

Tribal Entrepreneurship: A Case of Adivasis in Dangs

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Abstract

The Dangs in many ways represent extreme geo-physical, environmental and socio-economic characteristics in Gujarat. Having 59 per cent of its total geographical area under forests amid highly undulating terrains, the district receives an average rainfall of 3,000 mm per annum. **Nearly 95 per cent of its total population belongs to adivasi communities including the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PTGs). Despite vast possession of natural resources, the district which is home to 86 per cent below poverty line (BPL) households is not only the poorest in the state but also features in the list of five most backward districts of the country.** This paper is based on a recent study conducted in the Dangs examines the role of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) along with other forest resources in livelihoods of the adivasi communities. It seeks to understand the Malki practice – a unique system of forest governance and critically analyses the implementation of Forest Rights Act at ground level. The study finds out that majority of the adivasi households in the study villages are involved in collection of NTFPs **such as bamboo, mahua, tendu and amla from the forests besides extracting timber and fuel wood round the year.** Timber is primarily extracted from trees of teak and sesam whereas fuel wood forms the basis of cooking in the villages. Despite having low monetary values, NTFPs, timber products and fuel wood continue to provide critical support to adivasi livelihoods. However, it is increasingly constrained in recent years by factors including rapid degradation of forest resources, low awareness and access to techniques of harvesting, processing and marketing of NTFPs; wide gap between the collectors and end users, unfair trade practices and lack of intervention of concerned agencies of the state. NTFP resources if used efficiently and marketed wisely can be a source of entrepreneurship opportunities. The Malki practice in the Dangs – a uniquely designed system of forest governance is another source of livelihoods for the adivasis. **Under this practice, occupancy rights have been given only to those lands which are under individual possession since January 1970, but the reserved trees on these lands continue to vest with Forest Department. However, the cultivators are entitled to sell them provided at least three tree saplings should be planted for each tree being cut.** The study finds that 60 per cent of the respondents have applied for Malki out of which 55 per cent got their application processed and have earned Rs 3.4 lacs per household. However, the Malki practice is only seen as a medium of earning money without thinking of the massive destruction being done through rampant cutting of trees leading to increased soil erosion, removal of top layer fertile soil and rapid degradation of forests that has led to extinction of many species of flora and fauna, drying up of rivers and other water bodies. On the Forest Rights Act, the study reveals that though majority of the households surveyed (nearly 75 per cent) are having awareness on individual rights, nearly 62 per cent have applied for individual pattas having a success rate of 44 per cent finally getting it. A large majority of the approved pattas have gone to the ruling elites particularly sarpanchs and many claims are under process for years. Major bottlenecks faced in FRA implementation in the Dangs evident from the study are lack of clarity of the application procedure, rejection of claims on flimsy grounds, misuse of power and co-option by PRIs members, inactive Forest Rights Committees (FRCs), very low awareness on Community Forest Rights, conflicting situations between FRC and JEM committees and Forest Department's alleged role in rejecting the claims. Despite facing harassment, local activists and organizations have played a significant role in spreading awareness, using GIS technology for allotment of land and sustaining the grassroots struggle on FRA alongside bringing changes through advocacy works in Gujarat. The paper attempts to find opportunities for possible entrepreneurship in Dangs in context of the above three realities.

Keywords: Tribal Entrepreneurship, NTFP, Malki Practise, FRA, Dangs

The Dangs is one of the 33 districts of Gujarat. Located in the south Gujarat region, it shares its borders with the neighbouring state of Maharashtra. In the north and east, it is bounded by Tapi and Navsari districts of Gujarat and in the south and west by Nasik and Dhule districts of Maharashtra respectively. The district headquarters is located at Ahwa town. Total geographical area of the Dangs is 1,764 sq. km. The district comprises of 3 talukas, 70 panchayats and 311 villages. The Dangs has total population of 2,28,291 (only 0.3% of state's population) and literacy rate of 76.8%. The district has the population density of 129 persons per sq. km. and registered decadal population growth rate of 21.44% from 2001-2011. The sex ratio of district is 1007 females for every 1000 males which are the highest in the state (Census, 2011).

