"Tribal Political Leadership and its Impact on Indian Polity: A Comprehensive Study"
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Abstract:

The Latin word "Tribus" is where the word "tribe" originates. The term was originally used by the Romans to describe social divisions. According to later usage, it meant impoverished people. The spread of colonization, especially in Asia and Africa, gave rise to the English language's current popular meaning.

Unity in diversity is Indian culture and at the core of that diversity are the tribes located in different regions of India. The tribes of India, living in different regions, through their culture, contribute to giving Indian culture a unique culture. The cultures of the country got imprinted on each other. Since the tribes were many, it is natural that there was diversity in their culture as well. And the Indian culture which contributed to the emergence of their diverse culture also became the one to embrace diversity.

The election of Draupadi Murmu as India's 15th President is rich in symbolism. She will be the first person from a tribal background to take the office. Ms. Draupadi Murmu's election is a milestone in the journey of tribal empowerment. Her election to the highest office in the country comes 101 years after two tribes people were elected to legislative bodies in colonial India.

The tribes in India form an important part of the total population. It represents an element in Indian society which is integrated with the cultural mosaic of our civilization. The tribal population of India constitutes nearly 8.6 percent of the total population. In Madhya Pradesh nearly 21.1 percent.

Hence, an Academician has been making efforts to define a tribe. The Dictionary of political science defines a tribe as a ''political group'', usually comprising several bands or lineage groups, each with similar language and lifestyle, definite area, dialect, cultural homogeneity, and unifying social organization and occupying a distinct territory. Kinship is the basis of tribal membership.

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Definition of Tribe: In the above context, a question arises as to who will be called tribes. There is a considerable difference of opinion among anthropologists in defining the term tribe. Anthropologists have considered culture as the main element in defining tribes, but sometimes it is seen that even though diverse tribes live in the same area, there is uniformity in their culture.

Therefore, considering only culture as the base element in defining tribes would be called one-sidedness. For this, apart from culture, it will be necessary to keep in mind the geographical, linguistic, and political

conditions as well. When India became independent, the economic and social conditions of the Indian society were extremely busy. Indian society has been plagued by the caste system for a long time. For the progress of any country or any society, it is necessary that every section of that society should stand in the same line under the same economic and social conditions.

Various scholars and academicians have given the names of primitive caste, forest caste, tribal, forest-dweller, illiterate, illiterate, prehistoric, uncivilized caste, etc. as synonyms of the word tribe. But most of it is going to declare the same meaning. But calling them uncivilized, illiterate, etc. is completely inappropriate and impractical today.

Tribes of Madhya Pradesh - A journey into the heart of India:

''Har Har Narmade'': Rivers are a heart of stories. a lifeline to communities. Civilizations have been created and devastated by rivers. And rivers tell their own tales, even if it"s tragic and mythical. The story of the tribes of Madhya Pradesh also revolves around the River Narmada. Madhya Pradesh, the heartland of the country has a very diverse and unique character, right from the erotic sculptures of Khajuraho, the hills of Pachmarhi, the wildlife at Bandhavgarh, the music legacy of Gwalior, and breakfast spreads of poha and jalebi. But the state has more to offer than its heritage, for it is also known for its tribal culture. The story of the tribes of Madhya Pradesh, their cultures, their myths and legends, their beliefs, and their lives, and their love for the river. In November 2021, the Madhya Pradesh Government changed its station name from Habibganj railway station to Rani Kamalapati railway station. It is India's first private railway station, in the memory of Gond queen 'Rani Kamlapati'. According to the Madhya Pradesh government, the renaming is to honour the memory and sacrifices made by a queen of the 'Gond' community.

Tribals in Madhya Pradesh:

There are 46 recognized Scheduled Tribes in Madhya Pradesh, India, three of which have been identified as 'Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) (formerly known as 'Special Primitive Tribal Groups'). The population of Scheduled Tribals (ST) is 21.1% of the state population (15.31 million out of 72.62 million), according to the 2011 census. Bounded by the Narmada River to the north and the Godavari River to the southeast, tribal peoples occupy the slopes of the region's mountains.

