



An overview on Tribal Culture and Sustainable development in Central India

(with reference to Baiga, Bharia and Saharia PVTGs of Madhya Pradesh)

Dr Neelu Rawat

Associate Professor
Department of Sociology
Central University of Punjab

Abstract: Culture can be defined as all the ways of life including arts, beliefs and institutions of a population that are passed down from generation to generation. Sustainable Development refers to a way of achieving economic growth and development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Tribal culture believes in sustainable development as they use the natural resources by focusing on its preservation and conservation. The environment is the inseparable part of tribal worship because it has a functional role in fulfilling the needs of tribal culture. Tribal culture and sustainable development will help to preserve the environment. This research paper will focus on the of living by tribals and its association with nature. The present paper is aim to explain the importance of tribal culture of Baiga, Bharia and Saharia and their identity in the sustainable resource management. The paper discuss the tribal ecological setting and other cultural experiences which have developed a style of life, a type of man-nature-spirit and give them unique identity which is the result of their long process of adaptation. Further, it explains the tribal subsistence economy which is based on the entire habitat including land, forest and water system. The paper demonstrates that the knowledge of tribal people regarding the preservation of forests, seeds, water and biodiversity. The knowledge about naturopathy and meterology of their daily life has also been discussed in this paper. The methodology used in research is observations method and it is secondary data based study.

Keyword - Tribes, Culture, Sustainable development

Introduction

Culture has been called "the way of life for an entire society." As such, it includes codes of manners, dress patterns, food patterns, language, religion, way to worship, rituals, music, technology and science etc. Holistic Sustainable Tribal Development is a transdisciplinary approach to understand the Socio-Ecological System and intervene to enhance the competency of the community and build the social, natural and financial capital to pursue livelihood, food security and well-being which leads to improve the Human Development more. The tribal culture believe in communal living, connection with nature, self-sufficiency, spiritual beliefs and folk arts and crafts. Since centuries, tribal culture and environment has deep down relationship as they fulfill each other's needs. Tribal culture focus on environmental worship in different forms such as sacred groves.

The tribals are divided into two categories I.e. Tribals and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). PVTGs were formerly known as primitive tribal groups. As per Census 2011, there are a total of 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes, spread over 17 states and one Union Territory (UT). The categorization is done by the Ministry of Home Affairs and not by the Ministry of Tribal affairs. As per census 2001: There

are 12 PVTGs having a population above 50,000. The remaining groups have a population of 1000 or less. During the Fourth Five Year Plan, a sub-category was created within Scheduled Tribes to identify the most vulnerable groups which were considered to be at the lowest levels of development. The Dhebar Commission report has identified a criterion for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups. The criteria mentioned by the Dhebar Commission are Pre-agricultural level of technology, low level of literacy, Economic backwardness, and A declining or stagnant population. The PVTG of Sahariyas has the highest population of 4,50,217. PVTGs of Sentinelese and Andamanese have a very small population of 39 and 43, respectively. Odisha has the highest number of PVTGs in India while no PVTGs are found in the states of Punjab and Haryana. PVTGS faced issues like The dearth of data i.e. The census doesn't comprehensively capture data on the PVTGs and Some PVTGs are not even recognized as STs, some PVTGs are located outside schedule 5 and 6 areas are remian bereft of special protections. The Degradation of the native culture has also become very huge problems now a days for everyone and specially for PVTGS. Bringing in foreign pathogens and diseases that can wipe out their entire populations. (Syphilis among Jarawas) and it is more common due the degradation of environment and negligence of sustainable development. The resoruce curse is very common and it disrupts the tribal way of life. Rise of exploitative economic systems like the Goti system – a bonded labour system among Juangs. The conflict between environmental conservation and upholding tribal rights are incresing day by day because tribals are the first one to receive the havoc impact on environment. PVTGs, being a near Mendelian population, are more prone to modern diseases, thereby increasing chances of extermination. Poor socio-economic indicators. For example, Himalayan tribes suffer from goitre due to the paucity of iodine in their diet.