Tribal Entrepreneurship

The word 'entrepreneur' appeared in the French language long before the emergence of concept of entrepreneurial function. In the early 16th century it was applied to those who were engaged in military expeditions. In the following century it got extended to cover civil engineering activities such as construction and fortification. It was only in the beginning of the 19th century that the word was used to refer to economic activities.

On a broader plane it must be said that the economist's right from Cantillon to Marshall visualized entrepreneurship in the context of stationary situation. First of all it was Joseph Schumpeter who analysed the theory of entrepreneurship from a different perspective. He said that development is the burst of economic activities when the stationary equilibrium is disturbed, development takes place. This disturbance comes forth in the form of innovation. According to Schumpeter, the entrepreneur is an 'innovator' who is characterized by potentialities of doing new things or doing things in a new way. Thus, Entrepreneur who foresees the opportunity and tries to exploit it by introducing a new product, a new method of production, a new market, a new source of raw materials, or a new combination of factors of production.

For K. Knight and Peter Drucker entrepreneurship is about taking risk. The Entrepreneur is a kind of person who is willing to put his career and financial security on the line for an idea, spending his time and capital in an uncertain venture. Howard Stevenson of Harvard University believes that entrepreneurship is the "pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled".

We try to understand how tribals can become enterprising. Defining a tribe is something like signing on a blank cheque. The tribals are defined and interpreted in the perspectives which are convenient to the non-tribal interventions or outsiders. The tribals do not have any traditional occupations like the high caste Hindus. They do not have any trading groups, blacksmiths, carpenters, and sweepers as strata in their rank and file. And therefore very conveniently they are described as peasantry, fisherman, wood-cutter, agricultural labourers and wage earners. Tribals are early settlers to this country. For centuries, the tribals took to hill and forest life.

A tribal entrepreneur is essentially someone who graduates from ordinary membership of the tribe, catering for their own need for tribal commodities, to also catering for other members of the tribe, on some form of commercial or semi-commercial basis.

Tribal entrepreneurship in its' purest form is really about promoting and perpetuating the tribe's identity and values alongside entrepreneurial activity. Commercial considerations are at times almost secondary to the need to promote the tribe and champion their concerns. Ironically of course the more you are seen to be a champion of the tribe's cause, the more your products or services will be perceived as a bona fide embodiment of tribal values.

Tribal entrepreneurs often enjoy commercial success because their actions - and their track record as members of the tribe - confer authenticity and legitimacy on their products. The products and services

they provide are perceived as genuine symbols of tribal identity and members of the tribe will eschew more mainstream products in favour of these tribal-produced alternatives that are higher in symbolic/tribal capital.

Current Scenario in Dangs

The following part of the paper describes the study conducted by the authors attempting to understand opportunities for tribal entrepreneurship. The tribals do not have capital. They have land but of fragmented sizes and that too with inadequate facilities of irrigation. Years of isolation has kept them away from present day's minimum needed technical know-how. The knowledge of different nature of non-traditional occupations, formal education and training for almost all the jobs and the marketing system is totally absent

About the Study & Methodology

The study on forest based livelihoods, malki practice and Forest Rights Act in the Dangs was conducted during May – June 2014. The primary objectives were to (i) study the role of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and other forest resources in livelihoods of the adivasi households, (ii) to understand the Malki practice, and (iii) to assess the implementation of Forest Rights Act in the Dangs. 105 respondent households consisting tribal communities of Konkani (47%), Kunbi (30%), Bhil (15%) and Varli (8%) were randomly selected from 7 villages in Ahwa and Waghai talukas for the household survey. A detailed interview schedule was used for collection of primary data. Further, in order to understand the Malki practice and FRA implementation, personal interviews were held with officials of forest department and activists of civil society organizations, and focus group discussions were held with members of forest rights committees. The following table provides village wise details of households surveyed for the study in the Dangs.

