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Importance of non-timber forest products for livelihood of tribal's in bastar region of Chhattisgarh: A review

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Abstract

Bastar “the tribal region of Chhattisgarh” is located 260 km away from the capital Nava Raipur Atal Nagar. Bastar “the tribal region of Chhattisgarh, which represents about 30% of the total tribal population of Chhattisgarh. The main tribes of this region are the Gonds, Marias, Bhatras, Murias, Halbas and Dhurvas. The people of the various tribes of Chhattisgarh have their own distinct cuisine. They primarily add the various types of fruits that are commonly found in the forest of Bastar. The most famous dish is the “Chaprah chutney” or red ant chutney. The red ants along with the eggs are collected from the nests and they are mixed with tomato and different spices. Red ants is said to contain valuable proteins. Among the famous drinks in bastar is the “Mahua alcohol” made out of the dried flowers of the mahua tree and “Salphi” (more prevalent in Bijapur and Dantewada areas) prepared from sap of Salphi tree. The tribes use the same on various occasions. This drink is considered sacred for the tribes of Bastar. They collect their food, firewood for cooking and in winter to keep warm; use the timber or bamboo to construct their houses; collect use grass for fodder, brooms and mats; collect leaves for leaf plates; and use harre behra for dyeing and tanning from forest. These show that the in lives of tribal's, the non-timber forest products (NTFPs) especially play pivotal role. But the access of tribal's to NTFPs is ever curtailed by the state. But they have rights to collect fuel; fodder and minor forest produce only from protected and unclassified forests except in Arunachal Pradesh, the tribal's have special rights to collect all forest produce and hunt and fish freely in all forests, whether reserved or unclassified. This concession is not found anywhere else. This article will try to assess the nature and extent of tribal's dependence on forests.

Keywords: Tribal's, forest, non-timber forest product (NTFPs), socio-economic condition, forest policy

1. Introduction

There are symbiotic relationship between forest and tribes of Bastar with each other. Scientific analysis of this symbiotic relationship between adivasis and forest is quite elaborative. The richness of biodiversity, culture and natural resources in forests that is safeguarded by tribes is adequate. According to conservationists the tribal's are depend on the forests for their survival; but in Chhattisgarh that the forests depend on tribals for its survival and forests only exist wherever the tribal's protect the forest. The forests that have gone into the hands of non-indigenous communities have wiped out (Arjjumend, 2005). Chhattisgarh is the third most mineral rich state in the country and is a hotspot for mining and power industries that put a huge pressure on forests and tribal's who are dependent on the forest for their livelihood and depend on it for collection of non-timber forest produce (NTFP), firewood, grazing, medicinal plants collection etc.

Under this condition it becomes crucial for the state to ensure that its forest dwelling population is protected from being exploited to give way for larger development projects and protected areas. Odisha is one of the pioneers in rights settlement and has secured the leading position in integration of convergence schemes post-rights recognition. To ensure benefits are provided to the right holders, a set of guidelines was issued in 2016 by the Odisha Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste Development Department thereby becoming the first state to come out with these guidelines.

2. Non-Timber Forest Products

Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) encompasses all biological materials other than timber which are extracted from forests for human use (Table-1).

Table 1: Non-Timber Forest Products

Edible plants	Non edible plant's products	Edible animal products	Non Edible animal 's products	Medicinal products
Food	Rotten	Terrestrial animals	Insect product	All medicinal product
Edible oil	Bamboo	Fish	Wild life product and live animals	
Spices	Sustainable produce wood	Aquatic / terrestrial invertebrates	Other non edible animal 's products	
Fodder	Ornamental plant	Other edible animal		

		products		
Other edible pars	Chemical components			
	Other non edible plant's products			

3. Importance of Non-Timber Forest Products for tribal's

The importance of NTFPs goes beyond meeting basic needs. NTFPs are also a rapidly growing market sector. The estimated total value in world trade in NTFP is approximately US \$1,100 million, and the market has grown by nearly 20 percent annually over the last several years. Future development of NTFPs offers potential for increasing income, expanding opportunities, and diversifying enterprises in tribal's areas. Embarking on an enterprise involving non-timber forest products is an appealing challenge for many rural entrepreneurs. Non-timber forest products represent an opportunity for diversifying and expanding income. Possibilities for a variety of rural enterprises involving not only growing and harvesting, but also value-added processing, packaging, and transport are available in the NTFP trade (Arjjumend, 2005).

