed from the cultural pattern. In the customary way of thinking of monetary science, non-financial components like social and social relations are viewed as insignificant however they are the ancestral reality for the actual association of their monetary cycle. Monetary human studies visualize financial deeds of man in his social and social structure. Every community has its own way to run into its basic requirements for the survival of its members failing which they are endangered with extinction. Nature here comes forward and joins hands with them to fulfil their necessities fashioned, of course, in their own way dependent on their customs, traditions, demographic structure, etc. Owing to this, people with the same natural environments have advanced different economic processes to meet their ends. Economic system of the Kutia Kandhas of Odisha is an important aspect of the tribal economy of Eastern India (Rao, 1940). The Kutia Kandha pursues many occupations, like forest collection, shifting cultivation, settled cultivation, wage-earning, domestication of animals, etc. But the economic organization of the Kutia Kandha is predominantly agricultural. Inter dependence and co-operation of male & female are found in all

the economic pursuits from production to consumption (Ota, & Sahoo, 2010). The Kutia Kandha is a primitive tribal community, which is recognized in later as one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (Frye, 1980). The people of Kutia Kandha tribe are diverse in character and live in different environment of more interior and less accessible pockets and their traditional sources of sustenance are declining (Raman, 1957-58). As such they languish in very fragile conditions of backwardness and deprivation. This has made them more vulnerable to food insecurity, malnutrition and ill-health. Their socio-economic and educational conditions are much worse than other tribal groups besides, their remote habitat lacks there quired minimum administrative set up an infrastructure back up. Their needs and problems are different from other scheduled tribes and hence deserve special attention. With the adoption of the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) approach since the 5th Five Year Plan, Government of India has been taking steps to identify the PTGs in different parts of the country and implement special projects and programmes for their development.

The Kandha (Patnaik, 1990). are divided into two linguistic groups i.e. "Kui" and "Kuvi", both belonging to the Dravidian linguistic family. The Kutia Kandha speaks the "Kui" language while "Kuvi" is spoken mainly in the eastern part of the Koraput District (Mazumdar, 1932). The Kutia Kandhas constitute a primitive section of the most numerically preponderant Kandha tribe in Odisha (Sahoo, Ota, 2010). They inhabit a contiguous pocket comprising the Belghar area of Baliguda sub-division in Kandhamal district, Chandragiri area of Gunpur sub-division in Rayagoda district and Lanjigarh area of Kalahandi district (Raman, 1957-58). In Baliguda sub-division they are found in Belghar, Guma, Lankagada and Jhirpani Gram panchayatas of Tumudibandha block and in Subarnagiri area of Kotagarh block.

Their habitant is wild, rugged, hill and forest – clad high land country situated at about 2500 feet above the sea level. The total geographical area is about 900 sq miles. The main concentration of Kutia Kandha lies in the Belghar area, which is located at a distance of 150 KM, from Phulbani- the district headquarters of Kandhamal, 68KMs from Baliguda sub-divisional Headquaters and 28 KMs from Tumudibandha, block headquarters. Belghar is accessible from Tumudibandha through a steep and circuitous metalled ghat road connecting Belghar to the Phulbani-Koraput main road at Tumudibandha. There is another road from Ambadola in Rayagada district linking Belghar with Muniguda. The distance is 72 KMs, both the roads are jeepable.

The traditional form of education and the knowledge gained by the Kutia Kandhas need to be emphasized for development of their area and people (Swain, 1968-69). The pattern of education which has have induced has very little relation with schooling. Their fore-fathers, elderly experienced people, social and cultural experts and traditional trainers and senior relations teach them non-formally about the behaviour pattern, social mores, scientific traditional techniques for socio-economic gains, and many others that help in leading a free, independent and happy life. In the learning process they inherit that knowledge and acquire certain capabilities which can be useful for own self, family, village and tribesmen. They aim to material or spiritual gain while undergoing special training. They laugh and keep laughter in other's lips. They enjoy out of other's enjoyment. In the educational process they are helped by others and always get ready to help others. According to their age, sex, family status, and age-old traditions, each individual is expected to behave in a particular pattern. He learns certain tings quite non-formally within the time stipulation and without any payment. The knowledge and specific techniques are inherited from generation to generation and that is an

