



NATIONAL LAW INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY, BHOPAL
CENTRE FOR TRIBAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH



Vol. 1 Issue I (2024)

INAUGURAL ISSUE

THE T*Ri*BAL INSIGHT



Image Source: Pinterest

ABOUT CTSR



The Centre for Tribal Studies and Research (CTSR) has been established with the objective of taking an all-inclusive view of issues concerning tribal rights, preservation and protection of their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge. The Centre is involved in studies and research related to tribal law, with its focus on the implementation and analysis of Central Government and State Governments' schemes for tribals in collaboration with NGOs, local communities and government bodies. The Centre also envisions to research and review the legal instruments and policies related to Indigenous Rights and their protection in the International forums, across jurisdictions. The Centre shall organize seminars, conferences, and training programs in areas including education, economy, resettlement and rehabilitation, forest rights, customary laws, and the tribal criminal justice system, and publish the related literature.

We can be reached at- ctsr@nliu.ac.in



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Hon'ble Vice Chancellor
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Bhopal (M.P.), India



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Prof. (Dr.) Bir Pal Singh

Chairperson
Centre for Tribal Studies and Research
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Bhopal (M.P.), India



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Assistant Librarian, NLIU

Ms. Srishti Chaturvedi

Research Scholar, NLIU



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Aastha Chauhan

Mahak Gupta

Dhruv Gandhi

Sara Khajuriya

Sujhen Vanshkar

Paritosh Singh Wadiwa

Pawani Dhurve

Yashika Chouksey



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Chelsy Mehta

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Soumya Choubey

Damini Parte

Harshita Shukla



DESIGN TEAM

Yash Kumar Bharti

Ayushi Solanki



MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR



The Centre for Tribal Studies and Research (CTSR) at National Law Institute University, Bhopal is an initiative dedicated to preservation, promotion, and study of indigenous knowledge, culture, and heritage. Recognizing the richness of India's tribal communities and their unique contributions to the nation's diversity, CTSR aims to be a hub of research, education, and awareness that respects and values tribal heritage. It seeks to be a vast repository of indigenous knowledge and foster

respect for tribal wisdom and encourage its integration into broader scientific and academic frameworks, community engagement and education.

It thus, gives me great pleasure to introduce the inaugural edition of The Tribal Insight, a magazine brought to you by CTSR. This publication not only stands as a testament to NLIU's commitment to inclusivity, awareness, and scholarly engagement with the unique issues and challenges faced by tribal communities across the globe but also as a crucial resource for both preserving India's tribal legacy and ensuring its continued relevance in today's society. The Tribal Insight serves as a bridge between academia and the broader society, bringing readers timely updates on both national and international events concerning tribal and indigenous communities. CTSR has worked tirelessly to provide a platform that not only educates but also inspires advocacy and positive change. I commend the team for their dedication to this publication and extend my gratitude to all contributors whose insights and perspectives enrich this magazine.

May The Tribal Insight grow as a valuable resource for our students, faculty, and community, and may it encourage the pursuit of knowledge, empathy, and social responsibility in every reader.

Best Wishes,
Prof.(Dr.) S. Surya Prakash

FROM THE DESK OF THE CHAIRPERSON



With deep gratitude and pride, I extend warm congratulations on behalf of the Centre for Tribal Studies and Research to all the esteemed contributors, writers, editors, and supporters who have brought this edition of The Tribal Insight to fruition. Their dedication, and insightful contributions make this magazine an invaluable platform for raising awareness about their rich and diverse heritage of Indian tribal and indigenous communities worldwide.

The Centre for Tribal Studies and Research at National Law Institute University, Bhopal is serving not only as an informative resource but also as a vibrant celebration of cultures, stories, and traditions that shape the lives of India's tribal populations and indigenous communities worldwide. I am truly appreciative of how The Tribal Insight explores the current issues, challenges, and achievements of tribal communities—narratives that are frequently overlooked in mainstream conversations. Through the work of team - CTSR, we are better able to highlight the resilience, wisdom, and rich cultural tapestry of these communities, fostering a greater understanding and appreciation within the academic environment and beyond.

My sincere gratitude extends to each member of the Centre for Tribal Studies and Research, whose relentless commitment to this cause strengthens our mission to bring tribal and indigenous voices and issues to the forefront in our university. I am confident that this edition shall inspire readers to further engage with the issues and celebrations surrounding Indian tribes, fostering a deeper, more inclusive understanding that is essential for building a truly diverse society.

Best Wishes,
Prof.(Dr.) Bir Pal Singh



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Empowering Voices: '*Janjati Samvad*' Unites Tribes for Dialogue and Development

As part of the Government's '*Karmayogi Saptah*' initiatives, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, on 24 October 2024, organized an impactful event, '*Janjati Samvad: Chunautiya aur Pahal*' (Tribal Dialogue: Challenges and Initiatives). This platform brought together tribal representatives, government officials, and key stakeholders to discuss challenges faced by tribal communities and explore innovative ways to address them. The *Janjati Samvad* event highlighted areas crucial to the growth and welfare of India's indigenous communities. Key issues discussed included access to education, healthcare, sustainable livelihood options, and preservation of cultural heritage. The initiative aimed to not only identify pressing challenges but also to encourage action-oriented solutions that foster inclusivity and self-sufficiency among tribal communities.

CULTURAL PRESERVATION AS PRIORITY

Recognizing the deep cultural richness of India's tribal heritage, the event also highlighted initiatives aimed at preserving tribal languages, folklore, and traditional practices. This approach ensures that while tribes benefit from developmental programs, they also retain their unique cultural identities.



Image: Press Release: Press Information Bureau

JANJATI SAMVAD CHUNAUTIYA AUR PAHAL

SOURCES:

<https://indiaeducationdiary.in/ministry-of-tribal-affairs-organises-janjati-samvad-chunautiya-aur-pahal-as-part-of-the-karmayogi-saptah/>

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2068067>

Celebrating Culture: *Aadi Mahotsav* Inauguration



Source: https://www.instagram.com/tribesindia/p/DBGdOv3SPNV/?img_index=1



Source: https://www.instagram.com/tribesindia/p/DBGdOv3SPNV/?img_index=1

SOURCES:

<https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/aadi-mahotsav-was-inaugurated-honble-shri-durga-das-uikey-minister-state-tribal-affairs-government>

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2006938>

At the recent inauguration of *Aadi Mahotsav*, a National Tribal Festival that highlights the rich customs, artwork, and culture of indigenous groups, by Shri Durga Das Uikey, the Union Minister of State in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the lively energy of India's tribal history took centre stage. Around 190 tribal artisans from across the country exhibited their traditional art and craft between 13 Oct 2024 to 22 Oct 2024.

WHAT IS AADI MAHOTSAV?