Tribes and the environment has very deep connection specially the particularly vulnerable tribal group. The environment is the inseparable part of tribal worship because it has a functional role in fulfilling the needs of tribal culture. The tribals are facing the issues of Globalisation which made depletion of biodiversity and erosion very common today. In todays era, tribal culture is very important as we are moving more towards the exploitation of natural environment. With the increasing methods of exploitation, the value of sustainable development in entering into picture more intensely. Even most of international policies and programmes are focussed towards sustainable development. Tribal Lifestyle and Sustainable development beliefs in respect for the natural environment such as using natural materials for housing, food, and medicine, and living in harmony with the cycles of nature. The more they use the natural resources the more they conserve natural resources. Their Collective decision-making takes into account the needs of the community as a whole and ensures that decisions are made in a sustainable and equitable manner. They put emphasis on the intergeneration knowledge sharing which keeps the value of sustainable development intact. Use of renewable energy and protection of water resources promotes sustainable development. Even in the agriculture practices they follow the regenerative practices to stick to the principle of sustainable development. For example organic farming for mitigation of malnutrition which is widely practiced in India today. We all witness that organic farming it the part of tribal culture and helps to sustain their livelihood. Cultural adaptation being more eco-friendly and sustainable. The problems tribals face while protecting the environment is very grave. Despite the poverty and destitution they try to protect the environment with there practices. In the course of acculturation they have also been cheated by many so called civilized people who grabbed their land in lieu of providing assistance.

Study area

Madhya Pradesh, a state in central India, is known for its rich cultural diversity and a significant population of tribal groups. The state is home to various indigenous communities, each with its own distinct language, culture, and traditions. Here are some key aspects of tribal groups in Madhya Pradesh. A sizable number of tribal communities, including several particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs), are found in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. Due to their acute social and economic marginalization, unique cultural practices, and susceptibility to exploitation and displacement, certain PVTGs—often referred to as "Scheduled Tribes"—have been selected by the Indian government as in need of special attention. The state has one of the largest tribal populations in India, with more than 21 distinct tribal communities. Some of the prominent tribes in the state include the Gond, Bhil, Baiga, Korku, Saharia, and Bharia, among others. ribal communities are primarily concentrated in the hilly and forested regions of Madhya Pradesh, such as the Vindhya and Satpura ranges, which provide a suitable habitat for their traditional way of life. Each tribal

group in Madhya Pradesh has its own unique language, customs, and rituals. These languages often belong to the Dravidian and Austroasiatic language families. Tribal culture is deeply rooted in their traditions, which include music, dance, art, and folklore. Historically, many tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh have been primarily dependent on agriculture, forest resources, and hunting-gathering for their livelihoods. However, over the years, there has been a shift towards other economic activities like wage labor, trade, and animal husbandry. Despite their rich cultural heritage, tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh face various socio-economic challenges. These include issues related to land rights, education, healthcare, and access to basic amenities. Poverty and malnutrition are also prevalent among some tribal populations. The state government, along with various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and tribal welfare agencies, has been working to address the issues faced by tribal communities. Initiatives include providing education, healthcare, and skill development programs to uplift their socio-economic status. Tribal culture and artistry are also a significant attraction for tourists in Madhya Pradesh. Visitors can experience tribal traditions, dances, and crafts through cultural tourism initiatives that promote sustainable tourism while supporting tribal communities. Tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh celebrate various festivals throughout the year. These festivals are marked by colorful rituals, music, dance, and traditional attire. Examples include the Bhagoria Festival of the Bhil tribe and the Karma Festival of the Gond tribe.

In Madhya Pradesh, some of the tribal groups that are especially susceptible are Baiga, Bharia and Saharia Tribes. They had previously relied on forest resources for their livelihoods, but due to conservation initiatives, they have been displaced.

