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**GLOCALIZATION OF INDIGENOUS CULTURE:  
A STUDY OF DR ACHYUTA SAMANTA'S CONTRIBUTION TO  
GLOBAL PEACE**

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**Abstract:** Tradition versus individual talent has always resulted in innovations and new experiments in fields like science and education and it also equally holds good in the field of cultural assimilation and change management. This concept can be analyzed in the context of global peace and locating the role of an individual namely Dr Achyuta Samanta whose local efforts have paid global dividends in terms of world peace. Dr Samanta, the founder of KIIT University ([www.kiit.ac.in](http://www.kiit.ac.in)) and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), has tried to empower the youth through these world-class institutions, the former a technical educational institute and the latter a home for 20 thousand plus tribal children, who are given education from KG to PG, accommodation, medicare, earn while you learn facilities, and training and placement absolutely free of cost. This paper intends to focus on the contribution of Dr Achyuta Samanta to world peace by empowering the tribal youth with education as well as his relentless war against poverty, illiteracy, and terrorism --- forces antagonistic to world peace. In doing so, an analysis of Dr Samanta's KISS model of Tribal Development and Social Inclusion vis-à-vis the conceptual framework of the UN Millennium Development Goals is presented with a view to highlighting the relevance of his theory and practice. This paper ascertains whether local efforts can foster global peace.

**Keywords:** KISS, Dr Achyuta Samanta, Millennium Development Goals, tribal development

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**Introduction:** Tradition versus individual talent has always resulted in innovations and new experiments in fields like science and education and it also equally holds good in the field of cultural assimilation and change management. This concept can be analyzed in the context of global peace and locating the role of an individual namely Dr Achyuta Samanta whose local efforts have paid global dividends in terms of world peace. Dr Samanta, the founder of KIIT University ([www.kiit.ac.in](http://www.kiit.ac.in)) and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), has tried to empower the youth through these world-class institutions, the former a technical educational institute and the latter a home for 20 thousand plus tribal children, who are given education from KG to PG, accommodation, medicare, earn while you learn facilities, and training and placement absolutely free of cost. This paper intends to focus on the contribution of Dr Achyuta Samanta to world peace by empowering the tribal youth with education as well as his relentless war against poverty, illiteracy, and terrorism --- forces antagonistic to world peace. In doing so, an analysis of Dr Samanta's KISS model of Tribal Development and Social Inclusion vis-à-vis the conceptual framework of the UN Millennium Development

Goals is presented with a view to highlighting the relevance of his theory and practice. This paper ascertains whether local efforts can foster global peace. A KISS Can Transform the World! United Nation's Youth Assembly celebrated the Malala Day at the UN Headquarters (July 12) to champion the cause of education in general and the girl's rights in particular. India was represented by Laxman Hembram, a student of KISS, who shared his and fellow tribal children's experiences with youth representatives from all over the world in the presence of the UN Secretary-General and the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Mr Gordon Brown. He did highlight "educational backwardness among tribals and efforts that KISS is making to help tribal children join the mainstream society." Laxman did speak what education could and can do and he himself walked the talk.

A question that crops up is what the likes of Laxman would be doing without KISS. Theoretically there may be hundreds of answers to this question but the ground realities imply something else. Laxman, who hails from a poor Santhal family from Mayurbhanj, one of the nine naxal-Maoist affected districts of Odisha (other eight are Malkangiri, Ganjam, Koraput, Gajapati, Rayagada, Sundargarh, Deogarh, Kandhamal). As a matter of fact, all the 20,000 tribal students at KISS, belong to the Naxal-hit areas. It is a fact that Odisha constitutes a vital region in the Red Corridor, which is characterized by high rate of poverty, illiteracy and overpopulation. The naxals and Maoists get their strength in terms of man power, safe havens and moral support from the tribals of these said areas. The tribal youth, which is vulnerable to the lures of the Naxals and Maoists because of compulsions and easy choice, supply strength. Young people of Laxman's age, who are bereft of education and crushed by the wheels of poverty, see a chance of survival or an opportunity of comfort, coming into the fold of the Naxals and Maoists. Then, there is no doubt that KISS is the greatest single but organized peace agent that is not only transforming the lives of the tribals but also nipping the problem of Naxalism just before its conception.