ongoing process. Starting from very early childhood up to the adulthood one observes social practices, taught non-formally and learns by virtue of experiences. The striking feature of the Kutia Kandha people is that they never punish the children. Love, affection and repeated or devour of the parents enable the children to develop desired personality (Jena, 1962-63). That does not mean that the children are not warned for their faults but they are never taunted or irritated. One may observe that the children are not very free to the outsides. But with all matters of respect, regard and manners they are very perfect towards their kinsmen, villagers and tribesmen. They learn in all stages of age and activities, at hom and in the field, inside the village and outskirts of the area. The receptivity of the Kutia Kandhas and their balanced thought process enriched their cultural heritage. Major fields or areas where an individual involves him in the learning process are forest, field, inside house, at bathing ghat, youth dormitory, on the way to or inside the market, centre for magico-religious performance, Village Street, communal gathering and many others. Individuals like parents, senior members of the family, village political, magico-religious and other leaders, secular head, village Domb cattle herd and very often senior friends are traditional trainers. Whenever they learn something new they verify and experiment in due course before practical application. Anybody repeats the same mistake is taught, then warned and subsequently reprimanded. At last the act of reconciliation works, without any written document the Kutia Kandhas remember many things about their songs, music, dance, medicine, techniques, process of management and several others (Jena,1962-63). Each individual is found as a good trainee before adulthood but afterwards he behaves and acts like a master. A modest attempt has been made in this article to focus on the economic activities of the people of Kutia Kandha tribe of Odisha.

II. MEHODOLOGY

Both the primary and secondary sources have been used in the writing of the present article. The primary data have been collected from *Gazetteers*, literatures, reports, practical observations, hearsay accounts of respondents through the interview methods during the period of experimental field survey. For the collection of data, the present authors have used the qualitative research methods like field study, personal interview, schedules and taking photographs. The extensive field survey had been undertaken for the collection of detailed information (data) with regard to the economic activities and religious practices of the people of Kutia Kandha tribe of Odisha in Eastern India. The secondary data used in the present article are *Books, Magazines, Reviews, Journals, Periodicals, Proceedings, Records*, and published theses. The data collected from both the primary and secondary sources are critically analysed for the writing of this article.

III. DISCUSSION AND RESULT ANALYSIS

3.1. Economic Life of the Kutia Kandhas of Odisha

Odisha has the distinction of having the largest number of PTGs among all the States and Union Territories as evident from the above Statement. In Odisha there are 13 PVTGs namely, Bonda, Birhor, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dongria Kondh, Hill Kharia, Juang, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankirdia, Paudi Bhuyan and Sora. 17 Micro Projects are functioning in different parts of the State to take care of their problems of development (Mohanty and Behura, 2008, p.33). They believed themselves to have existed in Odisha from the beginning. Their forbearers were probably driven from their homes on the richer coastal plains of eastern India during the Aryan advance. Preferring hardship to the less of independence, it is thought that they were forced up into the wild hill tracts of Eastern many centuries ago.

The social solidarity of a tribal community is maintained through segmentary opposition. The clan as a social institution is exogamous everywhere. The divisions of the Kutia section of the Kandha tribe into 14 clans regulate marital union in their community.

From the above myth, we notice four opposite elements such as (i) Celestial/ Heavenly versus Earthly; (ii) two brothers versus two sisters; (iii) Oviparity versus viviparity; and (iv) Surface of earth versus, subterranean hole, so neatly conjoined with each other for discovering a hidden message and also confirming to a universal structural arrangement, as is found in other myths. The Kutia Kandha pursues many occupations, like forest collection (Jena, Pathi, & Patnaik, 2006). shifting cultivation, settled cultivation, wage-earning and domestication of animals etc. But the economic organization of the Kutia Kandha is predominantly agricultural. Interdependence and co-operation of male & female are found in all the economic pursuits from production to consumption (Pathy, 1976).

The economy of the Kutia Kandha a primitive tribal community has following characteristic features: -

- a) They have a meagre possession of settled cultivable land. The average settled land per family comes to 1.11 Ac. (as per the socio economic survey, 2002). So the Kutia Kandha resorts to shifting cultivation to supplement their livelihood.
- b) They have a economy based on simple division of labour based on age and sex.
- c) Barter economy still exists in Kutia Kandha society, although monetization has already made in road.
- d) The implements used are indigenously produced and are very simple in nature.
- e) They have a very simple technology with traditional outlook resulting lower productivity.