Baiga tribe - One of the indigenous tribal groups in India's Madhya Pradesh state is the Baiga tribe. They live largely in Madhya Pradesh's central and eastern regions, as well as in some areas of the adjacent state of Chhattisgarh. The Baiga tribe is renowned for its distinctive culture, age-old customs, and close ties to the forests in which they live. The Dravidian language family includes the language spoken by the Baiga people. The major tongues in the area, like Hindi, are different from this one. An essential component of their cultural identity is the maintenance of their language. Historically, the Baiga tribe has relied heavily on forest-based subsistence. They engage in shifting agriculture, often referred to as "jhum" farming, in which they prepare tiny plots of ground for cultivation, primarily of millets, and then permit the land to naturally regenerate. Along with hunting and fishing, they also collect a variety of forest products, including medicinal plants. Historically, the Baiga tribe has relied heavily on forest-based subsistence. They engage in shifting agriculture, often referred to as "jhum" farming, in which they prepare tiny plots of ground for cultivation, primarily of millets, and then permit the land to naturally regenerate. Along with hunting and fishing, they also collect a variety of forest products, including medicinal plants. The Baiga tribe practices animistic and nature-based spirituality. They adore and worship numerous woodland spirits, natural elements, and gods. Their spiritual traditions heavily rely on trees, animals, and other natural objects. They confront economic difficulties, same like many tribal people in India. Poverty, poor access to healthcare, education, and employment prospects are widespread problems in this neighborhood. The Baiga tribe's traditional ways have been environmentally sound and have helped to keep the woodlands they live in intact. However, conservation initiatives that limit their access to forest resources in the name of environmental protection have had an influence on their way of life.

Bharia tribe -The Bharia tribe is one of the indigenous tribal communities found primarily in the central and eastern regions of India, including Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and parts of Maharashtra. The population of this tribe is estimated to have a population of around 500,000 people. They are primarily concentrated in the forested and hilly regions of Madhya Pradesh, particularly in the districts of Dindori, Mandla, Umaria and Chindwara as well as in parts of Chhattisgarh. They have their own language, which belongs to the Dravidian language family. However, many Bharia individuals also speak Hindi, which is the lingua franca in the region. Like other tribal communities in India, the Bharia tribe has a rich cultural heritage. They have their own distinct customs, rituals, and traditional practices. Their cultural identity is closely tied to their relationship with the forests and natural surroundings. Historically, the Bharia tribe has been dependent on traditional activities such as shifting cultivation (known as "jhum" cultivation), hunting, gathering forest produce, and some agriculture for their livelihoods. These activities are closely connected to their traditional way of life. Bharia people typically live in small, traditional huts made of bamboo and thatch. These huts are designed to be portable, allowing them to move as needed for agricultural or other activities. This tribe, like many other tribal communities in India, faces various socio-economic challenges. These include issues related to land rights, access to education and healthcare, and poverty. Efforts are

being made by the government and non-governmental organizations to address these challenges and improve the living conditions of the Bharia tribe. There is a growing awareness of the need to preserve the cultural heritage of the Bharia tribe and other indigenous communities. Initiatives are underway to document their traditional knowledge, promote their art and craft, and support sustainable livelihoods that are in harmony with their environment.