On February 16, 2023, Hon. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi opened the massive National Tribal Festival, *Aadi Mahotsav*. The Festival honours the spirit of tribal culture, crafts, food, trade, and traditional art. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs' Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation Limited (TRIFED) organizes it every year.

AADI MAHOTSAV 2024

On February 13, 2024, a B2B workshop was organized for the first time, drawing representatives from major industry bodies. With over 35 industry leaders and start-ups, it saw the active participation of industry heavyweights like the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), and the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (IFCA). By showcasing their goods, the tribal business owners created new avenues for cooperation and bulk purchases from the State Corporation, SHGs, and private consumers. The Festival ensured that traditional crafts are not only preserved but also flourishes in modern markets by giving craftsmen a nationwide platform and fostering the creation of new employment opportunities.

Tribal Cafes at Tourist Spots Across M.P. Soon

Madhya Pradesh, known for its rich cultural heritage and diverse traditions, is taking a unique step towards promoting its indigenous culture. The state is now introducing tribal cafés at various tourist destinations, aiming to offer visitors an immersive cultural experience while supporting the local tribal communities. Tribal cafeterias are under construction at Turia village near Pench National Park in the Seoni district, near Kanha National Park in the Balaghat district, and at Mandu in the Dhar district. Through these cafeterias, one can experience the regional Tribal culture, food, cuisine and craftsmanship. Chief Minister Shri Mohan Yadav made an announcement on 26 October 2024 stating, that the objective of this initiative is not only to promote tourism but also to provide employment opportunities to the local tribal communities.

WHY VISIT?

Authentic Cuisine: Experience dishes crafted with indigenous ingredients and methods.

Support Local Artisans: These cafés showcase local crafts, providing artisans with sustainable income.

Cultural Immersion: Décor, music, and events highlight the diverse tribal heritage of Madhya Pradesh.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Madhya Pradesh is demonstrating how cultural preservation and economic development can coexist by developing a sustainable model that benefits both the locals and visitors. The idea could be extended to additional tourist locations throughout the state as these indigenous cafés become more well-known.



Source :- <https://magicpin.in/Bangalore/Nandi-Hills/Restaurant/Tribal-Cafe/store/a76cb/photos/>



SOURCE:

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/experience-tribal-cafes-at-mps-tourist-destinations-and-support-local-culture/articleshow/114634286.cms>

Kadar Tribes take up Restoration of Natural Forests



Image: Members of the Kadar tribe taking up restoration of natural forests degraded by invasive alien species at Pothupara, under Vazhachal forest division in Thrissur. | Photo Credit: SPL



SOURCES:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/a-tribal-community-takes-charge-against-invasive-alien-species/article68796281.ece>

<https://keralamuseum.org/article/kadar-education-at-vazhachal/>

The *Kadar* Tribe, indigenous to the lush landscapes of Kerala, has recently embarked on a significant ecological initiative in the Pothupara area under the Vazhachal forest division. With a deep-rooted connection to the forest and an unwavering commitment to conservation, the *Kadar* are bringing life back to the natural landscapes that have long sustained them. This joint initiative by the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), MGNREGA, Scheduled Tribes Development Department, Local Self-Government department, and WWF-India is a major step in the process of clearing damaging exotic species from native forests. The *Kadar* tribe's efforts highlight the critical role that indigenous communities play in environmental conservation. Their unique knowledge and practices are vital for protecting biodiversity and combating climate change.

AS THE PROGRAMME PROCEEDS:

The programme's ultimate goal is to improve the sustainability and standard of living of tribal groups by restoring the natural habitat that supports the region's flora and wildlife. According to R. Lekshmi, divisional forest officer, Vazhachal forest division, "this initiative is crucial for restoring the ecological balance and supporting those who depend on these forests." This project supports a global effort to stop and reverse ecosystem deterioration, which is in line with the UN General Assembly's decision of 2021–2030 as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Project Tiger Displaces 5.5 Lakh Tribal Communities, Report Reveals

The Rights and Risks Analysis Groups (RRAG) on International Tiger Day released a report titled “India’s Tiger Reserves: Tribals Get Out, Tourists Welcome” which reveals that Project Tiger in India may displace at least 5,50,000 Scheduled Tribes and Forest dwellers. This is a significant increase in Displacement compared to before 2021.

DISPLACEMENT STATISTICS

Before 2021, about 254,794 people were displaced from 50 tiger reserves, averaging around 5,000 per reserve. Since then, the average displacement across tiger reserves has increased to 48,333 per reserve, which is a 967% increase.

MAJOR AFFECTED AREAS

The report details that the most significant displacements will occur in:

- Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan: 160,000 people
- Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh: 72,772 people
- Ranipur Tiger Reserve, Uttar Pradesh: 45,000 people.

VIOLATION OF RIGHTS

Indigenous communities often lose their homes, access to resources, and cultural sites. The report claims that the government bypasses the required free and informed consent mandated by the Forest Rights Act.



Image: This undated file photo released by Corbett Tiger Reserve shows a tiger at the reserve in Corbett National Park, India



Image: This undated file photo released by Corbett Tiger Reserve shows a tiger at the reserve in Corbett National Park, India

SOURCES:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/project-tiger-to-displace-55-lakh-tribals-says-rights-group-report/article68460745.ece>

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/indias-project-tiger-to-displace-55l-forest-dwellers-report/articleshow/112120288.cms>

Bill to Provide Representation to STs in Goa Assembly



Image: APTI Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla conducts the proceedings of the House during the Monsoon session of Parliament, in New Delhi



Image: APTI Goa Legislative Assembly

Recently, the Union Minister of State in the Ministry of Law and Justice, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha to provide reservation to STs in Goa Legislative Assembly. The Bill is titled as, 'Readjustment of Representation of Scheduled Tribes in Assembly Constituencies of the State of Goa Bill, 2024'. It will empower the census commissioner to notify the population of STs in Goa. Based on it, the Election Commission (EC) will amend the Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 2008, to make way for ST reservation in the 40-member Goa Assembly. As of now, no seat in the Goa assembly is reserved for the ST community while one seat is reserved for Scheduled Castes. The ST community has been demanding that 04 out of the 40 seats in Goa be reserved as it is estimated that Goa has a ST population of 1.5 lakhs.

SOURCES:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/bill-to-provide-sts-representation-in-go-a-assembly-introduced-in-lok-sabha/article68487477.ece>

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/bill-for-st-representation-in-go-a-assembly-introduced-in-lok-sabha-9497175/>



PM Modi unveils projects worth Rs 83,700 Crore from Jharkhand's Hazaribagh

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, on 02 October 2024, unveiled development projects worth over Rs 83,700 crore in Jharkhand, including the *Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan* for tribal development. The projects would cover health, education, livelihood infrastructure, and electric cation for marginalized communities, benefitting over 5 crore tribals in 549 districts across 30 States and Union Territories. The scheme seeks to address critical gaps in social infrastructure, health, education, and livelihood through 25 interventions implemented by 17 central ministries and departments.

