



MEDIA NARRATIVES AND TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN JHARKHAND: UNRAVELLING SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITIES

Badshah Alam¹, Prabhat Kumar Dubey², Ashutosh Kumar Shukla^{3*}, Sumit Kumar Rohit⁴

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Abstract

Public opinion and policy debate are greatly influenced by media narratives. Media narratives have a complex impact on how society develops and functions. They do this through influencing public opinion, influencing policy discussions, advancing social justice, encouraging civic participation, empowering communities, and promoting cross-cultural understanding. Media companies can make a positive impact on societal growth and collective well-being by presenting narratives that are factual, balanced, and constructive. Especially in areas like Jharkhand, India, where socioeconomic dynamics are complicated and societal framework is culturally rich and multilayered; to understand the socioeconomic realities that tribal groups in Jharkhand experience, this research paper explores the relationship between media narratives and tribal development. Media narratives present a variety of viewpoints, customs, and experiences from throughout the globe, promoting cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. Media narratives enrich society fabric and contribute to global connection by fostering cross-cultural conversation, tolerance, and appreciation for variety through entertainment, literature, and multimedia platforms. This article investigates how media narratives affect community attitudes, government policies, and tribal development programs through a thorough examination of case studies and media depictions. The results underscore the significance of impartial and subtle media representation in promoting sustainable growth and tackling the obstacles encountered by indigenous communities.

Keywords: Media Narratives, Tribal Development, Jharkhand, Socio-Economic Realities, Government Policies

^{1,3*}Amity University Patna

^{2,4}Amity University Jharkhand

***Corresponding author:** Ashutosh Kumar Shukla

*Amity University Patna

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Introduction

The Latin word *tribus* is where the word "tribe" originates. This phrase was originally used by the Romans to describe social divides [1]. According to later usage, it signified impoverished people. The spread of colonialism gave rise to the English language's current widespread meaning especially in Africa and Asia. There are several definitions for tribes. However, a definition of a tribe is not found in the Constitution. Scheduled Tribes are the people whose names are mentioned in the Constitution.

Scholars have been attempting to characterize tribe. A tribe is described as a "social group, usually with a definite area, dialect, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organization" in the Dictionary of Sociology [2]. A tribe, as defined by the Imperial Gazetteer [3], is a group of families with a common name, a common dialect, and the occupation of a shared region. Tribes are typically not endogamous, though this may have been the case in the past. A tribe is characterized as a collection of native people who share a common name, language, and region, are bound by close kinship ties, practice endogamy, and have unique customs, rituals, and beliefs, among other characteristics.

Eastern India's Jharkhand state is home to a sizable tribal community, which makes up a sizable percentage of the state's population [4]. Although

the state has an abundance of natural resources, it also faces enduring socioeconomic problems, including as poverty, eviction, and the marginalization of tribal people. Within this framework, media narratives are essential in forming attitudes, swaying laws, and propelling programs for socioeconomic development. Now let's take a closer look at the presence of different tribal groups present in the state of Jharkhand.

Tribal populations are classified based on their culture types as suggested by anthropologist, Lalita Prasad Vidyartha [5]:

- A. *Hunter - Gatherer type* - Birhor, Korwa, Hill Kharia
- B. *Shifting Agriculture* - Sauria Paharia
- C. *Simple Artisans* - Mahli, Lohra, Karmali, Chik Baraik
- D. *Settled Agriculturists* - Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Ho, Bhumij,

Above is a general classification and it contains different tribes. Some tribes might as well appear in more than one classification and there is nothing sacrosanct about that except that it's a neat way sociologists need to compartmentalize.

Official website of Government of Jharkhand lists 32 tribes inhabiting the Jharkhand state in India [6].

Munda	Gond	Asur	Bedia	Chero	Karmali	Kora	Mal-Paharia
Santhal	Kol	Baiga	Binjhia	Chick-Baraik	Kharwar	Korwa	Parhaiya
Oraon	Kanwar	Banjara	Birhor	Gorait	Khond	Lohra	Sauria-Paharia
Kharia	Savar	Bathudi	Birjiali	Ho	Kisan	Mahli	Bhumij

In their seminal study, Minz et.al. have listed and elaborated all the scheduled tribes living in the state of Jharkhand of India with comprehensive details [7].

