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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS, IMPACTS AND MANAGEMENT OF TRIBAL HEALTH ISSUES- A STUDY ON JANGALMAHAL PERSPECTIVE

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#### Abstract

Jangalmahal is a tribal and forest dominant area in the State of West Bengal. It is also a marginal and underdeveloped area. It is inhabited by various tribal groups of people who live in the lap of hills and forests so almost everything of their life and livelihood revolves around depend on the forest. Their social and cultural norms are heavily dependent on this forest environment. Health is a very important aspect of human life being isolated from the mainstream society for a long time, the people of the tribal community here took care of their own health and wellness and in this, and they are dependent on the environment and the forest here. Not only that they tried to stay healthy when they were sick, a deep analysis of their lifestyle shows that there are some customs and habits involved in every aspect of life which are part of their desire for a healthy life. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to exploring the factors which are associated with the health and understanding impacts of these factors on their health. With this, we tried to comprehend the management process of their own way regarding their health and wellness issues. After reviewing various aspects of the health of the tribal of Jangalmahal, we found that the tribal here mainly prefer to stay in their own world. Though, the social provisions are also largely responsible for their marginalization. So, they have made their own society and everything is conducted according to the norms of their society. The aspect of health and being healthy revolves around their own perception and every aspect of this health is influenced by the environment or the forested atmosphere.

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#### Introduction:-

India is a country of multi-ethnic groups having more than 500 tribal communities along with different religious groups. Among these tribal groups more than 80% of people live in different forest environment. Forest environment based tribal communities fulfill most of their basic needs from the surrounds. There is no denying fact that tribal people are enriched with their indigenous knowledge and traditional wisdom. They live in nature, use natural resources and enjoy nature for maintaining their life and livelihood. From the time immemorial they knew how to protect themselves from different types of diseases and ailments. These tribal people are often considered as the reservoir of our traditional knowledge and wisdom. Throughout the country, the tribal have their own distinct

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pristine culture separated from the others. The indigenous knowledge is about medicinal plants and its uses tribal groups to sustain their society, environment and economy (Dasgupta and Sarkar, 2005). This knowledge is also rooted in the lived experiences of indigenous peoples; these experiences highlight the philosophies, beliefs and educational processes of tribal communities. Indigenous people come to know things by personal observation and interactions in their daily lives (Julian Berger, 1987).

Jangalmahal is one of the most important forest areas of West Bengal. This name was prevalent in the British period. Towards the beginning of the twenty-first century, the word 'Jangalmahal' got famous because of the Maoist Movement in this area. Jangalmahal area includes forest areas of three districts of West Bengal viz., Purulia, Bankura, and Paschim Medinipur. In total, Jangalmahal has 22 blocks. Purulia is the western district of Jangalmahal. Eight blocks of Purulia districts are included in Jangalmahal. Which are Jhalda-I, Jhalda-II, Arsha, Baghmundi, Balarampur, Barabazar, Bundwan, and Manbazar-II. These regions are under forest areas and part of the Jangalmahal and these blocks belonged to Jangalmahal during the British period (Suchibrata Sen, 2013). The total area of this district is 6,259 km. According to the 2001 census, the total population of Purulia district is 2,536,516, and the tribal community is 366,679. But the literacy rate of this district is only 64.48 %, and the sex ratio is 1000:955. Parts of the Bankura district of West Bengal also include the Jangalmahal area. Bankura's neighbouring districts are Bardhaman, Purulia, Paschim Medinipur, and Hugli. According to the 2011 Census, the total area of this district is 6,882 km<sup>2</sup> and the population is 3,596,292 (Census, 2011). In 1881, the present Bankura district was established. Presently, the dense forest in the western part of Bankura is called Jangalmahal. The area of my research includes this western four blocks of the Bankura district. The blocks are Ranibandh, Simlipal, Raipur, and Sarenga (R.C. Majumder, 1971). Apart from Bankura and Purulia districts, the Jangalmahal area also partly includes the western part of Paschim Medinipur district. Six blocks of Paschim Medinipur are under Jangalmahal area. Those blocks are Binpur-I, Binpur-II, Garhbeta, Salboni, Midnapore Sadar, Jamboni, Jhargram, Gopiballavpur-I, Gopiballavpur-II, and Nayagram. Paschim Medinipur district was formed in 2002 by the division of the Midnapore district. All those areas discussed above together are called Jangalmahal, which is the area of this research. Although the British Government named it as a district that lasted from 1805 to 1833, people of this area still use the name Jangalmahal. This area is now divided under three districts of West Bengal, which are separated by 22 blocks. These blocks have common geo-physical, social, cultural and ethnic characteristics.

