

# LIFE IN THE WOODS: An Emotional Note from the Heart of Kutia Kondhs of Kandhamal District of Odisha

*Dr. Sushree Sangita Mohanty*

*Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology,  
KISS Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha*

## **Abstract**

*Most of the forest dwellers in India in general and Odisha in particular lead a toilsome, materially poor spartan life, in spite of multiple natural resources in abundance along with strong community ties, even under difficult and adverse circumstances. Subsistence livelihood pattern of these forest dweller/ forest tribes are mainly based on shifting cultivation and some practice sedentary agriculture in forest regions, supplemented by hunting, foraging and pastoral activities simultaneously, exploiting three main natural resources i.e. land, forest and animals. However, when any problem arises for their livelihood, these communities exercise all possible precautions for the conservation of the biodiversity, or else it could pose a serious threat to their survival and continuity. Even though, in the contemporary world, tribal culture is changing rapidly, research says that the rate of deforestation in indigenous and tribal territories are significantly lower. (FAO, 2021). The FAO report says that, tribal areas in the Amazon Basin lost an average of 0.17 per cent of carbon stored in their forests each year between 2003 and 2016, due to deforestation and forest degradation, in contrast, forests outside the tribal territory and protected areas lost 0.53 per cent each year, which is 0.36 per cent more than tribal territories. This shows the tribal people follow some management practice which directly and indirectly sustaining their ecosystem. Therefore, the present paper tries to enquire into the tradition symbiotic relationship between forest tribes and its ecosystem, in order to understand their attitude towards the environment and how their culture, beliefs and practices are geared to maintain a balance between human and ecological needs. In broader sense, it is intended to explore man-nature relationship, which most often exists in their thought process and it also provides an understanding of how modern and developmental aspects value the natural environment and to assess in what ways they are likely to participate in and engage with their natural environment.*

**Keywords:** *Kutia Kondh, Life in Wood, Kandhamal, Tribe, PVTG, Odisha, Ethnography*

## **Introduction**

This study is the outcome of an ethnographic research conducted during January 2020 on the Kutia Kondhs of Kandhamal district of Odisha. Kutia Kondh is one of the PVTGs of Odisha. The majority of Kutia Kondh inhabit the south-eastern part of the Kandhamal district, while some communities have settled in the Kalahandi district near the western boundary of Kandhamal District and also in the Koraput District, south and south-west of Kandhamal. The research work was conducted amongst

the Kutia Kondh residing in and around Belghar Gram Panchayat of Tumudibandha block, Balliguda sub-division, Kandhamal district.

Love for nature is a unique characteristic of Kutia Kondhs and their association with it is since time immemorial. Their association with the forest has given birth to their myths and legends, ideas of evolution and a specific identity that they are a forest dwelling community. (Jena, 2006) Their love for the nature and the forests are reflected in their cultural traditions, religion and in their

social organizations which still function as a legacy of the past. Forest as a part of the nature has cultivated in them the religious ideas, moral values (expressed in their myths and sentiments) and has designed their pattern of life and living in concentric forest-clad patches, hills and mountains. Their ideas of living inside the forests and their love of forest as a part of the nature, it can be elucidated as follows: the community lives in the peaceful tranquility of the forest, maintaining a life of no worries, finds its place in between the supernatural power (*Penu -God*) at the top and the bottom, has a myth of origin from forest and has preserved the contact with forests *vis-a-vis* nature since primordial times till today. The Kutia Kondhs are accustomed to a style of living where they feel that forest is closely intertwined with them and their culture is attuned to it.