The state of Madhya Pradesh in central India is home to a significant population of tribal communities. These tribal groups have diverse cultures, languages, and traditions. Some of the major tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh include Gond, Bhil, Baiga, Korku, Sahariya, and Bhariya. Here are several aspects to explore about tribals in Madhya Pradesh:

* Demographics and Distribution:

Examine the demographic composition of tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh, their population distribution across different districts, and variations in their socio-economic characteristics.

* Cultural Heritage:

Explore the rich cultural heritage of tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh, including traditional art forms, music, dance, rituals, and festivals. Investigate how these cultural aspects contribute to the unique identity of each tribal group.

* Economic Livelihoods:

Study the economic activities and livelihood patterns of tribal communities. This may include traditional occupations, agriculture practices, handicrafts, and the impact of modernization on their economic pursuits.

* Land and Forest Rights:

Analyze the status of land and forest rights for tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh. Investigate the implementation of relevant laws and policies, such as the Forest Rights Act, and assess the challenges faced by tribals in securing their land and resource rights.

* Health and Education:

Examine the health and education status of tribal populations. Investigate the availability and accessibility of healthcare and educational facilities in tribal areas, and explore initiatives aimed at improving health and education outcomes.

* Political Representation:

Explore the political representation of tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh. Examine the participation of tribals in local governance through Panchayati Raj institutions and their representation in the state legislative assembly and other political bodies.

* Challenges and Issues:

Identify the key challenges faced by tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh, including issues related to displacement, marginalization, and access to basic amenities. Analyze the impact of development projects on tribal livelihoods and culture.

* Tribal Development Policies:

Evaluate the effectiveness of government policies and programs aimed at tribal development in Madhya Pradesh. Assess the implementation of schemes designed to improve the socio-economic conditions of tribal populations.

* Traditional Knowledge and Sustainable Practices:

Investigate the traditional knowledge systems and sustainable practices of tribal communities, especially those related to agriculture, natural resource management, and conservation.

<u>Following are the major tribes of Madhya Pradesh-</u>
The Bhil tribe is the third largest tribe in India and Madhya Pradesh in terms of population.
1. Bhil whose residence is mainly in Jhabua, Alirajpur, Dhar, Barwani, Khargone, and Ratlam. Bhils consider themselves descendants of Valmiki and Eklavya. They have many sub-castes like Bhilala Patti Liya Barela and Rathia. Tantya Bhil is a notable freedom fighter of India's freedom struggle that comes from this tribe.
2. The Korku tribes reside in various villages of Chhindwara, Betul, and Hoshangabad district of the Satpura range region of Madhya Pradesh.
3. The Baiga tribe mainly lives in the forest areas of Mandla, Dindori, Shahdol, Umaria, Balaghat, and Amarkantak. The Baiga tribe is believed to be an offshoot of the Bhumiya tribe of the Chhota Nagpur region.
4. The Kol is the second largest tribe of Madhya Pradesh and has 22 sub-branches.
5. The Bharia mainly reside in Jabalpur and Chhindwara districts.
6. The Sahariyas reside in Shivpuri, Guna, Gwalior, Morena, Bhind, Vidisha, Raisen, Sehore, and Bundeli districts of Madhya Pradesh.
Recently, the Central Government has approved the inclusion of some other communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, fulfilling the long-pending demands of the states.

Madhya Pradesh Tribal Museum: There is a museum located in Bhopal, the capital of the heart of India, Madhya Pradesh. This museum is operated by Madhya Pradesh Government Culture Department. In this, the art, culture, tradition and life-useful craft paintings, living and customs of the tribal groups living in Madhya Pradesh have been shown through pictures, sculptures and demonstrations. Along with this, many cultural events, workshops etc. are organized here from time to time so that people can get knowledge about the beliefs, art and culture of the tribal society. Many artifacts which were originally used in tribal cultures are displayed here. It was inaugurated by the then President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee.

Diversity of tribes:

The diversity in tribes across the state comes from differences in heredity, lifestyle, cultural traditions, social structure, economic structure, religious beliefs, and language and speech. Due to different linguistic, cultural and geographical environment, the diverse tribal world of Madhya Pradesh is largely cut off from the mainstream of development.

Madhya Pradesh holds the 1st rank among all States/Union Territories (UTs) in terms of specific tribal population and 12th rank with respect to the proportion of ST population in total population.

