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Economic Adaptations And Cultural Change Among Tribal Communities In Purulia

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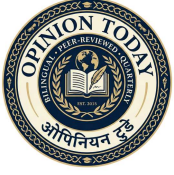
Abstract

Tribes are groups of people that continue to exist in a traditionally unrecognised form in contemporary society. Numerous indigenous peoples call India, and the rest of the globe, home. Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh are home to about 55% of India's tribal population. The remaining tribal people live in the western part of the country, the Dravidian area, and the islands of Andaman, Nicobar, and Lakshadweep. Whenever various aspects of material growth were introduced, tribal identity has always been subject to significant difficulties. As a result of this development, the indigenous groups' ways of life and natural environments are being negatively impacted. The indigenous people now coexist with people of many other ethnic backgrounds after losing their land. A change in the way these indigenous people live their lives is brought about by their cultural integration and the influence of Hinduism in rural culture. When compared to other tribal districts in India, Purulia ranks at the bottom. The indigenous peoples of this region have maintained their own unique way of life, language, culture, traditions, customs, and values for generations. Nonetheless, these folks are among the country's lowest of the poor when it comes to their financial situation. Traditional communities in this area rely on the forest for food and shelter. This research intends to zero in on the Sabar people and the challenges they confront in maintaining their way of life in light of recent cultural shifts and socioeconomic conditions.

Keywords: Purulia, Economic Adaptation, Cultural Change, Tribal Community

Introduction

Located mostly in the Indian states of Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Tripura, and Orissa, the Santhal constitute the biggest religiously devout adivasi population in the country. The adivasis and tribals are indigenous peoples that number 90 million in India. A total of 8.10% of Indians identify as tribal, with 14.8% of Gujaratis falling into this category, as reported in the 2011 census. The Santhals make up 51.8% of West Bengal's overall ST population, which is more than half. An ancient people who recognise the power of a chief and often believe they have a common ancestry are considered to be part of a tribe, as stated in the Oxford English Dictionary. The term "social change" describes the way in



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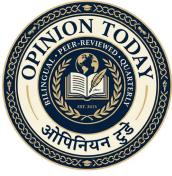
which society and interpersonal relationships are evolving as a result of social processes facilitated by the internet. As a result, people from all over the world are forming new relationships and engaging in mutually beneficial activities. There are several ways to describe it. Several facets of social phenomena, systems, customs, traditions, interactions, habits, and organisational setup are elucidated by the concept of social change. Merrill and Eldredge state that when a considerable portion of a population does something different from what they or their ancestors did in the past, it is called social change. When people's habits and perspectives shift, it's called social change, says M.D. Jenson. All parts of society—their systems, processes, patterns, interactions, and organisations are subject to change, says Jones.

When compared to non-tribal or more developed societies, tribal cultures' socioeconomic structures are radically different. Their technological simplicity is in keeping with their conservative values and the natural environment in which they live. In addition, people rely on a variety of jobs to exist off the "Marginal Economy," which means their economy is essentially subsistence-level. As a whole, the Indian tribal economy reflects the overlapping economic phases of the country's indigenous peoples, who range from subsistence farming to factory employment. Finally, it's worth noting that, in most cases, a tribe is seen as a financially autonomous community with its own unique economic system. One defining feature of tribal economies is the interdependence of human activities with their natural surroundings, most often the forest. About 15% of the landmass is home to indigenous peoples, who inhabit a wide variety of landscapes, from lowlands and forests to highlands and inaccessible regions. The social, economic, and educational levels of various tribal communities vary greatly. Contrasting with the more mainstream lifestyles of certain tribal tribes, there is a set of 75 Scheduled Tribes called Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) that are defined by:

- the level of technology prior to agriculture
- the population is either flat or falling
- the literacy rate is very low
- and the economy is operating at a subsistence level.

Literature Review

Guha, Subrata & Ismail, Md. (2015) Tribes are groups of people that continue to exist in a traditionally unrecognised form in contemporary society. Numerous indigenous peoples call India, and the rest of the globe, home. Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh are home to about 55% of India's tribal population. The remaining tribal people live in the western part of the country, the Dravidian area, and the islands of Andaman, Nicobar, and Lakshadweep. Tribes, in the view of D.N. Majumdar, are social groups that share a common language or dialect while acknowledging social isolation from other tribes or castes. They are also known as endogamous groups that are not administered by a tribal king or anyone else. Among them, the Santhal are notable since they make up over half of India's tribal population. Using the Santhal villages in Birbhum district as an example, this article seeks to provide an encouraging account of the plight of Indian tribes while also learning about their diverse culinary traditions, religious practices, social structures (such as marriage), and levels of self-awareness. One of the key factors that might dictate the degree of growth and changes in lifestyle patterns is social transformation. According to L.M. Lewis tribal societies are relatively tiny, have a limited range of social, legal, and political interactions in terms of both space and time, and have a religion, moral code, and worldview that are proportional to these factors.