Since long Kutia Kondhs have been occupying the forested region. Though they have lived in isolated for long, they are living in harmony with forests and drawing their sustenance largely from forests. Their life is connected in one way or the other to the forests right from the birth to death. Forest has been the last succor to them in times of distress like famine, natural calamities etc. It has been pointed traditional requirements however insignificant they may appear to others. Forest has been providing all their necessities. For a long period in history, they subsisted with reasonable standard of health and abode mainly because the forest provides them with food, clothing, shelter, medicines etc. No forces either natural or man-made disturbed them in their forest dwelling. In their economic life, forest has been occupying the central position. A change in forests or anything that affected the forest, affected their life directly or indirectly. Forest represented and also represents for them a whole way of life, a home, a culture, a worship, food income and everything. (Patnaik and Daspatnaik, 1982).

Kutia Kondhs cultural and social life is closely interlinked with their forest habitat which regarded as a deity on whose blessings the tribe survives. Not only are they familiar with a number of biological species around them, but also they possess lots of understanding of ecological inter-relationship of the various components of forests. They have appropriate knowledge and skills of gathering minor forest produces from the forests.

Kutia Kondhs depends upon forests for fuel-wood, charcoal, poles and logs, gums, resins and oil, carpentry and crafts, medicines, mushrooms, wildlife leaves... etc. which they use for themselves or dispose them in markets for cash. This gives a good benefit to them in consideration to jobs and other sources of incomes. For household needs they get fuel wood and charcoal, building materials, poles, fodder and forage, fruits,

nuts, honey and materials for thatching and weaving, medicines... etc. On environmental considerations they derive benefits from forest which provides fertile soil for cultivation and a better yield, water resources, shade, protection from wind and rain. Thus, they acquire a lot of benefits from forests in various ways. They are so accustomed to these benefits that they cannot live without it. To get benefit from the forest, not only they able bodies' workers but also the old infirm as well as children frequent it as a part of their daily routine. (Jena, *et al*, 2006)

Their sentimental attachment with the forest world impels them to regard it as God's gift. Their folklore, oral traditions have portrayed their relationship with forest. Many of their rights and rituals, festivals are done in forests which is an indication of their cultural attachment. In such rituals many forest products are used in one or other. Many plants, roots, leaves, flowers, climbers, grasses needed in performance of their magico-religious rites, are procured from it. In their cultural traditions they pay grate reverence to trees which are considered as representation of godly beings or symbols of gods or as abode of gods and goddesses. Those trees from a greater part of their indigenous forests.

Their indigenous knowledge is shaped from the experiences they gather from forests and natural phenomena. This indigenous knowledge has enabled them to be unique among the indigenous communities. Kutia Kondhs believe in a give and take relationship with the forest. On material grounds, they feel, they cannot give anything to the forests. They believe in both i.e., 'live and let live' for forests that are virgin in terms of plants, trees and animals and 'live and let live' for forests that are heavily exploited. This is better marked from their sacred feelings attached to the forests. Great number of forests and hills constituted their sacred geography with specific godly attributes to each of their parts. Living amidst the forests is their interest which has led them to regard it as sacred forests, sacred hills and sacred groves etc.

The symbiotic relationship to the Kutia Kondhs with forests needs a little elucidation here. On one hand, the forest supports the tribal people and on the other, the Kutia Kondhs preserve and consume the forests by use of their indigenous knowledge and traditional processes and feelings. This is their feelings since the day Kutia Kondhs came into being. They regard the forest as their; they regard lands as the successors of forests in terms of resource and for all these benefits they accumulate from forests the immediate sustenance of their lives, they act and do for its preservation and conservation.

### Life in The Woods: The Social Context of Discourse

Kutia Kondhs know of the forest as a place of work, where they make clearings to shape it into a home, a village settlement. They are socialized in casteless society which gives freedom to know, test, touch, smell, see and hear all forest products. The non-tribal dwellers of plains know the forest as a reservoir of natural renewable resources and not as home (Patnaik & Daspatnaik, 1982).