4. Types of NTFPs Collected by tribals:

Before 1865, tribals were completely free to exploit the forest wealth. Then, on 3 August 1865, the British rulers, on the basis of the report of the then-superintendent of forests in Burma, issued a memorandum providing guidelines restricting the rights of forest dwellers to conserve the forests. This was further modified in 1894 and forest dwellers have been dissociated from the management and exploitation of forest wealth. The British contractual system that still exists in many states has resulted in unscrupulous

exploitation of the local people and of the natural vegetation and wildlife that the forest policy was intended to conserve. Development programs - construction of roads and availability of educational, medical and housing facilities - have allowed economically viable outsiders to enter forest regions. In order to make quick profits, they have exploited the forest dwellers, displacing them from their land and making them bonded labourers. The tribal people bring nearly about 29 types of NTFPs from surrounding forests, which are enlisted, with their uses, in Table-2. They are categorised in to two groups (a.) nationalized and (b.) non-nationalized (Forest Survey of India, 1997).

- a. Nationalized forest products like tendu patta, sal seed, harra, gum: The forest dependent communities are free to collect tendu patta, sal seed, harra and gum from the forest areas of the state and sell these products to the notified purchase centres of Chhattisgarh Minor Forest Produce Cooperative Federation Ltd. at predetermined rate decided by the Federation. The registered collectors of tendu patta become entitled to get bonus on the profits and group insurance facilities.
- b. Non-Nationalized non-wood forest products (NWFP) including medicinal plants: The forest dependent communities are entitled to collect non-nationalized non-wood forest products including medicinal plants by non-destructive means and sell them in the open market.

Table 2: Types of NTFPs collected by tribals

S. No.	Name of the plants	NTFPs being collected from	Part of Plant utilized	Selling time	Application
1.	Mango	Mango	Fruit	April-May	Household use (pickle, fruit) Sale of dry mangoes. Powder (aamchur) can also be used at home.
2.	Tamarind	Tamarind	Fruit	February-April	Sale of raw tamarind and pallets Household use
3.	Mahua	Mahua	Flower	October	Sale of dried flowers Making country liquor (Salphi and Mahua alcohol Boiled with sarai seed and consumed at home.
4.	Char	Char seed (chironji)	Fruit	May-June	Sale of kernel of char, and chironji. Laddu of chironji also prepared.
5.	Kusum	Kusum seed	Fruit	July	Oil is extracted and sold and used in cold
6.	Wild Bamboo	Kareel	Stem	August-October	Basket weaving Consumed as vegetable Used to kill worms in the stomach
7.	Mahua	Tori/Gulli	Fruit	July-August	Oil is sold and eaten at home Oil is used for massaging in winter. Cake after oil extraction is burnt to kill mosquitoes.
8.	Kusum and Palaas	Lac	Bark	April-May	Sealing; closing holes in utensils.
9.	Kedu	Kedu leaves	Leaves	April-May	Consumed as vegetable
10.	Sarai	Pattal	Leaves	Throughout the year	Plates are weaved and used for taking food
11.	Fungi	Boda (mushroom)	Entire body	July-August	Household consumption
12.	Bhuineem	Bhineem	Leaves/stem	November-Dec.	Medicinal use in jaundice and malaria
13.	Chirota	Chirota seed	Fruit, seed	February-March	Sale; used in coffee making and fever treatment.
14.	Dhawal	Dhawal phool	Flower	April-May	Colouring agent in drugs/medicines
15.	Bel	Bel	Fruit	March- April	Sale; household consumption
16.	Tikhur	Tikhur	Tuber	February-March	Sale; household consumption. Cold drink making in summer