Table-1: Village wise details of household surveyed

Taluka	Village	Total HH	Sampled HH	%age
Ahwa	Borkhal	160	16	10
	Gondalvihir	238	16	7
	Pipalyamal	89	12	13
Waghai	Bhendmal	132	12	9
	Borpara	172	15	9
	Lavariya	255	15	6
	Malin	143	19	13
Total		1189	105	9

Among the above households, 58.09% are under BPL, 27.62% are APL and 14.28% of the households are yet to be listed in either of the category who does not have any of the cards yet. Further, 27.62% of the households we surveyed have access to banking services and while 72.38% are yet to avail it. Data analysis showed that 19.04% of the total households are landless or have an area of less than 1-hectare agricultural land. Only 5% of the total households have more than 10 hectares of land. And the maximum percentage of households i.e. 29.52% has up to 3 hectares of agricultural land.

Availability, Seasonality, Collection and Uses of NTFPs

The survey shows that majority of the households in the study villages collect bamboo (*Bambusa arundinaceae*) followed by mahua (*Madhuca indica*), Tendu (*Driospiros melenoxylon*) and Amla (*Amblica officinalis*) from the forests. Out of the 81 households that collect bamboo, 74.07% collect up to 50 pieces or stumps, 15% households collect 50-100 pieces and only 7% collect more than 100. These 7% households

comprise mainly of people who are building a new house and hence require bamboo for thatching purpose. This forms the major use of bamboo in the surveyed villages. Other uses are creating baskets for carrying stuff, grain storage baskets, daily use equipment and house fencing purposes. Among the 54 households that collect Mahua, 50% collect up to 100kg of Mahua in one season. 46.29% of the households collect between 100-100kg of Mahua and only 3.7% collect more than 1000kg. Mahua flowers are mainly used to prepare county liquor. The tribals either prepare it at home for self-consumption or sell the flowers to traders. Cotyledons of Mahua fruits (known as doli) are used to prepare cooking oil. The following table shows the seasonality of collection of the NTFPs.

Table 2: NTFP Collection and Seasonality

NTFPs (major)	No. of HH collecting	%age HH collecting	Seasonality of Collection
Bamboo	81	77	Apr-May-Jun/Oct-Nov-Dec
Mahua	54	51	Mar-Apr-May
Tendu Leafs	14	13	Apr-May-Jun
Amla	11	10	Oct-Nov-Dec

Apart from these major NTFPs, there are also a number of NTFPs collected occasionally by the tribal households in the area. These NTFPs possess medicinal as well as nutritional value.

Table 3: Occasionally Collected NTFPs

Local Name of NTFPs collected	Botanical Name	Seasonality	Uses
Bark of saal	Shorea robusta	All year	Diarrhea
Bhutjhaar		All year	Medicinal use
Goonj	Abrus precatorius	All year	Mouth ulcer
Tetu	Oroxylum indicum	All year	Post delivery pain, heart disease, tonic, gout
Achar		All year	Vegetables
Kand, Kavli, Bokhara		June-July	Vegetables
Kantola		June-July	Vegetables
Raw bamboo	Bambusa arundinacea	All year	Vegetable
Kuhru		June-July	Vegetable
Mokha		June-July	Vegetable
Mahua fruits	Madhuca indica	April-May	Cooking oil
Bamboo seeds	Bambusa arundinacea	Once in 20 years	Pickle
Karanda	Carissa congesta	May-July	Fruit, making gum

Role of NTFPs in Tribal Livelihood

The study finds out that majority of the adivasi households in the study villages are involved in collection of NTFPs such as bamboo, mahua, tendu and amla from the forests. It would normally seem that in the Dangs with dense forests, people would rather have high dependency on NTFPs. However, the survey shows that the monetary gains from NTFPs are very less. Households mostly earn up to Rs. 5000/- which is very less to rely on it as a means on livelihood. Gujarat State Forest Development Corporation's (GSFDC) data from the last 5 years confirms that no Mahua flower has been procured by them from the 7 study villages. This implies that the households have sold Mahua flowers to other local traders. Despite having low monetary values, NTFPs continue to provide critical support to adivasi livelihoods. However, it is increasingly constrained in recent years by factors including rapid degradation of forest resources, small quantities collected at individual level, low awareness and access to techniques of harvesting, processing and marketing of NTFPs, wide gap between the collectors and end users, unfair trade practices, low value additions are leading to lower price realization, uncertain demand and competition from alternative synthetic products and lack of intervention of concerned agencies of the state.

