

TRIBAL STUDIES IN INDIA: INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES

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Lecture56

Lecture 56: Globalisation and Tribes in India

Thank you. Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on tribal studies in India, interdisciplinary approaches and perspectives. So, today we are going to discuss globalization and tribes in India. First, we need to understand what is globalization. In its fundamental sense, globalization constitutes a process of transforming the regional or local phenomena into global ones.



This multidimensional phenomenon called globalization exerts a substantial impact both directly and indirectly on all facets of human life across the globe. According to scholar and critic Rahul Kabiraj, the process of lifestyle transformation within any community, regardless of location or social level, is a result of the integrated action of economic, technological, sociocultural and political forces and all these together amount to globalization, the process or the wave called globalization. Now, globalization that is often equated with modernization entails advancement of science and technology and the development of communication infrastructure, which mutually interconnect diverse locales and contribute to heightened human mobility. So when we talk of globalization,

we think of a globe that has become smaller and more interconnected through better human mobility, better transportation and quick transportation, not only of humans.

Globalisation

- Globalisation, often equated with modernisation, entails the advancement of science and technology and the development of communication infrastructure, which mutually interconnect diverse locales and contribute to heightened human mobility.
- The profound impact of globalisation on culture is especially evident in the indigenous cultures of tribal societies.
- As the indigenous settlers, these communities largely inhabit ecologically distinct and often resource-rich environments like forests and hills, where their lifestyles are deeply conditioned by their natural surroundings.



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but also of technology, of information. Everything moves very fast, very soon. And so the profound impact of globalization of culture is especially evident in the indigenous cultures. When talking about the tribal society, what globalization does, you know, in the trails of globalization, what changes happens. What faces the brunt of globalization is the indigenous culture.

Their cultural fabric, the basis of their culture, kind of unsettles as a result of globalization. So, as I have been saying in my previous lectures, the way globalization envisions a society, envisions the globe, is very different from the way indigenous cultures or tribal societies work. Tribal societies work based on diversity, based on differences, acknowledgment and, you know, preservation of these differences, whereas globalization, it has been supposed, it has been apprehended, has a tendency, albeit all its advantages, to bulldoze, to flatten all the differences and make everything into an imitation of the West, into an offshoot, an artifact that is produced in the Western powerhouse.

Globalisation

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So that becomes very problematic. That's not something that fits very well organically with tribal social values. So, as the indigenous settlers, the tribal communities have largely inhabited ecologically distinct and often resource-rich environments like forests and hills, where their lifestyles are deeply conditioned by natural surroundings. India's substantial ethnic diversity, comprising 8.6% of the tribal population according to the 2011 census, with its varied linguistic, economic, and sociocultural fabric presents a very complex context for understanding the transformative effects of globalization on its diverse tribal cultures.

So globalization has had manifold impacts, you know, different kinds of impacts, different kinds of influences on these very distinct tribal societies. And these societies have, in turn, responded very differently to the waves of globalization. Navdeep Kaur writes that while globalization is viewed by many as a catalyst for cultural diversification, offering stimulating and often empowering experiences, a significant segment of the tribal population also perceives globalization as something that is disquieting and disempowering.

Globalisation and Culture

- India's substantial ethnic diversity (comprising 8.6% tribal population according to the 2011 census), with its varied linguistic, economic, and socio-cultural fabric, presents a complex context for understanding the transformative effects of globalisation on its diverse tribal cultures (Kabiraj, 2022).
- Navdeep Kaur (2006) writes, while globalisation is viewed by many as a catalyst for cultural diversification, offering stimulating and empowering experiences, a significant segment of the population perceives it as disquieting and disempowering.



In fact, such intuitions might undo, might completely change the basis of tribal cultures. So these sections' anxieties, some of these tribal sections' anxieties centering on globalization are based on its potential for national fragmentation and the loss of established values, which are attributed to increasing immigration patterns, the expansive reach of international trade, and the pervasive influence of modern communication media that can supplant local cultural expressions, right. So, this anxiety is not only rooted in some sections of tribal people or tribal rights activists, but it extends even among the non-tribal population.

Globalisation and Culture

- Their anxieties around globalization centre on the potential for national fragmentation and the loss of established values, which are attributed to increasing immigration patterns, the expansive reach of international trade, and the pervasive influence of modern communication media that can supplant local cultural expressions.
- Moreover, some analysts project a negative future scenario characterised by cultural homogenization, with diverse national cultures being overtaken by a global culture dominated by Western norms and symbolic systems (Kaur, 2006).



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The fact that globalization can undo their existing culture, it can leave very deep wounds, very deep negative aftermaths and consequences. Further, some analysts project a negative future scenario that is characterized by cultural homogenization, with diverse national cultures being overtaken by one global culture dominated by Western norms and symbolic systems. So globalization is exerting a profound influence on tribal communities, resulting in these different groups' extensive marginalization within India, and it therefore leaves a negative outcome for human civilization. The life, livelihood, culture, and natural habitat of indigenous peoples have been intensely and very negatively affected by globalization, and such changes are often justified under the premise of or in the name of development. Scholar and critic Jagannath Patti notes that the remoteness and limited quality of territorial resources have historically been common features of many tribal communities.

