

THE ROLE OF TRIBES IN THE LEVEL OF SOCIAL LIFE

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Abstract:

Tribes have played a significant role in shaping the social fabric of communities across the world. Their unique traditions, customs, and social structures contribute to the diversity of societal life, impacting everything from governance to cultural identity. Tribal communities are often the custodians of indigenous knowledge, which includes environmental conservation, sustainable living, and social solidarity. Despite facing marginalization, many tribes preserve rich cultural practices that emphasize collective responsibility, egalitarianism, and respect for nature.

Introduction:

Tribes have played a fundamental role in shaping the structure and evolution of social life throughout history. Representing some of the earliest forms of human organization, tribal communities have long served as the foundation for maintaining cultural identity, social cohesion, and governance in many parts of the world. Despite the pressures of modernization and globalization, tribes continue to influence the social, economic, and environmental fabric of both local and national societies.

The social systems within tribal communities are often characterized by deep-rooted traditions, collective responsibility, and sustainable living practices that emphasize harmony with nature. These communities possess unique social structures, where kinship, shared values, and traditional governance systems create strong communal bonds. Additionally, tribes often act as custodians of cultural heritage, preserving languages, customs, and ecological knowledge that are vital for maintaining biodiversity and cultural diversity.

This exploration seeks to highlight the multifaceted role of tribes in elevating the level of social life, their contributions to sustainable practices, and the challenges they face in an increasingly modern world. By understanding the significance of tribal life, we gain insight into the richness of human diversity and the importance of integrating indigenous wisdom into contemporary social systems. The social role of tribes extends to conflict resolution, decision-making, and economic contribution, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. Tribal leadership often reflects a blend of tradition and communalism, offering models of decentralized governance that contrast with mainstream hierarchical systems. However, with the pressures of modernization, globalization, and state policies, the autonomy of tribes and their way of life face increasing challenges.

This abstract explores how tribes maintain their social identity while interacting with broader society, their contribution to social cohesion, and the challenges they encounter in a rapidly changing world. Understanding the role of tribes at the social level highlights the importance

of preserving cultural diversity, fostering social integration, and recognizing their potential for contributing to sustainable development and community resilience.

Review of Literature:

- 1. Azra Musavi and Juhi Gupta (2020).** have represented a comprehensive analysis of different aspects of concerns about the exclusion of women of marginalised communities of India. It explored a fruitful discussion on the various magnitudes where women confront challenges and complexities of the life associated with them. The study is not limited to explore issues and challenges, but also it has thrown a light on constitutional, judicial, and political aspects on the concerned topic. It also provided fresh perspectives for understanding the present scenario of the marginalised women in India.
- 2. Ashwini Deshpande & Smriti Sharma (2015)** concerning India, the study has identified disadvantages that multi-faceted, caste, and gender are recognised as two identical factors of social stratification. Women and girls of lower caste groups experience a range of inequalities: in health and nutrition, education, wages, occupation and ownership, control, and access to assets and resources. It is one of the studies on women in economic development in India. This study has examined the difficulties and issues of women in India. It concluded with an observation that illiteracy, poverty, early marriage, and undernutrition are massive hurdles in their way of development and empowerment.
- 3. Ramakrishnappa (2015)** This paper addresses the socio-economic status and empowerment of the scheduled tribes' women in Karnataka. The study observed that there are significant gaps between policy and advancements and the actual emancipation of tribal women. Women's empowerment is also determined as women's economic, social and political identity and their weightage. The majority of tribal women are in rural areas, and they got less education, health, and productive resources, among others, are inadequate.
- 4. Nabarun Purkayastha (2020).** The Tribal represent an important social category of Indian social structure. The tribal's are said to be the original inhabitants of India spread over the length and breadth of the country. Every tribal group have their own religion, custom and own way of life. The Angami is a major Naga ethnic group native to the state of Nagaland in North-East India settled in Kohima District and Dimapur District. They are one of the fifteen major tribes of Nagaland. The study mainly focuses on social life of Angami Naga of Peducha village in Nagaland.
- 5. Tianenla Jathy (2020).** The present paper, titled "The Role and Position of Women in Traditional Ao Naga Society", has been undertaken to analyze the position of women within the Ao tribe of Nagaland during the late 19th and early 20th century. Drawing from colonial ethnographic reports as well as other secondary material, the research looks into the various social and cultural practices in traditional Ao society prior to the advent of Christianity. It analyses how various practices, notions and behaviour are shaped by extant gender norms. While much has already been written and published on the women in Western or mainland Indian society, the position of women in marginalized cultures like the Ao Nagas has still not been studied in a detailed manner. Most of the academic work done on the Ao Nagas focus on their customary, political or social life. The position of women continues to remain a topic which has not been explored. The research, as an initial attempt to study the role of gender in

Naga society, has attempted to provide an inclusive and encompassing overview of women and their participation in the Ao community.