OTHER PROJECTS

PM Modi also inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for multiple projects under the *PM Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan* (PM-JANMAN) including the construction of more than 1,380 km roads, 120 Anganwadi centres, 250 multi-purpose centres, and 10 school hostels.

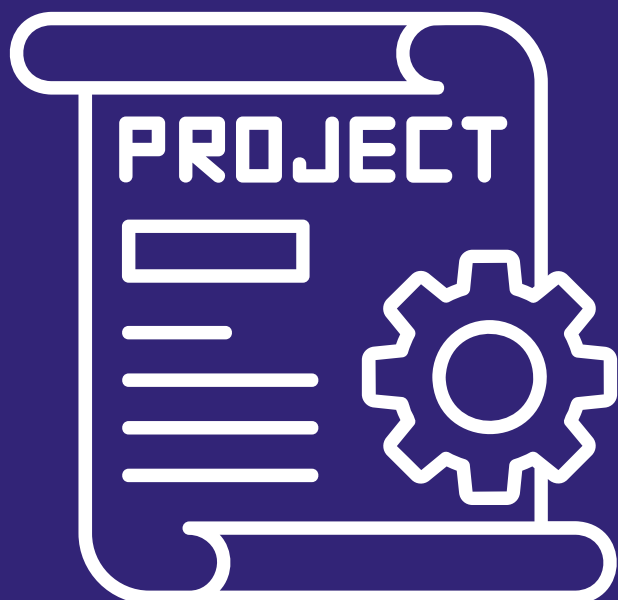


Image: PTI | Prime Minister Narendra Modi participates in 'Swachh Bharat Diwas 2024' program at Vigyan Bhawan, in New Delhi, Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2024

SOURCES:

<https://www.thehindu.com/elections/jharkhand-assembly/centre-committed-to-tribal-development-projects-worth-83700-crore-to-boost-growth-pm-modi/article68709246.ece>

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/pm-modi-unveils-projects-worth-rs-83700-crore-from-jharkhand-hazaribag/articleshow/113875291.cms>

₹5 Lakhs each to transform Tribal Houses into Homestays



Image: ANI | Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw addresses a press conference after the cabinet meeting, at the National Media Centre in New Delhi on Wednesday, September 18, 2024



Image:- Bhil tribe House in Madhya Pradesh |Credit: Alamy

The Union Cabinet on 18 September 2024 approved a package that will provide up to ₹5 lakhs each to tribal households and villages across the country, to turn their homes into tourist homestays or to build new ones under the Tourism Ministry's *Swadesh Darshan* scheme. This scheme is meant to tap the tourist potential of tribal areas and to provide alternative livelihood.

PMJUGA Scheme

This scheme is one of the 25 interventions planned under the *Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan* (PMJUGA), an umbrella package to implement existing schemes in 63,000 Scheduled Tribe majority villages. The new package also aims to provide an impetus to existing development schemes to build 20 lakh *pucca* homes for ST families, lay 25,000 km of roads connecting ST-majority villages, and bring piped water to every eligible village, with a focus on 5,000 hamlets with less than 20 households each. It also plans to electrify around 2.35 lakh households and unconnected public institutions, provide 25 lakh LPG connections, broadband connectivity to 5,000 tribal villages under the Bharat Net project, and set up 100 tribal multipurpose marketing centres. The tourism section of the scheme aims to create five to 10 homestays in each target tribal village where there is a "tourist potential", with an overall goal of setting up 1,000 such homestays.

SOURCE:

<https://www.thehindu.com/elections/jharkhand-assembly/centre-committed-to-tribal-development-projects-worth-83700-crore-to-boost-growth-pm-modi/article68709246.ece>

Priyanka Jarkiholi: Youngest Tribal Woman to win in Lok Sabha

In a historic moment for Indian politics, Priyanka Jarkiholi became the youngest tribal woman to be elected to the Lok Sabha, representing Chikkodi constituency in Karnataka's Belagavi district. She became the first tribal woman to win an unreserved seat in Karnataka. Her win represents more than just a personal triumph; it also marks a major shift in the country's governance toward greater political representation of tribal communities.

BACKGROUND

As the daughter of former Karnataka Minister Satish Jarkiholi, she comes from a prominent political family. Her love for public service was stoked by her upbringing in a politically engaged atmosphere, which gave her a deep awareness of the difficulties faced by indigenous groups. At 27, she is one of the youngest members of Parliament and the first tribal woman to be elected to an open district seat in Karnataka. She is also the second person from reserved category to win a general seat after Kotturu Hariharappa Ranganath who represented Chitradurga Lok Sabha seat from 1984 to 1989.

POSSIBLE IMPACT

The significance of diversity in political representation is underscored by Priyanka's triumph. A government is better able to meet the diverse needs of all of its citizens when it represents the demographics of its people. It is anticipated that her participation in the Lok Sabha will upend conventional wisdom and introduce novel viewpoints to national debates, particularly those pertaining to issues impacting underprivileged and tribal populations.



Photo Credit: ZeeNews India



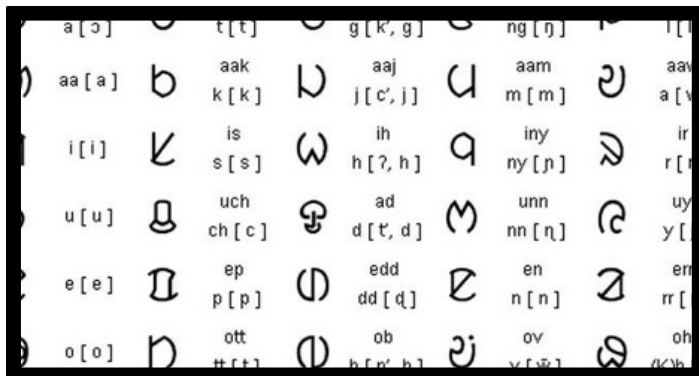
Photo Credit: The Hindu

SOURCES:

<https://www.theweek.in/theweek/specials/2024/06/22/chikkodi-karnataka-inc-lok-sabha-mp-priyanka-jarkiholi.html>

<https://en.themooknayak.com/tribal-news/meet-priyanka-jarkiholi-the-youngest-tribal-woman-to-win-an-unreserved-seat-in-karnataka>

PRESERVATION OF TRIBAL LANGUAGES



SOURCE:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2042993>

Ministry of Tribal Affairs under the 'Support to TRIs scheme', provides financial support to the Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) in States/UTs for the activities undertaken for the preserving and promoting of tribal languages and dialects as mentioned below.

i. Preparing Bilingual Dictionaries and Trilingual Proficiency Modules in tribal languages.

ii. Preparing Primers for students of Class I, II and III in tribal languages under Multi-Lingual Education (MLE) Intervention in the line of New Education Policy 2020. Publishing *Varnamala*, local rhymes, and stories in tribal languages.

iii. Publishing books, journals on different tribal languages to promote tribal literature

iv. Documenting folklore, and folktales of different tribes for preservation and promotion of tribal folk tradition. Collecting oral literature (songs, riddles, ballads etc.)

v. Translation and publication of Training module about Sickle cell Anaemia disease awareness Module I and Diagnosis & Treatment Module II in local Tribal Dialects

vi. Conducting conferences, seminars, workshops, and poetic symposiums.

