



**INDIAN SOCIAL INSTITUTE**  
Center for Research, Training and  
Action for Social and Economic  
Development and Human Rights

# SUBALTERNS

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## Editorial

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

The tribal communities constitute 8.6% of the total population of India, i.e., about 10 crore people, which is bigger than many nations of the world. But, unfortunately, this huge population of the country is largely at the bottom of the development pyramid, even after 75 years of India's independence. It is in this context that we have to reflect about the sustainability of their lifestyle.

Central India is home to about 80% of the tribal communities in the country. The government has constituted Scheduled Tribe districts. At present there are 257 such districts. Out of these, 230 districts (about 90%) are located in the forest areas or in the hilly areas which are usually dry, with little access to water for farming as well as human needs. As a result, they are deprived of sanitation, nutrition, access to drinking water. Their children are also deprived of proper education as they often live in remote hill tops, or deep forests or in locations not connected with proper roads for transportation, in case they want to send their children to school, which are often located far away

from their dwelling places.

The tribal areas also face a lot of disturbances and conflicts, either due to internal causes or due to the efforts of some business groups to occupy their land for mining purposes. The governments, both the Union and State levels are hardly able to control the encroachments of outside agencies, who take all possible steps to occupy the traditional abodes of the tribals, motivated by their desire for profit-making. Consequently, the many government welfare schemes and policies are not being implemented in these areas, resulting in distress and deprivations.

Historically, the indigenous communities have been pushed farther and farther away from the alluvial plains and fertile river basins of India into the harshest ecological regions of the country -- hills, forests, and drylands. Thus, today there seems to be a conflict between the welfare of the indigenous people whose dwelling places or mostly in the forests and the need for environmental protection. The National Forest Policy of 1988 recognized for the first time the

domestic requirements of the local people (indigenous people). This policy clearly highlighted the need for safeguarding the customary rights of the indigenous people and also associated the Adivasis in the protection of forests. While this movement towards a people-oriented policy is a welcome development, it has remained an unrealized policy, mainly because the indigenous people and their approach to life were not taken into consideration. The policy was evolved without giving a chance to the indigenous people to express their point of view.

The only solution to ensure a sustainable lifestyle and development for the indigenous people is to have a policy-making methodology that will include the active participation of the affected people, in this case, the indigenous people. If this approach is adopted, the indigenous people will be in a position to bring out their problem before the policy-makers and the policy-makers in turn can take steps to ensure their protection while formulating any policy. This is the only way to ensure and promote their sustainable lifestyle. □

**Sebasti L. Raj**

## CHALLENGES TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND THEIR SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

Lancy Lobo

Anthropocene has come as a challenge to indigenous people and their sustainable lifestyle. The term 'Anthropocene' is defined as relating to or denoting the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment. Some geologists argue that the Anthropocene Epoch began with the Industrial Revolution.

Since anthropologists studied differing economics and societies of the past, they claimed that primitive man belonged to the food gathering and hunting. Man survived by collecting fruits, and hunted for roots, animals and birds. Then he began to tame animals which gave rise to a pastoral economy. This economy was followed by the agricultural economy and finally we had the industrial economy.

It has been affirmed that prior to the industrial revolution there was sustainable lifestyle but technological inventions and interventions have ruined this sustainable lifestyle. Anthropocene has indeed caused the over-exploitation of the environment thereby destroying eco-systems and ecology creating a crisis in climate change. Technology coupled with market forces with the mediation of the State have supported this trajectory of deterioration of the environment thereby creating a crisis in sustainable development.

Concretely, the tribals (Adivasis) in the past who lived in remote areas following a sustainable lifestyle have come heavily under the influence and the forces of technology and the market. For example, organic

cultivation was practiced which has now given way to chemical fertilizers and pesticides. One finds that they grow a second crop meant largely for the market by using copious amounts of water through water pumps and pipes. For instance, in Chikalpada of Songadh in the Tapi district of Gujarat, the tribals grow Lady Fingers (bhendi) or okra of the Monsanto variety, the plants are small and require chemical fertilisers and pesticides, with intense labour. The work is hard, as the labourers have to bend over the plants, wear protective clothes and gloves. After harvesting the vegetable every third day, they have to sort these according to size and quality, finally take the crop into town to sell to the wholesaler. Then the wholesalers transport these to large towns and cities where the prices are good.

The irony is that the tribals would never consume this vegetable as they are chemically treated by, they grow these organically in their small plots of land. The requirement to cultivate quick growing crops is because the need for cash traps them into this. However, they know that vegetables grown with chemical fertilisers and pesticides are not good for health. But for the market it is alright.