Saharia tribe- The Saharia tribe, also spelled as Shahariya or Sahariya, is an indigenous tribal community primarily found in the central Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The study area for Saharia tribe is the area of Madhya Pradesh. They are one of the vulnerable and marginalized tribal groups in India. The Saharia tribe, also spelled as Shahariya or Sahariya, is an indigenous tribal community primarily found in the central Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The Saharia tribe is concentrated mainly in the districts of Shivpuri, Guna, Ashoknagar, and parts of Datia and Sheopur Kalan. In Rajasthan also a smaller population of Saharia tribals resides in the southeastern parts of Rajasthan, particularly in the districts of Baran, Kota, and Jhalawar. The Saharia people have their own language, known as Saharia or Sahariya. This language is part of the Indo-Aryan language family. However, due to interactions with the broader population, many Saharia individuals also speak Hindi. The Saharia tribe has a distinct cultural heritage characterized by their traditional customs, rituals, and way of life. Their culture is deeply intertwined with their natural surroundings, and they have a close connection to the forests and the land they inhabit. Historically, the Saharia people have been forest dwellers and have relied on activities such as hunting, gathering forest produce, and shifting cultivation for their livelihoods. These practices are central to their cultural identity. Saharia tribal households typically live in small, thatched huts constructed using locally available materials. These huts are designed to be simple and portable, reflecting the traditional nomadic lifestyle of the Saharia people. The Saharia tribe, like many other tribal communities in India, faces numerous socio-economic challenges. These include issues related to land rights, access to education and healthcare, poverty, malnutrition, and limited economic opportunities. Efforts are being made by government agencies and non-governmental organizations to address these challenges and improve their living conditions. There is a growing recognition of the importance of preserving the cultural heritage of the Saharia tribe and other indigenous communities. Initiatives are underway to document their traditional knowledge, promote their art and craft, and support sustainable livelihoods that are in harmony with their natural environment. The Saharia tribe, like many other tribal groups, celebrates various festivals that are linked to their agricultural and cultural practices. These festivals often involve music, dance, and rituals that reflect their connection to nature and their environment.



Research Methodology

The research is empirical based. In this study the observation methodology has been used which gives the touch directness and the real time information. It has been collected with in the natural environment of the tribe. The unstructured interview has been taken in the research which make the respondend comfortable and easy to give answers. It is collected to find out the connection between the concept of sustainable development and tribal cultural practices. The secondary data has also taken into consideration which gave the direction to this research. The secondary has been collected for tribal development departments, planning commission, census and reviews of articles and books.

Objectives

To explore the roots of sustainable development in practices of tribal culture.

To analyse day to day practifces of tribal communities in the manner of sustainable development

On the basis of analysis and findings provide a model of sustainable development. Make suggestions for policy making and implementation.

Findings and Discussions

Tribal culture is diverse and multifaceted, varying from one indigenous community to another but tribal is the very important part of the society which impact almost every sectors directly and indirectly. Many tribal cultures rely on oral traditions for passing down knowledge, history, and stories from one generation to the next. This includes oral storytelling, songs, and folklore.

Tribal culture and Psychology- The tribals have a psychology that every part of nature contain some power and that power is to be worshiped by them. The emphasis on the intergeneration knowledge sharing which means passing down the knowledge to the next generation includes traditional knowledge of the natural environemnt and sustainable practices for managing resources. Their psychology to promote natural resources and to save them for the use of future generation helps to find out various ways of conservation like bawdi or jhalara system to conserve water. The traditional knowledge they have contributed in the world a lot. Indigenous tribes often have their own languages, which play a significant role in preserving their unique culture. These languages are essential for communication within the community. Tribal communities typically have their own spiritual and religious beliefs, often rooted in nature and the environment. These beliefs may involve rituals, ceremonies, and sacred sites and these things have psychological impact on the tribe. They feel safe and secured by performing rites and rituals. Music and dance are integral to tribal culture. These forms of expression are used in rituals, celebrations, and storytelling. Traditional musical instruments and dance styles are unique to each community.