1. **Munda:** Known for its own language, music, and dance forms, the Munda tribe is one of the biggest tribal populations in Jharkhand. They moved from shifting cultivation, which was their traditional way of life, to settled agriculture and other sources of income.
2. **Santhal:** One of the most well-known tribes in Jharkhand, the Santhals are renowned for their vibrant festivals, music, and dancing. They live mostly in the Santhal Parganas area and work as wage labourers, farmers, and handcrafters.
3. **Oraon:** The Oraon tribe, often referred to as Kurukh, is dispersed throughout Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, and Odisha. Their principal activity is agriculture, and they have a strong cultural past. The Oraons are renowned

for their distinctive dances, music, and ceremonies.

4. **Kharia:** A portion of Jharkhand and Bihar are home to the Kharia tribe. They maintain their own language and cultural customs, and the main pillars of their way of life are agriculture and forestry.
5. **Gond:** The Gond tribe is dispersed over Jharkhand and central India. They have a distinct cultural identity that is enriched with ceremonies, artwork, and oral traditions. For them, forests, handicrafts, and agriculture are vital sources of income.
6. **Kol:** The Kol tribe is renowned for its agricultural methods, especially rice farming, and it is present in several parts of Jharkhand. They have a unique cultural history that includes rituals, dances, and folk music.
7. **Kanwar:** The Kanwar tribes inhabit Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand. Their way of life is semi-nomadic, and they have historically

- relied on agriculture, forestry, and cattle rearing. The social structures and practices of the Kanwars are distinct.
8. **Savar:** The Chotanagpur Plateau in Jharkhand is home to the Savar tribe. They engage in shifting farming and have strong ties to the forest. Savars speak their own language and have a custom of using medicinal plants.
 9. **Asur:** Jharkhand's indigenous communities include Asur tribes. They were traditionally recognized for their proficiency in metallurgy as iron smelters. But as a result of modernity, many of them have turned to agriculture as their traditional means of subsistence have diminished.
 10. **Baiga:** The majority of Baiga tribes are located in central India, which includes several regions of Jharkhand. Their complex tattoos, ancient art forms, and respect for the natural world are all part of their rich cultural legacy. The main sources of sustenance for Baigas are agriculture and forest products.
 11. **Banjara:** Traditionally involved in trading and transportation, the Banjara tribes lead a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle. Their vibrant clothes, music, and dancing are well-known, adding to Jharkhand's cultural richness.
 12. **Bathudi:** The Bathudi tribes are mostly found in Jharkhand's Santhal Parganas area. They have a unique cultural identity and have traditionally worked in handicrafts, agriculture, and animal husbandry.
 13. **Bedia:** The Bedia tribes are distributed throughout Jharkhand and are typically connected to the entertainment industries, which include dance, singing, and performing arts. However, a lot of Bedias have changed careers because of societal shame and financial constraints.
 14. **Binjhia:** The Binjhia tribes are dispersed throughout the state of Jharkhand and work mostly in agriculture, especially in the cultivation of paddy. They speak their own language and engage in customs, dances, and folk music.
 15. **Birhor:** The nomadic or semi-nomadic Birhor tribes are renowned for their expertise in using forest resources. They have encountered difficulties as a result of habitat loss and modernization, but they still engage in traditional hunting, gathering, and basket making.
 16. **Birjiali:** The Birjiali tribe is found in eastern India, which includes Jharkhand in some sections. They have a unique cultural identity, and the traditional handicrafts and agriculture are vital to their way of life.
 17. **Chero:** The Chero tribes are found in different parts of Jharkhand and Bihar. Their principal occupations are agriculture and animal husbandry, and they have a rich cultural legacy. Cheros have their own social mores and language.
 18. **Chick-Baraik:** West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Bihar are home to Chick-Baraik tribes. They moved from shifting cultivation, which was their traditional way of life, to settled agriculture and other sources of income.
 19. **Gorait:** Jharkhand and Bihar are home to the majority of the Gorait tribes. Their way of life is centered around agriculture, animal husbandry, and forest-based livelihoods, contributing to their varied cultural heritage.
 20. **Ho:** The Ho tribes are mainly found in Jharkhand's Singhbhum district. They have a rich cultural history that includes unique customs in dance, music, and ceremonies. The Ho community heavily relies on incomes based in agriculture and the forest.
 21. **Karmali:** The Karmali tribes are distributed throughout Jharkhand and have historically relied on agriculture, animal husbandry, and forest-based subsistence. Their social practices and language are unique to them.
 22. **Kharwar:** Several Kharwar tribes inhabit Jharkhand and Bihar. Their main activity is agriculture, and they have a unique cultural identity. The language and traditional knowledge systems of the Kharwars remain intact.
 23. **Khond:** Eastern India, including some areas of Jharkhand, is home to the Khond tribes. Their way of life is centered on agriculture and forest-based livelihoods, and they have a rich cultural legacy.
 24. **Kisan:** Tribes of the Kisan are dispersed over Jharkhand and Bihar. Their traditional means of subsistence were agriculture, animal husbandry, and forest living. With their abundance of oral traditions and folk art, Kisans have a distinct cultural identity.
 25. **Kora:** The Kora tribes are found throughout Jharkhand and have historically relied on agriculture, animal husbandry, and forest-based subsistence. They have distinctive social rituals and a distinct cultural identity.
 26. **Korwa:** There are Korwa tribes in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand. Their manner of life is centered around agriculture, hunting, and gathering, and they have a rich cultural legacy.
 27. **Lohra:** The Chotanagpur Plateau in Jharkhand is home to the Lohra tribes. Their way of life is centered on agriculture, animal husbandry, and