When once they ploughed the land with bullocks, they now use tractors. Moreover, the absence of bullocks has caused a crisis in obtaining organic manure from their dung for use in agriculture. However, to use the tractor, one needs money and so also to buy chemical fertilisers. For this they require money and hence they have to see how they can make more money.

It was observed that dairy farming was not popular with the tribals in Gujarat. However, it has picked up substantially as it provides cash for the rising needs of the tribals. They may not consume the milk they produce as they supply it to the dairy cooperatives which give them ready cash. This cash is spent on modern eatables and foods sold in by the markets which may not be substantial.

Once I was attending a meeting addressed by a medical officer of the Malaria Eradication Department in a tribal area. He was speaking about impregnated mosquito nets (soaked with chemicals that repel mosquitoes) and marketing the idea that they buy one for the family. As he was speaking an old man interrupted him and asked if the officer has a mosquito net for his buffaloes. The buffaloes provided milk and in lean periods helped provide livelihood for the family. The old man did not worry about anthropile mosquitoes but more about zoophile ones which bit his buffaloes and adversely affected milk production, thereby causing less monetary returns.

A number of people romanticise that the tribals have lived a sustainable life in the past. But this 'sustainability' is increasingly becoming impossible. The government also promotes a number of schemes which go counter to the life style of the tribals but these schemes are very enticing. Romanticising about the Tribals and their sustainable lifestyle is no longer relevant as they have been drawn into the vortex of the market forces. And these market forces are increasingly encroaching into remote tribal areas. □

## INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES ONE HEALTH ANALYSIS

Shreya Jessica Dhan

The concept is supported internationally through the World Health Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health, and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations Tripartite Alliance that promotes the concept of One Health as the optimal method of preventing and controlling emerging and endemic zoonotic diseases. This interdisciplinary approach has been noted as an effective way of addressing health threats at the human-animal-environment interface and is the best way of preventing and responding to future zoonotic outbreaks and pandemics. This holistic way of thinking continued into the nineteenth century with Rudolf Virchow stating that 'between animal and human medicine there is no dividing line – nor should there be'. In the 1980s 'One Medicine', which focused on bringing together the commonalities between animal and human medicine, was conceptualized by Calvin Schwabe. In the early 2000s, following multiple zoonotic outbreaks, this concept evolved to 'One Health' which refers to a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, at local, national, and global levels, to improve health for people, animals, and the environment.

The concept of 'One Health' can be traced back to indigenous societies and cultures that are thousands of years old. The concept of 'One Health' aligns with indigenous views encompassing a holistic view of health that recognizes traditional knowledge that links the health and wellbeing of animals, people, and the environment. This approach is suitable in indigenous community settings as it aligns with cultural and community contexts, and indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being. The One Health concept also considers health as more than the physical self, which is in line with the World Health Organization's

definition of health as 'a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease'. It defines One Health as an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and ecosystems are closely linked and interdependent.

Indigenous Peoples across the world are unified in their belief that the wellbeing of an individual is directly connected to the wellbeing of the land. However, with the arrival of colonial settlers and the forceful removal from their traditional territories, Indigenous ways of living, being, and knowing were affected. Further, globalization with modern-day state policies led to health inequities. With the increasing urbanization, it is more difficult to witness the effects of human activities on areas outside of the major urban spaces. This lack of insight is exceptionally accurate for the residents made up of Indigenous Peoples whose livelihoods continue to be impacted by climate change. Therefore, climate change policies should be implemented with a One Health approach that integrates ecological and environmental science. Indigenous inhabitants have historically relied on traditional means of food gathering as means of sustenance. Non-holistic interventions focus on downstream factors (e.g., easier access to less-nutritious, non-traditional foods) that cause food insecurity without taking climate change into account. These issues would be best addressed through a *One Health* approach, which prioritizes traditional knowledges through community consultation. Indigenous communities and nations have long acknowledged the interdependence of animals, humans, and the environment. Indigenous Peoples

are aware of the benefit that environmental health and human health play for each other.

There were few studies that addressed the intersection of Indigenous knowledge with *One Health*, such as discussions about how climate change is affecting Indigenous food systems and the ecosystem, as well as the state of vegetation and plant health used for traditional medicine. One Health framework can utilize the existing Indigenous traditions to promote a fundamentally positivist interpretation of health. But they ultimately apply methodological approaches drawn from western scientific methods which are anchored in a rather narrow vision of health where health is viewed as the absence of disease rather than holistically. *One Health* approach would be strengthened by incorporating and enhancing traditional Indigenous knowledge.