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Mukherjee, Somnath & Malik, Uma. (2021) Examining the cultural, institutional, and social settings of people-environment interactions is central to social ecology, which seeks to understand how humans interact with their natural surroundings. It is a call to social reconstruction along ecological lines, but more importantly, it is a call for moral regeneration. According to Ramachandra Guha, there are two main components of social ecology: ecological infrastructure and social models. Society, culture, economics, and politics were his additional divisions within the social frameworks. This research presents a new perspective on the unique social and ecological needs of the Santal and Kharia Sabar peoples of the Purulia province. This study explores the ways in which these two communities are bringing ecological and social harmony into their daily lives by combining ecosophic and geosophic concepts and creating a special harmony between humans and the natural world.

Gorai, Partha & Dey, Abhijit & Modak, Biplob. (2022) The Birhors are a nomadic, primitive, hunter-gatherer people that live on the Indian subcontinent and get most of their food from the forest. They would rather continue living their archaic way of life in relative isolation from modern civilization. As one of the most archaic tribes in India, they are listed as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) on the scheduled tribal list. Despite claims to the contrary in the Indian census, the study discovered no Birhors in West Bengal outside of the Purulia district. This section makes an effort to depict the present-day socioeconomic situation of this underprivileged community in the Purulia area. The district is divided into three blocks, and 113 Birhor households are spread out among them. Slowly but surely, they are beginning to engage in a variety of government-sponsored developmental programmes and are displaying a desire in interacting with mainstream culture. Additionally, Birhor youngsters are receiving elementary schooling. But right now, they're having a hard time keeping their religious and cultural identity in this area.

Jana, Narayan & Ghosh, Prasanta. (2015) Orissa is a significant state in eastern India, notwithstanding its traditional culture and socioeconomic backwardness. With a total population of 41,947,358 in 2011, a considerable portion of 22.1% belongs to tribal people (8,145,081 in 2011). Nine out of thirty districts are classified as tribal districts based on the Location Quotient value. Not only are they physically isolated, but they are also among the most backward societies in the world. Natural resource exploitation, a pre-agricultural technological level, and a distinct indigenous form of labour constitute the whole of their way of life and economic system. The longstanding bond between indigenous communities and the natural world has been shattered by the advent of modern industrialization and the free market. With this background, the current research endeavours to investigate the evolving socioeconomic situation in Orissa's tribal regions. Consequently, in order to portray patterns of quality of life at the district level and to discover variance among the primitive tribal families in the research region, a number of socio-economic variables have been examined and compared. Also, the socioeconomic status and quality of life on a block level may be shown using the example study of Mayurbhanj. It is worth noting that Mayurbhanj has the greatest concentration of tribal people out of the 30 districts in Orissa when considering the Location Quotient score. This study aims to better understand the socio-economic disparities in Orissa and Mayurbhanj and to identify ways to help the primitive tribal community integrate into mainstream society by addressing these disparities and variations. While the district's quality of life has improved significantly over the years, socio-economic inequities in caste and gender persist, particularly in tribal and backward regions, according to the examination of health-related variables.

Patra, et al (2021) In order for a society's social and economic circumstances to improve, education is a crucial component. When it comes to global population, India is second to none. The tribal community in India accounts for around 8.6% of the overall population and has a literacy rate of roughly 58.96%, according to the 2011 census. With a total population of around 5.97% tribal, West Bengal is one of the most popularly populated tribal states in India (Census 2011). Because most of the tribal people of Purulia are extremely poor, socially deprived, jobless, and unable to get appropriate social benefits due to



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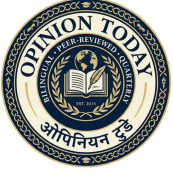
their dispersed settlements, the district has a significantly lower literacy rate despite having a large number of tribal people living in its hilly and forested region. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine the educational situation of West Bengali tribal people, focusing on the Purulia area. Additionally, this article provided an analysis of the factors contributing to the educational backwardness of the indigenous population in this region and proposed solutions to improve their educational opportunities. As one of the main roadblocks to our society's progress, ST literacy is very low in India. The Indian government has recently instituted policies that are vital, such as a tribal development strategy, educational committees and commissions, regulations regarding reserves for indigenous people, and the administration of scholarships to indigenous students. The literacy rates of indigenous communities rise over a period of many years to accomplish this. The educational opportunities and infrastructure in Purulia district and among India's indigenous peoples would benefit from these measures in the years to come.

Research Methodology

The Study Area

The Purulia district has been selected as the region of investigation by the author. Extending eastward from the Chotanagpur plateau lies the Purulia district. The Purulia district is located between the coordinates of 22°42'35" North and 23°42'00" North latitude and 85°49'25" East and 86°54'37" East longitude. A total of 6,259 square kilometres makes up this district's administrative area. Because of its rich indigenous history, the Purulia area was hand-picked. After West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district, this one has the second-highest concentration of tribal people. About 18.45% of the overall population in the district is tribal, according to the 2011 Census.