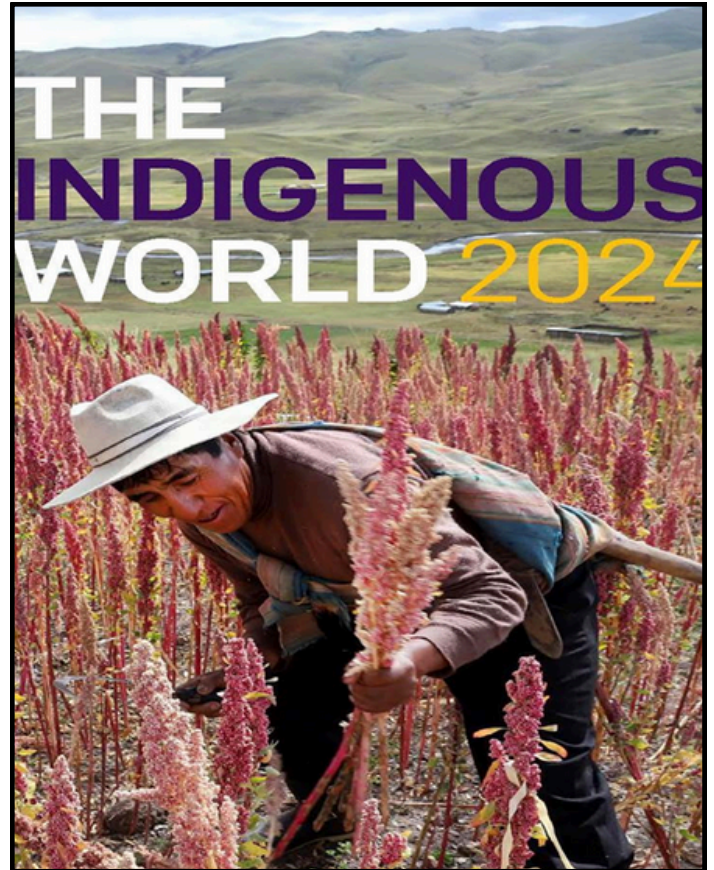
Further, under another scheme 'Tribal Research, Information, Education, Communication and Events (TRI-ECE)' funds are given to reputed Institutions for carrying out research study programs including documentation of tribal languages and developing AI based translation tools for converting English/Hindi Text/Speech to selected tribal languages and vice-versa.

THE INDIGENOUS WORLD 2024: INDIA

“Approximately 705 ethnic groups are classified as Scheduled Tribes in India. The Scheduled Tribes of central India are commonly known as *Adivasis*, which translates to "original inhabitants, Indigenous Peoples." They make up 8.6% of the entire population, with an estimated 104 million people. The overall population of the Scheduled Tribes is higher than the official statistics because there are numerous other ethnic groups that would be eligible for Scheduled Tribe status but are not recognized by the government.

The seven northeastern Indian states and the so-called "central tribal belt," which stretches from Rajasthan to West Bengal, are home to the greatest numbers of Indigenous Peoples. The Fifth Schedule for central India and the Sixth Schedule for some regions of northeastern India are two examples of legislation and constitutional provisions in India that acknowledge the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-governance and land. Numerous flaws exist in the legislation intended to safeguard Indigenous Peoples, and their application is far from ideal.

The Government of India has increasingly been using the term “Indigenous Populations” in official notifications such as the establishment of a High-Level Committee to investigate the “social, economic, cultural and linguistic issues of the indigenous population in the State of Tripura” or in its justification for the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019. The State government of Jharkhand declared the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, celebrated on 9 August every year worldwide, a state holiday.”



THE INDIGENOUS WORLD 2024, 38TH EDITION.

EXCERPT FROM:
THE INDEGENOUS WORLD 2024 (38th Edition)
Edited by: Dwayne Mamo
Page: 199

SOURCE:

<https://www.iwgia.org/en/resources/publications/5508-the-indigenous-world-2024.html>

Brazil: Crisis In Yanomami Territory, One Year after Operation to Remove Goldminers



The Yanomami are suffering an acute health crisis, and hundreds of children are acutely malnourished. © URIHI



An illegal airstrip built by goldminers, just inside the Venezuelan border, in the heart of Yanomami territory. Nine light aircraft are visible. © Globo TV

SOURCE:

<https://www.survivalinternational.org/news/13864>

Health Crisis in Yanomami Territory

Escalating Health Issues: Malaria cases rose by 61% in 2023, with over 25,000 cases. Flu infections surged by 640%, from 3,203 in 2022 to 20,524 in 2023.

Child Mortality: Between January and November 2023, 308 Indigenous people died, most of them children under five.

Failing Health Services: The Inter-American Court of Human Rights reports that health facilities are barely functioning. Nine health posts that were supposed to reopen remain closed.

Unsafe Water & Mining: There is little access to safe drinking water, and many illegal mining camps continue to operate.

Armed Miners & Organized Crime: Armed miners linked to criminal gangs remain in the territory, distributing weapons and seeking to control Indigenous communities.

Severe Malnutrition: Recent photos and videos reveal widespread malnutrition among Yanomami children and adults. Illegal gold miners continue to operate with little restriction

The Yanomami people in Brazil's Amazon face a worsening humanitarian crisis, despite a government operation intended to expel illegal miners. In one shocking case, miners held three young Yanomami boy's captive. Dario Kopenawa Yanomami, from the Hutukara Yanomami Association, expressed frustration with the government's inability to control mining, now run by organized crime factions. He noted that children continue to die from malaria, pneumonia, and malnutrition.

Fiona Watson of Survival International criticized President Lula's response, highlighting that miners are returning, health services remain inadequate, and the military is slow to act. She warned that without immediate, sustained action, including healthcare and strict law enforcement, Yanomami's survival is at serious risk.

***Mashco Piro* Tribe has emerged from Isolation in Peru's Forests**

The sudden public appearance of a previously uncontacted tribe from Peru's Amazon rainforests recently shook anthropologists worldwide to action. For the first time, the *Mashco Piro* tribe, who had been isolated in the Peruvian forest for a long time, came out of their remote home.

THE MASHCO PIRO TRIBE?

