

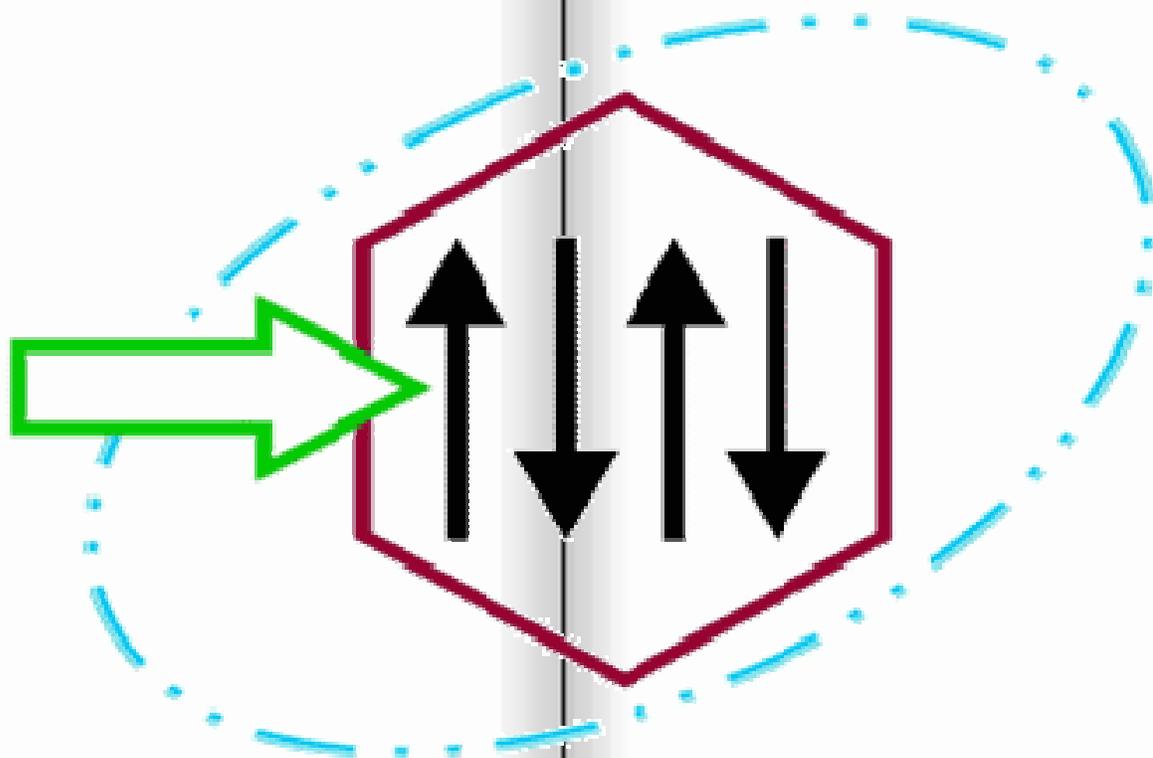
Livelihoods Management Programme

(An e-course by Akshara Network)

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e-livelihoods
learning course

Capsule No : 476 - 479



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e-Course; Capsule No- 476: Konda Reddis:

Konda Reddis, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), inhabit the banks of the river Godavari and the forest tracts of Papi Hill ranges in East and West Godavari, and Khammam districts of Andhra Pradesh. The tribe has a very symbiotic relationship with forests.

The social institution of Konda Reddis is governed by their traditional institution “Kula Panchayat”. The family as an institution is patriarchal and patrilocal. Monogamy is the rule, but polygamous families also are found among the Konda Reddis. The tribe is divided into exogamous septs for regulating matrimonial relations, and their surnames are prefixed to individual names. Each village of Konda Reddis is headed by a headman called “Pedda Kapu”. The Konda Reddis worship forest, earth, village, river goddesses, and have most of the festivals centered around forests.

Their economy is subsistence-based, and the production is for self-consumption rather than for the market. Their main occupations are “podu” (shifting) cultivation, collection and sale of Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), and basket making, using locally available bamboo. In shifting cultivation, they cultivate jowar majorly, which is their staple food, and also grow ragi, red gram, bajra, beans, paddy and pulses. The tribe not only depends on flora and fauna of the forest for their livelihood, but also subsist on a variety of tubers, roots, leaves, wild fruits, etc.