In areas where the Kutia Kondhs traditions of work such as, of food collection, of shifting cultivation and of horticulture are alive and active, their method specifies minimum requirement, of time, space, materials, work relations and knowledge for it and leads them to be counterproductive by the nature of work. Their social life in relation to the forests remain in a way far from a crisis when they experience a sense of social relation with the forest through work patterns and deduce their constructive thoughts for a good and desirable life and perfect well-being. However, their concept of well-being and to feel easy with the forests, with a relation of mutual aid to each other. Their respective experiences about their well-being and associations with forest is commensurate with the question of preservation and conservation. This notion of their well-being, work, rest and leisure in relation to forests shape their respective discourse of the phenomenon of preservation and conservation. Therefore, their sense of well-being is specific to their forest living spaces. Accordingly, Kutia Kondhs believes their relation with forests is shaped appropriately with regard to time, place and action. This has two aspects. Firstly, specific situations and events spell out their specific relation with forests and secondly, a situation may provoke to shape a dealing with forests. But in either case the Kutia Kondhs use their full intent intellect to shape the situation to go in favour of them and the forest, for their well-being is determined with that.

About their well-being, Kutia Kondhs are sensitive to the modes of doing and thinking which they feel is appropriate in consideration to time, situation and the subjects, forests or themselves. Their quest is to accomplish peace and wellbeing which is always derived from the wise mode of interaction. Therefore, the Kutia Kondhs continue to live in the manner they are familiar with and this they think is the most appropriate behavior and response to their notion of well-being. They are reluctant to live a life in the manner the outsiders and non-tribals live. They are aware of the changes the government attempts to bring about. They may be uprooted from their natural habitat and the forests will not be availed to them to continue to earn a livelihood. In these conditions the Kutia Kondhs feel that their well-being and notion of good and desirable life in the forest is endangered.

Time and again the Kutia Kondhs have reiterated their desire to continue their practice of living in forest. They have expressed this view with the assertion that they do not wish to abandon the place of their dwellings and their practice with the forest for a livelihood. For, Kutia Kondhs believe that their well-being lies in that which they do not want to lose. This is not merely their sentimental attachment to their place of origin. On the contrary, it is the most practical work to do. This response is based on the view that one must continue to do what one knows best. For, the master of art always acts with a constructive thought. (Behura & Sahu, 1980, p. 14) They know how ill-equipped they are to successfully earn a sustainable livelihood in the market and at the same time they are aware of how ill-equipped the government is to prepare them for participation in modes of living outside the forest. Lack of an ensured alternate livelihood hence becomes the crux of the problems.

The Kutia Kondh's life in forest has been confronted with a large number of problems. They have developed a complex that they are no more regarded as a forest dwelling community by others. A very old Kutia Kondha man of Dahabali village Dati Majhi by name may be taken here as an example. In his everyday life he used to go out from his home after having food watch the forests and his *bagada* (clear patch of forest for cultivation) some distance away from his home. There was a large rock on which he sits the whole day. He talks to nobody, likes to keep quite. He sits in deep contemplation and thinks on his own. He was consulted many times during the investigations. He is regarded as a resource person about Kutia Kondh's traditional way of living. But it was quite hard to get a response to a question. But he took a great interest one day to divulge all his feelings when he was asked about what pleasure he gets by sitting on the rock and looking towards the forests the whole day. His emotion burst out. He became emotional and responded to the question in *Kui* language, translation of which is given here.

*"What I get from here is not known to me exactly. But I find this place more than anything else in my known world. Since my boyhood I am sitting on his particular place, watching the forests, cattle, streams flowing down from the rock. But at present I feel as if the place is calling me all the time. Because I have already reached the time (age) to leave my friends and relatives. I can't watch the forests, this enchanting landscape and have the pleasure anymore. Therefore, I am spending most of my time here. For, once I am out of life would mean being out of forests also. The same thing happens to me at present. I feel, if I am out of forest, I will be out of life too".*

This can say to be an emotional outburst of the man. But it is a fact, and a reality. There is a secret charm which Kutia Kondhs get out of forests. They admit that throughout

their whole life they have got everything from the forest. Forest will live forever but they will not live. The truth is that 'life is mortal'. They fell forest is standing there only to cater to the needs of the Kutia Kondhs and to preserve their lives.