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Data Based and Methodology

The study does make use of secondary sources, the authors give field survey data the weight it deserves. Using a random sample procedure, 80 families were chosen from the study areas. Secondary information was sourced from the Gramme Panchayat and the BDO's office. Lastly, for analysis, we arrange the data in the right table format and make charts and graphs. At long last, graphical and statistical representations of all the data have been completed.

Selection of tribal Community

So far, studies have only concentrated on the Sabar people.

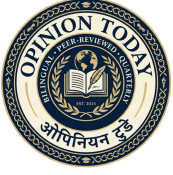
Results

Economic condition

Cooperation and collaborative efforts are the basis of the extremely rudimentary tribal economy. Natural resources are the only source of income for indigenous communities. Traditional Purulia indigenous people subsisted mostly on hunting and gathering. Their economic activities are solely centred on the forest. Their economic operations revolve upon Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP).

The native traditional food sources (NTFP) that they directly consume include fruits, roots, flowers, seeds, honey, mushrooms, and small animals such as pigs, hens, cocks, pigeons, and piglets. Utilising a variety of jungle-sourced raw materials, they not only employ NTFP to meet their physical requirements, but also turn it into money. They start their own little businesses creating things like weaving, spinning, and baskets. A number of indigenous communities also practise agriculture. The indigenous people's connection to the forest is deeply rooted in their religious beliefs, values, and way of life. They have a deep connection to the natural world. They don't save any of the natural resources for later; they use them up as they come up with them. A significant shift in the traditionally dependent tribal economic structure has occurred as a result of imperialist interference in the tribal periphery zone. Rapid urbanisation and industrialization are leading to deforestation, which is destroying thousands of trees in the name of progress. While mainstream civilizations have thrived, indigenous people have remained mired in poverty as development programmes have failed to lift them out of their plight. Tribal communities have had to diversify their economies away from their reliance on the forest as a means of subsistence due to the profound effects of deforestation, fast urbanisation, and overexploitation of natural resources on tribal socioeconomic life. Many indigenous people are leaving their traditional homes and establishing themselves professionally in non-tribal places, according to the report. They work as drivers, daily labourers, construction workers, housekeepers, construction workers, lunchtime chefs, and so on. Now that the MGNREGA initiative has been introduced, people have a chance to get a job with decent pay.

The gradual but steady impact of neo imperial interference on the social situation of the indigenous people, as well as their forced adaptation to modern culture, technology, and capitalism, has long been apparent.



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Characteristics of Economic Life of the Sabar Tribe of Purulia District of West Bengal:

Here are a few things you could notice about the Sabar Tribe in terms of their economic life:

- ❖ Forest Based Economy;
- ❖ Domestic or Familial/mode of Production;
- ❖ Simple Technology;
- ❖ Absence of Profit Motive in Exchange;
- ❖ Community: as a Cooperative Unit;
- ❖ Gift and Ceremonial Exchange;
- ❖ Periodical Markets;
- ❖ Interdependence

Socio-Cultural Aspects of Sabar

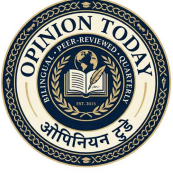
● Occupation

Traditional Sabar subsistence included hunting and gathering wild fruits and vegetables. However, their means of subsistence have been jeopardised ever since the Forest Preservation Act of 1952. It is now a game of chance to collect even a little quantity of food. As a people, they are landless and lack access to arable land. Consequently, they are reliant on hiring out their labour to the local Hindu Santal, Mahato, and other farmers for subsistence. They sell the fruits, flowers, and honey they gather from the forest at the local markets during their spare time. Men of a certain age eagerly await opportunities to go hunting.

The forest-dwelling Sabars were just as abused and mistreated by the British as the Lodha and Kharias. Forcing themselves to work as landless labourers or gathering materials from the wild had brought them nothing but humiliation and exploitation. Because there was never enough labour, they had been almost starved on several occasions. Their neighbours, government officials, and police had never assisted them; on the contrary, they had taken advantage of them and stolen their property. The result is a grave danger to their way of life. The Sabars have shifted their focus to agriculture as a career after independence, when forest collecting were hindered. Ten percent of Sabars were farmers and seventy-nine percent worked as agricultural workers in 1971. The second position, on the other hand, is temporary, lasting just a few of months out of the year. They usually end up starving. Extreme hunger has forced them to turn to superstitious rituals and risky experimental hack remedies since they just cannot afford to buy food, clothing, or medication at this time. The Sabars have been in this predicament for the last 30 years, since independence, through all the rhetoric about lifting them out of poverty.

