



The Politics of Cultural Revivalism in Jharkhand: Conflicts of Identities

Dhirendra Tripathi, Ph.D., Department of Political Science
Ranchi University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, INDIA

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Author

Dhirendra Tripathi, Ph.D.

E-mail : dhirendratripathi36@gmail.com

shodhsamagam1@gmail.com

Received on : 16/11/2025
Revised on : 18/01/2026
Accepted on : 27/01/2026
Overall Similarity : 02% on 19/01/2026



Plagiarism Checker X - Report

Originality Assessment

2%

Overall Similarity

Date: Jan 19, 2026 (08:15 PM)
Matches: 49 / 2854 words
Sources: 2

Remarks: Low similarity detected, consider making necessary changes if needed.

Verify Report:
Scan this QR Code



ABSTRACT

The paper seeks an overview of the renewed demands among certain communities of 'oneness' as the basis for re-organization to backward groups, and recent moves by the Government such as a troubled domicile policy and expanding reservation caps to a level of 77% that has further identity exchanges. As we identify such patterns in the state, the Paper pursues to examine the ongoing Cultural Revival trends in the state and their impacts on widening the existing cleavages of the society. Besides, the Paper attempts to revisit the socio-cultural background of such communities and understand the root cause behind such demands. Highlighting the role of the State, existing regional parties and tribal organizations to such demands, the most important aspect of the paper is to realize the future of such demands, steps taken to materialize their grievances, generated outcomes and appeasement politics related to it.

KEY WORDS

Cultural revivalisms, Political mobilization, Political participation, Mass mobilization, Political Identities.

INTRODUCTION

Identity is an individual claim of membership within the society based on certain social categories such as caste, creed, religion, sex, ethnicity, race or culture. Identities generate common consciousness among the people to articulate their political interests including recognition of their distinct culture and try to occupy the maximum political, economic and social resources of the society. Different Identities are true realities of Indian society and guiding principles of Indian politics and political ideologies. It is a representation of the well known concept 'unity in

diversity' of Indian society which plays an important role through different political parties and different political participation methods in Indian democracy.

Jharkhand as a state came into existence on 15 November in the year 2000. The criteria for the formation of state was the backwardness of the area, tribal dominated people, exploitation and unwanted interference by outer people, ignored by the centre Government and then Bihar Government and lastly feeling of identity crisis by the people and leaders of Jharkhand with Bihar. The formation of state was the result of a long drawn multifaceted struggle of Adivasi -mulvasi (tribes and originals) discontent emerging from the tribal alienation. formed from the southern districts of Bihar. It is home of majority tribal population that today accounts for approximately 26 percent of the state's population, but had been at the heart of a long-standing demand for political autonomy in the region.¹ Jharkhand has vast mineral resources which constitute 40% of India's minerals. Jharkhand has long served as a one of India's modern industrial and manufacturing bases. From the city of Jamshedpur which is the oldest steel plant of India to East and West Singhbhum, the richest mineral-bearing districts, are particularly important for heavy industries. These areas are famous for its rich mineral resources like Uranium, Mica, Bauxite, Granite, Gold, Silver, Graphite, Magnetite, Dolomite, Fireclay, Quartz, Feldspar, Coal (32% of India), Iron, Copper (25% of India) etc. Forests and woodlands occupy more than 29% of the state which is amongst the highest in India.² Despite having much potential of transforming into an economic powerhouse, the state today faces a myriad of challenges in the socio-economic field with continuous political instability since it's formation. After 25 years of its formation, Jharkhand showcases such a paradox, resource-rich and yet stuck in a poverty rut. An assessment of Jharkhand state on most of the socio-economic indicators presents a very much unfortunate Pictures It is the Second Poorest State in the Country in the Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021. On the Social Progress Index (SPI),³ a report released by the Economic Advisory Council-Prime Minister (EAC-PM) along with the Institute for Competitiveness, Jharkhand along with Bihar scored the lowest. The per capita income in the state is one of the lowest in the country. It ranks 26th of the 28 states⁴.

The utility of identity politics which formed the foundation of the state and an assessment of outcomes yielded to the state as a whole. Each and every tribal community has its own identity. These are fighting and dividing between converted and non-converted and demanding Sarana religious code for own special identity. A dominant OBC caste kurmis are demanding a special status with their original contribution in Jharkhand area . Actually kurmis are belong to agrarian society and want to put themselves with tribal in Jharkhand.