Because the productivity is low, the rate of savings for future is low. Whatever surplus remains in the family is largely spent at the time of birth, death, wedding and religious ceremonies. Therefore, many households are indebted by taking loan from private money-lenders.

So the main characteristics of Kutia Kandha economy is that its annual out-put of goods and services are not sufficient to give its members a decent living rather it is mostly a subsistence economy of hand to mouth existence.

The main occupation of the Kutia Kandha is agriculture (Pattanaik, 1962). As the settled cultivation land is limited, they mostly depend upon swidden land. Besides agriculture they also domesticate animals and birds for economic purpose. If available, they also work as wage-labourers to supplement their income.

Land type

The cultivated land in Kutia Kandha area is divided into five categories, i.e. (1) Kitchen garden (backyard of the house), (2) Bada land (Plain land adjacent to the village boundary or inside the village boundary), (3) Up land, •Wet land or low land and (5) Swidden or shifting cultivation land.

(1) Kitchen garden (Padagiri)



The patch of land just at the back side of the homestead land is known *Padagiri* and in this land vegetable, like pumpkin, beans, chilly

and tobacco are grown. But all the Kuria Kandha backyards are not cultivated. The cowshed is built in the backyard and some backyards remain barren throughout the year.

(2) Bada Land

The land cultivated adjacent to the village boundary or inside the village boundary and fenced in all directions are called the *Bada land*. In *Bada* land generally vegetables, banana and tobacco are grown.

(3) Up land

The lands at the foot hills are called *Bataa* (up land), where oil seeds and pulses are chiefly produced. Mustard, Niger are the main oil seeds and Black Gram, Green gram, Horsegram, *Kandula* are the variety of pulses grown in Up Land. In some places *Kunda* Dhana and *Gurjee* are also produced in upland.

(4) Low land

The low land or paddy land is locally called *Mera*, found in the narrow vallies between the mountains. In most of *the Mera* land perennial hill stream cut through or pass by the side. Only paddies are cultivated in this type of land and after the harvest the land remain fallow till the next sowing. But in some villages, now-a-days, cabbage, cauliflower, brinjal, radish and chilly are cultivated in Rabi season.

(5) Shifting Cultivation



The cultivation practiced on a patch of hill slope for consecutive 3 years on a patch and then abandoned for a period of 6 years is known as shifting cultivation, locally called *Nella*. Shifting cultivation, a primitive method of agriculture is the predominant form of crop cultivation among the Kutia Kandha (Frowde, 1908).

It is practiced on hill slopes by slash and burn method and cultivation is done with the help of a digging instrument called *Sechu*. The forest on the hill slopes selected for cultivation is cleared by the adult male members of the owner family in the months of February. The fruit-bearing trees like mango, jack-fruit, tamarind and mahua are spared. In the month of March and April these are cleared for cultivation. The seeds are dibbled on the ash covered soil. In the 1st year bumper crop is harvested. The crops in the second and third year are yielded in a diminishing rate. On the fourth year the patch is abandoned for recuperation. After abandoning the old patch a new patch on the hill slope is selected for cultivation. The family returns to the previous site after 6 to 7 years. The Kutia Kandha build a hut on each *Nella* which serves as a rest shed during working hours and guarding the crop from the wild animals.

Process of shifting cultivation:

After selection of a patch on the hill slope (*Dangar*) the Kutia Kandha perform a ritual / festival called, *Dedusina Dakina*. On the day of observance of the ritual, the first tree in the selected patch is felled down by the Jani (Sacerdotal head) of the village. Then just after 7 days of the ritual, clearing of the patch starts by the owner of the plot. After felling of the trees big logs and branches are collected for household use the small branches and shrubs are spread on the ground to dry. Towards the middle week of March to 1st week of April, they set fire to the dried leaves and branches of the fallen trees and shrubs of the cleared patch. Just after first shower the soil is dug with *Sechu* (a digging stick). After the second shower of the monsoon they sow seeds by

the method of dibbling and broadcasting. A ritual called, *Bicha takina* is observed for ceremonial sowing of seeds. Towards the middle of June, when the plants grow up to the size of six inches, they weed cut the unwanted growths. From the first week of August the watching and protecting of crops start. The harvesting starts from the middle week of August and continues until the second week of January, depending upon the variety of the crop. *Maize, suan, gurjee and Jhari* are harvested from August onwards and castor is harvested thereafter. During the harvest period, two major festivals like *Butipaji Dakina* and *Punikalu Dakina* are observed for ceremonial eating of newly harvested crops.