● Cultural Assimilation in Festivals of Sabar

The Sabar people live in harmony with the natural world. Consequently, they revered the natural world as a deity. They worshipped the elements, including the sky, trees, air, water, forest, and mountains. As a result of their struggles for existence in the natural world, they came to revere and fear God. Their religion was based on belief, and from these ideas sprang many rites. Sahajiya Buddhist literature mentions a goddess or divinity called Karna Sabari. The goddess adorned herself with tree leaves and embraced herself in the skin of a tiger. A slayer of epidemics and illnesses, she embodies youth and thunder. The Sabars' primal goddess. Nihar Ranjan Roy claims that the forest dwellers have a special bond with the



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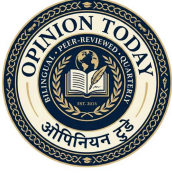
goddess Manasa and the deity Sabar. In cases of snake bite, manasa may be a lifesaver. Songs of the Sabar clan, which are comparable to the vajrayana Buddhist prayers, are found in Charyapada. Local mythology holds that the Sabar dynasty had a deity called Nilmadhav. This deity is revered and honoured with great majesty. The Sabar celebrates the New Year on January 1st, also known as Poila Baishakh, and all of their annual events start on that day. For private family prayers, every Sabar household crafts a ceremonial pedestal (Manch / Than). On that day, every family patriarch sits on a pedestal and pays homage to their ancestors via rituals like fasting and animal sacrifice. There will be festivities all day long since it is a good day for starting new things, whether that's purchasing a home, constructing one, excavating a pond, etc.

It is said that this is an excellent day to start over with everything. Badhna Puja is observed during Kali Puja. Another name for this puja is the Gorya Puja. In the days leading up to Kali Puja, every home undergoes a makeover adorned with vibrant flowers, natural hues, and intricate designs.

Beyond this, the Sabars honour deities associated with nature, such as mountain gods, Dalmas, Dharburu, Porapaku, and so on. The 'Garam Than' are a number of sacred trees located outside the settlement. People believed that the Garam God would protect their new home from harm, therefore they dedicated the tiles to him while they were building it. 'Baghut Puja' occurred when Sabars prayed to animals as well. "Baghut Than" was produced in several of the dwellings' courtyards. They attribute their safety from predatory animals to Baghut God. The Sabars have a strict no-marriage policy regarding the same-gotra (cow pen). Although love weddings are popular, people used to believe that being married to someone from the same gotra portends bad luck or maybe the husband's or wife's death. Marriage and death, however, were accompanied by a number of ceremonial duties. Women who are expecting a child should stay inside throughout the night. Traditions like as washing, clipping hair, and other sanitization rituals are performed after a kid is born. Many ceremonies are performed during a marriage. The marriage ritual makes use of a number of sacred objects, including swords, bows and arrows, mahul trees, and more. While most Sabars choose to bury their deceased, there are instances when they choose to burn them. Sabar Utsav, which takes place during Durga Puja, is mentioned in the Kalika Puran. According to anthropologist Atul Krishna Sur, not even Brahmins would deny the existence of the Sabar people since their civilization was so backwards. Mainstream Hinduism in Bengal and Orissa owes a great deal to Sabar traditions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Purulia district's indigenous peoples use a wide range of cultural practices to uphold their long-established norms of behaviour, including customs, beliefs, and taboos. This research presents a new perspective on the cultural and socio-ecological transformation of the Sabar people, who are a tribal group in the area. The federal and state governments have offered these indigenous communities a range of programmes. The indigenous people in some areas have reaped the advantages of these initiatives, while others have no idea that they exist. Sabar integration into the territorial Hindu social structure just deepens with the incorporation of its fundamental disconnection. They make an effort to blend in with Hindu culture since they see Hindu society and its norms as second home. Direct eye contact with other networks and the ability to maintain factions and rituals suddenly contradicted them. In their efforts to adapt their inherent culture to meet the needs of a new, more modern kind of distinctiveness, they are shedding the superstitious beliefs and practices of their forebears. The development of Hinduism may be traced back to the coming together of several ancestral groups, who organised their religious beliefs and customs. Brahmanical rehearsals scolded the social and religious purposes of these overindulged meetings. As they gain status as a Tribe-standing labour continuity, the Sabar people get closer to Hindu religious Caste culture. In the face of economic hardship, the Sabar tribal populace and their leaders have



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taken to the streets in a variety of imaginative and revolutionary methods.

The new economic policies have had far-reaching effects on people's livelihoods and living situations, since they have brought fragile and basic tribal economies into closer alignment with global markets. Market penetration, commoditization, commercialization, and economic integration have all played a role in the economic demise of Sabar indigenous people. The economic situation of the Sabar tribal people has deteriorated due to several factors, including overwhelming debt, land alienation, landlessness, and bonded labour.

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