Malki Practice in the Dangs

Malki is a source of livelihoods for the tribal households in the Dangs. Under this practice, occupancy rights have been given only to those lands which were actually leased to Dangs and are in their natural position since 1st January 1970. The reserved trees on these lands continue to vest with Forest Department but the cultivators are entitled to lop them for the purpose of cultivation. **Prior to 1997, 50% of the revenue from the logged trees was given to the land holder but now it has become 100%. For every tree being cut, at least 3 tree saplings should be planted in the malki land.** Half of the forest area in the Dangs is declared as protected forests by law. The tribals are given ownership rights of land mainly for agricultural use. A provision is made that the owner if requests to cut trees and is ready to plant 3 times more trees, all such owners will be granted permission to cut maximum 50% of trees on their land or demanded trees (to cut) whichever is lesser. Out of these two options, **maximum limited to 10 trees can be cut.** Net proceeds of sale would be paid in two instalments of 50% each.

The survey shows that 60% of the respondent households have applied for Malki rights having highest no. of application i.e. 15 in Gondalviher followed by 10 in Lavariya. Out of these, 55% got their application processed. The total amount disbursed to them is 115.4 Lacs and the average amount comes around 3.4 lacs per household. Thus, the Malki practice has had a substantial impact on their livelihoods. Major trees being grown in the malki land and harvested include mahua, teak, sadad, khair, ittar, seesam, tanas, baardi, hed, kalam, wad, kaakar, maadad, gundar, arjun, bodar and icchan among others.

The increased no of applications has led to cutting of a large no. of trees which have an adverse impact on the environment. But the right of cutting of trees under Malki comes with a condition of planting saplings more than or equal to five times of the actual no. of trees being cut and the **40%** of the amount is disbursed only when the planted trees grow to certain height. The balancing act done by enforcing the rule strictly leads to low negative impact of this practice. In order to get the verification done properly and speedily, households tend to take care of the planted saplings seriously. However, forest department's data reveals that after the new GR of 1997, they have paid Rs. 117 Cr to 13151 households under the Malki scheme. This means nearly 131,510 trees have been cut down over these years with an average of 773 trees being cut annually for Malki. The growth of saplings planted takes relatively longer time. Rampant cutting of trees have led to increased soil erosion, removal of top layer of soil, rapid degradation of forests, etc. The cutting of trees has also led to extinction of many species of flora and fauna, drying up of rivers and ponds, etc. Now, the Malki system has become only as a medium of getting money. The lure of earning money through Malki has led many of the tribal households to apply for it causing large scale destruction to the forests and environment. The Dangs which was once having the richest natural forest in Gujarat is now only reduced to manmade forested region through artificial plantations.

Implementation of Forest Rights Act in the Dangs

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 was enacted by Indian Parliament on 15th December 2006 and came into force on 1st Jan 2008. The objective of this Act is to recognize and vest the forest rights and occupations in forest lands of the Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDSTs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) who have been residing in the forests for generations but their rights could not be recorded earlier. The Forest Rights Act (FRA) gives individual property rights to the tribals and Other Forest Dwellers on the forest lands under their occupation for cultivation and dwellings and community rights over forest resources. It also includes the right to manage forests and total ownership rights on NTFPs. Individual land rights recognized by the Act include individual rights over forest lands including right to hold forest land for habitation and/or self cultivation provided that it has been under their occupation from before 13th December, 2005. Community forest rights, accordingly to the Act include community rights over forest resources, including right to own, access, use and dispose of minor forest produce, including bamboo; and also most importantly, the rights to protect, regenerate, conserve or manage forest resources of their area as

community forest resources for sustainable use. These community rights are most important as they ensure protection and conservation of forests and biodiversity while ensuring livelihood and food security of the scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers. Another important right recognized by the Act is the right of the communities living in the forest settlement villages to get their villages converted to revenue villages and lands held by them to revenue lands.