Tribal culture and physical impact- they have various practices which have relevance in the enviroment and main stream society. We might accept it as a fashion and its relevance for them is more than that. For example a tatoos on their body is a means of expression and faith. It symbolises their identity i.e. caste, gender, faith and traditions. They live in mud houses which has become the famous concept now a days specially in tourism and restraunat but it keeps their houses cool and natural friendly. They worship almost all the natural enviroment to keep the belief alive that is may protect them natural calamities and other natural disasters. The use of folk medicines which is now called the ayurveda is the important part of their culture. Their staple food is now recognised worldwide like kodo kutki and other millets. Even Food and Agriculture Organization and United Nations has recognised 2023 as International Year of Millets or IYM2023 for awareness about health and nutritional benefits of millets. The Indian Government proposed to celebrate 2023 as International Year of Millets. From warfare to protect nature they have reasons for all the practices which is enough to convince us to fight form the major issues like climate change and frequent natural disaster. Indigenous tribes have distinct clothing styles and adornments, which are often crafted using traditional methods and materials. These items reflect their cultural identity and are worn on

special occasions. Many tribal communities are known for their intricate artwork, including pottery, weaving, carving, beadwork, and basketry. These crafts often have deep cultural and symbolic significance. Tribal societies are often organized around tight-knit communities with strong kinship ties. Social structures and roles within the community are well-defined. Various rituals and ceremonies mark important life events, such as birth, initiation, marriage, and death. These ceremonies are central to tribal culture.

Tribal culture and environment- Tribals have developed practices to protect and promote diversity which includes traditional methods of agriculture, such as intercropping and seed-saving, as well as the protection of sacred sites that are important for the preservation of biodiversity. Despite this they are also focussed on Conservation of natural resources and the sustainable practices involve limiting the use of resources to ensure their long-term availability, such as rotational farming or allowing forests to regenerate before harvesting timber. The Tribal communities rely on water resources and have developed practices that can help to ensure that water is available for future generations, and can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Apart from this they have been practicing regenerative agriculture for centuries, which involves practices like crop rotation, intercropping, and regenerating soils with organic matter. These practices help to sequester carbon in the soil, which can help to mitigate climate change as we all know how big and gigantic the problem of climate change comes across us and the whole world is gathered to reduce the impact of it. Tribal cultures typically have a strong connection to the natural world. They often rely on traditional ecological knowledge for sustenance, medicine, and understanding their environment.

Tribal culture and sustainability -Tribal Respects for the natural environment by performing activities like using natural materials for housing, food, and medicine, and living in harmony with the cycles of nature. The living pattern is community centred for the tribal and decision making will be community based. Individualism concept is not very entertained in their culture. By making decision community based they ensure that decisions are made in the sustainable manner. They have traditionally used renewable energy sources like wind, solar, and hydropower which can be expanded and modernized to provide clean energy for more people. But there are some challenges which tribal faces and it shattered their idea of sustainable development and natural resources conservation. They often face discrimination and prejudice from the dominant society, including limited access to education, healthcare, and other basic services. They don't have land rights because they have been displaced from their traditional lands due to industrialization, and mining which has resulted in the loss of cultural identity, and social and economic marginalization. Climate Change, such as changes in rainfall patterns, increased frequency of natural disasters, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, pollution, and loss of habitat, has negatively impacted their traditional livelihoods and ways of life. They are also facing Socioeconomic marginalization like many tribal communities have limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, which can result in poverty and social exclusion. They are not even properly representing in political system and may not have a voice in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Tribal communities often face challenges in accessing quality healthcare, which can result in higher rates of disease, malnutrition, and other health issues. Moreover Many tribal communities face pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture, which can lead to the loss of traditional knowledge, language, and cultural practices. Many indigenous communities practice sustainable agriculture, hunting, and gathering techniques that have been passed down through generations. These practices are often in harmony with the environment.