Kutia Kondhs believe that their society will exist, with its traditional structure, configuration, culture, beliefs and ideas. This they consider from many angles of their socialization with the forest world. They want to live as part of the forest with all their good will for its preservation and conservation. The point at which the Kutia Kondhs halt to give explanation about their life in forest in the very social context is, 'we want to live, not exist'. This is the very perception of Kutia Kondhs about their life in forest. There lies their life, their notion of well-being and feeling of long eternal continuity of the race.

### Life in the Woods: Bilingual Discourse

The Kutia Kondhs are amidst a technological development. To be able to continue to live in the forest in the face of technological changes, they are required to know and learn *Odia* language which is the medium of speech in the exterior of their territory. They have been introduced over a period of several years to a process of modern technology. Their acquaintance with its tradition has been through a variety of developmental programmes undertaken by the government and non-governmental agencies. The main thrust of these programmes is to persuade the *Kuianka* to abandon shifting cultivation and to participate in the wider differentiated and alien market. The people whom they meet in these contexts speak *Odia* and few of them attempt to learn *Kui*. (Rath, 2006) To get benefit from the process of technological changes the Kutia Kondhs make efforts to learn *Odia*. At the same time, they wish to continue their traditional practice of cultivation. This is the transitional point from where the bilingual discourses take place.

In *Kui* and *Odia* the tradition of knowledge of the world and of nodes of living are different. They observe the world view, the speech and perceive different modes of seeing, thinking and living. In the market place these languages respond to a discourse. The main questions are:

- In what way is the forest a living space in which man, plant, animal are parts of one social order?
- What is that environment in which the idea or notion of open space is accessible to all living beings?

These are the questions to determine and evaluate the social and cultural values in relation to their environment.

These questions are important because they are generated from Kutia Kondhs experience in the modern market place. The discourse on the modern environmental crisis and the developmental programmes oriented to compensate the crisis as far as practicable, their experience raises the question, whether mode of dealing with these crisis need to consider the principles that underlay the practices of 'conquest of nature by science' are also valid for being present in this world in a way which ensures all living beings access to 'open space' for existence.

In the context of a bilingual discourse, the language of a stronger culture absorbs the language of the weaker one showing that when one language becomes important the process of cultural exchange and learning come to a standstill. (Diaz, 2014) The situation in the market place does not allow scope for exchange.

*Kuianka* (the kutia kondh community) teaches *Kui* (Kutia Kondh's language) in two steps. First in it explains the particular and general aspects of its mode of living. Then these aspects are explained in detailed using the *Kui* language via folk lore and myths. From them analogies and metaphors become accessible for a detailed enquiry. In Kutia Kondhs describe the forest as their living space and their tradition of living. *Odia* in contrast is a language of the inhabitants living outside the forest. The sense of dwelling in the forest is understood by them in contrast to modes of living known to forest dwellers. While *Kui* is contemplative of the living space of Kutia Kondhs, *Odia* is not. For the Kutia Kondhs, *Kui* is carrying various aspects of their living space, which is not present in *Odia* language. For them *Kui* presumes a sense of well-being specific to their forest living spaces.

*Odia* is an instrument to draw the Kutia Kondhs into developmental programs and consequently into the unfamiliar living world of the market and of people living outside the forest. A Kutia Kondh's observation is not only words and pronunciations from *Odia* language but also its infiltration into *Kui* language. Several people in recent times have begun to use *Kui* as an instrument to get into the social discourse of development and of the market.

The influence that *Odia* has over *Kui* is an indication of change in the living circumstances of the Kutia Kondhs. Kutia Kondhs consider the importance of *Odia* the question is not to preserve the purity of *Kui*. It is the preservation of tradition of songs and folklore which equip them to live in the new changing circumstances.