6. Krushna Chandra Panda (2020). The tribals believed to be the earliest settlers of India are generally called in Adibasis. Tribal population in many districts of Odisha is about 50%. India is the home for over 450 tribes out of which 62 live in Odisha. The tribal history is not just collection of facts and faithful documentation of changes but interpretation of issues by a sensitive mind with a histories determination, on economists sharpness and a sociology sts inquisitiveness. Now a days the tribal needed a large degree of agrarian sanctity protection and social assistance. In examination it would be found that the British authorities in fact had shown isolation.

Objective:

- ✓ To explore how tribal communities preserve their unique cultural heritage, including languages, traditions, rituals, and art forms, and the impact of these practices on their social identity and community cohesion.
- ✓ To analyse the social structures and kinship systems within tribal communities, understanding how these frameworks promote social cohesion, collective decision-making, and community support.

Data Methodology:

The data methodology for studying the role of tribes in the level of social life should involve a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive understanding of tribal communities and their social dynamics. The following methods can be utilized

To gather secondary data on tribal communities, their cultural practices, social structures, economic contributions, and interaction with broader society.

- **Sources:** Academic journals, books, government reports, NGO publications, historical records, and existing case studies on tribes.
- **Method:** Review the literature to develop a theoretical framework and contextualize findings. It will help identify gaps in current research and guide the primary data collection process.

Significance of the Role of Tribes in the Level of Social life:

The role of tribes in shaping social life is significant for several reasons, especially in terms of cultural diversity, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and governance. Here are the key points that highlight the importance of tribal communities:

1. Cultural Diversity and Preservation:

Tribes play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage. Their traditions, languages, arts, and rituals reflect the diversity of human expression across different regions. Tribal communities often safeguard ancient knowledge systems, including medicinal practices, ecological

management, and spiritual beliefs, which contribute to a richer and more diverse global cultural landscape.

2. Social Cohesion and Community Support

Tribal life emphasizes kinship bonds and community-oriented living, which promotes social unity and resilience. These bonds ensure that all members of the tribe are supported, especially during times of hardship.

Their systems of collective responsibility foster mutual aid, collaboration, and shared resources, which strengthen social ties and reduce inequality within the group.

3. Sustainable Living and Environmental Stewardship

Tribes often live in harmony with nature, practicing sustainable methods of agriculture, hunting, and resource management. Their deep connection to the land ensures environmental sustainability and protection of ecosystems. Indigenous ecological knowledge is valuable for modern conservation efforts, offering insights into managing biodiversity and climate adaptation.

4. Traditional Governance and Social Order

Tribal governance is often consensus-based and operates through systems of respect, wisdom, and the role of elders. This form of leadership fosters inclusivity, equality, and peaceful conflict resolution. Tribal leadership systems demonstrate alternative models of governance that focus on community well-being rather than individual gain, offering lessons for contemporary governance structures.

5. Economic Contributions

Many tribes sustain themselves through subsistence economies, relying on traditional forms of agriculture, handicrafts, and trade. Their unique economic systems reflect alternative models of production and consumption that prioritize sustainability. Tribal artisanship, including crafts and textiles, contributes to local economies, often blending traditional methods with modern markets, promoting both cultural pride and economic resilience.

6. Social Equality and Gender Roles

Tribal communities often have distinct gender roles, but many promote egalitarian values within the community. Women often hold key positions in decision-making, resource management, and social rituals. Social equality within tribes is maintained through shared responsibilities and community-driven support systems, where everyone has a role and place in society.

7. Challenges and Resilience

Despite their vital role, tribal communities often face marginalization, displacement, and challenges from modernization. However, many tribes continue to demonstrate resilience by adapting to new socio-economic environments while maintaining their cultural identities.

The significance of tribes in social life lies in their ability to maintain cultural continuity, support sustainable living practices, and foster social harmony through collective governance. In a rapidly changing world, their role becomes even more crucial, as their traditions and knowledge provide alternative pathways for addressing global challenges such as social inequality and environmental degradation.