17.	Kosa	Kosa cocoon	Kosa cocoon	Jul.-Aug.	For Silk manufacture
18.	Mulberry	Mulberry fruit	Fruit	March	Sale; used in rope making
19.	Shikakai	Shikaka fruit	Fruit	May-June	For making hair shampoo
20.	Cashew	Cashew fruit	Fruit	April	Obvious uses
21.	Amla	Amala fruit	Fruit	October-December.	For pickle, murabba & medicine
22.	Bhelwa	Bhelwa seed	Fruit	Feb-march	- Sale; use in skin diseases
23.	Karanj	Karanj	Fruit	March-April	- Household use in skin diseases
24.	Vajradanti	Vajradanti	Stem		- Teeth cleaning; also used in stomach swollen
25.	Various tree	Honey	Comb of honey bee	June	- Consumed at home
26.	Bahera	Bahera	Fruit	June	Sale, medicinal use
27.	*Sal	*Sal seed	Fruit	May-June	Sale of seeds; oil extraction for household consumption
28.	*Tendu	Tendu leaves	Leaves	May	Sale of leaves; bidi is made at home
29.	*Harra	Harra	Fruit	February-March	After grinding it is consumed to remove cough. Medicinal use once worm bites.

* Nationalized NTFPs bought by the government.

5. Marketing of NTFPs and Livelihoods of Tribal’s

Government of Chhattisgarh has established an NTFP market information centre through which vital information is passed on to Conservators of Forest and Divisional Forest Officers. So intensive networking with the Forest Department is equally important. Otherwise, this networking is essential from the point of view of countering the resistance of local traders. Chhattisgarh State Minor Forest Produce (Trading and Development) Cooperative Federation Limited is an apex organization of approximately 1 million forest produce gatherers comprising of 896 Primary Cooperatives and 32 District Unions. It is also the nodal agency for all aspects relating to management, development and trade of NTFP sector in the state. It is well known that all NTFPs collected from forests are not sold in the market, rather only some have market. Study findings revealed that only 16 NTFP items are marketed out of 29 being collected. Of these 16 items, 3 are nationalized and sold to Forest Department only. Before discussing the economics of the NTFPs there is necessity to understand the marketing system of forest products.

6. Chhattisgarh State MFP (Trading and Development) Cooperative Federation

Local traders do have close contact with tribals at all level. Once Grassroots supported SHGs will enter into the business to give people justice the traders’ network would attempt to confuse the tribal’s and may apply unholy means. Such negative forces can be neutralized only when networking with bureaucrats and officials in at least Forest Department is firm and functional. Under the 3-tier cooperative structure the primary societies have been constituted with the membership of actual pluckers and chairman of the society is elected from amongst the members only. At present there are over 10,000 collection centres spread over the length and breadth of the state and the annual turnover of the trade is over Rs 2000 million (Arjjumend, 2005). Chhattisgarh State Minor Forest Produce (Trading and Development) Cooperative Federation Limited is an apex organization of approximately 1 million forest produce gatherers comprising of 896 Primary Cooperatives and 32 District Unions. It is also the nodal agency for all aspects relating to management, development and trade of NTFP sector in the state. Under the 3-tier cooperative structure the primary societies have

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7. Official Procurement System of Nationalized Products

For helping the tribal’s the government monopolized the purchase of 3 NTFPs namely tendu leaves, sal seed and harra during 1960-1970. All traders had been eliminated from direct purchase of the produce. The Forest Department auctions the material after or before procurement of the products and various traders bid. If the forest product is auctioned before procurement, the material is straightaway lifted from procurement centre (locally called as phad). Auctioning before procurement has been introduced for last few years only. For the material not auctioned prior to procurement is taken to godowns from where it is auctioned (Biswas, 1988, 1993 and 1994). The procurement of the nationalized products is done through 3-tier cooperative system existing at Chhattisgarh level that is explained in box below. At micro level, the smallest unit, known as Primary Forest Produce Cooperative Society, procures the material through its many procurement centres. One centre covers many villages.