The lives of Konda Reddis have been adversely affected after the setting up of a paper mill by Indian Tobacco Company (ITC) here in 1977, leading to depletion of bamboo forests. Due to the paper mill, the cropping patterns of Konda Reddis have also been disrupted along with shortage of drinking water; therefore, the tribe has been forced to change their traditional food habits. Moreover, as the native habitats of Konda Reddis have been notified as sanctuaries (Papikonda Wildlife Sanctuary) without the tribe’s consent and approval of Gram Sabha, they are being deprived of their traditional rights over forests. The promotion of tourism around the river Godavari has led to serious pollution of the tribe’s pristine habitats, thereby, affecting their lives and livelihoods.

Land alienation among Konda Reddis is rampant, as many non-tribal men marry tribal women and purchase land in the name of their tribal wives and later desert the women. Even though there are many Acts in place to prevent the tribe from getting exploited, it is happening at a large scale. The expansion of market economy into their subsistence-based life has become an important channel for communication and cultural change. Various governmental interventions for PVTGs have percolated to them, but they continue to remain vulnerable as they are unable to cope up with the rapid globalisation.

e-Course; Capsule No- 477: Dongria Kondh:

The Dongria Kondh or Dongria Kondha tribe is a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) of Odisha, India. They are mainly found in the Rayagada, Koraput and Kalahandi districts of Odisha; especially in and around Niyamgiri hill ranges. The tribe calls itself as “Jharnia” meaning “those who live by the Jharana.”

The tribe holds a very close and symbiotic relationship with forests and is dependent on the integrity of their ecosystem.

Therefore, the tribe worships the mountain god Niyam Raja and the hills he presides over, including the 4,000 meter Mountain of the Law, Niyam Dongar.

They have a very strong cultural integrity and the ability to survive as a distinct social group, which is evident in their language, kinship relations, expertise in agro-forestry and customary practices. The tribe speaks two languages, namely Kuyi and Kuvi, having a Proto-Dravidian structure and vocabulary. Their religious practices anchor them in the landscape of the Niyamgiri hills. The Dongria have distinctive jewellery, tattoos and hairstyles; women wear many rings through their ears and three through their noses. The tribe has an expert knowledge of their forests, plants and wildlife. They collect wild roots, tubers, etc., and rare medicinal herbs, which treat a number of ailments i.e., arthritis, dysentery, bone fractures, malaria, snake bites, etc.

The government is responsible for protecting the rights of Dongria Kondh as it is a PVTG. The tribe is heavily dependent on forest produce for their livelihood. In the pristine environs that they inhabit, the government has brought in various developmental packages for the tribe.

Though traditionally the tribe practiced and continues to practice shifting cultivation; nowadays, the government has introduced other types of cultivation to them. They are growing orange, lemon, ginger and banana, etc.; vegetables; and high yielding rice. This allows people enough opportunity to earn cash in addition to pursuing their traditional subsistence agriculture on the hill slopes. The tribe was also trained to raise bovine animals.

For the past one decade, the 8,000 plus Kondh have been living under the threat of mining by “Vedanta Resources”, which is hoping to extract around \$ 2 billion-worth of bauxite that is lying under the surface of the hills. The mining operations will have adverse impacts on the livelihoods of the Kondh and will lead to the destruction of significant tracts of forests. The entire weaving of forests into the lives of Kondh will be permanently wiped out if mining operations are executed.

e-Course; Capsule No- 478: Asur tribe:

The Asur tribe is found in Gumla, Lohardaga, Palam and Latehar districts in Jharkhand state in India. In pre-historic times, the tribe was amongst the Proto-Australoid groups inhabiting the western regions of West Bengal. As per the 1991 census, the total population was 10,721. On the social front, Asurs are divided into 12 clans, named after different animals, birds and food grains. The tribe is further divided into three sub-tribal divisions, namely Bir (Kol) Asur, Birija Asur and Agaria Asur; however, Birja are recognized as a separate scheduled tribe.