Main majors Outlook Result on the Treble life On the Social life

A. Majors of Tribal in Karnataka:

Karnataka, a state in southern India, is home to several indigenous tribal communities that play a vital role in the state's cultural diversity and heritage. These tribes have distinct languages, customs, and lifestyles, contributing to Karnataka's rich social fabric. Some of the major tribes in Karnataka include:

1. Soliga Tribe: Primarily found in the Biligirirangan Hills (BR Hills), Male Mahadeshwara Hills, and surrounding areas in southern Karnataka. Traditionally semi-nomadic, the Soligas practice shifting agriculture, hunting, and gathering forest produce. They have a close connection with nature and are known for their sustainable forest management practices. The Soligas have a deep spiritual relationship with the forest, and their deities are often linked to natural elements like hills, trees, and animals. They perform rituals and dances as part of their cultural expression.

2. Jenukuruba Tribe: Predominantly found in the forests of Mysore, Kodagu, and Chamarajanagar districts. The Jenukurubas are traditionally honey collectors, and their name means "honey gatherers" in Kannada ("Jenu" means honey and "Kuruba" refers to a shepherd or forest dweller). They also engage in hunting, gathering, and small-scale agriculture. The Jenukurubas maintain a unique relationship with the forest, and their customs revolve around the forest's offerings. They speak the Jenukuruba dialect and have a distinct set of religious practices and folk traditions.

3. Kadukuruba Tribe: Found primarily in the Western Ghats and Mysore districts. Traditionally, the Kadukurubas are hunters and gatherers. Over time, many have settled in villages and practice agriculture, animal husbandry, and labor work. They have their own dialect and maintain distinct customs, especially related to nature worship. Their dances and folk songs are often associated with forest life.

4. Yerava Tribe: Concentrated in the Kodagu (Coorg) region and along the Karnataka-Kerala border. The Yerava people traditionally worked as laborers in coffee plantations and in agriculture. They are known for their deep connection to the land and forest, and many Yeravas still rely on farming and forest-related activities. The Yerava have their own language called Yerava, and they practice unique customs and rituals. Their folk dances, music, and festivals reflect their tribal heritage.

5. Koraga Tribe: Primarily found in the coastal districts of Karnataka, such as Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, and Uttara Kannada. The Koraga people have traditionally been involved in occupations like basket weaving, drum-making, and other forms of manual labor. They are among the more marginalized tribal communities in Karnataka. The Koraga tribe follows its own religious practices and social customs, and they have a distinct language called Koraga. They are known for their unique music and rituals, often associated with traditional ceremonies.

6. Gond Tribe: Found in the northern districts of Karnataka, especially in the Bidar and Gulbarga regions. The Gonds are one of the largest tribes in India and practice agriculture, hunting, and gathering. Many Gonds have also integrated into mainstream society, engaging

in labor and small-scale business. The Gonds have a rich cultural heritage that includes traditional dance forms, mythology, and nature worship. They speak Gondi and have a unique tradition of storytelling through art and song.

7. Lambani Tribe (Banjara): Predominantly found in the northern parts of Karnataka, such as Ballari, Kalaburagi (Gulbarga), Raichur, and Belagavi. The Lambani are traditionally nomadic traders, but many have now settled and are involved in agriculture and handicraft work. They are renowned for their embroidery, mirrorwork, and colorful attire. The Lambani tribe has a vibrant culture with colorful clothing, unique jewelry, and a tradition of folk songs and dances. Their dialect is a mix of Romani, Rajasthani, and Marathi, and their festivals and ceremonies are a lively part of their culture.

8. Hakki Pikki Tribe: Mainly found in Mysore, Bangalore, Tumkur, and Chamarajanagar districts. The Hakki Pikki tribe, which means "bird catchers" in Kannada, were originally nomadic and specialized in bird hunting and animal trapping. Today, many have transitioned to agriculture, selling herbal medicines, and labor work. The Hakki Pikki have their own dialect and practice a blend of traditional and modern lifestyles. They are known for their traditional herbal knowledge and are recognized for their skills in natural medicine.

9. Iruliga Tribe: Found in the Ramanagara, Mysore, and Tumkur districts. The Iruligas are traditionally forest dwellers and hunters. Over time, they have adopted agriculture and labor as their primary occupations. They continue to gather forest products for sustenance and trade. The Iruliga people follow their own religious beliefs and practices, which are deeply connected to nature. Their traditional music, dance, and rituals reflect their tribal heritage.

B. Occupation of the Tribal People:

The traditional occupations of tribal people, deeply intertwined with nature and community life, play an essential role in their social structures. These occupations not only ensure the economic survival of tribal communities but also foster social cohesion, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship. The sustainable practices followed by many tribes offer valuable insights into community living and environmental harmony, contributing to the overall level of social life. However, the pressures of modernization, displacement, and economic changes pose challenges to these traditional ways of life, making it crucial to recognize and preserve the occupational and cultural heritage of tribal communities.