Preservation here is understood as a way of living in changing circumstances so that it contributes to the well-being of Kutia Kondhs. Their tradition of living in a forest from this standpoint is more than a collection of songs,

folklores and other oral traditions. Preservation, viewed from this perspective is a practical mode which seeks to accomplish appropriately the notion of well-being and life in the forest. Language preserves successes in including a learning of different ways to know, understand and accomplish appropriate acts. In the social context the life situation created for the Kutia Kondhs offer their contact with the people who live outside the forest, customary standards of judging appropriateness are progressively exposed. The emergent of social discourse, from the bilingual discourse is shaped by their facility to speak *Odia* and *Kui*. Within this discourse appropriateness seeks to preserve their well-being as understood by them.

In the past decades, several attempts have been made to make the Kutia Kondhs give up shifting cultivation as a mode of earning livelihood. Programmes have been implemented such as the Orissa Soil Conservation Act, 1965 to induce them to being production for the market. Shifting cultivation dissemination programme has been prepared to upgrade forest. All these efforts have failed either to make the Kutia Kondhs give up shifting cultivation or to ensure their participation in the market. The result of these failures is that the Kutia Kondhs are adjudged as irrational people who do not understand that their well-being is not in the continuation of shifting cultivation nor is it in their living in forest. Irrespective of any criticism, the Kutia Kondhs continue to lead their lives in the manner they are familiar with and this they think is the most appropriate response. They are reluctant to share their way of life because they believe that to share a way of life is also to share the language with which it is shaped. And to share a language is not merely exchange of speech, but it is also a sharing of ideas, views, emotions and concern for each other's well-being. At the same time, they are aware that the changes which the government want to bring about may overtake their lives. They may be uprooted and that the forest will not be available to them to continue to earn a livelihood. Time and again the Kutia Kondhs have reiterated their desire to continue their practice of living in forest. They have expressed their views that they do not wish to abandon the place of their dwelling and their practice of shifting cultivation.

The Kutia Kondhs have given their rational thought and arguments in favor of their living in the forest. They have a strong conviction that their living essence is preserved in the forests. They are a part of it. They shaped their idea of well-being with regard to their dependence on the forests. Their instrumental realities have however, been found on the basis of which the Kutia Kondhs opine that their well-being will not be hampered till they are in the forest where the 'anima' (soul & mind) of their well-being is preserved. They hold that they maintain a mode of interdependence with the forests.

The idea arises if the anima of the well-being of the Kutia Kondhs are preserved in the forest, how do they perceive the 'anima' of well-being of the forest? This becomes a main query which has basis on the Kutia Kondhs strong conviction that the forest is living for them and they are living for the forests. They admit that they have both constructive and destructive dependence on the forests. They believe in: 'live and let live' and 'let live and live'. In this circumstance the enquiry of the 'anima' of the well-being of the forest becomes the main quest. For, without that it cannot be justified that the Kutia Kondhs have a constructive dependence on the forests and take care to keep the forest alive for the sake of their long-term sustenance. This is however, associated with the Kutia Kondh's ideas of preservation and conservation. They hold that they are preserved, and their culture and language are preserved by the forest. The enquiry is thus enviable to exactly evaluate the tradition of work, ideas, values, appropriateness of thought and need for the preservation and conservation of their life sustaining ethos and resource base the forests. And this becomes the last quest where their notion of well-being and their perception of well-being of the forest world coincide.

#### **Life in the Woods: Aspects of Preservation and Conservation**

Kutia Kondhs are as much a part of forests as forests are a part of Kutia Kondhs. The relation to non-human nature, which here refers to plants, trees and animals can be ordered differently. The responsibility of self-preservation, therefore is simultaneously a responsibility of preservation of forests both in human and non-human beings.

