

## Dongaria Kond Tribe and Higher Education; A Case Study

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### Abstract

There has been a growing concern over education across the globe. India is considered as leading country in terms of making legislations and taking strategic initiatives for education for its people since the onset of liberalism. Some of the fundamental reasons behind these are associated with the idea of sustainable development of human population in a competitive environment and protecting the global commons. Higher education is considered to be as a step forward for capacity building of individual and society in this regard in a knowledge driven society. This paper portrays the kind situations prevailed amongst the vulnerable Dongaria tribes in India in terms of getting access to opportunities of education particularly higher education and its implications in their socio-cultural, political and economic life. This paper claims that that the Dongaria Kond graduates have positive impression towards the system and the kind of opportunities there for higher education. Nevertheless, it establishes a contradictory unpleasant fact. On one hand Dongaria Kond graduates have positive impact on the social stability along with financial well-being of their family, however the quest for education and productive aspirations have brought some sort of disturbances in their own families caused by their movement to a distance place for education and participation in productive works on the other. The graduates sometimes create distance from their own socio-cultural values because of their adaptive nature of behaviour they gradually develop. This paper suggests to strike a balance in terms sociocultural and economic sustainability of vulnerable groups like Dongaria Kondh and developmental initiatives like opportunity for higher education and their effect in their own regions rather pulled by the external forces at the cost of culture and sustainable sources of livelihood.

**Keyword:** Higher Education, Socio-economic life, Dongaria Kond

### Profile of Dongria Kond

The Dongariya Kond tribe known as a primitive tribe of Odisha. They live in the Niyamgiri hill range covering Bissam Cuttack, Muniguda Kalyanisinghpur of Rayagada district and Lanjigarh block of

Kalahandi district basically Niyamgiri hill range of south Odisha. The population size is very small that is 2584 Male is 1105 and female 1479, And the literacy rate is 33.68 Male is 46.57 and female 23.42 (SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar 2011-12). The Kondas can broadly be divided into several sections such as Desiya Kond, Kutiya Kond, Dongria Kond, Pengo Kond, Sita Kond, Mulua Kond, Nanguli Kond, and Bura Kond etc. The Dongria Kond have many distinctive features in their settlement pattern, house types economic life, social organization, political system, and religious belief and practices which stand them separate from other tribal groups. Dongria Kond are very simple and spend happy life they have their own language known as kuvi and distinct culture (Ota, 2010, Sahoo, 2015 & Patnaik, 2005). A Dongria Kond village is situated in gentle slope at the foot-hills every village has a long and wide street running in east-west direction the houses are built close to one another. In the middle of the village there is a secret house jatra kudi the goddess of the village. There are hills on all sides of the village with plantations of fruit trees in hill slopes. The population of Dongria Kond is roughly 5000 their number is very small and they are the temporary inhabitants of the village. There are hills on all sides of the village with plantations of fruit trees in hill slopes. The Dongria Kond house is rectangular in ground plan and gable shaped to look they make the house like a railway compartment. The Dongria Kond are particularly educationally quite backward (Panda, 2015).

#### **Socio-cultural and Economic Background**

The Dongria Kond has unique characteristic features and rich cultural heritage their addictiveness is revealed especially from their dress styles mode of living indigenous skills and technology. One of the striking characteristic features is strong belief in the supernatural as well as magic, witchcraft and sorcery they attach goddesses and spirits they like hard work and derive pleasure by performing dance and music in their leisure time. The Dongria Kond are lover of beautiful arts and craft they adorn their body with various types of ornaments their customs also deserve special mention because of socio-cultural importance. Each Dongria Kond village having youth dormitory where young boys and girls use to visit and boys and girls get chance to interact each other for choosing their life partners. A Dongria Kond acquire different name during life time. Dongria Kond are celebrated number of feast and festival at their community level and individual level in individual household level, they celebrate Ghanta Paraba and pomp at village level is Kodru Paraba and Mariah sacrifices during this festival they perform rituals and pray and invoke supernatural powers to get their blessing and protection these functions are called Jani, Lambajani, Ichhanjani and Bejuni etc (Gomango & Mohanti, 2015). One significant feature of the Dongria village is the youth organized in each Dongria village there is a dormitory (Adasbetta) for young boys and girls (Patnaik, 2015). A Dongria Kond village is a cohesive unit socially as well as politically. The minimum age of marriage for boys is 20 to 22 years and for girls 16 to 18 years. A woman can marry after she is divorced similarly a widow woman can marry even if she has children. Marriage among Dongria