The survey shows that nearly 75% households in the study villages are aware about the FRA and its provisions. Among the households (79 hh) that are aware about it, 62% households (49 hh) have applied for individual rights under the FRA. Of these, nearly 45% of the households successfully got the claims while more than half of the applications (53%) are still under process. However, no. of applications made has gone down over the years; highest no. of applications (55%) was made in 2008. The following table provides tribe wise details of households having awareness and made application under FRA.

Table: 4: Awareness and Application under FRA

Tribe	No. of sampled HH	No. of HH aware of FRA	% of HH aware of FRA	No. of HH applied under FRA	% of HH applied under FRA
Bhil	16	12	15	8	16
Kokani	49	31	39	21	43
Kunbi	32	29	37	15	31
Varli	8	7	9	5	10
Total	105	79	100	49	100

Women and Tribal Entrepreneurship

Women's work is regarded as crucial for the survival of tribal households in terms of provisioning for food, income, earning and management of financial resources. Food gathering is also a vital economic activity even for women of agricultural tribes. In order to ensure women's productive and effective participation in the development, intensive and sustained training on an on-going basis would have to be given. Women's work is critical for the survival of tribal households both in terms of provisioning food and income as well as in the management of resources. Agriculture in the tribal villages/area is predominantly rain fed and mono-cropped. Opportunities for women can be in the field of

- Food/NTFP gathering from the forest
- Rope making from the bark of trees & sabai grass
- Honey collection
- Herbal medicinal plant collection, processing & sale
- Hunting & trapping
- Basket making
- Shifting cultivation
- Agricultural Labour
- Fishing

Challenges

There is very low dependency of the tribals on NTFP. To generate a full scale livelihood means just on NTFP is not possible without value addition and entrepreneurship drives. Measures need to be taken to enhance the supply chain of the existing MFPs and grow more beneficial trees in the villages.

Lack of a formal marketplace: There has been no Mahua collection from the villages we surveyed since the last 5 years by GSFDC. Mahua has been collected though and sold to other traders. Building more connections with the GSFDC can ensure tribal welfare. GSFDC conducts workshops on efficient

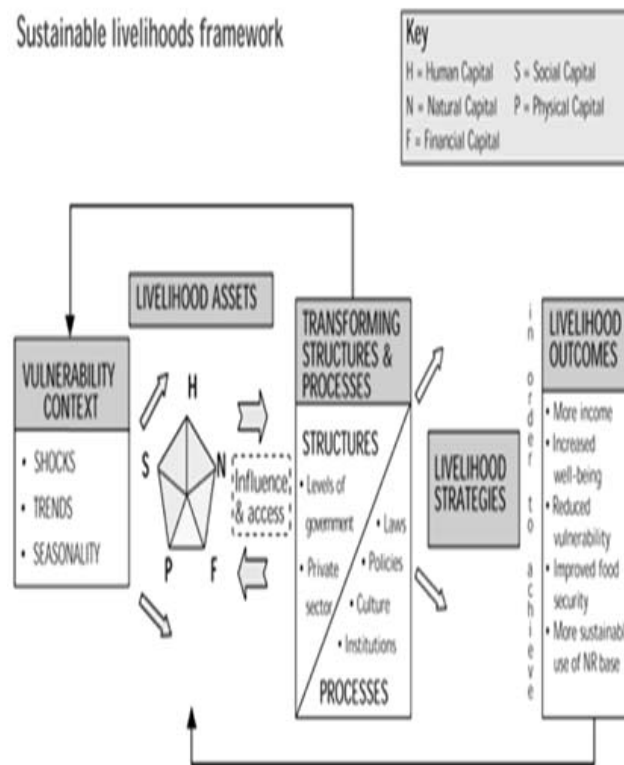
growth techniques of various MFP trees. This can be helpful to the forest dwellers in improving their livelihood. As observed, the tribals face a lot of problems in farming due to the difficult terrain of the region. Often the villagers even after getting land rights from FRA are not able to raise their income from agriculture because of the low quality of land. **Our survey showed people spending huge amounts of Malki money in getting their land levelled.**

Malki practice is known to most of the villagers and has been going on since generations. It has turned out to be a source of income among the tribals. However, they claim that Forest Department officials often resort to bribes to get the processing done faster. The overhead expenses are also to be borne by the tree owners. This leads to a lesser amount being paid finally to the beneficiary. This amount in turn has to be distributed in the household. This money used judiciously is helpful to the tribals. But some of them get trapped in loan cycles which results in further poverty of the household.

