



A Journey Through Time: The History of Tribals in Jharkhand.

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into the history of the tribal communities in Jharkhand, India. Over the course of centuries, these indigenous groups have inhabited the rugged landscapes of Jharkhand, forging unique traditions, languages, and social structures deeply rooted in their ancestral heritage. The narrative traverses through time, exploring the historical evolution of tribal societies in the region, from ancient times to the present day. Through an interdisciplinary lens, we examine the cultural practices, traditional knowledge systems, and socio-economic dynamics that have shaped the identity of Jharkhand's tribals. Furthermore, the article sheds light on the challenges faced by these communities in the face of modernization and globalization, as well as the resilience and adaptation strategies employed to navigate changing landscapes. Ultimately, this journey through time serves to illuminate the significance of preserving and honoring the cultural heritage of Jharkhand's tribes, while also recognizing the imperative of empowering these communities to thrive in the contemporary world.

Keywords: Tribals, Jharkhand, History of Jharkhand

History of Jharkhand

Jharkhand, a state located in eastern India, is rich and diverse, spanning millennia of human civilization and cultural evolution. From ancient times to the present, the region has been home to various indigenous communities, witnessed the rise and fall of powerful kingdoms, and played a significant role in the struggle for independence from colonial rule. Minz (2022) provided a detailed overview of the history of Jharkhand, tracing its evolution from ancient times to the modern era.

Ancient Period: The history of Jharkhand can be traced back to the ancient period, with evidence of human habitation dating back to prehistoric times. The region was inhabited by several indigenous tribes, including the Santhal, Munda, Ho, Oraon, and others. These tribes practiced agriculture, hunting, and gathering, and developed their own distinct cultures and traditions. The ancient history of Jharkhand is also marked by the presence of several important dynasties, including the Mauryas, Guptas, and Kushans, who ruled over parts of the region.

Medieval Period: During the medieval period, Jharkhand came under the influence of various dynasties and kingdoms. The region was part of the Magadha Empire, which was one of the most powerful empires in ancient India. It later came under the control of the Gupta Empire and the Palas. The medieval period also saw the rise of indigenous kingdoms in Jharkhand, such as the Nagvanshi, Chero, and Singhbhum dynasties. These kingdoms played a significant role in shaping the socio-cultural and political landscape of the region.

Colonial Era: The arrival of European colonial powers in India had a profound impact on the history of Jharkhand. The region came under the control of the British East India Company in the 18th century, following the Battle of Plassey in 1757. The British colonial administration introduced various policies and laws that adversely affected the indigenous communities of Jharkhand. The exploitation of natural resources, particularly coal and minerals, led to the displacement of tribal populations and the destruction of their traditional way of life.

Tribal Uprisings: The colonial period also witnessed several tribal uprisings in Jharkhand against British rule and exploitation. The Santhal Rebellion of 1855-1856, led by tribal leaders like Sidhu and Kanhu, was one of the most significant uprisings in the region. The rebellion was brutally suppressed by the British authorities, but it inspired other indigenous communities to resist colonial oppression. The tribal uprisings played a crucial role in shaping the nationalist movement in India and eventually contributed to the country's independence in 1947.

Post-Independence Period: After India gained independence from British rule, the demand for a separate state for the tribal communities of Jharkhand gained momentum. The region witnessed widespread socio-political movements advocating for the creation of a separate state. Finally, on November 15, 2000, Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar to become the 28th state of the Indian Union. The creation of Jharkhand was a significant milestone in the history of the region, as it provided greater autonomy and representation for its tribal population.

Modern Era: In the modern era, Jharkhand has emerged as a major center of industrial development in India, owing to its rich mineral resources. The state is known for its abundance of coal, iron ore, bauxite, and other minerals, which have attracted investment from both domestic and international

companies. However, rapid industrialization has also led to environmental degradation and displacement of tribal communities, leading to conflicts over land and resources.