Jangalmahal covers a vast area, from the west of Rajmahal hill to the Bay of Bengal. It is a hilly area covered with forests and is full of natural resources. Mostly the soil of this region is not fertile. However, patches of places are only productive because of rivers like Kangsabati, Subarnorekha, Keleghai, Dwarakeswar, Rupnarayana, and Damodar flowing through this region (Pranab Chattopadhyaya, 1945). The environmental condition of this region is mentioned in some of the ancient texts: Mukundaram's Chandimangal Kavya, Rupram's 'Dharmamangal Kavya', and many other ancient Bengal's Mangal Kavya (Sukumar Sen, 2013). These texts mentioned small hills, rocky red soil, and thick Jungle, which formed the topography of this region. The Jungle is very dense, and some of the essential trees like Teak, Peal, Mahua, Palash, and Shal are found in this region. The source of most of the rivers in this region is Chhotonagpur Malbhumi, and over time, those joined the river Bhagirathi flowing into the Bay of Bengal. These rivers are mainly seasonal. Thus, those do not have water all-round the year. The Jangalmahal region is situated far away from the sea; during summer and winter, the average temperature is 35<sup>0</sup>-40<sup>0</sup> Centigrade and 12<sup>0</sup>-14<sup>0</sup> Centigrade respectively. Because of monsoon wind, the rainfall rate is very much high in Jangalmahal: 140-160 cm/year approximately. The effect of monsoon cultivation of this region begins in June and July.

The number of Tribal and Dalit people living in this region is very high. The famous historian R.C. Majumder mentioned in his book that; Dom, Hari, Pulind, Shabar, Chandal these castes were found in Bengal, and they were the descendants of the primitive inhabitants of Bengal. People were also seen in other provinces of India. They were grouped based on the languages they spoke. Some scholars mentioned them as 'Austic' people (Ramesh Chandra Majumder, 2010). Tribal people mainly inhabit the Jangalmahal region of West Bengal. Nearly half of West Bengal's tribal population lived in the Bankura, Purulia, and undivided Midnapore districts. There is also a lot of lower caste Hindu population residing in this region, known as Scheduled Castes after India's independence. There are also a large number of Kurmi or Mahata people in this region. They are sub-tribal people. For their diversity, these people have influenced the society and culture of this region. According to the census report of 2001, all tribes of the west Bengal are Asur, Baiga, Bedia, Vumij, Vutia, Birhor, Birjiya, Chakma, Chero, Chikbaraik, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Hajong, Ho, Karmali, Kharoar, Khond, Kishan, Kora, Koroa, Lepcha, Lodha, Lohara, Mog, Mahali, Mahli, Malpahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nageshiya, Orao, Pahariya, Rabha, Santal, Shoriyapahariya, Shobor and

Unidentified. Among them some of the tribes among the largest tribal groups are Santal, Bhumij, Kora, Mahali, Lodha and Munda.

There is a famous proverb stating 'Health is Wealth'. Health is an asset to human life, which leads to a stable and calm mind, ultimately leading to a wealthy life. Modern medicine is highly advanced and capable of curing and saving many lives. But science, as a blessing, is often fatal when misused. Drug abuse and side effects disrupt people's lives. Many modern people also believe in herbal treatment. The tribal people of Jangalmahal region are trying to stay healthy through their own healing methods in the lap of pristine nature and forest. A major part of their own medical system is herbal treatment which is effective and good in many ways. However, there are other parts of the medical system that are not scientific and therefore dangerous.

### **Methods:-**

The study has adopted a descriptive and interpretative methodology. Historical narration and critical evaluation are also applied as and when needed. The data used for this research work has been collected from various sources. The source materials consist of primary and secondary data. We have gathered secondary data from the different sources like government orders, archival materials, government reports, project reports, and administrative reports etc. Except these we have gone through various books, research papers, articles, newspapers, periodicals, and unpublished Ph.D. thesis which has treated as secondary sources of data. Though, both primary and secondary sources are referred from various libraries, including the central library of Vidyasagar University, the main library of Midnapore College (Autonomous), National Library of Kolkata, District Library of Midnapore, West Bengal State Archive of Kolkata, Bureau of Applied Economics & Statistics Department of Medinipur, District Collectorate Record Room (Midnapore and Bankura) and online resources.

In this study we have used much information collected through interview process which is our primary sources of data. We visited tribal villages across the Jangalmahal area which is located under three districts of West Bengal i.e., Bankura, Medinipur and Purulia. In total 23 blocks exist in Jangalmahal region. Among these, four blocks i.e., Ranibandh, Simlipal, Raipur, and Sarenga are from the Bankura district, eleven blocks i.e., Jhargram, Binpur-I, Binpur-II, Jamboni, Nayagram, Sankrail, Gopiballavpur-I, Gopiballavpur-II, Salboni, Garhbeta-II, and Midnapore are from the Medinipur district and eight blocks i.e., Jhalda-I, Jhalda-II, Arsha, Baghmundi, Balarampur, Barabazar, Bundwan, and Manbazar-II are from the Purulia district. All those areas taken together are called Jangalmahal, which is the study area of this research. It is because those are under forest areas and parts of the Jangalmahal. Those blocks have belonged to Jangalmahal since the British period.