Tribal Political Representation in India:

1. Reservation Policies:

India has implemented reservation policies to ensure political representation for scheduled tribes (ST) in parliamentary and state legislative bodies. Analyze the effectiveness of these policies in providing adequate representation and empowering tribal leaders.

2. Presence in Parliament and State Legislatures:

Examine the current representation of tribal communities in the Lok Sabha (House of the People), Rajya Sabha (Council of States), and state legislative assemblies. Assess the trends over the years and whether these representatives have been effective in advocating for tribal rights and concerns.

3. Panchayati Raj Institutions:

Investigate the participation of tribal communities in local governance through Panchayati Raj institutions. Assess the roles and responsibilities of tribal leaders at the grassroots level and their influence on local policies.

Policy Influence of Tribal Representatives:

1. Advocacy for Tribal Rights:

Analyze instances where tribal political leaders have advocated for and influenced policies related to tribal rights, land, and resource management. Evaluate the impact of their advocacy on the legal and policy framework.

2. Tribal Welfare Policies:

Examine the role of tribal representatives in the formulation and implementation of welfare policies for tribal communities. Assess the effectiveness of these policies in addressing socio-economic disparities.

3. Forest Rights and Land Policies:

Explore the influence of tribal representatives on policies related to forest rights and land ownership. Evaluate the implementation of the Forest Rights Act and other measures aimed at protecting tribal land.

4. Inclusion in Development Plans:

Investigate the extent to which tribal perspectives are included in state and national development plans. Analyze the role of tribal representatives in ensuring that development initiatives are culturally sensitive and inclusive.

Challenges Faced by Tribal Politicians in India:

* **Limited Access to Education:** Many tribal politicians face challenges related to limited access to quality education in their formative years. This can impact their political acumen and ability to navigate complex legislative processes.

* **Economic Disparities:** Economic disparities and lack of economic opportunities in tribal areas can hinder the political participation of tribal individuals. This may result in financial constraints for running political campaigns.

* **Cultural and Linguistic Barriers:** The dominance of mainstream languages and cultures in political spaces can marginalize tribal politicians who may face challenges in expressing themselves effectively and preserving their cultural identity.

* **Discrimination and Stereotyping:** Tribal politicians often confront discrimination and stereotyping based on their ethnicity. This can hinder their credibility in political arenas and affect their ability to represent their constituencies effectively.

* **Limited Infrastructure Development:** Tribal-dominated regions may have inadequate infrastructure, affecting the overall development of these areas. Tribal politicians may find it challenging to address these issues within the political system.

* **Land and Resource Disputes:** Land and resource rights are crucial for tribal communities. Tribal politicians may face challenges in advocating for and protecting these rights, especially in the face of development projects that may lead to displacement.

* **Political Marginalization:** Despite reserved seats and affirmative action measures, tribal politicians may still face marginalization within political parties, limiting their opportunities for key leadership roles.

Cultural Preservation through Politics in India:

* **Advocacy for Cultural Recognition:** Tribal politicians play a crucial role in advocating for the recognition and preservation of tribal cultures. They can use political platforms to raise awareness about the unique cultural heritage of their communities.

* **Integration of Cultural Education:** Tribal politicians may work towards integrating cultural education into mainstream educational curricula, ensuring that younger generations are aware of and connected to their tribal heritage.

* **Support for Traditional Arts and Crafts:** Policies and initiatives led by tribal politicians can support traditional tribal arts and crafts, providing economic opportunities for tribal artisans and preserving cultural practices.

* **Promotion of Indigenous Languages:** Tribal politicians can advocate for the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages. Efforts to include these languages in official communications and education can be critical in sustaining linguistic diversity.

* **Cultural Festivals and Events:** Tribal politicians can organize and promote cultural festivals and events that celebrate tribal traditions. This helps in fostering a sense of pride and belonging among tribal communities.

* **Inclusion in Decision-Making:** Ensuring the inclusion of tribal voices in decision-making processes related to cultural policies is crucial. Tribal politicians can work towards policies that empower tribal communities to actively participate in cultural preservation efforts.

* **Collaboration with Cultural Organizations:** Tribal politicians can collaborate with cultural organizations and NGOs to amplify their efforts in cultural preservation. This partnership can provide resources and expertise to sustain cultural initiatives.