The Asurs have a very good knowledge of herbal medicines. The tribe has its own community council called as “jati panch” which settles all disputes. The Asurs accept food from Rajputs, Oraon, Kharwar, Thakur, Ghasi, and maintain kinship ties with Munda, Kharwar and other neighbouring tribes. The tribe lives in pats, a clearing areas in the forests, with their houses having mud walls, supported by wooden poles with a roof covered with paddy straw and self-baked khapras (tiles). Their houses have spaces for cattle and birds and a separate area for worship of ancestors. The traditional male clothing is dhoti, while the females have tattoo on their bodies and wear metal and non-metal ornaments and glass bangles.

The tribe’s religion is a mixture of animism, naturalism and ancestral worships; they also strong believe in black magic, as their chief deity is Singbonga. The other deities are Dharati Mata, Duari, Turi Husid, and their festivals

include Sarhul, Karma, Dhanbuni, Kadelta, Rajjkarma, Dsahara Karam. The Asurs are mainly a hunting-gathering-foraging tribe.

However, over the time, a few of the them have started doing settled cultivation, and only occasionally hunting game. Due to increased alienation from their native habitats, and increased contact with plains people, the tribe has turned to iron-smelting, which has become their traditional occupation. This gives them a distinct identity as they claim to have descended from the ancient asuras, who were associated with metal craft. It's interesting to note that women sing songs relating to the furnace to an expectant mother encouraging the furnace to give a healthy baby.

Though Asurs have transformed from a hunting-gatheringforaging tribe to iron-smelters for economic reasons, they are facing many difficulties and struggling for access to health services, education, transportation, drinking water etc.. Additionally, the agriculture-based economy is under threat due to bauxite mining in their areas. As a result, migration and displacement have been rising, and human trafficking of minor girls has become a serious challenge.

The tribe is one of the ancient tribes of the country, and the government should take proactive measures to protect the tribe, as they form quite a big part of the total population in Jharkand.

e-Course; Capsule No- 479: Thoti tribe:

Thoti tribe is one among the Scheduled Tribe (ST) of India. It falls, under the bracket of minor tribe, among many other minor tribes in India. Very little is documented about Thoti tribe. It was way back in 1956, based on President's order , which was modified by the Bombay Reorganisation Act, 1960, it was identified that Thoti tribe inhabit five districts of Marathwada division of Maharashtra, spanning up to Rajura Tahsil in Chandrapur district. The tribe is also today found in other states i.e., erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, now the regions where the tribe inhabit fall in newly formed state Telangana.

The Thotis are found in Adilabad, Warangal, Nizamabad and Karimnagar district. All the above districts share border with the neighbouring state Maharashtra. The population of the tribe was 3,654 in 1991, but by 2001, their population came down to 2,074. These are similar to those of the Gond tribes. Gondi is their mother tongue. Thoti tribe live in separate hamlets of the main village, which are also inhabited by the Gonds, Marathas or Kurbis. Thotis live in small huts consisting of a room with a door and one or two small holes at the back, which serve as windows.

The tribe erects their huts on stone plinths or on earthen mounds. The walls of the huts are made of wooden ribs of bamboo matting, plastered with mud and cow dung. Thotis traditional dress comprises of a bandi (shirt) and a dhoti. Elderly men of the tribe wear pheta (head turban). Women wear choli (blouse) and a sari (lugada). Both men and women adorn themselves with ornaments. The family structure of the tribe includes both a nuclear and as well a joint family.

The Thotis have their own traditional panchayat known as "Karbharis" and the post is hereditary. The elderly villagers, too play a role in traditional panchayat and assist the man in judging social and religious disputes, unlike most the tribes, the Thotis also excommunicate their culprits. The traditional livelihoods of Thoti tribe were earlier wandering musicians, and later they took to work as bamboo workers and were engaged in making bamboo mats

i.e., that is; therefore, they came to be known or referred to as Thotis. Majority, of the Thoti tribe, continue to follow their traditional livelihoods by making bamboo articles, play musical instruments at weddings and other occasions, sell few musical instruments in nearby towns and villages.

The tribe today, for survival have taken to various other livelihood activities and they work as agriculture labour in others fields and also in MGNREGA. The tribe is a minor tribe, and with their dwindling population efforts must be laid to build cultural and ecological resources, which are possessed by the group. As the tribe, still continue with traditional occupation of making bamboo products, they should be financially supported in making basketry, cane furniture and other artefacts business, which can be marketed and help them sustain their livelihoods, in the changing face of livelihoods. It is important; to make a note that understanding tribals lives and their lifestyles is very important, prior to making any intervention for their development. ❖