In the second year, the Kutia Kandha do not dibble or broadcast the seeds other than pumpkin and cucumber in the same patch. After the outbreak of the monsoon the plants like castor, arhar, kueri, suan, kating, automatically germinate and grow from the seeds fallen during the harvest in the first year. From the stumps of the castor plants new trees grow after the first shower. Then the cycle of weeding, protecting, harvesting is followed as usual like the first year. In the third year also seeds are sown but plants like *suan, kueri* and castor automatically grow from the fallen seeds and castor stumps.



34. Kutia agricultural implements are mostly made out of sal wood. In view are: plough, yoke, harrow, axe, sickle, leveler.

From the fourth year the patch is abandoned consecutively six years for new vegetation to grow. On the seventh year, the Kutia Kandha family return back to the same patch for cultivation. In this process of shifting cultivation

the Kutia kandha cultivate 30 varieties of crops in the swidden land (Mishra,1963).

Animal Husbandry

The Kutia Kandha domesticates cow, bullock, buffalo, pig, goat, sheep, poultry and pigeon. Both the bullock and cow are used for ploughing and drawing cart. Buffalos are kept for ploughing and drawing cart and religious sacrifices. Goat, sheep and poultry are kept for both commercial and sacrificial purposes. Pigs are mainly kept for commercial purposes and ritual sacrifices, traditionally the Kutia Kandha do not milch the cow. But now-a-day some Kutia Kandha who resides near the central places milch the cows for commercial purpose.

Wage Earning

Both the Kutia Kandha male and female goes for daily wage earning. Generally they work as labourers in the unorganized sectors. Govt. departmental works and under contractors. The daily wage is R.s.40/- per day. Besides they also work as labourers in the construction work and agricultural work undertaken in and around the village by well-to-do persons. In this type of wage earning they get cooked rice and dal per person plus Rs.20/- in cash per day.

Division of Labour

The Family in Kutia Kandha economy is the unit of production. All the adolescent members of the family from the production unit, the pattern of labour in this tribal family is based on simple division of labour according to age and sex. The boys and girls are allotted different jobs suited to their age. The grown-ups shoulder all strenuous works but women are usually given light works given as compared to men. The participation of male and female indifferent works is given below:

Trade and Barter

Panos, a Schedule Caste community act as the co-coordinator between the Kutia and other non-tribal traders as they are well versed in both Odia and Kui language. The Panos carry their trading

with the Kutia Kandha round the year. They supply liquor and household articles to Kutia Kandha. Barter system is still in vogue in the Kutia society. Panos charge 3 to 5 Kgs of Paddy in exchange of a bottle of liquor, which is thrice more than the actual value of a bottle of liquor (Rout, 1964-65). During the lean period when Kutias face scarcity of food, they borrow money from local money lender through Panos and promise to pay back the loan in crop after the harvest (Watts, 1970). The traders purchase the crop at a very low price. Kutias sell their produces like oil seeds and forest products at a very lower price in the Belghar Market. In fact this sale price is one and half time less than that of Tumudibandha and Ambodola market, two markets situated at a distance of 23Kms and 10 Kms from the local market.