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Konds is a means of creating alliance between two clan group (Sahoo, & Panda, 2015). The Dongaria Konds primarily depend upon horticulture and mostly they depend on forest it is their main source of food, they go for hunting and trapping of bird and animals to get non-vegetarian food items. Dongria are skilled horticulturist taking advantage of favourable climates conditions they raise jackfruit, mango citrus, banana, pineapple and turmeric plantation in the top of hill. They produce tons of fruit but earn less due to exploitation by middlemen. They also collected seasonal food from forest like root and tubers, mushrooms green leaf. Dongria Konds keeps animals like buffalo (kordra), cow (kodi), goat (Adda), pig (paji), dog (Neudi) and pigeon (parua) for meeting the demands of presentation and for their own use in ritual occasions (Ota, 2010 & Sahoo, 2015).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to study the nature of support gets and challenges faced by Dongria Konds tribe while pursuing higher education. And to study the effect of higher education on Dongria Konds in term of their social stability, social participation, cultural transformation, Socio-cultural sustainability, health and hygiene and economic growth and sustainability.

### **Methodology of the Study**

The researcher adopted descriptive study with case analysis design. The study was conducted in Kalahandi District of Odisha. Five cases have been involved in this study. Semi-structured interview, informal interaction, close observation and recording of the interaction and interview techniques were adopted to study the cases. The collected data has been classified based on themes and further based on the common and unique nature of characteristics of the content the analysis has been carried out. Attempt has been made to draw conclusion and initiate discussions based on the findings of this study and review of related literature.

### **Case Profile**

In this study five graduated of Dongria Konds tribes from Bissam Cuttack Block of Raigada District of Odisha were involved. All five of them belong to low socio-economic status, as per the criteria of Socio-Economic Caste Census (SESS, 2011) and Human Development Indices and Indicators (UNDP, 2018). Previously to their higher education all of them have done their schooling from their village and nearest village of government school located of Malkangiri District. All of the graduates have completed their higher education from KISS University which is an NGO located in Bhubaneswar where they get free education and free accommendation. After completion of higher education in 2015 one graduate works as a tribal project fellow and presently work as community health worker. and other two graduates are working

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in private sector like professional tailor and computer teacher. and rest of two graduates completes graduation in 2013 from KISS University and they are presently unemployment.

### **Findings of the Study**

The analysis of all five cases shows that all of the Dongria Konds graduates have positive opinions about the system and their chances of pursuing higher education. Every graduate completed their graduation at KISS University. After completing their undergraduate courses, R. Wadaka and N. Wadaka, the two surviving graduates, completed their post-graduate studies, Raju Wadaka and U. Wadaka. For every graduate that completed their higher education there, KISS, an NGO, gave free education and free recognition. A competitive atmosphere for growing aptitude, expressing interest, and skill development programs is provided, in addition to the curriculum. Facilities such as Medicare are also provided. Graduates receive moral support from family, teachers, and the community. R. Wadaka receives support from family and teachers, while N. Wadaka relies on his parents and Dongaria tribe for communication. Raju Wadaka receives support from his mother, who encourages discipline and good study habits. Raju participates in traditional dance performances and co-curricular activities, while U. Sankar Wada receives support from his school teacher and family. Four graduates faced challenges during their higher education at KISS. R. Wadaka faced difficulties due to his parents' refusal to send him to a distance place due to financial constraints. N. Wadaka and Raju Wadaka faced social criticism and financial crises, but eventually found stability after becoming a computer teacher. U. Wadaka faced language and social adjustment issues, while Jakisika received moral support from her class teacher and parents. Despite facing social rejection, they eventually adjusted to their new role as responsible family members.