It is important to note, that there are existing studies which consider and use a *One Health* approach while incorporating Indigenous perspectives of health and wellbeing. *One Health* approach, is relevant in working in indigenous community contexts which is based on 'whole-of-society' approach and recognizes cultural knowledge (values the inclusion of local community members, and prioritizes benefiting indigenous peoples). However, these studies do not describe their approach as '*One Health*' and there are limited *One Health* studies that have been undertaken in indigenous communities globally. Therefore, it is even more important that we develop a comprehensive understanding that ties together Indigenous knowledges and concepts of health and wellbeing with a *One Health* approach. As a result, we will be able to better understand and meet the needs of indigenous peoples and communities. □

## TRIBAL TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*Arun Kumar Oraon*

In our country, 705 ethnic groups are officially recognized as Scheduled Tribes. The Scheduled Tribes of the country are referred to as tribals, which means indigenous people. The Indian Constitution has many laws and provisions that can protect the tribal people. The framers of the Constitution made a provision under the Fifth Schedule for the tribals living in Central India and the Sixth Schedule for some areas of the Northeast region of India so that the rights of the indigenous people to land and self-government could be recognized. Despite such provisions, no satisfactory work is visible in the tribal areas. Since Independence, the Government's attitude towards the tribals has been unhelpful. This dual attitude of the Government of India towards the indigenous people is visible in the United Nations platform. At the UN forum, the Government of India voted in favour of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which states that all Indians are indigenous after independence. Therefore, the Government of India does not consider the concept of 'indigenous peoples'. Consequently, UNDRIP rules do not apply in any exclusive way to the tribal people of India. Despite this, the present Government of Jharkhand State has declared that the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, celebrated on August 9 every year, as a State holiday. Such an initiative is a step towards officially recognizing the Indigenous Peoples.

Order 4.27 of the Integration of Curriculum, the subjects, skills and abilities required under the New Education Policy 2020 mentions that tribal knowledge should be scientifically adopted in the school curriculum wherever relevant to protect the future aspirations of India. Along with

this, the traditional knowledge system of the tribal people should be included in the school curriculum in mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, architecture, and medicine. The new curriculum gives place to agriculture, engineering, linguistics, literature, sports, and administration system. The new education policy should specifically include the medicinal practices of the tribals and their forest management system.

It is known that many countries have preserved and implemented the tradition of tribal knowledge. The Government of India is well aware of the impact of climate change. Nevertheless, it refrains from openly saying that its effects are beginning to be seen in the country. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, issued a notification on February 25, 2022, in this regard. It is commonly known as building management regulations 2022. The Act mentions several conditions relating to building construction. In the tribal village, ponds, big and small, are constructed mainly to conserve water along with trees and plants so that the level of water remains around. It can be seen prominently in the inhabited tribal villages.

At the same time, such substances that contaminate water should not be used. This process is done keeping in mind the coexistence of other people who can also use it, while there is a prevalent practice among the tribals regarding forest conservation. The tribal communities around the forest area use only dry wood and do not even cut down green trees to meet their needs. In response to one of the questions to the tribal people about whether they collect sal seeds, the response was that

if they pick up the sal seeds and sell them, the forest will end. Also, planting in any location cannot create a forest. That is why they do not do that. This knowledge is not prevalent in modern times; instead of improving the forest, we eliminate it. After that, we develop a forest in a place that suits our convenience, which can hardly be a substitute location for a better environment. Tribals get many types of medicines from the forest, which is known as naturopathy. These medicines have become a better market for the herbal company. During Covid-19, people drank "giloy" decoction to increase immunity. This process of naturopathy has been prevalent in the tribal society for quite a long time.

The government is implementing the tradition of tribal knowledge through the back door. But they do not want to give the credit directly to the tribals. It would be correct to say that the kind of traditional knowledge system already exists among the tribals. It also appears in their folk life. For example, with forest conservation, more attention is paid to land conservation. Despite the low yield, crops are planted in tribal areas without chemical fertilizers. At the same time, silt farming is still prevalent in most places. Due to this, the fertility of the land is maintained, and its erosion is reduced. In most tribal areas, some land is left to the community for public use. Here the community activities are carried out. The tribal community considers it important to have community property in place of individual property. Therefore, many such rules are followed in the customary laws, which are related to the philosophy of humanity. □

## ISI Recognized as SIRO by the Central Government

On June 26, 2023, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, was certified by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, as a Social and Industrial Research Organization (SIRO). This recognition by the Central Government gives a unique status to ISI, to carry out its research works, in different aspects of social and economic development. □

## REPORT OF THE LEGAL TRAINING PROGRAMME ON EMPOWERING WOMEN TO LEAD CHANGE: CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY RIGHTS (ENGLISH)

After a gap of three years due to the pandemic of Covid-19, we resumed our legal training programme which were regularly conducted at Indian Social Institute this year. The first legal training programme of 2023-2024 organized by JRDS with the resource team of CHRL was held from 4 -8 May 2023 at Indian Social Institute.