8. Draw Back of Official Procurement System of Nationalized Products

Observations made in trade of nationalized NTFPs i.e. tendu leaves, sal seed and harra, reveal that

1. There is quite much exploitation in procurement process and payments distribution. People are also not aware of their rights involved in the trade of nationalized NTFPs.
2. Despite that fact that women are major workforce behind collection of nationalized forest products, they do not have sufficient representation in cooperative societies, the 3-tier structure of the forest department meant for dealing in trade.
3. There is also a complete lack of transparency and accountability among the representatives of societies. The phad munshi takes away extra bundles of tendu leaves above the counted ones. It is called as saraa, which is taken away by saying that the leaves brought by collectors would be less in count as well as

damaged. Collected bundles thus are entered as deposited anyone of phad munshi.

9. Marketing of NTFPs through Private Traders' Network

There is a network of village traders in all forest divisions. This network decentralizes the task of marketing products to the road-head making it more efficient. Village traders have valuable local knowledge of sources. They often have close relations with collectors and have control over performing marketing functions and hence increase the volume of trade and collection. These traders mostly purchase the NTFP material in weekly markets of the area.

10. Drawback of Private Traders' Network

1. In case of non-nationalized NTFPs the private petty traders operating at village level keep their dominance/monopoly on the market, hence they heavily exploit the tribal people. They have attained enough power to buy the panchayat representatives and try to coerce the local administration and polity in their favour. In turn the tribal poor suffer.
2. Quite often the trader's mischiefs, rob, molest and exploit the tribal collectors whose livelihood solely depends on the NTFPs. Total business runs unfair and in monopolistic manner. Tribes grossly lack the bargaining power and capacities to handle the affairs.

11. What does government say about tribal rights over forest products?

Chhattisgarh has a strong mineral base, forests and a large tribal population. As a result there are many conflicts over land use and access to natural resources. The Forest Rights Act 2006 has given legal space for tribal communities to access their resources. Chhattisgarh has achieved good numbers in the implementation of individual and forest rights. However, there are problems in the qualitative implementation of the rights and these needs to be addressed. On Gandhi Jayanti, Mongabay-India looks at the status of implementation of indigenous people's rights in Chhattisgarh. As per the Provisions of Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (PESA) the state government has endowed ownership rights of NTFPs on panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) especially gram Sabha. The ownership rights are in consonance with the following principles:

- a) Harvesting of minor forest produce will be done on non-destructive basis.
- b) The members of the Gram Sabhas will be free to collect minor forest produce for their own consumption.
- c) The manner, frequency and intensity of minor forest produce collection for any use other than *bona fide* domestic use by the members of the Gram Sabhas will be in accordance with the prescription plan prepared by Zila Panchayat in conformity with the guidelines as may be notified from time to time.

Besides the remunerative wages paid to the forest produce collectors, the net profit from the trade of nationalized non-wood forest produce are being shared among the stakeholders (primary collectors) on an equitable basis. Under the existing system of tendu leaves (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) trade, the net income generated from the

collection and trade is distributed among the tribal's in following proportion:

- a) 70% to the primary collectors as incentive wages.
- b) 5% for the development of non-wood forest produce resources and regeneration of forests.
- c) Balance 15% is utilized for infrastructure development in the Society area.
- d) The Promise and Performance Report prepared in 2016 by the Community Forest Rights Learning and Advocacy Group states: "One of the challenges with community forest right titles in Chhattisgarh is that they have been issued in the name of JFM committee and not gram sabha (people's representative body in the villages). Also, the titles are issued selectively for grazing, NTFP collection or firewood collection under the condition to follow the work plan of the forest department, which is in direct violation with the spirit of the law."