The *Mashco Piro* tribe, the largest uncontacted tribe globally with 750 members who inhabit the space between two natural reserves in Madre de Dios (region in southeastern Peru's Amazon Basin), have hardly been sighted and usually don't speak to anybody else. Recently, the tribe was seen coming from the rainforest near the Las Piedras River in Madre de Dios. They are known to throw arrows at anyone who gets too close. It has been observed that the *Mashco Piro* have interacted with people outside of their community just a few times, and when they have, it has usually been violent. According to reports, the village of Monte Salvado was visited by about 50 members of the *Mashco Piro* tribe.

WHY DID THE TRIBE SALLY FORTH?

On the property where the *Mashco Piro* tribe resides, a number of logging businesses are authorized to remove trees. These businesses, have constructed more than 200 kilometres of roads to enable logging trucks to remove the timber. The tribe's emergence is believed to be driven by the need for food and a safer place to stay near the remote villages of Monte Salvado. According to experts, the *Mashco Piro* now have nowhere else to go as logging corporations continue to encroach on their property.



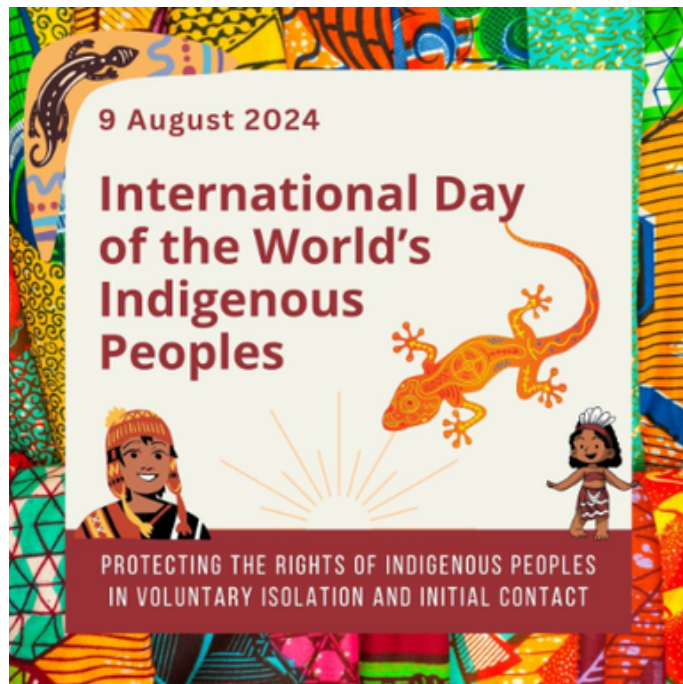
Mascho Piro tribe |Source: Survival International



SOURCE:

https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/why-did-this-isolated-uncontacted-tribe-come-out-of-the-amazon-forest-124071900490_1.html

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples - 2024



SOURCE: <https://globalpres.org/international-indigenous-day-2024/>

SOURCE:

<https://www.unep.org/events/online-event/virtual-commemoration-international-day-worlds-indigenous-peoples-2024#:~:text=This%20International%20Day%20of%20the,best%20protectors%20of%20the%20forest.>

Every year on August 9, the world observes World Tribal Day to honor and defend the rights of Indigenous People everywhere. This day also honors the noteworthy accomplishments and contributions made by indigenous communities to improving the globe, particularly environmental preservation initiatives. Also referred to as the International Day of the World's Indigenous People or World Indigenous Day, it offers a fantastic chance to actively fight toward protecting the basic rights of indigenous communities around the globe.

WORLD TRIBAL DAY HISTORY:

The United Nations General Assembly established the International Day of the World's Indigenous People in December 1994, designating August 9 as the date of this yearly celebration. The UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Sub commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights met for the first time on this date, which makes it a symbolic date. In 1982, this symposium was held in Geneva.

THIS YEAR'S THEME:

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, this year emphasizes "Protecting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact." This year's theme draws attention to Indigenous groups who have chosen to live in voluntary isolation or are in the initial stages of contact with the wider world. These communities, often found in remote and densely forested areas, hold invaluable knowledge about their ecosystems and are among the most effective guardians of the forest.

This year's focus calls for greater protection of these Indigenous Communities' rights and territories. It highlights the need to respect their autonomy and establish policies that safeguard their lands from external exploitation. Respecting their choice for isolation and ensuring their safety supports their role as forest protectors, benefiting both biodiversity and climate stability. The day also underscores the need for global awareness, legislation, and support for Indigenous-led conservation efforts.

INTERVIEW

“INTEGRATING GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN PROGRAM DELIVERY FOR TRIBAL COMMUNITIES”



PROFESSOR AMITABH PANDE *Director, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sanghralaya, Bhopal*

Professor Amitabh Pande is a professor of Anthropology. He has completed his Anthropology degree from the University of Hyderabad. He did his master's in Anthropology among the Chenchu tribe (a PVTG in Andhra Pradesh). He also completed his M.Phil. on village communities and how their livelihood was impacted by pollution. He joined the Indian Institute of Forest Management in 1993. He then started working on the sacred groves of indigenous communities, focusing on their religious beliefs and how they conserve the forest. He has been in this field for 30 years. Several PVTGs of Madhya Pradesh have been studied by him, examining how their livelihoods have been affected by development in that area. He has also played a role in sensitizing the tribal department of Madhya Pradesh and has trained officers. He was also involved in several projects with international organizations and worked with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

1. What are sacred groves?

Sacred groves are influence zones of a deity, who can be either male or female. Approximately 4% of forested land across India is designated as sacred groves. In the Northeast, communities such as the Khasi and Jaintias have their own sacred groves—large forest areas that act as reservoirs, enriching the local ecosystem by releasing minerals preserved within these groves. Sacred groves exist at the village, community, and family levels, and their sizes can range from 100 hectares to as small as 0.5 decimals.

2. What kindled your interest in Tribal Studies and Research and what is your motivation for it?

After joining the field of Anthropology, studying tribal communities becomes one of its central aspects. Anthropology involves in-depth fieldwork, where we immerse ourselves in communities to understand their practices and beliefs. By sharing their daily life, we build trust, making communities more comfortable sharing their insights. There are also strict ethical guidelines we must follow, including not using their knowledge without prior permission and informing them of what we plan to report. We return to them with our findings, inviting their feedback on our reports.

3. What are the pressing issues that are still prevalent in India, and do you think that the social stigma is still entrenched like it used to be?

Social stigma is not as entrenched as it once was, and it is gradually decreasing. However, it varies at different levels. It is not as prevalent among tribal communities, but it remains significant in caste-based communities. Another pressing issue is the loss of cultural knowledge; traditional knowledge systems are fading. When you visit a museum and observe the items on display, you see objects once created by these communities. Now, market products are replacing these items, causing them to forget their skills and knowledge. They have the ability to build their homes, make their clothes, produce agricultural tools, construct bullock carts, and create iron implements. However, by supplying these goods from outside, we are gradually increasing their dependency. Our task is to protect and conserve this knowledge.