Fighting Divisive Forces: Dr Achyuta Samanta, the Founder of KIIT and KISS, who plans to establish 8 KISS-model schools in tribal areas of Odisha and many more in the country, articulates his conviction: "Meaningfully educating and mainstreaming children from bottom-of-the-pyramid families is the best prescription for combating the Naxalite insurgency confronting the nation, and raising the poor majority out of poverty" (Education World, April 2012, p 48). By providing the basic needs like food, clothing and accommodation on one hand and quality education on the other, KISS is trying not only to eradicate poverty, the root cause of Naxalism, but also enabling the tribals a sustainable voice of local and global peace. In the true sense of the term, Dr Achyuta Samanta is a global crusader of peace with a local beginning. One may be tempted to ask, what made Dr Samanta find education the panacea of all the ills and woes affecting mankind in general and India in particular: poverty, illiteracy, and terrorism?

Dr Samanta gives the reply in the following words: "Having experienced acute poverty and deprivation in my childhood and youth from which I was able to extricate myself through the power of education, it's my life's mission and purpose

to eradicate the deep poverty and ignorance which is the natural condition of children and youth, especially among the tribal communities of Odisha and eastern India [i.e. Naxal-Maoist -hit areas of India] (EW 43). Another question that comes naturally is where does Dr Samanta get the funds to transform his dream into reality?

Peace is Everyone's Right:

The Founder of KISS, Dr Achyuta Samanta, started it with a capital of Rs 5,000 and 12 students in 1992. Over the years the student strength has grown to 20000. Of course it is a herculean task to support so many young children and their growing needs. Though Dr Samanta answers this puzzle in a one liner ---"KIIT is funding KISS and it is as simple as that"---the details really interesting. Three percent of the aggregate revenue of KIIT University (approximately 6 crores), 3% of the gross salary of the employees of KIIT, portions of profit of the vendors and suppliers and donations from parents, alumni and students go up to 25 crores annually. The Ministry of Social Justice and Tribal Welfare provides Rs 4.75 crores towards the nutritional needs of 5000 students. What is interesting that besides occasional corporate donations, the students of KISS themselves a revenue by sale of their handicrafts and other products made in their vocational classes. While KISS retains 30% of it for internal development, the students are allowed to send the money to their families. In other words, 'earn while you learn' scheme helps students to support their respective families as well.

Besides vocational training, the students at KISS receive state-of-the art education in all disciplines that enables them to opt for higher studies like Engineering, Management and Medical sciences. The tribals who are always dogged by their arch enemy illiteracy have started giving it a huge push through KISS. Dr Samanta has proved through KISS what he preaches "Poverty breeds illiteracy. Literacy drives away poverty." It is really heartening that KISS, affiliated to Board of Secondary Education, has been achieving 100% result in Class 10 (HSC) since its inception and it is repeated this year (2013) with more than the state average. It has also achieved 100% result in +2 Science, Arts and Commerce and in Post graduation. Zero drop-out is another feature of KISS. This has been possible due to the holistic education aimed at sustainable development. Anyway, does it remind you of the Millennium Development Goals?