* **Legal Protection of Cultural Sites:** Advocacy for legal protection of sacred sites and areas of cultural significance is essential. Tribal politicians can work towards legislation that safeguards these sites from development projects that may threaten their cultural value.

By addressing these challenges and actively promoting cultural preservation through politics, tribal politicians can contribute significantly to the well-being and identity of tribal communities in India.

<u>**Status of Scheduled Tribes in India:**</u>

- According to the 1931 census, the Scheduled Tribes are said to be "backward tribes" living in "excluded" and "partially excluded" areas. The Government of India Act of 1935 made provision for the inclusion of representatives of "backward tribes" in provincial assemblies for the first time.

- The Constitution does not define the criteria for recognition of Scheduled Tribes, so the definition contained in the 1931 census was used in the early years after independence.

- However, Article 366(25) of the Constitution only provides the **procedure for defining the Scheduled Tribes:** "Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities or parts or groups of tribes or tribal communities as may be prescribed under Article 342 of the Constitution." Considered a Scheduled Tribe.

342(1): The President may, in relation to any State or Union territory, by public notification after consultation with the Governor with respect to that State or Union territory, in respect of tribes or tribal communities or part of tribes or tribal communities Can designate groups within as Scheduled Tribes.

- There are more than 705 tribes that have been notified. The largest number of tribal communities are found in Odisha.

- The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution provides for the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, among others.

- The Sixth Schedule deals with the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Legal Provisions:

1. Protection of Civil Rights Against Untouchability Act, 1955

2. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989

3. Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996

4. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

Article 14 of India guarantees every citizen of India equal protection of law and protection of law.

Article 15 prohibits discrimination by the State on grounds of place of birth, religion, race, caste, sex, or entry into any public place. Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from closing the same for the socially and educationally classified or scheduled castes.

Article 16 guarantees opportunities for government jobs, prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, place of residence, but provides for reservation of appointments or pensions for persons belonging to the said category.

Article 17 is the abolition of unrestricted Karta, which is a great stigma towards Indian society.

Article 19 Panch Article to protect the interests of primitive castes, the fundamental rights given in section four of this article seems to be restricted.

Tribal Pride Day:

'Tribal Pride Day' is organized every year to recognize the efforts of tribals in preserving cultural heritage and promoting Indian values of national pride, valor and hospitality. Many Indian states may be launching campaigns to celebrate and advance tribal pride in recognition of the rich cultural diversity and contributions of tribal communities. Tribal festivals, cultural gatherings, and community-led celebrations that highlight the distinctive customs, artistic expressions, and cultural heritage of indigenous populations are common manifestations of these initiatives. Even though there isn't a formal National Tribal Pride Day in India, there are still initiatives being carried out by the government, non-governmental organizations, and the tribal communities themselves to promote and protect the priceless cultural heritage of India's tribal people.

* **Tilka Majhi** was an Indian freedom fighter the first Adivasi leader from Santal Community. He took up arms against the British in 1784, around 70 years before Mangal Pandey.

* **Rani Gaidinliu** also known as the 'Rani' and 'Daughter of the Hills'. Jawaharlal Nehru met her at the Shillong Jail in 1937 and he promised to pursue her release. His statement, published in the Hindustan

Times, described Gaidinliu as a "daughter of the hills" and he gave her the title 'Rani' or Queen of her people. After Jadonang's execution, she took command, leading guerilla warfare against British forces.

* Birsa Munda:

Birsa Munda who was born on November 15, 1875, belonged to the Munda tribe of the Chota Nagpur Plateau. He was an Indian freedom fighter, religious leader and folk hero. He led the Indian tribal religious millenarian movement in the tribal region of modern Jharkhand and Bihar during the British rule in the late 19th century. Birsa was a close observer of the chiefdom fighting movement in the region in the 1880s, which sought to restore tribal rights through non-violent means such as petitioning the British government.

Role in Grassroots Governance:

1. Participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions:

Tribal communities play a crucial role in grassroots governance through their active participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions. They contribute to decision-making processes at the local level, addressing community needs and advocating for development initiatives.

2. Local Development Planning:

Tribal leaders often engage in local development planning, identifying key priorities for their communities. They work towards the implementation of projects related to infrastructure, education, healthcare, and sustainable livelihoods at the grassroots level.