C. Health life of the Tribal People:

The health status of tribal people in Karnataka is characterized by significant disparities when compared to the general population. Malnutrition, maternal and child health issues, infectious diseases, and lack of healthcare access are major challenges. While traditional healing practices play a role in tribal health, the increasing burden of modern health problems requires better integration of these practices with modern healthcare systems. Government initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access and sanitation have made progress, but much more needs to be done to ensure that Karnataka's tribal communities receive equitable and quality healthcare. Efforts to improve nutrition, expand healthcare infrastructure, and enhance health education are essential to improving the overall health and well-being of tribal populations.

D. Gender Roles:

Gender roles in the tribal communities of Karnataka are shaped by their unique cultural practices, socio-economic structure, and traditional way of life. Although there is some variation among different tribal groups, such as the Soliga, Jenukuruba, Hakki Pikki, and Koraga, many tribes exhibit relatively distinct roles for men and women, rooted in both their connection to nature and traditional customs. However, modernization, exposure to urban life, and state policies have started to influence these roles in recent decades.

E. Cultural Diversity of Tribal People:

The cultural diversity of tribal people in Karnataka is vast and reflects their deep connection to nature, traditional customs, and the environment in which they live. Each tribe has its own language, rituals, festivals, crafts, and social structures that set it apart, contributing to the vibrant cultural mosaic of the state. While modernization is influencing tribal lifestyles, many communities remain committed to preserving their unique heritage, ensuring that their traditions continue to thrive in the face of change.

Findings :

Tribes play a significant role in the broader social life of both their own communities and the regions they inhabit. Based on the analysis of their cultural, economic, and social structures, the following findings highlight how tribes contribute to social life at multiple levels:

- Tribal communities are essential custodians of ancient traditions, languages, and customs, serving as living links to historical ways of life. Their unique cultural practices, including festivals, rituals, dances, and storytelling, enrich the cultural diversity of the broader society.
- Tribes, such as those in Karnataka, maintain a close relationship with nature, which influences their religious beliefs, practices, and sustainable ways of living, offering valuable lessons in environmental stewardship to wider society.
- Decision-making is often communal, with the tribal council or elder groups playing a significant role in maintaining order, resolving disputes, and guiding community matters.
- Tribes contribute to the local economy through traditional occupations such as agriculture, forest product collection, handicrafts, and small-scale trade. Their knowledge of natural resources, particularly in forested regions like Karnataka, is invaluable for the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable living practices.
- Gender roles in tribal societies are evolving, especially with increased access to education and healthcare, leading to greater gender equality and empowerment of tribal women in certain areas.
- Tribes face challenges such as limited access to education, healthcare, and modern amenities, which hinder their social mobility. However, government initiatives aimed at tribal development are gradually improving their living standards and access to resources.
- The traditional knowledge of tribes about sustainable agricultural practices, natural resource management, and herbal medicine significantly contributes to the environmental and ecological sustainability of the regions they inhabit. Their deep respect for nature promotes a

lifestyle that prioritizes balance with the environment, which is a model for contemporary society to adopt.

➤ Tribal communities have often served as protectors of forests and wildlife, as seen in the Soliga and Jenukuruba tribes in Karnataka. Their environmental stewardship offers valuable insights into sustainable living, resource management, and conservation efforts.

Suggestion:

To further empower tribal communities and enhance their contributions to social life, the following suggestions can be implemented across various sectors, including cultural preservation, economic development, education, and healthcare:

- ❖ Organize festivals that showcase tribal arts, crafts, music, and dance. This not only promotes cultural exchange but also provides a platform for tribal communities to display their rich traditions to a wider audience.
- ❖ Provide training and financial support for tribal artisans to enhance their skills and market their handicrafts. Establish cooperatives that allow artisans to collaborate, share resources, and access broader markets.
- ❖ Offer vocational training programs that equip tribal youth with skills relevant to the modern economy, such as computer literacy, hospitality, and sustainable agriculture. This can improve employability without compromising their cultural identity.
- ❖ Establish mobile health clinics to reach remote tribal areas, providing essential health services and education on hygiene, nutrition, and maternal and child health.
- ❖ Encourage tribal representation in local governance bodies to ensure their voices are heard in decision-making processes. This can help address their specific needs and priorities effectively.
- ❖ Strengthen legal frameworks that protect the rights of tribal communities, including their cultural heritage, land rights, and access to resources. Advocacy efforts can help ensure that tribal voices are considered in policy-making.
- ❖ Encourage research that explores the cultural, social, and economic aspects of tribal life. Collaborative research involving tribal communities can provide insights into their needs and contributions, leading to more effective policies.
- ❖ Collaborate with non-governmental organizations that focus on tribal welfare to implement programs that address their specific challenges and enhance their social life.

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