Globalization of the UN Millennium Development Goals: In 2000, 23 international organizations and 192 countries of the world formally agreed to develop "a better world for all" through the auspices of the UN. The goals are:

- (1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- (2) Achieve universal primary education
- (3) Promote gender equality and empower women
- (4) Reduce child mortality
- (5) Improve maternal health
- (6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- (7) Ensure environmental sustainability
- (8) Develop a global partnership for development

Local Efforts Result in Global Pride! In tune with the above, KISS, in its own way,

is trying to contribute to achieve the MDGs in the post-globalized world where noble local (read country-level) initiatives produce global dividends. By providing accommodation, clothing, health facilities and nutritious food to 20000 children and young, it has tried to curb starvation and malnutrition among tribal children. Its 'Earn while you Learn' programme offers 50 vocational skills as socially useful and productive work on the basis of their aptitude, age and interest. While it lays foundation for self-employment for the tribal children, the students also send a major portion of their earnings to their families. Training in nursing, driving, security officer, tailoring, etc. and other indigenous arts and crafts has gone a long way to acquaint tribal children with present-day technological innovations and advancements in a practical and useful manner even as helping nurture and preserve tribal values. KISS has also been extending support to other tribal youths of Odisha in ensuring their livelihood in a dignified way with the motto "Work is Worship". KISS emphasizes linking education with productivity, economic development and poverty eradication without any discrimination whatsoever on grounds of one or the other.

Education with a Cause: While aiming to provide universal education to all tribal children in a planned manner, particularly by establishing more and more KISS model schools in the tribal areas of the country, the KISS management is nevertheless concerned with the holistic development of the incumbent students, who are seen as volunteers of the social inclusion drive. The satisfaction of the KISS-insiders has been translated into success as nearly 40,000 applications are now annually being received, and as per its CEO Dr Prasant Routray, most probably will be realized in a year or two.

The Subaltern Can Speak! As we know child mortality, child labour, and gender discrimination are the issues that plague the tribal society at large. KISS has tried to reduce child mortality by promoting good hygienic and health practices. Its students spread awareness, whenever they visit their homes, among the local community. Girls constitute more than 50% of student strength at KISS. As it focuses on gender equality, both tribal boys and girls are provided with nutritious food and healthcare. The health counseling for girls in KISS dispensary is helpful for the girls and in the long run it will reduce child mortality and maternal mortality rate. By empowering the girls through education, training and counseling, and through their participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities, KISS has helped its girl students develop communication skills and soft skills to prove their potential in national and international events, which involves sports activities.

Involvement in sports is an indispensable part of tribal life. The tribal children are genetically suited for hard work, congregational activities and any work where the brawn and brain can be employed to achieve community goals. With an aim to ensure good health, extra-curricular and recreational needs of young girls and boys at KISS, sports (both traditional and modern) occupies a significant place here. Modern training facilities are provided for rugby, football, hockey, archery, shooting, volleyball, etc. KISS students have become champions in international Rugby tournaments in 2007, 2011. KISS boys won the Coca-Kola Trophy 2013 at the

Coca Cola Inter-School Tournament. KISS girls have brought laurels for the state and the country. For example, Bhagyalaxmi Barik represented India in the 16th Asian Games at China. (Please refer to <http://kiss.ac.in/sports/index.html> for details). It is found that daily exercises, meditation and yoga have bolstered sports performances. However, sports is not the only entertainment at KISS.

“miracles” in academic and in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities by tribal children at KISS would perhaps not been possible if they had been weaned away from their socio-cultural and religious roots. The tribal culture is rich and a paradigm in itself as evidenced in their folk songs and dances. In order to encourage to preserve and also to cultivate their cultural heritage, the students are allowed to work on tribal arts and crafts and indulge in songs and dance which are the essence of the tribal culture of Odisha. Apart from celebrating different festive occasions, KISS encourages its students to perform their cultural activities in important platforms. Young children armed with the knowledge of science and technology and deeply rooted to their societal values, culture and tradition, thanks to the vision of KISS, are a global asset. These boys and girls are national and international ambassadors of global peace transcending language and ethnicity.