Tribal cultures frequently promote the concept of sustainable development in a number of ways because they have historically lived strongly eco-connected lifestyles and have cultivated sustainable practices through many generations. Tribal groups have a thorough awareness of their regional ecologies. They have important traditional ecological knowledge about plants, animals, and natural resources, which can be crucial for resource management that is sustainable. Crop rotation, mixed cropping, and organic farming are just a few examples of sustainable agricultural methods used by many tribal people. They frequently have no influence on the environment and preserve soil fertility using conventional techniques. Many tribal cultures live in forests and practice sustainable forest management. They recognize how crucial it is to protect forests from overuse in order to maintain their way of life. Strong conservation principles are frequently ingrained in the spiritual and cultural beliefs of tribal civilizations. In order to safeguard the welfare of future generations, they highlight the importance of responsible resource usage and regard nature as holy. The wellbeing of the group is frequently prioritized in communal decision-making in

traditional tribal communities. These methods may support fair allocation of resources and sustainable resource management. The environment and natural cycles are prominent themes in many tribal rites and celebrations. These activities strengthen a person's relationship with and appreciation for nature. Regulations and taboos are frequently in existence among tribes who depend on fishing and hunting for a living in order to prevent overexploitation and guarantee the sustainability of natural resources. Tribal diets frequently consist of organic and locally procured foods, minimizing the carbon impact caused by transportation and chemical farming methods. In order to resist local climatic conditions, traditional tribe houses and infrastructure are frequently constructed utilizing locally obtained and sustainable materials. Self-sufficiency is a way of life for many indigenous cultures, who make their own food, clothes, and tools. Because of this independence, there is less of an environmental impact. Traditional arts and crafts that make use of natural resources and encourage sustainability are frequently practiced in tribal communities. These crafts can be used to make money as well. Tribal cultures frequently respect biodiversity and are aware of how different species interact with one another in their environments, which can help conservation efforts. Tribal cultures frequently have a long history of adjusting to changing conditions and living in harmony with their environmental conditions making them resilient in the face of climate change. Some tribal tribes practice sustainable tourism, giving tourists the chance to experience their culture while honoring regional customs and ecosystems. While tribal cultures can provide insightful information on sustainable development, it's crucial to remember that these people frequently experience a number of difficulties, such as encroachment on their lands, a lack of access to healthcare and education, and economic marginalization. While addressing these issues and promoting the well-being of tribal groups, sustainable development programs should take into account their cultural heritage and rights.

Conclusion

As India celebrates its 75th year of Independence with 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahostav', Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas would be a thoughtful gift for our tribal community and a recall to Ram Rajya — where the likes of Guha are given due respect, their cultural diversity is respected, and their contributions celebrated. Tribal lifestyles can offer solutions to climate change and global warming through sustainable practices that protect and preserve the natural environment. Overall, tribal lifestyles can provide valuable lessons for sustainable development, particularly in areas with high levels of biodiversity or where development threatens the natural environment. In order to improve the living conditions of these particularly vulnerable tribal tribes, the Madhya Pradesh government has developed a number of welfare and development projects in conjunction with the central government of India. These programs cover measures for housing, land rights, healthcare, education, and skill development. In addition to addressing the problems these tribes face, efforts are made to protect and promote their distinctive cultural legacy. The position of PVTGs might fluctuate significantly within and between Indian states, hence continual efforts are necessary to lift up and empower these underprivileged groups. Efforts are ongoing to empower the Baiga, Bharia and Saharia tribe and preserve their cultural heritage while addressing the socio-economic challenges they face. Striking a balance between conservation and the rights and needs of indigenous communities is the need of the hour.

Reference

Spee,j.2021.Clan and Tribal Perspectives on Social, Economic and Environmental Sustainability: Indigenous Stories From Around the Globe.Emrald publishing limited.

Kocherla, Gangadhar.2021.Transformation of Tribes and Sustainable Development.ABD Publisher

Lal, Suresh. 2014.**TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES IN INDIA (2 VOLS.)**. Serials Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Vidyarthi L.P. and Rai Binay Kumar "The Tribal culture of India" (2000) Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.

Dholni S.P. and Singh RSP "Indian Anthropology and Tribal Culture" (1996) Piyush Publications, Delhi)

Vsave Dilvarsing :Sustainable Development perspectives for Tribal Women in Maharashtra
(www.academia.edu)

Dube, S.C. (1960) Approaches to Tribal Problems in Indian Anthropology in Action, Ranchi