The positive impact of higher education on the social stability of the Dungria Kond tribe is observable among the Dungria Kond tribe graduates. The graduates contribute to their family in terms of social stability. The graduates also contribute to the financial well-being of their family. In the case of N. Wadaka, the family is somehow socially stable because of his job as a community health worker and helps his father with making decisions like providing education to his brother. His parents also support him in resolving conflicts and local problems during festival observation when the Konds tribe heavily drunk. The N. Wadaka family, which is still struggling for social stability, has nine members and relies solely on agriculture and labor work to support the family. After he completed graduation and was appointed as a computer teacher, the family economic stability was going to change, and his father got help from his son in the process of decision-making and financial support. Another graduate, namely Jakisika, who after higher education, gets married due to family pressure and takes full responsibility for her family's financial stability. Precisely because Jakisika is a professional tailoring master, she plays an active role in

contributing to the financial support of her husband, and she mostly takes decisions in family affairs. The R. Wadaka family is socially stable because of the positive impact of his higher education, and after a joint job in the private sector, his family fulfils financial needs whenever necessary, and he is also able to provide a good education for his children. Within the family, he plays the head role and takes all decisions under his mother's guidance. In the case of U. Sakar Wadaka, the family is still struggling for social stability because they depend on only seasonal shifting cultivation, which is their main source of family functioning. They also go for hunting and trapping birds and animals to sell in the local market.

In social affairs, the Dongria Kond Graduates participate in different local festivals like Mariya festival, Dongar Puja, Dhan Nuakhai, Ghanta Paraba and Bhihan Puja. In the case of R. Wadaka's he mostly attends community meetings (muttash). Dongria Konds is divided into several Muttash. Each Muttas comprises a group of villages. His parents also supported him in organizing community meetings (muttash) in different villages to create awareness about laws and orders. Wadaka also discards ill habits and practises of Konds society, like opposed child marriage and myths and taboos like boys and girls not being allowed for education. R. Wadaka invites and motivates his young friends to participate in the traditional youth dormitory as a school of learning. The dormitory members get the scope to learn the rhythms of dance and music and techniques of making art and crafts. It serves as a Centre for cultural sustainability and cultural heritage. In the case of N. Wadaka during the Meria festival, he plays an important role in planning and organising the Meria festival because it is the biggest and most important festival of the Kond community during January-February in which people of other Muthas participate. It is also found that N. Wadaka is a record of cultural activities in Oriya language by the Dongria Kond tribe. They believe fulfilment of vows and improving economic conditions is worship Sita Penu deities within the family and society. N. Wadaka also shares his opinion about staying in urban areas and adopting urban life. In the case of Jakisika, she actively participates in all the rituals like the kedu festival, which is the most important and it is the biggest festival observer in Donriya Kond villages. When a Dongria girl reaches puberty, she contributes to the preservation of all rituals and the dissemination of knowledge-based practises during her adolescent stage, particularly health and hygiene practices. She is the president of the Mahila Sangha Group, and she occasionally encounters issues such as a lack of unity among group members when proposing a loan scheme to the bank. She also talks about community issues, mostly about child marriage and mutual understanding between neighbours, and she advises people to stop bad habits and practises like drinking all day and eating tambakhu. Within the Konds society, Jakisika faces some problems and challenges which mostly prevail because of the socio-cultural sustainability of Konds society, like the rapid adaptation of urban culture and poverty, which is one of the main challenges for socio-cultural sustainability because most Konds families are not able to maintain satisfying rituals at the right times. In the case of R. Wadaka, who plays an active

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role in the traditional village council, he helps the community members to discuss village matters mostly relating to finalizing the dates of rituals and ceremonies, the amount of contribution from each house, and also resolving quarrels and conflict between individuals and groups. R. Wadaka assists club members in finding a grand location for community development work. Dongria Kond animists and polytheists believe in a plethora of supernatural beings who govern their daily lives.