Although there were 12 persons registered for the English session of the Training Programme this year, due to some inconvenience only 6 participants attended the training programme on "Empowering Women to Lead Change: Constitutional and Statutory Rights".

The legal training programme was really a fruitful one. The participants, though less in number, were very participative and very enthusiastic to know in detail, all the laws related to women in India.



Fr. Ravi Sagar was the resource person for the entire session and he elaborated in simple ways the various legal provisions, so that the participants were able to understand all the important laws related to women in India. There were also input sessions from Ngshemla, Melki and Bibin John. On the last day of the programme Adv. Sneha Gill gave a session on

Domestic Violence Act.

The programme was concluded by distributing the certificate to the participants. The Executive Director of Indian Social Institute, Fr. Denzil Fernandes, addressed the participants and distributed the certificates to them, and the programme was concluded at 6 pm in the evening. □

A panel discussion on "Civic Literacy and Political Participation" was organized by the Federation of Catholic Associations of the Archdiocese of Delhi (FCAAD) and Nehru Dialogues at Jawahar Bhawan, Delhi, to commemorate the 2nd death anniversary of Fr. Stan Swamy on 5th July, 2023. The programme began with a minute of silence for the victims of the violence in Manipur and a prayer song by the students of Vidyajyoti College. Dr. Denzil Fernandes welcomed the speakers and the gathering on the occasion by highlighting the contribution of

## PANEL DISCUSSION ON "CIVIC LITERACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION"

Fr. Stan Swamy to the protection of the rights of tribals, especially in Jharkhand. Prof. Nivedita Menon, Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, highlighted the need to practice Constitutional morality as part of civic literacy. Prof. Apoorvanand, Professor at the University of Delhi, pointed out that just as Fr. Stan Swamy refused to be a silent spectator at the injustice faced by the tribals, so also speaking the truth to power should be an integral part of civic literacy

and political participation. Dr. Lancy Lobo, the moderator of the panel, emphasized greater political participation of citizens and the need for understanding the social, economic, religious and political dilemmas faced by India as part of civic literacy. The programme concluded with a few words of thanksgiving by Mr. A.C. Michael, the President of FCAAD. The event was conducted in collaboration with Indian Social Institute, New Delhi. □

## WEBINAR ON CARE OF MIGRANT WORKERS

Indian Social Institute in collaboration with the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and "The Future Work - Labour after *Laudato Si'*" (FOWLS) project, organised a webinar titled "Care of Migrant Workers: Present Scenario and Future Prospects" on 7th July, 2023. The webinar began with a video clip of a testimony of a migrant worker prepared by Migrant Assistance and Information

Network (MAIN). Dr. Denzil Fernandes, the moderator of the webinar, introduced the topic and the speakers. Dr. Neha Wadhawan, a National Project Coordinator at International Labour Organisation (ILO) stressed the need to follow ILO Conventions on migrant workers. Mr. Johnson Topno, the Regional Head of Partnering Hope in Action (PHIA) shared his experiences of heading the State Migrant Control

Room on behalf of the Department of Labour, Employment, Training and Skill Development, Government of Jharkhand. Sr. Rani Punnaserril, Secretary of the Commission for Migrants for the Archdiocese of Delhi and Northern Region, shared the efforts of Church organisations to support domestic and international migrants in India. At the end of the webinar, Ms. Christine Nathan, the President of ICMC, gave her concluding remarks and proposed a vote of thanks. □

## REPORT OF THE LEGAL TRAINING PROGRAMME ON EMPOWERING WOMEN TO LEAD CHANGE: CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY RIGHTS (HINDI)



Jesuit Research and Development Society with the resource team of Centre for Human Rights and Law, conducted a legal training programme on "Empowering Women to Lead Change: Constitutional and

Statutory Rights" in Hindi from 8 to 12 of June 2023. There were 65 persons from various parts of India participating in this Training Programme. The participants were very enthusiastic to know in detail

all the laws related to women in India. Within the stipulated time the resource team could cover the important laws related to women in India.

The training was inaugurated with the lighting of the lamp by Fr. Tom, the then acting ED of Indian Social Institute. Frs. Ravi Sagar and Peter Mahendra were the resource persons for the entire session. There were resource persons from outside as well to help us out to conduct this programme. Adv. Sr. Asha Paul, Adv. Sr. Rani, Adv. Anshu Davar took one session each for the programme.