Economic Activities and Annual Income of Households

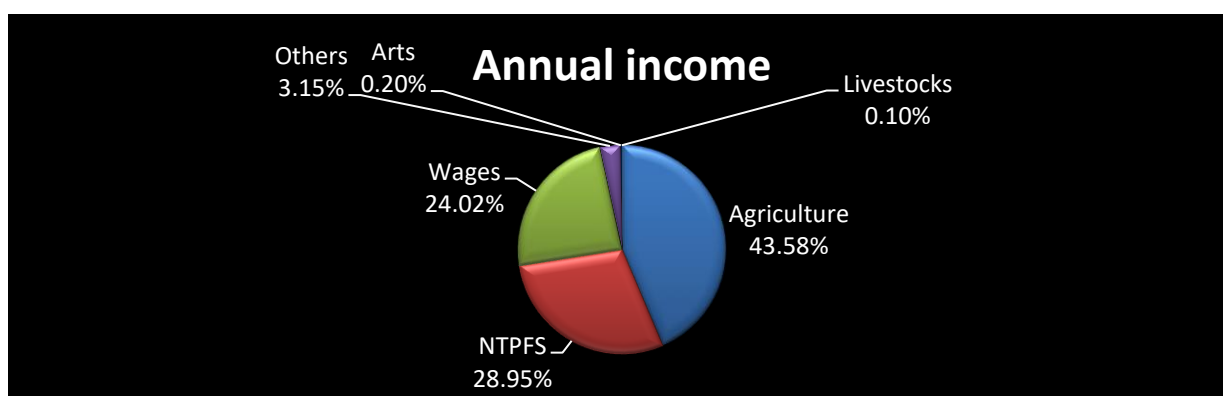


Household income is one of the most important indicators in livelihood. The household have multiple sources of incomes. It is because no single source of income is sufficient to provide means of survival. We identified six, major sources of livelihood in the selected villages. These are agriculture, wage labour, livestock, and collection of forest products, arts and crafts and income from other sources. The other sources includes small business, traditional based on caste-division of labour work, services etc. Agriculture is the most important single source of household in all the villages (Sahoo, and Ota, 2010). The total income of the surveyed household is Rs.52,68,486 in 2018, we consider

income from agriculture as sum of income settle cultivation and income shifting cultivation. The share of agriculture to the total income of Kutia Kandha is reported 43.58%.

Source of income	Total income(Rs.)	Percentage (%)	Rank
Agriculture	2295755	43.58	1
NTFPs	1525056	28.95	2
Wages	1265725	24.02	3
Others	165700	3.15	4
Arts	10700	0.20	5
Livestock	5550	0.11	6
Total	5268486	100.00	

The second most important source of livelihood is collection on Non-timber forest product collected by the people for self consumption and marketing. The major Non-timber forest products are Mahua flowars, Mahua seeds, Sal leaves, sal seeds Sal twigs, Siali leaves, Siali fibre, Kendu leaves, Hill brooms, Honey, Tamarind, Fire wood. The income from Non-timer forest product as the percentage of total income is 28.95. The income from wage labour as percentage of total income of the household is 24.02. The income from livestock percentage of total income is 0.11% and the income and income from other sources as percentage of total income is 3.15%. Thus agriculture and collection of forest produce are to major source of income for Kutia Kandha, The wages has a significant share to total income. The average days of wage earning in a year accounted 45 to 60 days. Minimum wages earning is reported Rs 100 for female and Rs 150 for male which is less than the minimum wage rate fixed by Government



IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, it is known from the above discussion that the economic life of the Kutia Kandhas of

Kandhamala is very weak. The people of Kutia Kandha community are completely neglecting

their education, for which, their standard of living is inferior in comparison to other tribal groups of Odisha. The economy of Kutia Kandha indicates that they are mostly acquainted with the traditional / primitive practices of hunting, food gathering, collection of fuel wood, fishing, leaf plate making, bamboo crafts, paddy production,

shifting cultivation for their economic subsistence. For the development of modern education among the Kutia Kandha of Odisha, the state Government of Odisha has recently established school in the local areas of Kutia Kandha community. In this respect the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, Bhubaneswar has been trying at best to educate the poor children of Kutia Kandha tribe of Kandhamala and other places of Odisha. In comparison to Santal tribe of Odisha, the economic condition of the Kutia Kandha is very inferior, because they are not adopting modern technology for the development of their economy. Most of the Kutia Kandhas are adopting traditional way of life like collection of honey, cultivation of paddy and turmeric, selling of fuel wood, etc. Most important source of livelihood of Kutia Kandhas is collection on non-timber forest product collected by the people for self consumption and marketing. Agriculture is the most important single source of household in all the villages of Kutia Kandha community of Odisha. So, the main occupation of the Kutia Kandha is agriculture. As the settled cultivation land is limited, they mostly depend upon swidden land. Besides agriculture they also domesticate animals and birds for economic purpose. Both the Kutia Kandha male and female go for daily wage earning. Generally they work as labourers in the unorganized sectors and under contractors. In fact, the economic condition of the Kutia Kandhas was not so affluent for which, they were maintaining pathetic life in the past, but now their economic life is found to be improved in their community like other tribal communities of Odisha in India. On the whole, the economic life of the Kutia Kandhas is very interesting study to know the tribal economic management system of one of the Particularly Venerable Tribal Groups of Odisha in Eastern India.

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