forest-based livelihoods, giving them a unique cultural identity.

28. Mahli: The Mahli tribes are dispersed throughout Bihar and Jharkhand. Their way of life is centered on agriculture and forest-based livelihoods, and they have a rich cultural legacy. Mahlis have their own language and customs for knowledge.

29. Mal-Paharia: The mountainous areas of Jharkhand are home to most Mal-Paharia tribes. Their way of life is centered on agriculture, animal husbandry, and forest-based livelihoods, giving them a unique cultural identity.

30. Parhaiya: The Parhaiya tribe is spread over several parts of Jharkhand and has historically relied on agriculture, raising animals, and forest-based subsistence.

Media Representation and Tribal Development

The media has long been acknowledged as a potent instrument for influencing cultural perceptions, distributing information, and forming public opinion [8]. Nevertheless, mainstream media sources frequently oversimplify, sensationalize, and stereotype the indigenous populations of Jharkhand, India. The intricate socio-economic problems that Jharkhand's tribal population faces are frequently reduced to constrained and false narratives, which feed negative perceptions and obstruct attempts to comprehend and address the true problems these communities confront. Jharkhand's tribal concerns are sometimes sensationalized or oversimplified in the media, with a primary focus on conflicts over land, resources, and identity [9]. These depictions frequently downplay the complexity of the lived experiences of tribal communities and reinforce stereotypes by ignoring the varied socioeconomic realities within those communities. Another prevalent stereotype is the portrayal of tribal communities as obstacles to development or modernization. Media narratives often depict tribal resistance to industrial projects or infrastructure development initiatives as regressive or irrational, failing to acknowledge the legitimate concerns of communities regarding environmental degradation, displacement, and loss of livelihoods [10]. This portrayal not only undermines the agency of tribal people in asserting their rights but also obscures the structural inequalities and power imbalances that drive such conflicts.

According to a case study by Das et al. (2018) [11], there is an excessive focus on disputes and crises in media coverage of tribal development initiatives in Jharkhand, which overshadows encouraging tales of resiliency and community-led development initiatives. This biased portrayal not only feeds into

harmful prejudices but also damages the legitimacy of development programs, impeding their efficacy.

Additionally, the way that Jharkhand's tribal people are portrayed in the media perpetuates ideas of exoticism or primitivism, portraying them as remnants of a past time rather than strong, dynamic communities rising to the difficulties of the modern world. Stereotypes of tribal societies as static, homogeneous groups unaffected by modernity are reinforced by images of tribal people dressed traditionally or participating in cultural rites [12]. These images are romanticized or exoticized.

There are numerous repercussions when tribal disputes and issues in Jharkhand are stereotyped by the media. First, it feeds prejudice and discrimination by maintaining unfavourable mainstream impressions of native populations. This may worsen social unrest and obstruct efforts to create societies that are inclusive and harmonious. Second, it thwarts attempts to identify the underlying causes of disputes and devise just and informed strategies to resolve them. The media's use of stereotypes to characterize complicated socioeconomic problems as violent or backward tribal societies hides the structural injustices and inequalities that keep tribal groups impoverished, marginalized, and evicted [13]. Stereotyping tribal disputes and issues in Jharkhand calls for a multifaceted response that includes media literacy, ethical journalism, and increased representation of other perspectives. When covering tribal issues, media outlets should follow ethical reporting guidelines that put emphasis on truthfulness, impartiality, and subtlety. One way to do this is by giving indigenous communities' voices more prominence so they may express their own viewpoints and share their own tales. Initiatives to promote media literacy in the public can also aid in dispelling myths and encouraging critical interaction with media portrayals of tribal communities.