Tribals in Jharkhand

Jharkhand, the land of forests and hills, holds a rich tapestry of tribal history that weaves through centuries. Situated in eastern India, Jharkhand is renowned for its diverse tribal communities, each with its unique culture, traditions, and way of life. Exploring the history of these tribes unveils a saga of resilience, struggle, and adaptation, reflecting their enduring connection to the land and their indomitable spirit. According to 2001 census, 91.7 percent of tribals reside in villages. There are 32 tribal groups in Jharkhand and classified as follows: 1. Hunter-gatherer type – Birhor, Korwa, hill Kharia. 2. Shifting agriculture – Sauria, Paharia. 3. Simple Artisans - Mahli, Lohra, Karmali, Chik Baraik. 4. Settled agriculturist – Santhal, Munda, Oraon, ho, Bhumij. Shukla and Shahdeo (2019) reported that the tribes of Jharkhand are divided into two groups primitive and non primitive. The culture of primitive groups like Korwas are almost on the verge of extinction. The historical journey of tribals can be explained in the following ways:

Ancient Roots: The history of tribal communities in Jharkhand traces back to antiquity, with evidence suggesting their presence in the region since prehistoric times. Archaeological excavations have unearthed artifacts and cave paintings dating back thousands of years, offering glimpses into the early lifestyles and socio-cultural practices of these indigenous groups. These ancient tribes were predominantly hunter-gatherers, relying on the abundant natural resources of the region for sustenance.

Impact of urban and more advanced communities: The interaction of advanced communities living in urban areas marked a significant turning point in the history of Jharkhand's tribal communities. The advanced communities, with their agricultural practices and hierarchical social structure, gradually extended their influence upon the lands inhabited by the indigenous tribes. This led to conflicts over territory and resources, as well as the assimilation of certain tribal groups into the advanced communities.

Colonial Era: The colonial period brought further upheaval to the tribal societies of Jharkhand. The British East India Company, seeking to exploit the region's rich mineral resources and fertile lands, implemented policies that marginalized and exploited the indigenous populations. Tribals were displaced from their ancestral lands, often forcibly, to make way for mining operations, plantations, and infrastructure projects. This period witnessed numerous revolts and uprisings by tribal communities against British rule, as they fought to protect their way of life and autonomy.

Struggle for Identity and Rights: Following India's independence in 1947, the tribal communities of Jharkhand continued to face challenges in asserting their identity and securing their rights. The post-independence era saw rapid industrialization and urbanization, leading to further encroachment on tribal lands and displacement of indigenous populations. In response, grassroots movements advocating for tribal rights and self-determination gained momentum, culminating in the formation of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in the 1970s.

Statehood and Empowerment: The culmination of decades of struggle came with the creation of the state of Jharkhand on November 15, 2000. The formation of the new state was a significant milestone for the tribal communities, as it provided them with greater autonomy and a platform to assert their cultural, economic, and political rights. The establishment of tribal welfare schemes, reservation policies, and affirmative action initiatives aimed at addressing historical injustices and empowering marginalized groups.

Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities: Despite significant strides in recent years, the tribal communities of Jharkhand continue to face numerous challenges. Economic disparities, lack of access to education and healthcare, and environmental degradation remain pressing issues affecting tribal populations. Additionally, the ongoing processes of globalization and urbanization pose threats to indigenous cultures and ways of life.

Impact of Modernization and Globalization: The impact of modernization and globalization is profound and multifaceted, touching nearly every aspect of human life across the globe. Modernization refers to the process of societal change characterized by the adoption of new technologies, ideologies, and practices, while globalization refers to the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of economies, cultures, and societies worldwide. Together, these forces have reshaped economies, cultures, politics, and environments in both positive and negative ways.

1. Economic Impact:

- Industrialization and Urbanization: Modernization and globalization have accelerated the pace of industrialization and urbanization in many parts of the world. This has led to the growth of cities, the expansion of manufacturing sectors, and the rise of new industries, creating job opportunities and driving economic growth.