There is cultural loss within communities, and the livelihoods associated with that culture are also diminishing with modernity. We are discussing entrepreneurship, and if space is provided for it, these cultural practices could be revived.

4. What are the key challenges tribal communities face today?

District-level officers work with various tribal communities, but one challenge is that some officers, coming from prestigious universities and urban centres, may not have the same level of cultural understanding needed for the unique context of these communities. The missionary approach is missing; an officer gains media attention when they genuinely aim to solve a problem. We need a stronger focus on understanding tribal communities and policies related to them. For example, in Bharwani, there is an English medium school from first to fifth grade. However, after fifth grade, students must switch to a Hindi medium school. This policy creates a disconnect; if a child is taught in English up to fifth grade, why not continue this through twelfth grade?

5. Is there a lack of continuity in educational policies for tribal children?

Some implemented the radical ideas, while others merely prevailed over it, neither changing nor closing it. Either improve it and extend it through twelfth grade. In tribal areas, getting an English teacher through twelfth grade is very challenging, as up to fifth grade, not much is taught—maybe some stories and poems. After fifth, subjects like science, math, and social studies start, for which better English-speaking teachers are required.

6. How can we address the challenges in tribal education?

In Andhra Pradesh, the government's ITDP management was more mission-oriented. In other states, it's not a mission approach. So, one is the mission approach, and the other is a specialized officer who should be allowed to go into districts with a larger tribal population. There should be some training for officers about the places where they are going to meet the tribals.

The government provides the money, and it must be used for something better, because sometimes, you do not know how to use the money when you are in a crisis. There was a case before 2014, where one of the tribals demanded bullocks, and another demanded bullock carts. The person without bullocks was given a bullock cart, while the person with bullocks was not given any. This was a waste of government money, and no inquiry or action was taken. However, the changes that have happened in the last 10 years, such as direct benefit transfer and a target-based approach, have benefitted the people.

7. How can the government better integrate resource management policies to ensure effective support for tribal communities?

The government has a resource management policy and provides space for the community to use the resources. However, inter-departmental conflict is creating a problem for the tribals in accessing them.

The forest department has drawn a line, the education department has drawn a line, and the agriculture department has drawn a line. The integration of government departments is the biggest challenge in the delivery of the program, not the people.

8. Are the existing policies and schemes for tribal communities adequate, or do gaps in implementation hinder their effectiveness?

There are adequate acts everywhere; however, in practice, the selection and prioritization of policies could sometimes focus more on administrative processes than on actionable solutions for the communities involved.

9. What structural challenges exist within the tribal ministry, and how can it be strengthened to better serve tribal populations?

The tribal ministry could benefit from enhanced authority and resources to better address the needs of tribal communities. Upon reviewing the organizational structure of the tribal department, it appears there is room for increased staffing support to more effectively serve these communities. There is a tribal officer in Andhra Pradesh, and in Gujarat, an officer works at the village level, but in other places, we do not have an officer working below the district level. It is the existing system that has to deliver the tribal policy. They have an agriculture policy and other policies, but there is a flaw in the design of the delivery system. While the tribal department has a structure in place, it differs from other departments like forestry or revenue, which have more consistent local-level representation, such as village guards or patwaris.

10. Is the lack of a specialized tribal workforce a key barrier in addressing tribal issues, and what changes are needed in the system?

It is a policy question, and the whole framework has to be created, and it has a high potential for employability. All the tribal districts can have it, so why not have the irrigation department have tribal engineers? He will be a more sensitive person to understand the issues at the root level.

He knows about the culture and that can create possibilities of solving the problem because how to solve the problem should be the approach. The department often appoints generalist officers with limited cultural or anthropological knowledge, which impacts their effectiveness. Assigning officers from diverse backgrounds to tribal affairs is valuable, though those with specialized understanding of tribal communities and their cultures may be especially suited for these roles. Studying Anthropology can provide a foundation, but deeper field experience and continuous engagement with tribal communities are essential for truly understanding and addressing their unique needs. Challenges faced by tribal communities are multifaceted and can benefit from the insights of specialists in Anthropology and related fields, ensuring that cultural nuances are fully considered. We should also engage and utilize resources within the tribal communities themselves to support culturally-informed solutions.

11: What challenges do tribal communities face in accessing digital resources, and how can these be overcome?

The issue is how to access it, and they want to access it. When I was doing my anthropology research, we had a practice of employing local children for data collection. So, all these children in the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades were trained and asked to assist with data collection. We conducted a training session on how to collect data, and the entire questionnaire was in Hindi. They would read it, sit with participants, and gather responses. Once the data was filled in, we sent it out. Tribal youth could be employed as project assistants or field investigators, creating local employment opportunities. For many surveys, various projects are available. They often expressed a desire to buy a mobile phone with their earnings, showing an aspiration for digital access. We simply need to create a supportive environment and system through educational institutions and other organizations.

FOREST RIGHTS ACT, 2006

INTRODUCTION

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 came into being after a long journey of political discussions and it is also commonly known as the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (hereinafter referred to as “Act”). The Act recognizes the rights of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) to forest resources essential for their livelihood, habitation, and cultural needs. The act provides for Individual Rights (e.g., self-cultivation, habitation) and Community Rights (e.g., grazing, fishing, access to water bodies, habitat rights for particularly vulnerable tribal groups).

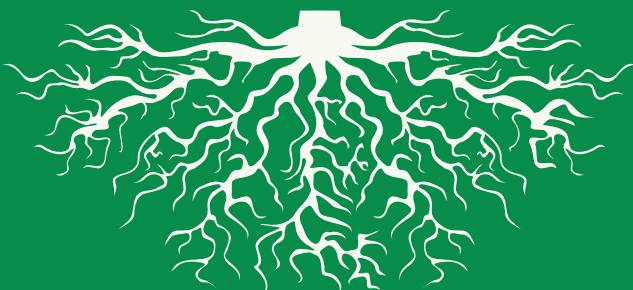
The Act protects against eviction without rehabilitation and mandates community involvement through empowered Gram Sabhas, which oversee conservation efforts, ensure sustainable forest management, and influence local policies. Additionally, it facilitates community infrastructure development to enhance access to education, health, and nutrition, making it a comprehensive framework for protecting both rights and ecological integrity.



BASICS OF FRA

The Act formally acknowledges and grants rights to forest land for FDSTs and OTFDs who have lived in forest areas for generations. The Act provides that individuals or communities who have primarily resided in forest land and depend on the forests for bona fide livelihood needs are called FDSTs and those members or community who resided and depended on the forest for at least three generations (75 years) prior to December 13, 2005, are called OTFDs. The Act, which aims to balance forest conservation with livelihood security, empowers the Gram Sabha to decide the nature and extent of rights, which includes but not limited to:

- Right to Hold and Live: The Act grants FDSTs or OTFDs the rights to hold and live in the forest land under their occupation for livelihood provided that such land shall be in occupation on the date of commencement of this Act and not to exceed 4 hectares.