Language and ethnocentricity are undoubtedly great barriers when a tribal child enters KISS for the first time. The dialects of each tribe are different from that of others. While communicating with others they face a lot of difficulty. Therefore when a tribal child enters KISS, he/she is first introduced to the senior students of his/her own tribe. Early socialization of few months of the child with empathetic seniors, who are acquainted with the life style at KISS, help them to adapt to the new environment and smooth the process of transition. Tribal teachers, who have passed PG from KISS, are appointed as mentors and they help in breaking language barriers. As tribal faculty, they have greater understanding of students' academic and personal difficulties and needs. This helps the young children enter the world of the language of formal instruction with confidence.

Internationalization: The English Access Micro scholarship Programme at KISS helps to upgrade the students' English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and appreciation of Indian and American democratic principles and culture. The Access classes not only broken their inhibitions to speak a foreign language but also enabled them to perform English plays, Skit, Mock Assembly, Anchoring during the visit of National and International delegates and dignitaries including Nobel Laureates, ambassadors from major countries of the world. (Laxman Hembram is one such student.) The tribal children at KISS have undergone study tours, presented academic papers, and played games abroad (Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, etc.). They have travelled extensively to countries like England, France, Australia, China, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand. The placement of KISS students in companies like TCS proves how they have evolved. Students are pursuing higher degrees like B. Tech, M. Tech, Management, Communication and Media studies in KIIT University, which reserves 5% of its seats for KISS students in Medical, Engineering, Law and Management sciences. Students are also studying in IIMs

and many national-level institutes. They are enjoying the fruit of globalization of the world.

The World Starts Beckoning!

The world has started recognizing the contribution of KISS to the global commitment of 'A Better Life for All'. For example, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), an American TV channel with the highest TRP, telecast a program on KISS for 20 minutes.<sup>1</sup> The programme touched 120 million TV viewers and 29 million internet users. The Reader's Digest featured Dr Achyuta Samanta on its cover page. London's TIME magazine also featured Dr Samanta and carried pages on him and his model of institution. At home also, Dr Samanta, the founder of KIIT and KISS, has attracted attention as a role model and an edupreneur of rare standing. People who have visited KISS have observed and some of the comments on the KISS Visitor Book are reproduced here. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) Chairman Rameshwar Oran commented after visiting KISS: "KISS is realizing the importance of education towards empowering the tribals in the country and it is a role model to be replicated across the country. I congratulate Dr Samanta for such an endeavour." Sri Kapil Sibal, Minister for Communication and Information Technology and Minister of Human Resource and Development, Govt. of India, sounded very optimistic about tribal education: "KISS shows how to convert constitutional guarantee for the tribals into reality." Dr M S Swaminathan writes, "I am happy to be amongst the makers of Modern India. Mind, Skill and Knowledge can be developed through sports, science and culture for which education is the key. I congratulate Dr. Samanta and KISS family members." Sri V. Kishore Chandra Deo, Union Minister of Panchayati Raj and Tribal Affairs writes in February 2013: "I am very happy to see your campus. Students from five to six states are studying here. I had a doubt about the maintainability of tribal tradition and culture at this place. But I observe that their original tradition and culture is very nicely maintained here. This is a very important factor. Even after coming to city and obtaining academic qualifications, even after travelling abroad, we should not lose track of our roots."

A Gandhian with a Vision: Sri Gulam Nabi Azad, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, assesses the founder: "Mahatma Gandhi sacrificed all his pleasures for the nation during struggle for the nation during struggle for freedom. Even after 64 years of independence, Samanta has sacrificed all his pleasures for the society. He is a Gandhian in the true sense." In fact, a single individual has taken significant steps at the local level towards achieving world peace.

**Conclusion:** Glocalization at KISS, while helping the tribal youth to retain the originality of their culture and basic values, also allows them to have a voice at global level. Blending tradition with modernity towards achieving a global citizenship has been quite helpful. Transforming tribal young men and women into global citizens and ambassadors of peace is undoubtedly a noble attempt at ensuring global peace. Dr Achyuta Samanta deserves a Nobel for his pioneering contribution to global peace at the individual level.

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