In these blocks, we interviewed a number of selected people like doctors, patients, concerned persons, midwives, Chowkidars, folk healers, and senior citizens who are mostly associated with the tribes as well as knowledgeable person regarding the tribal behaviors.

### **Results and Discussions:-**

#### **Thoughts of Tribal People regarding their Health and Wellness:**

The concept of diseases, health, treatment, life and death of the tribal people embedded in their society and culture. Of course, it is undeniable that there is a miraculous and super natural belief in many aspects of their health vision. Many people of their society believe that bad spirits are responsible for the various diseases. So, they rely on divine power for curing diseases. The usual theory of disease in tribal society is that it is caused by the breach of some taboo or by hostile spirits, ghosts or the dead (Buddhadeb Choudhuri, 2004). Sickness is the routine punishment by spirits for every lap and crime committed by them (S.P. Gupta, 2008). They blame various evil powers for different diseases and take different actions to protect themselves from them. Even when they are not affected by any diseases or feel healthy, they still follow some daily rituals. These are some of the fundamental peculiarities of their society. They think that whether they are healthy or not depends on their daily activities, performing rituals and pleasantness of the Gods. In order to please their Gods, they observe the various religious ceremonies of their society with utmost devotion and acted on the advice of the village foreman and priest. According to them village priests are the 'mediator between the people and the mystical powers. These priests appease the gods through their power and various rituals so that the people of the village stay well and get good health. As a matter of fact, disease to a tribal mind is like another phenomenon of the natural world, is many faced and essential incomprehensible in the sense that no single theory will cover all the known facts perfectly (Gautam Kumar Kshatriya, 2008).

There are some traditional customs within the culture of the Jangalmahal that every person in their society obeys with respectfully. As per their beliefs, they are each group wise and individually closely associated with unseen forces which affected both of their personal and social lives. If these unseen forces are angered by a person or a clan, then natural calamities, sickness and death come upon them as punishment. There are deities for calamities, diseases and health. They worship those Gods or deities to protect them from evil power, disease and epidemics (U. P. Sinha, 1996).

To know about the health scenario of a community, first, we need to know what causes health problems therein. Everyone will admit that health problems arise due to various diseases. We can broadly divide the various health-related problems of the tribes into three categories.

- ✓ Mental illness.
- ✓ Physical diseases, and
- ✓ Other reasons.

Mental disease of a person is capable of harming his health as badly as physical diseases. Some common mental diseases are Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Dementia, Schizophrenia, Autism, Epilepsy (Neurological). These diseases are very common among the tribal community of Jangalmahal. Laws imposed on them since the beginning of twentieth century like various forest Acts, Criminal Tribes Act as well as policies in post independent India, and globalization affected their society. As a result, there is a continuous change in their society which is difficult to cope with, thus mental problems with tribes are increasing day by day (M. N. Elnagar, 1971). The most important cause of the health problems of tribal of Jangalmahal is the various physical disorders that they suffer from. Sources to this are available in Censuses, District Collector's Office, and Bengal Gazetteers (Birth and Death Register, Paschim Medinipur, 1949-58). From 1900 to 2000, the diseases of the Jangalmahal region, which were found to be very common, are Fever, Malarial Fever, Cholera, Smallpox, Leprosy, Dysentery, Tuberculosis Asthma, Measles, Whooping Cough, Typhoid, Pneumonia, Black Fever, Anaemia, Arthritis, Malnutrition, Hepatitis, tetanus, Snakebites and attack of animals.

#### **Factors that influence Health Issues:**

It is not that these diseases and incidents are not seen in modern life but the natural environment of Jangalmahal also plays a very important role for this disease and health loss. Along with this, there is illiteracy and superstition in their society which has played a vital role in increasing the severity of this health issues. The fight against these diseases is mainly done by the tribal in their own way and the environment helps them there too.

Adjusting the life of the indigenous people is determined according to the geology of this region. Since the soil of this region is barren, it is complicated to produce crops, especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the primitive method was followed for cultivation. The people were mostly dependent on the rainfall for cultivation. Tribes are inherently not the owners of Land. They primarily lead their livelihood on Jungle. In addition to agriculture, the tribal people of this region were associated with more different professions, like weaving, pottery, metal works, shoal works [used in the mask of 'Chhou' dance], terracotta horse. Also, the bamboo work and weaving industry are famous in these districts.

Various Acts passed by central and state government prohibit hunting in Jungle to conserve and protect forests in India. A large part of Jangalmahal indigenous society lived based on hunting. In addition to daily hunting, they have been enjoying the hunting festival, which is an integral part of their culture that they have been carrying in present-day also. Apart from hunting, these peoples have been collecting various types of food items for their livelihood, such as the plant (wild olive, potato, and trunk), soft stems of the plant, leaves, flowers, seeds, mushrooms, etc. They also collect various Oils, Medicinal Plants, Resin, Colors, Fiber, Bamboo, Cane, Honey, Wax, Lacquer, Tree Bark, Kendu Leaves, Saal Leaves, etc. They gather dry woods and cut the dead trees to meet their personal needs, even they sell the collected timber in the market as fuel. Here we discuss about their lifestyle and economy which are very much dependent on these forest environments.