The programme was concluded with the distribution of certificates to the participants. The acting Executive Director of Indian Social Institute, Fr. Tom, addressed the participants and distributed certificates to them. □

REPORT

## NATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PEACE TRAINERS

A two-day 'National Training Program', initiated by Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, was organized on June 7 and 8, 2023, for the peace trainers associated with Shanti Sadbhavna Manch. This program was meant to enlighten the participants on different methods to create awareness among people

for social harmony and peace.

The Inaugural session of the Program was started with a prayer song and lighting of the lamp by Dr. Denzil Fernandez, Dr. Thomas Varghese, Mr. Pascal Tirkey, Prof. Mohammad Arif along with the state coordinators. Dr. Danzil Fernandez threw light on the theme and he said

that by following human values we can establish peace and harmony in the society.

Dr. Thomas Varghese said that an action plan has been made to form peace and harmony clubs in the communities and the schools. In this movement research studies, data gathering, health, education,



human values, environment, etc., have been added so that more and more people get benefited. Mr. Ruben Minj gave sessions on report writing, photography and social media. He said that its better use will facilitate in reducing social tension.

Mr. Joseph James elaborated on 'Do No Harm' and explained the Seven Steps. He said that by using this tool negativity can be converted into positivity and in the event of

conflict, we can reduce the dispute with our discretion and dialogue.

Father Xavier Soreng and Father Stany Tirkey said that violence is increasing day by day all over the world and such incidents can be controlled only by the initiative of peace. Mr. Pascal Tirkey, project officer of Shanti Sadbhavna Manch, highlighted the activities of the peace forum and discussed in detail the upcoming peace activities.

Dr. Arun Oraon supervised the entire workshop and gave new tips and also awakened mental consciousness through games. He said that the outline of the program should be decided according to the circumstances and need.

The participants came from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh. □

**Pascal Tirkey**

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME : 3R ZERO WASTE BY DR. SHIV RAO



The Staff Forum Committee organized a Staff Development Programme on May 04, 2023. The programme was on Zero E Waste Management and the resource person was Dr. Shiv Rao, CEO of 3 R Waste management Pvt Ltd.

He gave an awareness on electronic waste and explained

that Electronic waste or e-waste is now fast becoming an important environmental issue for the world. It is the waste generated from electronic, electrical appliances and the IT sector. It consists of items such as discarded mobiles, computer systems and their peripherals, old CDs, household and kitchen appliances, washing machines, medical equipment, transceivers, TVs, iPods, refrigerators and air conditioners, etc.

The challenge for the developed and developing countries is the disposal and recycling of this e-waste. The improper management of e-waste can have significant negative impacts on the environment and human health.

One method to get rid of this is to practice the 3R's of waste management: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.

1. Reduce implies the reduction of the quantity of waste we produce. It is the most effective strategy for keeping the environment clean and hence, it is the first of the 3R's.
2. Reuse means finding a new purpose for outdated or undesirable goods that would otherwise be discarded.
3. Recycling means the using of waste itself as resources.

Waste minimization can be achieved in an efficient way by focusing primarily on the first of the 3Rs, "reduce," followed by "reuse" and then "recycle." □

## HANDING OVER FUNCTION



On June 1, 2023, Dr. Denzil Fernandes, who served as the Executive Director of Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, for 8 years, handed over this responsibility to Dr. Sebastil L. Raj, who has been appointed as the Interim Executive Director. Dr. Sebastil L. Raj has held the same post earlier, from 1991 to 1998 and the staff of ISI are happy to have him back once again and they welcomed him whole heartily.

Under the leadership of Dr. Denzil Fernandes, a number of remarkable achievements took place in ISI. More specifically, during the critical period of COVID-19 Pandemic, the Executive Director played a very important role by supporting the staff members generously. The staff members gratefully acknowledge his services and wish him all success for his well-deserved sabbatical year. □

REPORT

## RETIREMENT OF MR. MOHMMAD SAHAB

The Institute organized a farewell on June 19, 2023 to Mr. Mohmmad Sahab who provided his valuable services to the Institute for 21 years as a gardener. He kept the place evergreen throughout the year which kept the environment attractive to the visitors. On this occasion, his nephew, Mr. Baraaz Khan, accompanied him. To appreciate and recognize his services, he was felicitated with a sapling and gifts. The Executive Director Dr. Sebastil L. Raj presented a shawl and a cheque in recognition of his commendable services. The letter of appreciation was read by Ms. Glory Wilson in Hindi and English. Mr. Mohmmad said; "I could not believe how these many years



have passed by in the Institute." The members of the staff thanked him and wished him all the best for his future. □

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