In conclusion, negative narratives that compromise the rights, agency, and dignity of tribal communities are perpetuated by the media's stereotyping of tribal disputes and issues in Jharkhand. Media coverage obscures the fundamental inequities and systemic disparities that fuel conflicts and sustain poverty in indigenous groups by simplifying complicated socioeconomic issues to facile caricatures. Promoting responsible journalism, media literacy, and increased representation of different voices in the media landscape are all necessary to address this issue. We can only promote a more inclusive and fair society for everybody by confronting prejudices and elevating the voices of tribal groups.

Impact of Media Narratives on Policy Discourse

Media narratives shape policy discourse by influencing public opinion and political agendas. In Jharkhand, media coverage often frames tribal issues in binary terms, pitting development against conservation, and traditional livelihoods against industrialization [14]. Such polarizing narratives impede constructive dialogue and hinder the formulation of inclusive policies that address the multifaceted needs of tribal communities. Media narratives have the power to highlight social injustices, elevate the voices of underrepresented groups, and promote constructive change. Media narratives have the power to galvanize public support for social justice movements and legislative reforms that aim to advance fairness and inclusivity by highlighting systemic injustices and human rights breaches [15]. By disseminating information, promoting active involvement in democratic processes, and fostering public conversation, media narratives are essential in fostering civic engagement. Media organizations can encourage citizens to act on issues that impact their lives by providing opinion articles, community-focused reporting, and investigative journalism [16]. This can enhance democratic institutions and advance social well-being.

Because media narratives can sway public opinion, advance political agendas, and direct policy decisions, they have a significant and varied impact on the discourse surrounding policy [17]. The following are some major ways that media narratives impact the conversation around policy:

1. **Agenda Setting:** By deciding which topics are prioritized and which are ignored, media narratives have a significant impact on the agendas of policy deliberations. Media sources prioritize some topics above others by selective reporting and framing, which shapes the public's impression of what essential policy concerns are [18]. As a result, legislators frequently prioritize some policy agendas above others in response to popular sentiment as expressed in the media.
2. **Frame Setting:** Media narratives shape not just the topics that are discussed but also how the public and decision-makers understand and frame such topics. Diverse perspectives, such as financial, ethical, or safety-related ones, may result in different approaches to policy for the same problem [19]. Policymakers may respond differently to media portrayals of immigration, such as framing it as a threat to national security, a humanitarian disaster, or an economic opportunity.

3. **Public Opinion Formation:** People's perceptions and interpretations of policy issues are shaped by media narratives. Media sources have the power to influence public attitudes, values, and beliefs on policies and policy actors by using framing, tone, and selective reporting [20]. Decisions made by politicians can be influenced by public support or opposition to programs, since they frequently aim to align with popular opinion to maintain political legitimacy.

4. **Pressure on Policymakers:** Public concerns or crises that are brought to light by the media can put pressure on policymakers to act. In response to perceived failures or weaknesses, politicians may be forced to move quickly or enact policy revisions due to negative media coverage or public outcry [21]. On the other hand, favourable media coverage might increase lawmakers' confidence in pursuing reforms or policy measures.

5. **Information Dissemination:** Data, analysis, and professional opinions on policy matters are provided to policymakers by the media, which acts as their main source of information. Policymakers' decision-making processes and policy preferences are influenced by media narratives [22], which also alter their understanding of difficult subjects. The views and interpretations of policy issues by policymakers can diverge due to variations in the calibre and precision of media coverage.

6. **Framing Policy discussions:** By establishing the bounds of appropriate discourse and forming the parameters of discussion, media narratives frame policy discussions. The variety of policy alternatives that policymakers evaluate may be limited if certain policy options are downplayed or disregarded due to the way they are presented in the media. Media narratives have the power to shape the degree of polarization and political rhetoric surrounding divisive subjects, as well as the tone and tenor of policy debates.

Finally, by setting the agenda, framing policy concerns, influencing public opinion, pressing policymakers, disseminating information, and structuring policy debates, media narratives significantly contribute to the shape of policy discourse. Understanding how the media shapes public policy discourse is crucial to advancing democratic governance, accountability, and openness in policymaking.

In a 2019 study, Kumar and Mishra [23] examined how media narratives affect Jharkhand government

policies concerning the development of tribal communities. They discovered that rather than long-term, community-driven solutions, politicians were frequently under pressure to adopt dramatized media coverage that imposed temporary, ad hoc measures. This emphasizes how important it is for the media to cover tribal problems with greater subtlety and fairness to promote educated public opinion and the creation of effective public policy.

Community Perceptions and Media Influence

Media narratives affect tribal cultures' aspirations and self-perception in addition to shaping external perceptions. Native youth may feel more disempowered because of negative media representations that heighten emotions of marginalization and undermine cultural pride. Gupta and Singh (2020) [24] investigated the influence of media narratives on the ambitions of tribal youth in Jharkhand using a case study. They discovered that misrepresented stories in the media frequently resulted in a desire to blend in with mainstream society and a loss of faith in traditional knowledge systems, hindering initiatives to protect indigenous cultures and advance sustainable development.