#### **Daily Life of indigenous people in Jangalmahal region:**

The geography of a region determines the life of indigenous people. Since the area is barren, it is complicated to produce crops, especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the primitive method was followed for cultivation. Although at that time, there were some rivers; thus, the coastal areas were somewhat fertile. However, these people had to fight with the challenging nature to cultivate in the rugged terrain in most places. Therefore, the

people were primarily dependent on rainfall for irrigation. Therefore, the people of this region's principal livelihood were agriculture, so the main festival of these people is called 'Nabanna,' celebrated in the months of 'Agrahayan,' 'Poush,' and 'Magh' in Bengali year. Since rice is the prominent food grain, there is enough food in everyone's home. Moreover, they have money in their hand by selling surplus crops.

Kavi KankanMukundaram Chakravartysaid,  
"Mas ModheyMargShirshaApaniBhagoban  
HatheMatheGriheGothoSobakarDhan"  
(KavikankanMukundaramChakravarti, 2015)

[‘Magha’ (in English year, February, and March) is the best month when there is rice in everyone’s house]

There have been numerous songs and rhymes in the centre of agriculture and cultivation for a long time, spread in every corner of the Jangalmahal. Tribes are inherently not the owners of Land. They primarily lead their livelihood in the jungle. Landlords and Jamindars of the Jangalmahal belong to the upper caste of the region. Historically, tribes are marginal farmers or agricultural labour. Due to 'Operations Barga,' many sharecroppers and landless tribal peoples own some land through less quality and land quality. Therefore, tribal people had to search for occupations in different unskilled/ Semi-skilled wage-earning sectors. In addition to agriculture, the tribal people of this region were associated with more different professions, like weaving, pottery, metal works, shoal works [used in the mask of 'Chhou' dance], terracotta horses. Also, the bamboo work and weaving industry are famous in the Medinipur district.

According to the famous folk culturist Dharendra Nath Baskey 'the Santal's childhoods have grown up in the lap of nature, from childhood to adolescence, and adolescence enters into youth. The following song is referred to them.

"BirhNarhageNowaaOdak Kook Allang  
RajaraniNondeAllangKonkAllang  
RengechJalaThlaangArherhGiddiya  
SermaReyaakSuklaangVungaoSukjangaa"  
(Dhirendra Nath Baskey, 1976)

The meaning of the above song is, "We will build up the houses for us in this forest area, we will be the King and Queen, we will forget the sorrows of this world, we will enjoy the heavenly joy." As a result, they span their life for year after year in the middle of nature. The outside blackness of this world cannot touch them. By ignoring some exceptions, the life of tribal people consists of four types of work, mainly in their social levels like hunting and food collection, animal husbandry, agricultural work, and permanent farming (Sumahan Bandopadhyay, 2014). These were the main activities of the residents of Jangalmahal, especially in the twentieth century.

Men and women of the tribes who did not engage in permanent agricultural work spent most of the day working as collectors inside the forest. Hunting animals, collecting honey and wood are their whole day jobs. Although, in the present day, there have been many changes in their work. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the variability in these indigenous people's past and present lives have been possible by interviewing senior elders in their village or 'Kulhi.' The forests were very dense in the past. Moreover, there were many wild animals in these forests. To deal with them, they used stones, axes, and arrow bows as a weapon. In conclusion, it can be said that their life was precarious (Dhirendra Nath Baskey, 1980).

Various Acts passed by the control and state government prohibit hunting in Jungle to conserve and protect India's forests. However, unfortunately, a large part of Jangalmahal's indigenous society lived based on hunting. The indigenous peoples were well connected with their cultural activities. Along with daily hunting, they participate in the hunting festival, an integral part of their culture that they have been carrying in the present day. Apart from hunting, these people have been collecting various food items for their livelihood, such as the plant (wild olive, potato, and trunk), soft stems of the plant, leaves, flowers, seeds, mushrooms, etc. They also collect various oils, medicinal plants, resin, colours, fiber, bamboo, cane, honey, wax, lacquer, tree bark, kenduleaves, saalleaves, etc. In addition, they gather dry woods, cut the dead trees to meet their personal needs, and sell the market's collected timber as fuel. Medinipur, Bankura, and Purulia's Santal, Munda, Konrha, Shabar peoples sustain their livelihoods by selling such fuel.

One of the famous folksongs of the tribal society can explain their struggle with life. The song is:

‘Bas KoriDudheJhare  
 Bang Idur Mare Khai  
 Itake Ki Bancha Bola Jai?  
 Bole Den O Bhai  
 KemonKoreKalkatai  
 KemneKalKatai  
 Bon BadorHoyeGelo  
 ShokhorBakhorFuraiGelo  
 PakhPakurHolo Dai  
 Pet Ache Pith Ache  
 Meyer Ache Chile Ache  
 Boll Eder KemoneBanchai?’