The Kond community is losing their cultural values because their son and daughter settled in urban areas after completing higher education and adapting to urban culture. Busy with their own work, the nuclear family also causes socio-cultural sustainability. In the case of U. Sakar Wadaka, who participate in social affairs like marriage ceremonies, Meeting place, Birth rituals, and magico-religious practices, he also plays an active role in Dongria Kond political organization called Mutha, which is the administrative hub of Kond society. It is led by a head designated as Mandal. On ceremonial occasions, he plays a lead role in organizing the event for the promotion of cultural activities among young people. They are known for their colorful costumes and their songs and dances reflect lyrics expressing love and devotion to different aspects of their socio-cultural and economic life. On this occasion, he also takes responsibility for those young men who are heavy drinkers (Saga palm and mahua liquor) and ensure social unity and integrity. The role of higher education is very impressive among the graduates of Dongria Kond on health and hygiene and economic growth. Most of the graduates are self-independent and have advanced in health and hygiene. In the case of R.Wadaka, the family was aware of health and hygiene and take help of the health care Centre. His parents were also aware of other neighbours to take advantage of public health care services because he worked as a community health worker. Home-entrepreneurship is another source of income for his family, they enjoy creating traditional clothing designs such as Sala and dresses and selling them to local NGO and international organisations as well as in the local market. In the case of the N. Wadaka family, earlier they used to go for magico-religious belief, even for critical issues like Malaria and typhoid, and used traditional medicine. After completing higher education in N. Wadaka, his family slowly became aware of health issues and perforation to the health care centre and took help from ASHA. His parents also started to practice a healthy lifestyle and maintain environmental hygiene.

The economic sources of the Wadaka family are horticulture. They produce jackfruit, mango, banana, pineapple, and turmeric plantations on the hilltop, but they earn less money due to exploitation by middlemen. Nowadays, they personally deal and start to sell turmeric to local NGO agencies with collaboration. In the case of Jakisika, she personally takes care of health-related problems of her family in very few cases, like headaches and body pain, and in the case of serious health problems, she prefers to start worship of her village deities and spirits. Her family practices wet cultivation near the side of a

perennial stream. Most of the time she helps her husband in agriculture. Beside farming, she runs a tailoring shop in her home, where she prepares traditional clothes such as Sala, Tawal and resurrected old dresses. In the case of the R. Wadaka family, they took the help of public health care services in spite of believing in magico-religious. The economic stability of the family is good. He also provides financial help to his wife for investing money in adapting shop for preparing traditional dress and costume. His wife also gets a chance to sell traditional clothes in a state-level exhibition in Adivasi mela Bhubaneswar. In the case of U. Sakar Wadaka, his family still faces health and hygiene issues in their day-to-day life. When his family suffers from any disease like malaria, headache, or feeling illness, they do not go to the nearest health care Centre; rather, they go to the Disari, who is a master in magico-religious and side by side, they also use traditional medicine. The family of U.Sakar Wadaka is fully dependent on seasonal agriculture like jackfruit, mango, citrus, banana, pineapples, and turmeric plantations in their respective hill areas. His mother carries a small head load of fruits for sell in the local market with the help of a middle man from their village because they are not good at marketing, hence quite vulnerable to economic exploitation by the middle man.

### Conclusion

National Policies on Education 1968 affirms that education must play a positive and interventionist role in correcting social and regional imbalance, empowering women, and in securing rightful place for the disadvantaged groups and the minorities. Education for women's equality and special focus on the education of S.T. (Scheduled tribes) and Minorities, the concerns for tribal development through education in general and higher education in particular have been found to be progressive and productive in India today which partly reflected in this study which represents a region where the latter constitutes a substantial population of tribes with highly vulnerable conditions. However, this study hints that the primitive tribes are gradually participating in higher education through the supports and opportunities being offered by government and non-state actors. This study has also revealed that some exceptions in the form of educated unemployment a good number of primitive's graduates have positive impression on the system and provisions of higher education. This reality somehow falls at par with the lines National Policy of Education (NPE, 1986) and National Education Policy (NEP, 2020), where the policies direct on extensive efforts for promoting higher education among backward classes and especially among the tribal people. This study has also revealed that the Dongaria Konda, tribe they are staying in inaccessible areas far outside the world, their higher education possible only when these people get opportunity of motivation through awareness and accommodation once they shown interest for higher education. The similar kinds of concerns expressed in the works of Behera (2016), Mendaly (2015). The study also reveals that there are certain issues and challenges in the system of higher education, where the primitives' tribes,