In the Indian state of Jharkhand, community views and media influence are closely related since media narratives greatly impact how people see themselves, their environment, and social concerns [25]. There are several ways to look at the relationship between media influence and community attitudes in Jharkhand:

1. **Identity and depiction:** In Jharkhand, media narratives have a role in shaping the collective identity and depiction of various communities. Media representations impact how communities understand themselves and are perceived by others by presenting cultural behaviours, traditions, and historical narratives. But occasionally, these depictions could be skewed or oversimplified, which could cause misconceptions or false impressions of group identity.
2. **Cultural Preservation and Change:** Views of cultural preservation and change among Jharkhand people are greatly influenced by the media. Media outlets have the power to raise knowledge of and pride in indigenous cultures and customs, but they can also expose local people to outside influences that could undermine or dilute long-standing customs. Media narratives and exposure can impact the delicate balance between conserving cultural

heritage and adjusting to shifting society standards [26].

3. **Socio-Economic ambitions:** How the media portrays socio-economic prospects and ambitions in Jharkhand affects community attitudes. Communities can be inspired with hope and ambition by positive portrayals of success stories, development projects, and employment and education prospects [27]. On the other hand, unfavourable preconceptions or scant media attention to socioeconomic issues might enhance emotions of exclusion or acceptance of poverty and underdevelopment.
4. **Environmental Awareness and action:** In Jharkhand, public attitudes and action are shaped by media coverage of ecological conservation and environmental challenges. Media channels increase public awareness of resource exploitation, environmental degradation, and the effects of industrialization on tribal territories through news stories, documentaries, and social media [28]. Communities are frequently prompted by this understanding to take up the cause of environmental preservation and sustainable development.
5. **Empowerment and Political involvement:** The media has a significant impact on how the public views Jharkhand's political systems and involvement. Public perceptions of democracy, government, and civic involvement are shaped by coverage of elections, governance problems, and political discussions. Media outlets give marginalized populations a forum to express their opinions, which encourages political empowerment and responsibility [29].
6. **Resolution of conflicts and Peacebuilding:** Media portrayals have the power to either intensify or lessen tensions and conflicts amongst communities in Jharkhand. Reports that sensationalize or present communal violence from a skewed perspective can exacerbate tensions and reinforce preconceptions, resulting in increased division. On the other hand, inclusive media practices and responsible journalism can support attempts at peacebuilding, rapprochement, and communication between various populations [27,28,29].

To summarize, the perceptions of the community and the media in Jharkhand are intricately linked and impact various aspects of the state such as cultural identity, socio-economic goals, environmental consciousness, political involvement, and conflict resolution. Informed and inclusive discourse, social cohesiveness, and

resolving the various difficulties that Jharkhand's communities face all depend on an understanding of how media narratives affect community perceptions. Furthermore, media outlets must interact with communities in an ethical and responsible manner, elevating the voices of all people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the socioeconomic reality of Jharkhand's tribal groups is greatly influenced by media discourses. While media coverage of tribal issues has the potential to increase public knowledge and hold decision-makers responsible, it may also reinforce stereotypes, skew public opinion, and impede development initiatives. To overcome these obstacles, media outlets, governments, and civil society must work together to report on tribal issues in a more nuanced and fair manner, to promote positive discourse, and to provide tribal people the authority to choose their own development goals.

In Jharkhand, India, the relationship between media influence and community attitudes is complex and multidimensional. How people and communities view themselves, their cultural identity, their socioeconomic prospects, and the issues they face in the environment is greatly influenced by the narratives presented in the media. Media channels have a significant impact on the attitudes, behaviours, and aspirations of communities through portrayals of cultural heritage, socioeconomic goals, environmental awareness, and political engagement.

Beyond only disseminating information, the media has an impact on intergroup relations, community dynamics, and conflict resolution procedures. Positive media narratives have the potential to stimulate feelings of empowerment, cultural pride, and environmental engagement; nevertheless, negative stereotypes and biased coverage have the potential to sustain social injustices, intensify tensions within communities, and impede attempts towards peacebuilding.

Understanding how media narratives affect community perceptions is crucial for maintaining social cohesion, encouraging open and educated debate, and tackling the range of issues that Jharkhand's communities face. Media outlets have an obligation to interact with communities in an ethical and responsible manner, showcasing a range of viewpoints and opinions and encouraging constructive social change and sustainable growth.

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