Meaning: [We live in Bamboo Forest and eat rats, frogs, can this be called living? We do not know how to survive. The food is also running out here. We are hungry, we have children, and we do not know how to save them?]

Animal husbandry is one of the main components of their livestock. They are mainly domesticated animals and birds who depend on the forest for the pasture and feed.

#### **Economic Life of indigenous people in Jangalmahal region:**

This is a popular song among the tribal people of the Jangalmahal region. Every line of this song is a description of misery in the everyday life of tribal people.

“MulukeNahi Mile Kam  
 KoiseBanchePran?SanjheKhale  
 Bihane Hoy Tan.  
 PorerGhorerPorKhatalee  
 Sokal Holey Jai Bagaleere  
 KhyateKhyePintheBoheGham  
 KoiseBanchePran?  
 NoyaaGarherKutumAyalo  
 KhaoyaDaoyaSareGelo  
 MarhBhateRakhloy Man  
 KoiseBanchePran?”  
 (Pasupati Prasad Mahato, 2012)

The economics of the indigenous of Jangalmahal were largely determined or developed based on marginal economics, conservative views, and the surrounding environment. The indigenous people gave more importance to their livelihood selection. It is not just applicable to Jangalmahal but also to all the indigenous people. While commenting on the indigenous economic structure’s characteristics, Himanshu Mohan Ray mentioned that this exchange is the central policy of their financial system. Their collections and productions are mainly meant to save their lives. So, they do not lend the complex calculations of profit or losses. Due to the use of backward and general machinery, their production ability is significantly less. Economic activities are more dependent on collective efforts than personal efforts. The demand for livestock is substantially less, so the economic life is straightforward, and the external products are less important(Himanshu Mohan Roy, 1931).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the economic life of the tribal people of the Jangalmahal was simple. Though there are many changes over time, the tribal economies are still very dependent on their everyday existence, or we can call it a subsistence economy. In the context of tribal economy, Prakash Chandra Mehta said that ‘Their economy can be said to be subsistence type. They practice different types of occupations to sustain themselves and live in a ‘marginal economy(Prakash Chandra Mehta, 2013)’.The main features of the indigenous economy are the intensive relationship with the forest. They are the children of the forest. Forest feeds them. He further stated that “the linkage between the tribal and forests is traditional tribes are economically and ecologically inseparable from forests. Be it food, fodder, or fuel needs, the tribal inescapably and assuredly depended on his surroundings forests for sustenance even during the troubled time of droughts(Prakash Chandra Mehta, 2013)”.The economic issue of tribal people associated with the forest was significant before and after independence. However, in the post-independent time, the Indian Government gave importance to protect the tribal economy through the Constitution.

