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The Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) has often been presented as an ideal model for ensuring that tribal children are not deprived of education because of poverty. Over the past three decades, this institute has grown from 250 students to over 27,000 students who are given free education. In return, it has earned a lot of name and fame for itself and its founder, Achyuta

Samanta. But beyond the headlines, there is a darker, murkier truth that has escaped the scrutiny of mainstream media.

The fact that thousands of tribal children are separated from their families after birth, or the fact that what part of our constitution allows a private entity to keep thousands of tribal children away from their culture under one roof has escaped the media and the larger society's attention. This explains why in July 2020, over 200 tribal leaders, academics, activists, etc submitted a petition to The International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Studies (IUAES) to express their dissent against KISS being chosen to host the World Congress of Anthropology (WCA) in 2023.

The petition was submitted to Junji Koizumi, president of International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) along with vice chancellors of Utkal and Sambalpur universities, Soumendra Mohan Patnaik and Deepak Kumar Behera, respectively.

These two universities were also to hold the event along with KISS. The WCA took cognizance of the matter and decided that the KISS will no longer host the event. This information was shared with the vice-chancellor of Sambalpur University on August 16, 2020.

Pranab Doley, who belongs to the Mising tribe in Assam and is the advisor to Jeepal Krishak Shramik Sangha, a farmers' organisation, played a leading role in this campaign. He, along with renowned tribal author Gladson Dungdung and other academicians and civil society members, exposed the systemic injustices that have been meted out to tribals in KISS in the name of upliftment and education. TwoCircles.net correspondent Amit Kumar spoke with Doley at length to understand the reasons behind the protests against KISS and why such institutions are dangerous for the tribal community of India. TCN: Could you tell us about when you came to know about the KISS event and what was your first reaction? Doley: The event was declared two years back in 2018.

It's been two years now that we have been thinking and sharpening our arguments towards an opposition to the event that was supposed to be held in KISS in Odisha. TCN: What was the process of building the argument? Doley: There has been a huge body of work that has gone into this. And in the process, academics, activists, both Adivasis and non-Adivasis have contributed to the same. It also includes more than 50 interviews of students, staff members who have resigned from KISS or are working there still. So, it comes from a knowledge base of not only the larger holistic understanding of Adivasi world view and their knowledge about building the future. KISS as an institute is not eligible to host and organize an event of the stature of World Anthropological Congress. This comes from experiences of more than 50 people within KISS and there are many more who did not want to speak about their experiences.

The whole argumentation that comes up against KISS comes out of lived reality, scientific studies

and the historical understanding of what such institutes have done in different parts of the world, how indigenous and Adivasi knowledge bases have been annihilated historically. We don't want this to continue in the modern age, where we talk about science taking precedence over illogical ideas. TCN: Could you give us a few examples of what were the most distressing testimonies that emerged out of KISS which strengthened your protests? Doley: A majority of the cases we have seen of the people who have talked about their experiences has been very disturbing. It has impacted them both physically as well as psychologically. It also impacted the individual but also their community. This sums up the kind of trauma that the members who have decided to come out and speak of their experiences. Also, there are references to large-scale violation of children's rights. The very existence of KISS is a symbol of colonial apparatus.

Where in the world do you find a single house holding more than 30,000 Adivasi children? Is

that even human? We would like to ask the Indian government, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, who shamelessly even awarded KISS a few years back for sadly recognizing the 'grand work' that the institute is doing. The National Commission needs to go back to the constitution of India which clearly states the rights of indigenous people of this country, the fundamental right to education for every child in this country in a free environment, the right to life, the PESA, the fifth and sixth schedule. Here, I would also like to include the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. They need to wake up. They need to look into the gross violations of its people. And if they can't stand up to this, then people like us will, who still have the rationality to think about the future of our children. I mean, just that you are failing to provide our people with the basic standard of education so that they too can compete with others without losing their culture, their knowledge base. It's your duty so that they too can become doctors, engineers and social scientists. KISS is a Brahmanical institute. The

moment you enter the campus, you see replicas of temples, which are not a part of Adivasi culture and heritage.

Is this a Sanskritization process? The Indian government and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs need to immediately act on this and provide the people of this country with a transparent report about what is happening in KISS. TCN: You mention how Adivasi children have almost been 'herded' in one place. But KISS is not a new institute. It has received support from the government as well as NGOs. How do we prevent another institute like KISS does not replicate its model? Doley: It is already happening. We have come to know that KISS is signing MoUs with other tribal states to create similar models. The whole glorification of Achyut Samanta and the kind of patronization he receives as the patron....no I would call him the owner of this institute proves that it is an Adivasi annihilation project. It aims to take away their resources, their land, their forests, their rivers and completely dispose of the communities who

continue to proudly showcase their symbiotic relationship with nature. In India, sadly, we know that the majority of resources are still present in the Adivasi territory.

A project like KISS cannot be seen in an isolated incident. It's a designed process to take away their resources and this is substantiated by the fact that multiple corporations, mining companies fund KISS. It is a design to annihilate the Adivasis and take away their resources from them. TCN: What were your experiences with regards to the petition and the response of the World Congress of Anthropology? Doley: This attempt by Adivasis and non-Adivasis is the first step towards taking on an inhuman institute like KISS and it's also a larger global struggle. The discourse, the idea behind this is that no children should be treated like this. Children have their rights and they need to be respected. If people who are considered adults do not take up this fight, then who will? The struggle against KISS is not a rabble-rousing struggle: it comes from a deep understanding of what is happening in the

name of education. It is just the first step into the injustice meted out to the Adivasi people in the name of education. Till the day, institutes like KISS are erased from democratic countries like India. KISS does not have the legitimacy to survive.

Our constitution does not allow this kind of an institute. Regarding the response of the World Congress of Anthropology, I must point out that there was a lot of support for our statement from across the world from people from all walks of life. IACN took cognizance of the fact that there is resistance against their step. KISS is an illegal institute and needs to shut down. We also want the World Congress of Anthropology to take a stronger position. Just saying that they decided against holding the event because a lot of people protested against the same does not give us a complete answer. I am sure the World Congress of Anthropology has studied indigenous societies across the world. I am sure they know what is happening in KISS.

We demand that they must come out with a clear stand on this idea. How does KISS have the authority to keep more 30,000 students under one roof? Do they have the right to hegemonize so many children? Do they have the right to take children away from their mothers? All these questions need to be answered by the World Anthropological Congress too else Adivasis will point fingers at them too. It is a matter of our life and death. For you, it may be just an institute, but for us, it is our future. We cannot let Corporate and Brahmanical institutes like KISS to annihilate our future and history.