- **Use Rights:** Extends rights to collect Minor Forest Produce, use grazing areas, collect products of water bodies, etc.
- **Relief and Development Rights:** Provides for rehabilitation in cases of illegal eviction and access to basic amenities, with stipulations for forest protection.
- **Forest Management Rights:** Enables communities to protect, regenerate, and sustainably manage community forest resources.

The Act addresses historical injustices by ensuring secure land tenure while strengthening the conservation of forest ecosystems.

ISSUES ASSOCIATED

AMBIGUITY IN LEGAL PROVISIONS

- **Nistari Rights (Section 3(1)(b)):** Customary Forest use rights with regards to the adjoining forest rights which were recognized pre-independence were often removed after independence and the Act provides no redress or compensation for the people dispossessed from such extinguished nistari land.
- **Village Settlement (Section 3(1)(h)):** Converting Forest villages to revenue villages is difficult as the task of regulating such village forests is given to the forest department which excludes the residents from local governance, legal land rights, and domicile certificates because these are in the jurisdiction of revenue department.

Access to Biodiversity and Traditional Knowledge (Section 3(1)(k)): The Act gives the right of access to biodiversity and community rights to intellectual property and traditional but the Act failed to provide any clear mechanism for their protection and enforcement.

CHALLENGES WITH THE ROLE OF GRAM SABHA

Gram Sabha is the lowest governing unit of the Panchayati Raj Institution which signifies the decentralized power structure and governance and the participation of the people in decision making process. The main authority under the Act is the Gram Sabha that has the responsibility of implementing the provision of the Act, however, there are certain issues with the role of the Gram Sabha in the implementation part.

- **Implementation Challenges:** While the Gram Sabha is the authority for recognizing forest rights, its effectiveness is often hindered by bureaucratic interference, lack of state support, and insufficient capacity-building.
- **Authority and Autonomy Issues:** As the main authority is Gram Sabha, there can be discretion of the Sarpanch and he might not put the important agendas or issues which affect the rights of communities or bypass the procedure mentioned under the Act. Caste and gender biases of the individual conferred with the responsibility further reduce the Gram Sabha's authority and weaken its role.
- **Resource and Support Deficit:** Without central government funding, the financial burden falls on states, limiting the resources and capacity-building necessary for the Gram Sabha to meet its responsibilities conferred by the Act.

IMPLEMENTATION GAPS AND ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS

- **Recognition Imbalance:** It is often observed that the authorities prioritize Individual Forest Rights (IFRs) over Community Forest Rights (CFRs), favoring private land use over community-led forest conservation, because community forest rights are often complex issues, this undermines the goal that this Act aim to achieve.
- **Bureaucratic Obstacles:** Poor coordination among Gram Sabha, Sub-Divisional Level Committee (SDLC), and District Level Committee (DLC) further affects the proper implementation of the provision of the Act. The refusal to provide the support to the Gram Sabha by SDLC and DLC with the records and the evidence further makes the situation worse.
- **Technical Limitations:** Gram Sabhas often lack the technical expertise needed to prepare claims, which government agencies may exploit to divert forest land for non-forest purposes, such as mining.

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) is supported by constitutional provisions that protect tribal populations from displacement due to land acquisitions, with state governors regulating land transfers. The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 ensures a humane and transparent process for Scheduled Tribes during land acquisition. Moving forward, it is crucial to empower Gram Sabhas in forest management, involve rights holders in decision-making, and conduct educational programs about their rights. Strengthening civil society, establishing monitoring mechanisms, and implementing accountability measures are essential, along with developing integrated plans balancing development and conservation.





A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE IN

Image:- The Apatani Tribe
Of Arunachal Pradesh by
English NEWJ

THE LAND OF RISING SUN

Arunachal Pradesh, the Land of the Rising Sun, is home to several tribes. One of the central attractions of the state, the Ziro valley is inhabited by a tribe known as the Apatani. The tribe belongs to the Tani group of tribes. The people of this tribe are dispersed over numerous communities in various villages. Known by several names, such as Apa or Apa Tani, the tribe has a sustainable way of living life. It is one of the few tribes in the world that still worships nature. Initially a marshy wasteland, the Ziro Valley was later converted into fertile land by these Apatanis.

Unique Agricultural Practices

A relatively small area of flat land between the valley is available for Agriculture. The Apatani tribe practices organic farming without any animal or machine. It is famous for its Wet-rice cultivation. Fishes are reared in these paddy fields, forming a symbiotic relationship. Women over eighty years of age, work on these fields and sow the seeds by themselves. The area's high degree of biodiversity and effective preservation of vital watersheds are guaranteed by this planned land-use pattern, which also guarantees that perennial streams will continue to flow into the valley to support local requirements. Millet is grown on raised partition bunds between the rice plots. Nutrient wash-out from the nearby hill slopes feeds the agro-ecosystems. In order to maintain soil fertility year after year, crop leftovers and village organic waste are recycled to restore nutrients lost during crop harvest.

The Cultural Landscape and the UNESCO List

In 2014, the Apatani cultural landscape was included in the Tentative List of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. To be under the list, the site must meet one of the ten selection criteria along with an outstanding universal value. One of the reasons given for universal value was the effective working of the ancient socio-political institution, Bulyañ, the mutual support between the nature, traditions and the tribals, participation of the community in developmental projects, judicial land utilization, reverence for nature, resilient customary rules and beliefs and extremely effective human adaptation strategy to the demands and limitations of highland areas. The valley provides a remarkable testament to the tribal civilization that has been in place since time immemorial and an excellent example of traditional human settlement in such a highland region, fulfilling the third and fifth criteria to be included in the list.



The Village Council- *Bulyañ*

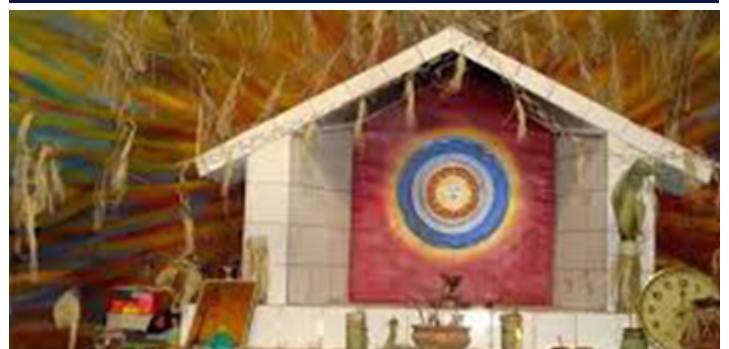
Arunachal Pradesh, along with other north eastern states has a unique tribal culture, which it has managed to preserve it till now. To maintain order in this tribal society, there exists traditional village councils in the state. The village council of the Apatanis is known as *Bulyañ*. It is an indigenous self-governing institution and existed since ages. These institutions continue to exist along with the present-day political institutions.