According to India's Constitution, the state shall promote special care for the weaker section of its educational and economic interests, particularly the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes. It shall protect them from long-nurtured social injustice and all forms of exploitation. In the British period, they did not get this general importance. The British Government and the money lenders (called 'Diku,' meaning an outsider) continuously exploited them economically. Despite this, they collected various goods from the jungle and lived life in deplorable conditions. In the British era, certain Acts were implemented, removing their rights from the Jungle (Indian Forest Act, 1927). As a result, their economic problems increased manifold. In this context, we also remember the impact of previous British-initiated land revenue settlements have greatly impacted them, especially the adverse effects of the Permanent Settlement. With the Permanent Settlement's introduction, Jungle Mahal witnessed a new agrarian tension that destroyed the Mandali system; the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 started a process that ultimately replaced the communal ownership of land with individual ownership (Suchibrata Sen, 2013). Since this Settlement, the private ownership of land was introduced largely to the tribal people. The concept of private land ownership to tribal people was new because they considered land a property of the entire community and believed in joint ownership. "More important, the notion of permanent individual ownership of land was foreign to most tribes. The land was viewed as a communal resource, free to whoever needed it if seen in terms of ownership. By the time tribes accepted the necessity of obtaining formal land titles, they had lost the opportunity to lay claim to lands that might rightfully have been considered theirs (John. K. Thomas, 2005)". From then on till independence and to the present time, tribal people have protested against land acquisition. As a result, their traditional socio-economic condition was hampered, and most of the time, they were forced to become landless agricultural labourers. Regarding the tribal economic life, it can be argued that tribal communities mostly live in our state's marginal areas. The land quality of those areas is barren and rusted. The scope for irrigation is minimal. About 70% of the households do not possess any agricultural land to cultivate. They have not achieved the technical knowledge of modern cottage and small industries due to a lack of education and staying in remote places. For this reason, large-scale livelihood is based on day-by-day labour and the selling of woods collected from forests in the local market (Prithwish Kumar Sana, 2005). Since the colonial era, this jungle-based Economy of tribal people got disrupted. After the independence of India, this economic problem was not solved. Babasaheb Ambedkar saw the related economic problem of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes during the formation of the Indian Constitution. Thus, he includes some privileges and protection for those neglected people in the Constitution to assure their position in society's mainstream. In the fourth paragraph of Article 16 of the Constitution, constitutional favours for scheduled tribes have been mentioned. The President of India has been empowered under Articles 341 and 342 for this order to be properly implemented. After discussing with the Governor or the Chief Administrator, he listed scheduled tribes of every state so that those listed may proceed in getting special constitutional privileges. In this process, in 1981, the number of scheduled tribe communities in West Bengal was thirty-eight. After 1991, two more groups resulting in a total of forty tribal groups in West Bengal. According to the Constitution, the President of India has the right to appoint a commissioner. The Commissioner's work is to see whether the laws for the Scheduled Tribes are being implemented properly or not. The Governor of every state personally investigates this matter, and the Chief Minister of the State and Tribal Affairs minister is also responsible for implementing the development projects. It has also been instructed that there is a need for the Tribal Affairs Ministry of such a state with many tribal people. Article Number 16 of the Constitution has ensured an equal opportunity forever citizen of India; its goal was to establish economic equality. Thus, there is no shortage of constitutional protection to overcome the indigenous backwardness, but the deficiencies are seen in those responsible for implementing tribal development projects. In many cases, those in charge of developing tribal areas are becoming corrupt for their profit (Suhrid Kumar Bhoumik, 2002). Chandan Sinha, the former District Magistrate of Paschim Medinipur, once viewed this corruption issue very closely and mentioned this in his book (Chandan Sinha, 2013). On several occasions, tribal people are unaware of various government projects and some small things. They must go to government offices repeatedly or bribe the officers. As a result, development funds became corrupted, and the socio-economic development of the tribal people was hampered. Annapurna Sanyal researched the economic issues of the tribal population till 1985. She showed that despite the Integrated Tribal Development Project, 80% of tribal people still live below the poverty line (Annapurna Sanyal, 1991).

#### **Description of House of indigenous people in Jangalmahal region:**

We have already drawn a picture of how the tribal people of Jangalmahal lived their life. Their villages and homes are built in the same way as their living. In the Jangalmahal region, the huts are usually located on the edge of the Jungle. Somewhere it is seen that their small villages are located on the small hillside. The walls of their houses are mainly made of clay and bamboo. Because the soil in this region is red, the colours of the walls are red too. However, tribal women often paint different images and designs on walls with various natural colours. The roofs of

houses are usually covered with bamboo, paddy straw, golpata, wild grass, and hay. Usually, there is no window on the wall, and the number of rooms in those houses is only one. They believe that if a large window is placed on the wall, then ghosts and evil powers will enter there. Even their village's spirit 'Chirkin' can come from the window and lick their children's feet, following the child's inevitable death.

The small houses did not have any furniture other than a rope bed available in almost all the homes constructed by them. In their houses, a clay oven is made, placed on one side of the yard. They cook in clay utensils. In the rainy season, they move their oven by creating a new one on one side of their hut. They cleaned inside and outside of the hut with cow dung mixed with water. The roof of the huts is rebuilt within two or three years. They prepare a mat with a date palm and sleep on it on the floor. They rarely use mosquito nets. Instead, they put oil made of Kachra Fruit (Mahua Fruit) seeds, protecting them from a mosquito bite. The smoke produced from the Kachra seeds cake keeps the mosquito and other insects away from their home. There is a fear of snake bites also as they sleep on the floor.

#### **Impact of these Factors on Health Issues:**

In this study, different customs and practices of each tribal community are noticed, and though these communities lived together for a very long time in this region, similar traditions are often seen overlapping. Traditions and customs in different societies developed based on the different stages of human life especially, on special events of life. Like in the Vedic period, there were various 'Sanskars'. In a tribal society, there are different rituals and customs based on birth, death, and marriage.

#### **A) Birth Related Rituals:**

When a child was born, the tribal people of Jangalmahal did various sacred of rituals and practices.

##### **i) Rituals during Pregnancy:**

When a woman becomes pregnant, she gets special care not only from her family but also from other villagers. Foods considered nutritious in their society are fed to the expectant mother. This habit can be seen in all the tribal groups. She always takes sufficient food and special foods like Wild Potatoes, 'Bengal Fruit, Herbs, and Snail's soup. However, certain foods are restricted during pregnancy, such as tamarind, berry, mahua, and rice beer. They believe that eating these foods can cause harm to the child. For instance, the Lodha thinks that the child's eyes get blind of eating jam berry fruit by mother; Santals do not allow expectant mothers to eat bananas.