Globalisation and Tribes

- Globalisation is exerting a profound influence on tribal communities, resulting in their extensive marginalisation within India, a negative outcome for human civilisation.
- The life, livelihood, culture, and habitat of indigenous peoples have been intensely affected by globalisation, often justified under the premise of development (Kabiraj, 2022).



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Previously, the exploitation of these regions would often be restricted by logistical and economic factors. So when we talk of, you know, the earlier times, we are referring mainly to the colonial and then the post-colonial times, where exploitation of tribal lands would be mainly in economic terms. However, the current era is marked by rapid technological progress and unparalleled economic and political dominance of global capitalism, alongside the growing influence of neocolonial mechanisms, which operate through the G8 and international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund or IMF, the World Bank. A lot of resources are being outsourced, so when you know globalization, the waves of globalization, the impacts of globalization ride on money. So when money from outside the country flows into these real tribal regions, it no longer remains only a post-colonial factor, the different national governmental schemes that are interacting with the tribal world system.

Globalisation and Tribes

- Jagannath Pathy (1992) notes that the remoteness and limited quality of territorial resources have historically been common features of many tribal communities. Previously, the exploitation of these regions was often constrained by logistical and economic factors.
- However, the current era is marked by rapid technological progress and the unparalleled economic and political dominance of global capitalism, alongside the growing influence of neo-colonial mechanisms operating through the G-8 and international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.



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It's no longer the nation as a category. It becomes transnational. It goes beyond the ambit of the nation. When money from the IMF and World Bank flows into these lands for

making development plans, and there is this economic and political dominance of global capitalism, the local culture, as a result, is completely changed.

Globalisation and Tribes

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It is disrupted, and in many cases, it is destroyed. So these developments, triggered and stimulated by globalization, have created an enabling environment for the encroachment upon and extraction of natural resources from the ecologically vulnerable territories of the tribal peoples. As a result, the forced displacement of tribal populations in order to facilitate massive, capital-intensive development initiatives has become a distressing and increasingly prevalent occurrence. It's no longer the colonial apparatus or even the post-colonial bodies displacing the tribal people for capital-intensive development.

Although we can very safely say that the British colonizers and their colonial mechanisms have shown the path to the rest of the world on how to exploit these vulnerable people, and now the larger, you know, transnational bodies who can invest a lot of money, a lot of capital into these lands, are following suit. It's just an aftermath of colonization—more intensified, more amplified avatar of colonization that we see perpetrating on these lands with the phenomenon called globalization. So the Central Indian tribal belt, extending from Gujarat in the west to Assam in the east and encompassing the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand, exhibits a significant concentration of industrial and mining activities. This region, characterized by high levels of poverty and a predominantly rural tribal population—over 90% of people are tribes over here.

Globalisation and Tribes

- These **developments have created an enabling environment for the encroachment upon and extraction of natural resources** from the ecologically vulnerable territories of tribal peoples.
- As a result, the **forced displacement** of tribal populations to facilitate massive **capital-intensive development** initiatives has become a distressing and increasingly prevalent occurrence (Pathy, 1992).



They are tribal people who are engaged in primitive agricultural practices. And these regions incidentally also host major industrial complexes including the steel plants, Bharat Aluminium Company Limited or BALCO, National Aluminium Company Limited or NALCO and heavy engineering concerns. So a tribal region, a place which is considered as organic habitat for 90% of tribal population, you know, 90% of this population is tribal, residing in the Central Indian tribal belt between Assam and Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. So this is also used as a concentration of mining activities and industrial enterprises. Furthermore, a substantial number of river basin development schemes, hydropower projects and a network of forest-based and ancillary industries are also located within this central belt.

Globalisation and Tribes

- The Central Indian Tribal Belt, extending from Gujarat in the west to Assam in the east and encompassing the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand, exhibits a significant concentration of industrial and mining activities.
- This region, characterised by high levels of poverty and a predominantly rural tribal population (over 90%) who are engaged in primitive agricultural practices, also hosts major industrial complexes including steel plants, Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO), National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), and heavy engineering concerns.



In this regard, Professor Ram Dayal Munda has asserted that the displacement of India's Adivasi population has reached a critical scale, an alarming scale, with approximately one-fifth of the population, around 2 million tribal individuals, already relocated to the slum settlements in metropolitan areas. The quality of life vastly changes from being a self-sustaining, a self-sufficient people who have been living with considerable dignity in

their organic habitat, They have to live in the slum areas of metropolitan cities, you know, cohabiting perhaps with delinquents, with antisocial, with minor, you know, people who are engaged in minor criminal activities. So the shady areas of city life are inhabited by the same tribals who have previously been very simple, benign peasants.