Religion- *Donyi Polo*

The *Apatani* tribe follows the *Donyi-Polo* religion, where, Donyi means 'Sun' and Polo means 'Moon'. As Apatanis generally worship nature, the religion is also based on the concept of animism. The religion emerged by the efforts of *Talom Rukbo*. The religion regained popularity to culturally safeguard tribal practices and rituals. The revival was the step forward to the idea in having faith in the tribe's traditional practices over other dominant choices. Sun worship is common in various religions including Sanatan Dharma, where some people practice "*Chhath Puja*". The actions and ancient stories of the tribe embodies the soul of Donyi-Polo. The religion in the present scenario is the desire to live a tranquil and fulfilling life on Earth.

Festivals

The two main festivals of the *Apatanis* are *Dree* and *Myoko*. Prayers are said for a bountiful crop and the prosperity of all people at the July agricultural festival of *Dree*. In order to protect crops from pests, diseases, natural disasters, and epidemics, as well as to promote human health and prosperity, the *Dree* rites are done to pacify and gratify deities. A four day programme is held. In accordance with their ancient practice, the priests conduct the ceremonies in their various communities on the first day. The entire valley's population gathers at the central location, where a communal altar is set up, on the second day. Cultural competitions are held in the evening, followed by a community feast and cultural assembly on the third day. Ultimately, on the fourth day, the sheds were disassembled. *Myoko* is a celebration of friendship. This friendship and harmony between villages lasts for a month and observed on a rotational basis. This is the season when paddy seeds are sown. The villagers pray for a good harvest. The homes of the villagers remain open all day for upcoming visitors. The festival commemorate togetherness and represent the unity of the tribe.



Source:-<https://www.manidvipa.in/donyi-polo>

Apatani women and their iconic tattoos and nose tubes

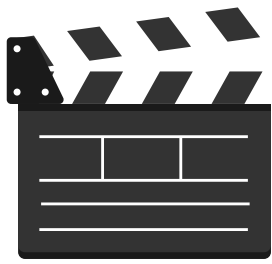
Tattooing is an age old tradition, the *Baiga* tribe in Madhya Pradesh for example, considers tattoo as immortal. Behind this beautiful and unique tattoos of the *Apatanis* women, there were several stories. One of them is that the women of these tribes were forced to get tattooed on their faces to scar themselves and save themselves from other tribal men who use to abduct their women. For this purpose, the women had to go through the painful process of putting tube in their nose and tattooing their face. This later became a tradition but the modern women found it alienating from other women outside the tribe. With the support of the Apatani Youth Association, the government had banned these practices.

Apatanis as an Inspiration

The *Apatani* tribe is a classic example of how to preserve the traditions but at the same time adapt to the modern practices while adhering to the needs of the nature and environment. Be it them accepting a religion which focuses on worshipping nature or their sustainable yet distinct agricultural practices, it all shows their will and vigour towards preserving their culture and nature.

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Screen

RRR movie review

RRR is not only a blockbuster of epic proportions but also a cinematic tribute to India's indigenous heritage and resistance against colonial rule. Directed by S.S. Rajamouli, the film skillfully merges fiction with historical elements, drawing inspiration from the lives of two legendary revolutionaries, Alluri Sitarama Raju and Komaram Bheem, whose roots and struggles echo deeply within the tribal communities of India. Featuring N.T. Rama Rao Jr. as Bheem and Ram Charan as Raju, the film has captivated audiences with its ambitious scale, breathtaking visuals, and a unique storyline inspired by historical characters but with fictional twists.

The portrayal of Komaram Bheem, a revered Gond tribal leader, is particularly notable for its cultural resonance. His character is a powerful representation of tribal pride, resilience, and defiance against oppression. Bheem's journey highlights the deep connection of indigenous communities with their land, language, and culture, which the film captures through scenes of tribal rituals, art, and customs.

RRR underscores the exploitation faced by tribal communities during colonial times. Bheem's mission to rescue a young tribal girl abducted by British authorities symbolizes the historical injustices that indigenous communities have endured. His courage and his unwavering sense of justice reflect the ethos of many tribal revolts across India during the colonial period, from the Santhal rebellion to the Munda uprising, where indigenous groups fought fiercely to protect their autonomy and way of life.



Image: Amazon | FILMY SPACE Glossy RRR POSTER A3 Size QUALITY 300 GSM

The movie opens with two separate stories: Bheem, a tribal warrior on a quest to rescue a young girl from British captivity, and Raju, a determined officer working for the British but with a hidden motive. Their paths cross unexpectedly, and a strong bond of friendship forms between them, only to be tested as their allegiances clash. This complex dynamic is one of the film's strengths, as it explores loyalty, sacrifice, and rebellion in an era dominated by colonial rule.

The duality of Bheem and Alluri Sitarama Raju's characters represents the contrasting approaches of different cultures in their fight for freedom. While Raju operates within the structure of the British system to dismantle it from within, Bheem represents an unrestrained, natural force. His battle against colonial oppression is rooted in a raw, primal desire to protect his people and homeland, embodying the tribal warrior ethos that values freedom and honor above all else.

Rajamouli's sensitive portrayal of tribal struggles resonates strongly in the climax. In the face of powerful British adversaries and immense challenges, Bheem's journey embodies the relentless spirit of indigenous tribes who have faced centuries of oppression but continue to safeguard their land, culture, and community. In the film's powerful finale, Bheem and Raju come together, symbolizing a unity across cultural divides—a message that transcends the screen, highlighting the strength of solidarity among diverse communities.

One of the key appeals of RRR lies in its language, both cinematic and cultural. Although it primarily features Telugu, the universal themes of love, loyalty, and resistance have helped the film resonate internationally. Rajamouli's ability to weave regional identity with universal appeal has given RRR a unique place in global cinema, breaking box-office records worldwide.

RRR is more than just a period-action drama. It's a cinematic spectacle that combines heroism, history, and mythology in a larger-than-life portrayal. It is a celebration of India's unsung heroes and a tribute to tribal resilience and cultural richness. Rajamouli's respectful and vivid representation of tribal identity and values through Bheem's character offers audiences a glimpse into a world often overlooked. By bringing Komaram Bheem to life with such authenticity and depth, RRR underscores the significance of tribal contributions to India's freedom and cultural heritage. It's a film that honors the indomitable spirit of indigenous communities and reminds us of the importance of preserving and celebrating tribal culture.



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