Cultural revival refers to the formation of group identity around a common culture, where a claim is forwarded that the aspects of culture with which the group identifies have been recovered after losses due to colonization, forced or voluntary relocation, oppression, or modernization.⁵ The vast diversity of India at social , economic and cultural level gives a broader opportunity for identity politics . So identity politics has served as a major tool for different communities to assert their political representation in Indian politics. The basis of such identity can range from caste, creed ,culture, ethnicity, religion, region and much more. It has seen that identity politics did ensure giving voices to all marginalized sections in politics. Several times time it has often used as a Political gimmick for political mileage.

Contest over "moolnivasi" /Original Inhabitants and the controversial domicile Bill: Jharkhand Domicile Bill 2023, defines a 'Domicile' in Jharkhand on the basis of 1932 land records. People who have their names or their ancestor's name in the land records of 1932 khatiyani or before, will be considered Domicile of Jharkhand. Those who have lost their land records or are landless people can approach their respective Gram Sabha for their inclusion. Only domiciles, as identified under this act, would be eligible for appointment in class 3 and 4 level services of the state Government. Though the Bill will be become an act only after the consent of Centre Government which carries out amendment to bring it under 9th schedule of the constitution to avoid any scope of judicial scrutiny. Since its inception the domicile policy has been Contested. In 2002 it was based on land records of 1932.⁶ In 2016 the Government came up with a relaxed domicile policy, which

mentions six ways in which one could be considered a domicile. With renewed discussions on Domicile policy, it has sparked off a new debate on outsiders. The arguments in favor of the Bill include that since the percentage of tribal population has seen a steady decline since the 1941 census, such steps will provide them much needed social, economic and educational benefits. On the contrary such actions might aggravate divisions leading to fragmentation of society and may ignite social, cultural and regional tensions.

The Jharkhand Government recently gave its nod to a proposal for granting 77% reservation in State Government jobs for the members of the SC, ST, backward classes, OBC and economically weaker sections. In the proposed job reservation policy, local people of the SC community will have a quota of 12%, ST 28%, extremely Backward Class 15%, OBC 12%, and economically weaker section barring those from other reserved categories 10%.⁷ Also recently the Government launched a dedicated employment portal that will give 75 percent reservation to the locals in private sector jobs under the Jharkhand State Employment of Local resident Candidates in Private Sector Bill, 2021 that was passed in September last year. While the intended purpose is to curb the migration of locals to other states in search of jobs. The analysts fear it might be counter-productive in attracting business corporates to invest in Jharkhand and establish their manufacturing units as the private sector which are based “purely” on the “merit, skills and the analytical bent” of the employee.⁸

Jharkhand Government supported the inclusion of kurmis in the list of scheduled Tribes in the year 2004. The kurmis are asserting that under British rule they were documented as tribes and originals community as 1931 census but were removed from the schedule tribes list in 1951 census due to political reasons. Recently in September 2025 members of the Kurmi community under the banner of Adivasi Kurmi Samaj and West Bengal Kurmi Samaj led to protest a rail blockade in Jharkhand's districts bordering Odisha and Bengal for restoring the schedule tribes status in Jharkhand and inclusion of their kurmal language in eighth schedule of Indian constitution. According to a report, a 60-km long highway was locked by the protesters. Meanwhile, Railways officials said that 435 trains had to be cancelled, causing losses worth more than 1,700 crores. The cause behind the protest was the demand for inclusion of Kurmi Mahto's as STs. As per the community, their largest populations live in Jharkhand, Bengal and Odisha, numbering 72, 30 and 25 lakh people respectively.⁹ Meanwhile the Adivasi community has consistently opposed such demands. They fear it will shrink their existing space for election, jobs and education etc. If kurmis are classified as STs. The central Government has assured the kurmis community that they will be granted a meeting with union Home minister to discuss the matter. Further protest 'rail teka-dahar chheka' will be suspended due to the meeting. Some tribal organizations in Jharkhand have strongly opposed the kurmis demand arguing that It would be hamper the constitutional rights and land rights of existing schedule tribes communities.

While it's true that certain communities including mainly the tribals and other backward communities have historically been marginalized and thus require special attention in the form of affirmative actions. These communities have enriched the country's cultural heritage, through their exquisite art culture and craft. They have played a leading role in the promotion, protection and conservation of the environment through their traditional practices; with their vast repository of traditional knowledge. These communities are the torch-bearers for sustainable development in Jharkhand. Recognizing the importance of tribals and their role in nation-building, the Constitution made special provisions for the protection of tribal culture and the development of Scheduled Tribes.¹⁰ To strengthen such efforts, tribal dominated states like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha should take special attention to their issues.