Globalisation and Tribes

- Furthermore, a substantial number of river basin development schemes, hydropower projects, and a network of forest-based and ancillary industries are located within this central belt.
- Prof. Ram Dayal Munda (2005) asserts that the displacement of India's Adivasi population has reached a critical scale, with approximately one-fifth (around two million individuals) already relocated to the slum settlements of metropolitan areas.
- This is not a theoretical apprehension but an existent reality in India and echoes with other global contexts, notably South America and South-East Asia, where this process has been fully realised.



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They comprise the peasantry section of our society. So from there they have to become slum dwellers. The quality, the meaning of life suddenly changes. This is not a theoretical apprehension but an existent reality in India and it echoes with other global contexts.

Notably South America and Southeast Asia, where this process of displacement of the tribals has been fully and completely realized. The displacement has been complete and absolute in places like South America and Southeast Asia. And it is ongoing at a very alarming rate in India, too. Having been deprived of their traditional resource control, the indigenous inhabitants of these affected areas are facing severe social disintegration with the potential for complete cultural and even biological extinction in some instances. We see that forced displacement renders the tribal population with a death of their social being and reduces them to what Giorgio Agamben would call bare life.

Globalisation and Tribes

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So Agamben's concept of bare life, a life that is stripped of political rights, any social aspects, and that is existing solely in its biological aspect at the mercy of the larger global happenings. That is the bare life that Agamben describes, and it can be directly applied to describe the condition of the displaced tribal population. The nascent state of Jharkhand is facing considerable difficulties despite the initial optimistic projections of its development. The Jharkhand movement for statehood was fundamentally a movement for cultural reconstruction, aspiring to create a state that embodies the ideals of a tribal society.

Globalisation and Development in Jharkhand

- The nascent state of Jharkhand is facing considerable difficulties despite the initial optimistic projections of its development.
- The Jharkhand movement for statehood was fundamentally a movement for cultural reconstruction, aspiring to create a state embodying the ideals of a tribal society: self-reliance, dignity, social equity, economic cooperation, consensual democracy, religious tolerance, cultural coexistence, a robust work ethic, and collective joy.






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So Jharkhand, when it separated from Bihar, it was originally meant to be shaped through, you know, fundamentally through or in terms of the tribal values, the tribal values of self-reliance, dignity, social equity and fairness, economic cooperation and symmetrical access to resources, consensual democracy, religious tolerance, cultural coexistence, a robust work ethic, and collective joy. But all these things fall apart When external schemes start interfering, the whole Jharkhand movement is undone. It has been

annulled because the state has not been able to achieve the principles on which it was made.

Although the optimistic projections of its development are a part of our popular consciousness. So the core problem, consistent with other tribal or indigenous regions, lies in the economic, social, as well as the cultural disposition that results from developmental policies which amount to internal colonialism. So the tribal people are kind of incarcerated from all directions, and they are delimited and suppressed from all directions. By different development projects that are being endorsed within the nation-state and also by some transnational projects that are receiving monetary support from larger global funds. So this has led to pervasive poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment, and an overall decline in self-esteem among the people of Jharkhand and, by extension, the Adivasi population at large.

Globalisation and Development in Jharkhand

- Nevertheless, the core problem, consistent with other tribal/indigenous regions, lies in the economic, social, and cultural dispossession resulting from developmental policies that amount to internal colonialism.
- This has led to pervasive poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment, and a decline in self-esteem among the people of Jharkhand, with a particular impact on the Adivasi population (Munda, 2005).



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So, to conclude. Globalization presents a complex duality for the Indian tribes. While potentially offering cultural exchange and economic opportunities, it predominantly manifests as a force that leads to marginalization, resource exploitation, and cultural erosion, worsening the existing vulnerabilities that stem. Among the tribes from causes such as historical disposition, and all these factors actually hinder tribal integration with the rest of the non-tribal culture on equitable terms. So when a population is dispossessed, constantly displaced, and uprooted from their areas, they are marginalized, their resources are exploited, and they cannot be smoothly integrated

Conclusion

- Globalisation presents a complex duality for Indian tribes. While potentially offering cultural exchange and economic opportunities, it predominantly manifests as a force driving marginalisation, resource exploitation, and cultural erosion, worsening the existing vulnerabilities that are stemming from historical dispossession and hindering tribal integration on equitable terms.



With the rest of the national culture, and they cannot—you know, the interface of the tribals with the non-tribals cannot happen on equitable, fair terms. So these are some of the things that we need to consider and take back home. We should think of how the tribes are being seriously affected by the different upshots, you know, that globalization leaves in its trail. So, with this, we come to the end of our lecture here today. And let us meet with a new topic and another round of discussions in our next lecture.

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Thank you.