There are also some rules strictly followed by the family for the sake of a healthy child. All the persons in that house are forbidden to go to the funeral. During that time, both husband and wife are forbidden to kill animals; hunted animal meat is also prohibited from consumption. The pregnant woman has ordered not to leave the house after the evening. There is a baby shower program in every tribal community. This ceremony is done by accepting fruits, milk, yogurt, rice, and new clothes from the father's house of the pregnant woman. After that, she also attained a similar ceremony, but her husband's family incurs the expenditure. In this program, the older adults in the village are invited. The older women of the village instructed the pregnant woman to obey various things. They believe that if she does not follow these things, the evil power will hurt the child and the mother.

Some of these customs are common in every tribal society in Jangalmahal. Those include: not to jump and cross a rope or a hole, not to open hair while going to the pond or the Jungle or burial ground. They do not clean house with cow dung during this period. In the new moon night, the woman has to sit with the spreading leg; otherwise, they believe the child of the womb will be born without eyes. Especially this belief is firm among the Lodha and Santal tribe. Sometimes tribal folk healers and shamans do many rituals to keep the mother and her child healthy. They prepared many herbal medicines from various herbs, which are collected from the Jungle. The older women from the villages also did some procedures to protect the mother from the demons and contaminated air. They also give her an armband to tie in the left hand (Sitamoni Hembram, Mr. Goutam Saren, Mr. Siblu Chalok, Mr. Bachhu Sing, Mr. Bholu Sardar, Interview).

##### **ii) Rituals during Childbirth and after Childbirth:**

Tribal people are doing the rituals after childbirth more strictly. At this time, the amount of food passed by aspiring mother was slightly reduced. Chapatti and steamed food are given more in quantity. Alcoholic drinks and sour fruits are forbidden at this time. Childbirth takes place in the house or in a separated corner of their home. In the last decades of the twentieth century, the condition of their childbirth process was more or less the same. The mother



was not taken to the hospitals or health centres until there was a critical situation. The birth house is mostly a separate and very tiny room adjacent to the main room.

When the hut is small, this place is built in the main room with the old cloths. All the responsibilities related to childbirth were on 'Dhai Ma' or midwife, an elderly lady from the village. She cuts the baby's umbilical cord by a bamboo stick or sharp oyster cell and cleans the baby with gentle warm water. In Santal society, there is a ritual of sprouting rice powder water after childbirth. Lodha people kept a firepot in front of the room and an iron rod, a stick of Hetal tree, a piece of net, and an old broom. They believe that these things prevent evil spirits. After the birth of the child, if everything is normal, then the mother is allowed to take only one meal a day for three days, and in those three days, the family of the newborn is considered impure by the community. After that all the clothes are cleaned, they also cleaned themselves by cutting nails and hair. Then the child is bathed with oil. Generally, there is no trend in the first rice ceremony among the tribal people. The baby's naming ceremony is must be done where the family invites older people from the village. 'Haria' (rice beer) is offered in the name of the child, and the child is bathed in front of everyone.

### **B) Death related Rituals:**

As the tribal people of Jangalmahal enjoy the birth of a child, the picture is just the opposite when someone dies. The whole village mourns on that day. On that day, no one goes to the Jungle, and all the youth of the village gathered in the house of the deceased. The village head man called them. Usually, they burn the body performing several rituals according to their tradition. The rituals associated with cremation can be divided into two categories. However, various tribal groups of Jangalmahal perform these rituals in a different way.

#### **i) Rituals of Burning of Dead Body:**

In the Santal society and Munda society, the dead body is draped with the head facing the South, whereas, among the Lodha's, it is performed facing the North. The dead body is kept on the ground. Santal people use oil and turmeric on the body. The dead body was taken to the crematorium by a bamboo stretcher, and mostly the elder son of the person has the right to set the fire on dead one. When they return home, they change their clothes after bathing. If the husband dies, the widow breaks her bangles in front of the dead body. Lodha people cut off the left little finger of the body and put it into a new clay pot. Later it is floated in a river. Santal tribe does not follow this ritual. They put ashes from the funeral site in a container, and before three days, they float it in the river Damodar. If someone dies abruptly, even for children, then the body is buried.

#### **ii) Rituals after returning from the Crematorium:**

After returning from crematoriums, the family of the deceased gives them rice, rice beer, and a cock so that they can cook their meal. In a tribal society, there is no fixed time for the obsequies' ceremony. However, it is necessary to have this ceremony before going to any happy ceremony in the house.