social adjustment, language problem, poor academic performance and feeling of social isolation cannot be ignored. One of the common issues with majority of graduates was they used their native vernacular language. This has been supported by Kerai (2017), Mohanty, & Kanungo (2019). In the context of social participation, the Dongaria Konda primitive's graduates have strongly supported and participated in their different local festivals and local common functions like marriage, village assembly, death ceremony, birth ceremony, etc, during their participation, it is found that the majority graduates guides the community members toward education and agricultural facilities, and also deals with discuss with head of the village *Nayak and Barik* (village mukhiya) to solve problems like violence and crime, like widow marriage, cases of divorce, and interpersonal family disputes. This finding has been also partly supported by Behera (2016), Muniraju & Thakur (2018), It is commonly found that majorities of Dongaria Konda graduates have supported to their parents and community members for bringing change in socio-cultural dogmatisms and advised to discard the ill habits and bad practices likes believe in myth (Gunigaredi) and practice of magical rituals. It also found that the parents of graduates shared their views that earlier they had been victims of many more situations, but after the guidance of their sons and daughter, they changed themselves towards healthy lifestyles This finding has been partly supported by Ota,2010, Mohanty,2015, Mohapatra, 2015, Ota,2010, Kumar (2016) Devi, &, Dhal (2020) and Patnaik,2005. The study has revealed facts about the health and hygiene of Dongaria Konda primitive's tribes. Majority of graduates have positive attitudes towards healthy lifestyles which is the result of higher education. The graduates gradually change the attitude of their families and community members towards health-related practices and guided them to seek the help of medical professionals when facing health-related issues This finding has been partly supported by Muniraju & Thakur (2018), So, from the study it can be concluded that higher education has considerable effect in the life of the Dongaria Konda primitive tribes as stakeholders, even if they are at the disadvantaged sides from many angles purchasing capacity, health and education. And looking at the future circumstances in the light of Education for Sustainable Development (SDG-4, 2030 by UN, 2015). Precisely, Dongaria Kond graduates have positive impression towards the system and the kind of opportunities there for higher education. Nevertheless, it establishes a contradictory unpleasant fact. On one hand Dongaria Kond graduates have positive impact on the social stability along with financial well-being of their family, however the quest for education and productive aspirations have brought some sort of disturbances in their own families caused by their movement to a distance place for education and participation in productive works on the other. The graduates sometimes crate distance from their own socio-cultural values because of their adaptive nature of behaviour they gradually develop. Valuing the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and earlier policies and the ground realities as revealed in this study there is need to strike a balance in terms of connecting higher education to the culture, values and economy of the tribes in their own regions rather pulled by the external forces and creating avenues of livelihood and productive works within their

own localities and regions, so that development becomes sustainable to the vulnerable sections like Dongria Kondh.

### Notes

1. *Jatra Kudi*: Secrete house of goddess in the middle of the village.
2. *Ghanta Paraba, Kodru Paraba, Mariya festival, Dongar Puja, Dhan Nuakhai, and Bhihan Puja*.: the local festival of Dongria Kond tribe celebrate with much enthusiasm.
3. *Jani, Lambajani, Ichhanjani and Bejuni*; *The local functions of Dongria Kond tribe*
4. *Adasbeta*: The Matrimonial house middle of the village where young Bonda boys and girls visit for choosing their life partner. Each village of Dongria Kond communities have such well organize youth dormitory.
5. *Muttash*: community meetings Dongria Konds is divided into several Muttash. Each Muttas comprises a group of villages.
6. Sita Penu: Secrete deities of Dongria Konds tribe.
7. *Mandal*: Head of Village who plays a lead role in ceremonial occasions.
8. *Saga palm and mahua liquor*: traditional Wine of Dongria Konds tribe.
9. Disari: A person who astrologer-cum medicine man and master in magic system in the village.

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