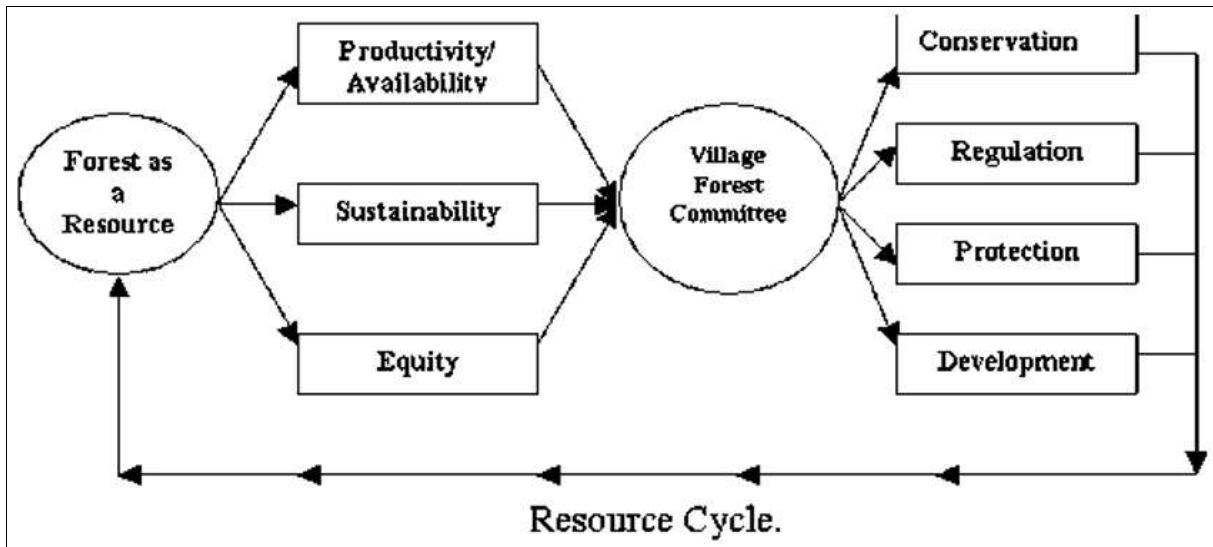
The tribal areas of Chhattisgarh whose community forest rights have been recognised selectively, have started asserting their rights over community forest resource management by formation of management committees (CFRMC) under the Rule 4 (e) of the Forest Rights Rules, 2008 with the support of local organisations which are further supported by Oxfam India working in Chhattisgarh.

12. Conclusion

The marketing of NTFPs is most challenging because the important marketing elements are dissemination of product and price information; creation of local benefit sharing institutions to market the produce; and creation of marketing institutions at different levels. Village traders and middlemen appear to be performing exploitative role in marketing produce based on NTFPs. However, the scope for cooperative institutional arrangements to share the costs and benefits of direct marketing; to develop a system of regular and up-to-date market information; to ease access to credit and technology; to help local producers organize. According to Govt. of Chhattisgarh, the NTFP potential in the state is not fully harnessed because of poor public investments, unsatisfactory infrastructure, lack of scientific inputs and undeveloped market facilities. It is because of such gigantic devastation that there is widespread demand for imposing a ban on tree felling. There are reported to be about 500 central and state acts of legislation relating to environmental issues. Some fundamental changes have been proposed in the national forest policy. Thus the focus seems to be on the conservation of nature, which in turn implies increasing restrictions on the local people. The past experience shows that the forest policy seeks to protect forest wealth from forest dwellers, not from the unscrupulous contractors. In estimating the loss caused by the disturbance of the ecosystem, the dangers posed to the lives and economy of forest dwellers by floods and landslides are ignored. The afforestation program gives top priority to quick-growing species that can be used as raw material for forest-based industries. Even ecological considerations are often overlooked. On the other hand, the movements by the forest dwellers - Chipko, Bhoomi Sena, Silent Valley Movement, and Jharkhand Movement - are insisting on a planned strategy incorporating the needs of the local ecology, local economy and the national interests. Only a people-oriented

forest policy and development strategy will be able to bring the forest dwellers in the mainstream of national life without adversely affecting the ecosystem. In the successive development programs for the forest regions, top priority is accorded to the development of transport and

communication facilities so that education, health, land colonization, housing, development of horticulture, animal husbandry and cooperative schemes could be initiated in the region, bringing the forest dwellers into the mainstream of nation development.



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