There are 32 distinct tribal communities in Jharkhand and these tribes are grouped under the 'scheduled tribes' group of Jharkhand. According to Census 2011 among the tribal, Santhals are most numerous accounting for one-third of the total tribal population followed by Munda, Oraon, and Ho contributing more than 10 % to the total tribal population. Other tribes of share as Lohra, Kharwar, Bhumij and Kharia have share of less than 3 % each while Mahali, Mal Paharia, Chero and Bedia have share of 1-2 % each. The most marginalized tribes with less than 0.01 % are Savar, Birjia, Gorait, Baiga, Bathudi, Banjara and Khond (Census 2011).

The overall literacy rate among Jharkhand is 67.63%. While among the tribals it is only around 47.63%.¹¹ The major cause of concern is within those tribes the level of education is highly uneven, with certain groups being more vulnerable such as Baiga, Birhor, Prahaiya and Savar less than 30% of literacy which are extremely low in Population as well.¹² Moving ahead, to curb the menace of dropouts from schools and colleges, the Government recently began the program of education in regional languages at elementary levels, though limited to certain schools. Here 17 languages are being taught at the matriculation level. In Jharkhand, out of 20 tribal and regional languages notified district-wise, 12 are being taught at the matriculation level. If we look at the figures of the matriculation board examination of 2021, then total 4.33 lakh children had appeared in the examination. Out of these, some 62 thousand, 545 candidates of tribal and regional languages recognized at the district level appeared. If this is the condition of students at the middle and high school level itself, then it is not a difficult task to estimate the actual situation in higher and technical education. According to the research conducted under the Jharkhand University of Technology, in the tribal-dominated state of Jharkhand, which comes under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, 91 percent of the tribal (Scheduled Tribe) quota seats in engineering colleges remain vacant. 26 per cent seats are reserved for Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes) in educational institutions of the state, but very few of them are filled. It is not that this situation is only in engineering, but it is more or less the same situation in general courses of higher education including polytechnic, medical.¹³

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) of 2019-21, has shown improvement in women and child nutrition in Jharkhand. Some positive outcomes came out of it, where the level of Pregnant Anemic women came down to 56.8%. Similarly, the proportion of stunted children declined to 39.6%. Despite the improvements there is a lot more to be desired. Districts namely Chatra, Latehar, Sahebganj, Simdega and West Singhbhum are tribal-dominated areas and they ranked quite low in nutrition indicators with malnutrition such as stunting, underweight condition, anemia, neonatal mortality rate etc. being quite high among females and children. According to NFHS-5, the socio-economic condition of families of STs in Jharkhand is not at par with that of other families and there is a need for critical attention of the Government for furthering the welfare of the STs of Jharkhand. Schedule Tribes households lag in aspects such as pucca houses, electricity, health and drinking water facilities. The non-existence of proper toilet facilities in the houses is reflective of their socio-economic situation.¹⁴ The tribals have also suffered due to mining operations. One such case is of mining of bauxite around 200 km away from Ranchi, Asur Adivasi living on top of the remote mountains across the villages, such as Sakhuapani, Pol Path. The mining operations often emit a large amount of dust, pollute the water and air. It is thereby causing tuberculosis among many people, apart from other diseases.¹⁵ One of the major challenges of Providing healthcare facilities to tribals is the weak infrastructure in the rural areas. Not only the hospitals, connectivity of roads impacts, inadequate medical Professionals, Pharmacists impacts the emergency services. In such scenarios women are the worst impacted as they undergo biological changes that require proper treatment and care. Pregnant and lactating mothers are severely impacted due lack of institutional delivery, manpower shortage and essential medical care.

Yes, there are also demands that are genuine, People need to preserve their respective cultures, distinct identities. Also People can choose a dominant Identity to avail benefit. We often witness patterns of recurring demands where certain communities across the states raise demands of granting them special category status such as SC/ST/OBCs on the grounds of cultural distinctiveness or backwardness. Last year a bill passed by the Parliament included certain communities Deshwari, Ganjhu, Dautalbandi (Dwalbandi), Patbandi, Raut, Maajhia, Khairi (Kheri), Tamaris (Tamadia), and Puran in the list of STs in Jharkhand. Though in the pretense of such demands a society must not bifurcate into sections. A fragmented society cannot flourish for long. Emerging fault lines based on social cleavages give birth to politics of segregation ultimately leading to secessionist tendencies. Politicisation of such issues is similar to fanning the flames. Taking cue from the Manipur controversy of kuki-Meiti conflict, over the ST recognition status created utter disorder and emergency situation in the state. Such issues are highly sensitive, and tender. Inclusion and collaboration of affected parties, organization affiliated to groups, and most important community participation are one of the ways to move forward rather

than unilaterally arbitrary orders of the state. Creating boundaries such as 'others' vs 'us' sparks the outsider debates which further disintegrates the society into pieces creating disharmony. Keeping in mind, the rationale behind the identity politics was to undo the wrongs of historical injustices to the distinct communities and provide them their fair share, ultimately paving way for a unified strengthened society that progresses together.