The Kutias attribute that the forest has a self-generation of 'anima'. In their perception self-regeneration is the continuous process of coming into being of the mysterious aspects of nature. From self-regeneration originates knowledge of plants, food, medicine, witchcraft and of the universe. Further originates the necessity to maintain boundaries between human and non-human nature. Since both are animated by systems of self-perpetuation they tend to intrude into each other's boundary. The forest is capable of dissolving human settlement and man is capable of cutting down forests.

There is no such visible step which Kutia Kondhs adopt for the preservation and conservation of forests. Only notion they have about this aspect is embedded in their social processes, religious performances and other cultural traditions that depend upon and grew from the forest world. Further, their indigenous knowledge, their oral tradition, myths, legends, songs, their tradition of work, ethos and sentiments are shaped with their long association with the forest world from which their notion

of their preservation and the conservation can be spelt out. The Kutia Kondh's work pattern is both conservative and preservative, as well as constructive and destructive dependences observed. But in the overall phenomenon, it is their cultural tradition that keeps up an ethical relation with the forests which is their major aspect of conservation and preservation. (Samantray, 2013)

For the Kutia Kondhs, preservation and conservation practice cannot be sequentially arranged in words, but can be seen through the actions pertaining to the subject. After a thorough study of the social and cultural life of the tribe from many angles: from both anthropological and sociological enquiries and ethno-botanical enquiries, we have come across certain points which can be claimed to be the notion of preservation and conservation.

In a forest both human and non-human living beings find place. The ethnography of plants that has been dealt with in the description of plants in the tribe's folklore is an index of the tribes familiarity and attachments to ethos and sentiments to such plants. It is in this ethnography, useful information about preservation and conservation of plants are recorded. Plants and trees are not only considered on the frame work of ecology and economy but also, they have multiple attachment to the plant world around them. The protection accorded many plants by this tribe viz: Bamboo (*Arundo donax*), *Siali* (*Bauhinia vahlii*), *Semul* (*Bombax ceiba*), *Sunari* (*Cassia fistula*), *Salap* (*Caryota urens*), *Amla* (*Embllica officinalis*), *Akanbindi* (*Cissamplelos pereria*), *Daman* (*Grewia tiliaefolia*), *Mahua* (*Madhuk longifoha*), *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*), *Asan* (*Terminalia tomentosa*) and many other plant species is well known. There are also instances of entire biological communities such as all aquatic communities on a rock, pool and plant life in patches of forest receiving protection because of their associations with a deity. Their sacred feelings of the tribe towards plants and trees, which are regarded as a symbol of a deity, an abode of a deity, a representation of the deity. As a phenomenon, by staying around forests and plant world, they have developed an intimate relationship, so to say a symbiotic relationship with the plant world which leads to the feeling of a continuous naturally co-operative process in between the tribe and the plant world a notion of their preservation and conservation of plants and trees.

The tradition of maintaining sacred groves as a part of village social life is one of the most valuable legacies which originates essentially from the forest dweller's disposition and practice of nature conservation. In the sacred groves are preserved the climax type of vegetation completely immune to human interference. Many a number of taboos are associated with those sacred groves. The Kutia Kondhs are not out of such a tradition. They

have a large set of ideas in this regard that is embedded in the sacred geography of the Kutia Kondhs. They have taboos, myths, legends associated with parts of forests, hills, groves, graveyard etc. Apart from preservation of rare and endemic species, the sacred groves also serve the function of preservation of biological diversity of flora. From the religious representations of Kutia Kondhs associated with their sacred geography, some ideas about their modes of preservation and conservation of the forest world can be extracted. For the Kutia Kondhs the middle ground extended the canopy and the space below the earth is occupied by air, water, mud, soil and fire respectively. The middle ground is filled with 'anima' the living principles present in all beings and the anima is mobilized in a naturally co-operative way for of all the beings. Forests have got in place in their folklores which develop a fear complex in the Kutia Kondhs not to undertake destructive activities more than the normal.