- Global Trade and Markets: Globalization has facilitated the integration of national economies into the global market, enabling the free flow of goods, services, capital, and labor across borders. This has increased international trade, fostered economic interdependence, and provided consumers with access to a wider variety of products and services.

- Income Inequality: However, modernization and globalization have also exacerbated income inequality within and between countries. While some regions have experienced rapid economic growth and development, others have been left behind, leading to disparities in income, wealth, and opportunities.

2. Cultural Impact:

- Cultural Exchange: Globalization has led to increased cultural exchange and interaction between different societies, fostering greater understanding, tolerance, and appreciation of diverse cultures, languages, and traditions.

- Cultural Homogenization: At the same time, there are concerns about cultural homogenization and the erosion of local traditions and identities in the face of dominant global cultural influences, such as Westernization and consumerism.

- Digital Media and Communication: The rise of digital media and communication technologies has further facilitated cultural exchange and the spread of ideas and information across the globe, enabling individuals to connect and collaborate on a global scale.

3. Political Impact:

- Transnational Issues: Modernization and globalization have given rise to a range of transnational issues, such as climate change, terrorism, pandemics, and migration, which require coordinated international responses and cooperation.

- Political Instability: Globalization has also contributed to political instability in some regions, as rapid economic and social changes disrupt traditional power structures and fuel grievances and conflicts.

4. Environmental Impact:

- Resource Depletion and Pollution: The pursuit of economic growth and industrial development associated with modernization and globalization has led to increased resource depletion, environmental degradation, and pollution, threatening the sustainability of ecosystems and the well-being of future generations.

- Climate Change: Globalization has contributed to climate change through the increased production and consumption of goods, the burning of fossil fuels, and deforestation, highlighting the need for collective action to mitigate its impacts.

5. Social Impact:

- Changing Social Structures: Modernization and globalization have transformed social structures and relationships, leading to changes in family dynamics, gender roles, and community ties, as individuals adapt to new lifestyles and opportunities.

- Migration and Diaspora: Globalization has facilitated migration and the formation of diaspora communities, as people move across borders in search of better economic opportunities, education, and quality of life.

The impact of modernization and globalization is far-reaching and complex, reshaping economies, cultures, politics, and environments in profound ways. While these forces have brought about significant benefits, such as economic growth, cultural exchange, and technological innovation, they have also generated challenges and inequalities that need to be addressed through concerted international efforts and cooperation. However, amidst these challenges, there are also opportunities for growth and development. Efforts to promote sustainable livelihoods, preserve indigenous knowledge, and empower tribal communities through education and skill-building initiatives are underway. Moreover, the rich cultural heritage of Jharkhand's tribes presents opportunities for tourism and cultural exchange, which can contribute to economic development while preserving cultural identity.

Conclusion:

The history of tribals in Jharkhand is a testament to the resilience, adaptability, and enduring spirit of indigenous communities in the face of adversity. From ancient times to the present day, these tribes have navigated through myriad challenges while preserving their unique cultural heritage and deep connection to the land. Yadav (2022) noticed that while the state holds the distinction of being a tribal-dominated region, the erosion of indigenous languages and oral cultures poses a significant threat to the identity of these communities. Kumar (2022) reported that the caste system separated people based on their caste groups and their certifications led to unscrupulous activities like fake caste certificates etc. Pushplata (2019) endorsed that monoculture is silently creeping into the mind of the common people due to globalization thus effacing the interface between locality-defined cultures that had constituted tribal identities. As Jharkhand moves forward into the future, it is essential to recognize the contributions of its tribal communities and work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society where their rights and aspirations are fully realized. The history of Jharkhand is a story of resilience, struggle, and resilience. From ancient times to the present, the region has been shaped by the interactions between indigenous tribes, powerful empires, colonial powers, and modern industrial forces. Despite facing numerous challenges, the people of Jharkhand have continued to preserve their cultural heritage and identity, making significant contributions to the socio-economic and political landscape of India.

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