We have so far seen shortcomings as well as gains made through Politics of Cultural Identities. Looking forward we have certain examples of Institutional Support and organizations doing phenomenal jobs in the upliftment of the tribals through empowering without creating divisions. One such organization is Transform Rural India Foundation, a non-profit organization in Jharkhand's Ranchi and Simdega districts, is working with hundreds of thousands of villagers to provide them access to pregnant and lactating women, including free institutional deliveries¹⁶.

CONCLUSION

The intended objective of Identity Politics is to mobilize masses around a common idea of oneness to cater their unattended aspirations. Adding substance to such claims, one of the most effective ways is to empower the People and make them independent. No way is better than investing in the capabilities of the people. Having seen loopholes in education at elementary levels, lack of primary healthcare centers are one of the first steps that need to be taken. Besides the preservation of the tribal heritage and their distinctive culture is equally important as they are part of Indian social and cultural Fabric. They are facing an existential crisis due to their declining Population. A blend of modernity and traditions is key for their sustainable development. Involve experts to widen our understanding, community participation are few part of decentralised approach we need. There is no radical change needed in the available solutions, all we need to do is change our approach.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Tilin, L. (2011) Questioning Borders: Social Movements, Political Parties and the Creation of New States in India; *Asia Pacific Affairs*, 84(1) 67-81.
2. Available at <https://www.jharkhand.gov.in/>, Accessed on 25/07/2023.
3. Available at <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/social-progress-index-puducherry-lakshadweep-goa-best-performing-states-jharkhand-bihar-worst-11671536270255.html> , Accessed on 28/07/2023.
4. Available at [https://www.drishtiiias.com/state-pcs-current-affairs/jharkhand-second-poorest-state-in-the-country-in-the-multidimensional-poverty-index-2021#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20report%2C%2042.16,after%20Bihar%20\(51.91%20percent\),](https://www.drishtiiias.com/state-pcs-current-affairs/jharkhand-second-poorest-state-in-the-country-in-the-multidimensional-poverty-index-2021#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20report%2C%2042.16,after%20Bihar%20(51.91%20percent),) Accessed on 29/07/2023.
5. Available at <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/cultural-revivals#:~:text=The%20term%20cultural%20revival%20refers,relocation%2C%20oppression%2C%20or%20modernization>, Accessed on 29/07/2023.
6. Available at Jharkhand governor returns 1932-based domicile bill back to Soren govt - Hindustan Times, Accessed on 30/07/2023.
7. Available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/jharkhand-raises-reservations-for-sc-st-others-to-77/article65893319.ece>, Accessed on 30/07/2023.
8. Available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/soon-75-per-cent-reservation-in-private-sector-for-locals-in-jharkhand-1778817-2021-03-13>, Accessed on 01/08/2023.

9. Available at <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/kudmi-mahatos-vs-adviasis-can-jharkhand-turn-into-another-manipur-over-st-status—news-288294>, Accessed on 02/08/2023.
10. Available at https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Jharkhand_districts_ranked_by_literacy_rate, Accessed on 03/08/2023.
11. Available at [https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/Statistics/ListofScheduledTribes\(STs\)withVerylowliteracyrate.pdf](https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/Statistics/ListofScheduledTribes(STs)withVerylowliteracyrate.pdf), Accessed on 06/08/2023.
12. Available at <https://vaigyanikchetna.com/education/truth-of-jharkhand-children-of-deprived-groups-of-the-state-are-constantly-getting-away-from-education-and-employment/>, Accessed on 07/08/2023.
13. Available at <https://www.iasparliament.com/downloads/new123/gist-of-idsa-july-2019-404/gist-of-yojana-magazine-july-2022-1287>, Accessed on 08/08/2023.
14. Available at https://www-outlookindia-com.cdn.ampproject.org/v/s/www.outlookindia.com/national/jharkhand-tribals-suffer-amid-state-s-bounteous-riches-magazine-229506/amp?usqp=mq331AQIUAKwASCAAgM%3D&_js_v=a9&_gsa=1#referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&csi=0&share=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.outlookindia.com%2Fnational%2Fjharkhand-tribals-suffer-amid-state-s-bounteous-riches-magazine-229506, Accessed on 09/08/2023.
15. Available at <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/ls-passes-bill-to-include-some-communities-in-jharkhand-st-list-7854667/>, Accessed on 10/08/2023.
16. Available at <https://www.gaonconnection.com/desh/healthcare-childbirth-simdega-ranchi-jharkhand-nutrition-children-infants-pregnancy-51599>, Accessed on 11/08/2023.