3. Customary Dispute Resolution:

In many tribal areas, traditional dispute resolution mechanisms coexist with formal legal systems. Tribal leaders often play a role in resolving disputes based on customary laws, contributing to social harmony and cohesion.

4. Preservation of Cultural Practices:

Grassroots governance provides a platform for tribal leaders to actively promote and preserve cultural practices. They may initiate programs and events that celebrate traditional art, music, and festivals, fostering a sense of cultural identity.

5. Natural Resource Management:

Tribal communities are often closely connected to their natural environment. In grassroots governance, tribal leaders may advocate for sustainable natural resource management practices, balancing ecological conservation with the needs of the community.

<u>**International Comparisons:**</u>

* Comparative Indigenous Rights:

A comparative analysis can be conducted to understand how different countries address the rights of indigenous and tribal communities. Examining legal frameworks, political representation, and cultural preservation efforts can provide valuable insights.

* Political Participation and Representation:

Studying the political participation of tribal communities in other countries can offer lessons on effective representation. Comparing political structures and affirmative action measures can highlight successful models.

* Land and Resource Rights:

Analyzing international approaches to safeguarding indigenous land and resource rights can provide context for evaluating the effectiveness of similar policies in India. This includes examining legal frameworks and their impact on community well-being.

* Cultural Diversity Policies:

Understanding how other nations implement policies to protect and promote cultural diversity can inform strategies for cultural preservation in India. This includes language protection, cultural heritage programs, and initiatives to support indigenous languages.

Future Prospects of Tribal Communities in India:

* Enhanced Political Representation:

The future holds the potential for increased political representation of tribal communities. Efforts can be made to encourage and mentor emerging tribal leaders, ensuring a stronger presence at all levels of governance.

* Education and Skill Development:

Investing in education and skill development programs can empower tribal youth, preparing them for active participation in various fields. This can contribute to a more informed and skilled tribal workforce.

* Technological Integration:

The integration of technology in tribal areas can bridge gaps in access to information and resources. Future prospects include leveraging technology for education, healthcare, and economic development.

* Cultural Entrepreneurship:

Fostering cultural entrepreneurship within tribal communities can provide economic opportunities while preserving traditional arts and crafts. Initiatives supporting tribal artisans and entrepreneurs can be promoted.

* Sustainable Development Practices:

The future involves a focus on sustainable development practices that align with tribal values. Balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and cultural preservation will be essential.

* International Collaboration:

Building international collaborations and partnerships can facilitate knowledge exchange and support for tribal communities. Learning from global best practices can contribute to more effective policies and initiatives.

* Legal and Policy Reforms:

Advocating for and participating in legal and policy reforms will be crucial for addressing ongoing challenges faced by tribal communities. This includes ensuring the effective implementation of existing laws and advocating for new ones where necessary.

* Climate Resilience:

Given the close connection of many tribal communities to the environment, addressing climate change and building resilience will be a key aspect of the future. Strategies for sustainable agriculture, water management, and disaster preparedness are important.

<u>**Related Initiatives:**</u>

- The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** has launched the "Programme for Capacity Building of Scheduled Tribe Representatives in Local Self Governments" along with "1000 Springs Initiatives".
- An online portal on GIS-based Spring Atlas has also been launched.
- Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)
- Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools
- Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups
- Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana

Recently, the President of India paid tribute to freedom fighter Bhagwan Birsa Munda on his birth anniversary on the occasion of Tribal Pride Day (15 November 2022).

<u>**Conclusion:**</u> India is the center of tribal population in the world. Tribal world in India remained relatively calm till the arrival of the British. The colonial system bores harshly on tribal communities that were formed in isolation and remained relatively intact social systems of control, they rebelled more and more often and more brutally compared to the rest of the community counting Indian farmers.

India recognizes special protection for its tribal or indigenous peoples in the Constitution, recognizing their distinct cultural, social and economic identity from mainstream Indian society and the fact that they need some protection from exploitation by the mainstream Is. The Indian Government took various

extensive welfare schemes for securing the comforts of the tribal people and their socio-economic upliftment. Embedded in the Indian Constitution are several articles that have the object of promoting and safeguarding the comforts of the Scheduled Tribes. Educational backwardness exists at the root of the economic, social and political backwardness of the tribal communities in India. Both the Central and State Governments have been making some efforts to increase education among the tribes.

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