Forests are cut, cleared for settlement sites. Associated with the settlement are many culture feelings. The forest is regarded as a deity who looks after the people in the settlement. Before a settlement is set, permission from the deity of that part of the forest is sought. Then the patch is cleared and settlement is made. Side by side the settlement setting the Kutia Kondhs believe the presence of deities in and out the settlement. With complex of sacredness and fear of such deities, they worship the forests and deity. This is the secret of the notion of preservation and conservation. They pose themselves as people of an agricultural society. Being mostly adapted to shifting cultivation on hill lands they regard the gods as the owners of the hill lands. Hence before cutting of a forest for shifting cultivation they seek the permission of the god who is held to be the authority of that region.

The aspects of preservation and conservation of forests are concealed in the whole go of life of the Kutia Kondhs in association with the forest. The notion is reflected in all aspects of their culture and traditions that have grown with time in relations to forests.

### **Life In Forest: Keeps its Continuity**

The life in the forest of Kutia Kondhs is connected with three main things- the culture, the subsistence crops and the emotional attachment of the tribe to the forest. Since time immemorial this continuity of life in forests is maintained. The life the tribe calls '*Jella*' and the well-being as '*Nehijell*' gives many philosophical understandings which the tribe has developed in course of time. The cultural set up of the tribe that tells of the forests and the nature in all aspects, has been designed in a manner to suit the maintenance of Kutia Kondhs' life system in relation to the forests.

The forests have contributed to the lives of the tribals substantially through food, clothing, shelter, medicine

and many other material requirements. In an emotional way it can be said that the forest has supplied 'Jella' i.e. the life force to the Kutia Kondhs which have contributed to the 'Nehijella' i.e. well-being of themselves. This is maintained through multifaceted dependence and interdependence between the tribe and the forests. They have both constructive and destructive dependence on the forests. The shifting cultivation is an example of destructive dependence of the tribe on the forests. But it is the main source of earning a livelihood of this tribe. They also take care of the forest wealth, preserved and conserves by all possible means. The life in the forest has by now confronted with great numbers of problems and crisis originated from such problems. This has put the tribe in a transition. The tribe through regarded as a forest resource at their will and need. Yet that tribe has not abandoned its practice of shifting cultivation. They want to live with it. In the absence of sufficient plain lands for cultivation, they can only think of the hill slopes to continue shifting cultivation which has been named at forest degradation practice. They are conscious of the crisis which are surmounting day by day. Obviously, the problem knocks at their door and it is time for them to think for the knowledge, for the life in this sweet forest remembering their line of the *Kui Gaani*.

*Edu itere budhi itere*

*Inisatisi adine Inisatisi ranjine.*

Means life goes on.....

## Conclusion

Thus, for Kutia Kondh, physical environment/forest seems to be meaningful not as a concept or as an abstract idea, but as the real physical environment. The forest that they are surrounded by and which they appropriate in their everyday life; they refer to it as our physical environment. When relating to their physical environment by acting, interpreting, talking, they relate to it as a bundle of significations. Every single practice is implicitly or explicitly over determined by other meanings. The social construction of physical environment is very important, as it helps to understand the meaning of physical environment and

how people are interacting with physical environment. The physical environment is not determined by its physical characteristics like density of the tree cover, the species represented, the geological substrate etc...rather in addition to these physical constrains, people fill the physical environment with meaning which affect where cattle are allow to graze, which tree are cut for firewood, which land is cleared for agriculture or what fruits, leaves and roots are collected as medicine or food. This shows, they have established a direct and intimate relationship with the physical environment around them for subsistence. Man-nature relationships in such societies are explicitly comprehensible of every aspect of human living. This relationship is the nucleus of their culture. And their culture plays as a mediator between human behaviour and their respective physical environment. Therefore, culture emerges as a balancing system in ensuring survival and continuity of humankind.

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