### **C) Marriage Ceremony:**

An essential event of tribal society is marriage. Among the tribal groups, Santal's wedding ceremony is very sparkling. In santal family, when a girl seems to be ready for marriage, her father plays a drum made of buffalo skin called 'Dhamsa' across the night. The sound of the 'Dhamsa' passes long distance across villages in the silent night hearing the sound, the groom's father communicates to the father for probable marriage relationship. The marriage ceremony of Santals is quite different than the other tribal. In the marriage ceremony groom's companion carry their own food stuff to the marriage place generally outside the village near to a jungle. They prepare their own food. Relatives, villagers and invitees drink rice beer and dance whole night. The other tribal communities also delightfully celebrated this ceremony. There is no such value as a matchmaker in a tribal marriage system. Communication between the bride, groom, and their family is developed by working together or by relatives. The tribal wedding has a tradition of dowry, but this dowry is taken by the daughter's family. They mostly marry in their community, but not within the same 'Gotra'. Some gifts are sent from the bride's family to the groom's house before marriage - the main ceremony of marriage centres around rituals, varying from one tribe to tribe. Usually, wedding ceremonies are done at the bride's house. Before marriage, both of the family worshipped their Deity (Parbati Saren, Angori Tudu, Fulmoni Murmu, Rabin Hansda, Mr. Gobor Dhon Kari, Mr. Inmanuel Murmu, Interviewee).

### **Health Care Management in Tribal Culture:**

There are various medical methods associated with Jangalmahal and consequently there are also various doctors. However, the treatment method that is mostly dependent on the forest environment is the herbal treatment.

Folk medicine or 'traditional medicine' is a very common term in today's society. Sometimes it called 'ethno-medicine too. Analysing it, it can be seen that almost all types of indigenous or traditional medical method come under it. According to the world health organization, about 80% of people worldwide rely on traditional medicine for primary health care(WHO, 2003). The herbal medical system is one of the parts of this system. Herbal medical knowledge is based on practical experience of people, deep rooted in the life of the tribal people and this has been transmitted verbally through generations. Gradually it becomes an integral part of their lives. Tribal people, in the twentieth century and still now rely on these traditional herbal remedies to cure diseases and other health problems like snake bite(SumanaSarkhel, 2014). Tribal people who were particularly familiar with the medicinal properties of these herbal plants find them in the forest and use them to make medicine. All these people are known as herbal folk healers and in the tribal society here, those who give only herbal medicine are known as 'Kabiraj' in their language.

Herbal medicine system is a part of medical institution in tribal societies where the medical importance of herbs and plants is recognized. The treatment here is obviously done through the herbs on the human body. Herbal medicine is one of the popular terms of indigenous knowledge in tribal society. It is based on philosophical thought, folk education system and cultural origins of a society (SaritaDas, 2003). Mostly it is derived from local herbal plants, different organic matter and minerals. Traditional belief is the main factor of use of herbal medicine which is coming from the practical experiences (WilliamWilsonHunter, 1882). The Jangalmahal region of West Bengal is a bio-diversity rich region and in the forest here many kinds of trees and plants have been seen. There are many plants which have medicinal properties. The herbalist folk healers are lived in this area for many years so that they know the herbal plants very well and they also know where these plants are found from. Tribal people of Jangalmahal first try to cure the diseases through the plants around their houses according to their experience. When that process does not work, they go to the village folk healers who are mostly called 'Kabiraj', 'Gunin' or 'Ojha'. Most of these plants help in the case of primary health problems. 'Kabiraj can treat more complex diseases apart from ordinary health problems through these herbal plants, like skin diseases, injuries, ulcer, fever, dehydration, high blood pressure, diabetes, liver diseases and neurotic disorders.

### **Conclusion:-**

After reviewing various aspects of the health of the tribal of Jangalmahal, we found that the tribal here mainly prefer to stay in their own world. Social provisions are also largely responsible for their marginalization. So, they have made their own society and everything is conducted according to the norms of their society. The aspect of health and being healthy revolves around their own perception and every aspect of this health is influenced by the environment or the forested atmosphere. Their various rituals and customs from birth to death are dependent on the environment and the herbal medical system which is a major part of their medical system is almost entirely dependent on the forest. Therefore, it will not be an exaggeration to say that a large part of the health of the tribal of Jangalmahal is deeply dependent on the environment and the forest here. Though we have limited studies with reference to Jangalmahal, but all of them have indicated deep knowledge of the people regarding the health care. Many of the tribal groups use different parts of the plants not only for treatment, but even for population control. This knowledge can be fruitfully utilized in a wider context. Many tribal groups plant certain species against insects. Instead of going for insecticide, these shrubs can be planted since they would not adversely affect the environment and may be more helpful to preserve the ecological balance.

A documentation of tribal health related knowledge is also urgently necessary. It is important for the modern system to begin with the base existing in the tribal society and build on it, rather than replace it. In order to achieve that, information about tribal medicinal practices should be documented before they are forgotten. A study of indigenous method of treatment may help to identify new methods of treatment of various diseases with certain modifications. Documentation should be made and same time one has to be aware of the risks involved and the use of the commercial interests can put to it. Hence, it should be done with certain reservations. The relation of forests with nutrition may be mentioned. It has been noted by many that the tribal health status depend on the various foods available in the forest. So,deforestation affects the nutritional status of the tribal. Unplanned use of insecticides and pesticides is also fatal for the forest environment. Thus, the whole development strategy needs critical analysis as it may adversely affect the environment and consequently the health status of the people, particularly the tribal.

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