Power abuse and corruption is frequent in claiming individual rights under FRA 2006. Often the successful claimants were the FRC heads or the Sarpanch's family members. Land is directly related to the food security of the tribals and hence quality of land and irrigation form an important aspect. Both these appeared as a problem to almost all households that we surveyed.

Conclusion: Tribal Entrepreneurship as a Solution

Despite the nature being hostile in terms of hills and non-cultivable land with meagre sources of irrigation, keeping in mind the above challenges the tribals of Dangs have shown entrepreneurship to some extent. With very little land in possession the tribals today have become a burden on land. Their economy has to be diversified. A large portion of them have to seek goodbye from land cultivation. Can entrepreneurship provide an alternative to the present crisis? The growth of Entrepreneurship is related to several factors. The push factor of inadequate land along with poverty, spread of urbanization and industrialization, expansion of education and a number of other factors are responsible for the acceptance of entrepreneurial programs.



Source: DFID Sustainable Livelihood Framework

Agriculture, NTFP, Malki money from the main sources of livelihood for the tribals of Dangs residing there. Rest resort to migration. The above framework of sustainable livelihoods can be used to understand how entrepreneurship can be used to achieve desired outcomes. Five types of capital needed for creating entrepreneurship as shown above are: Human Capital, Natural Capital, Financial Capital, Social Capital and Physical Capital.

Vulnerability Factors in Dangs

Ecological imbalance is seriously undermining the livelihood patterns of tribal populations, enhancing their vulnerability. Deforestation, due to in part to excessive dependence on shifting cultivation, coupled with increased pressure on land has sparked off a spiral of problems including soil erosion, loss of soil fertility and declining productivity which are aggravated by poor water retention.

- Seasonality of crops
- Dependence on rainfall for irrigation
- Difficult terrain
- Rising unavailability of NTFP due to unchecked Malki cutting
- Lack of marketplace for tribal artefacts and small innovations (bamboo articles)

Structures and Processes

Village institutions play an important role in creating the processes that influence people and their access to resources:

- Gram Panchayat
- FRCs
- SHGs
- Water Development Committee
- Village Development Committee
- Van Suraksha Samiti

In context with the ground realities, a tribal entrepreneur with some external support can start his/her own enterprise and turn each of these challenges into business opportunities. The Central Govt. has certain schemes: Entrepreneur of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled tribes shall be provided maximum subsidy, rebate and concessions. Margin money subsidy rate is being enhanced to 25% in order to bring them in main stream of Industrial Development. Apart from this "Scheduled Caste/Scheduled tribe's entrepreneurs promotion Scheme" shall be started. To promote the efficient entrepreneurial/ business activities in the tribal villages, there must be some institutional arrangements to solve the problems in the area of health, education, training, finance, marketing and others. Some efficient efforts need to be made to connect tribal with the financial institutions where the latter can take a proactive approach by providing loans liberally with low interest, create awareness among people about the bank schemes and help them in official formalities, so that the role of dealers/middlemen could be curbed/avoided and they can approach the banks without any hesitation or fear.

The Government programs - especially those pertaining to Scheduled Tribes welfare are never taken seriously and there are no effective monitoring system to pinpoint the failures/deviations from the plan objectives, diversion of resources and lack of relevance / utility of the schemes and to take timely remedial measures and effect course corrections. Therefore, it is suggested for the effective implementation of the welfare programs with close monitoring for immediate interventions. The most important aspect is to motivate the tribal people about the various opportunities of entrepreneurial activities by the Government/ NGOs by conducting the awareness camps of various developmental programs within the short intervals at village, panchayat and block levels.

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Women's Entrepreneurship

