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A Study of Changes in the Tribal Society of Thane District in the Context of Globalization

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Abstract

The research paper “A Study of Changes in the Tribal Society of Thane District in Context of Globalization” tries to analyse in a comprehensive manner the economic, social, cultural, educational, environmental and technological changes occurred due to globalization in the tribal society of Thane district. The methods of the descriptive research and historical research methods have been used in this study, and secondary data obtained from reference books, government reports, periodicals and the internet. The research findings indicate that globalization has brought new jobs to the tribal youth in industry, construction, services and unorganized sector. Scholarships, mobile phones, the Internet and digital media have provided opportunities and access to information in education. The traditional folk arts such as Warli painting have become more popular and recognised. Globalisation has also brought about a number of challenges like migration, job insecurity, education dropouts, digital divide, cultural erosion, problems with forest and land rights, environmental changes etc. The pattern of traditional food culture and traditional life styles are also affected by modernity. Tribal population in Thane district has tremendous opportunity for socio-economic development due to its close proximity with Mumbai, which is a very developed metropolitan city. The overall effect of globalization is that it has given the tribal communities new avenues of development; but, at the same time, their traditional culture, environment, land and forest resources and social identity must be safeguarded. Tribal development that is balanced and sustainable can be achieved through the creation of employment opportunities, quality education, skill development, provision of digital facilities, and the effective implementation of forest rights for tribal communities.

Keywords: Globalization, Tribal Society, Thane District, Economic Changes, Cultural Transformation, Migration, Education and Environment.

Introduction

Towards the end of the twentieth century, globalization spread rapidly all over the world. Globalisation is the process whereby trade and industry, technology, information and culture become more and more interdependent and globalised. India was faced with a serious economic crisis around 1991. The post-1991 policies of India were liberalization, privatization, and globalization. These policies impacted not only urban, but also rural and tribal communities. Thane district is significant from the tribal point of view. A considerable population of tribal communities is seen in talukas like Shahapur, Murbad, Bhiwandi, Ambernath and Kalyan. The district has a large population of tribal communities including Thakur, Katkari, Mahadev Koli, Malhar Koli etc. Traditionally their lifestyle has been very close to nature. Wage labour, traditional occupations, agriculture and forest produce have been their primary sources of livelihood. Several changes have occurred in the economic, social, cultural and educational life of these communities due to the process of globalization. While some of these changes are desirable, others have brought new problems to tribal society. In this context, this paper tries to analyse the different impacts of globalization upon the tribal population of Thane district.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the social and economic status of tribal communities of Thane district.
2. To study the changes brought about in tribal society due to globalization.
3. To describe the pros and cons of globalisation.
4. To recommend steps to be taken for the betterment of the tribal communities.

Research Methodology

The present research paper is based on descriptive research methods and a historical method "A Study of Changes in the Tribal Society of Thane District in the Context of Globalization". Secondary data have been used for the collection of information. Both reference books, textbooks, reports of different institutions, journals, periodicals and internet sources have been consulted to obtain the necessary information.

The status of Tribal Society in Thane District is given below. The status of Thane District Tribal Society is as follows.

Thane district has a decent number of tribesmen in the talukas of Shahapur, Murbad, Bhiwandi, Ambarnath and Kalyan. Their livelihoods rely primarily on agriculture & allied activities, forest products (forests, wood, fruits, and medicinal plants), and wage labour, construction, small-scale industries, and traditional livelihoods. They share culture, festivals, folk dances, folk arts, social traditions, which are closely linked with nature. This is a nature-based tribe which has been heavily affected by the process of globalization. These changes are accounted for as follows.

Globalization has brought about changes in the Tribal Society of Thane District.

1. Economic Changes

Globalization has been a process that has made the world more connected and has shortened the gap between regions and economies. It has also been a force for market expansion. Thane district is a combination of urban and rural. Several tribal communities have seen development opportunities in the industries, service sector and construction in several parts of the district, thus creating new employment opportunities. Numerous young members of the tribes have taken up jobs in the cities. As a result, there is a growing population of people moving from tribal and rural to urban areas. In certain regions, modern farming techniques, better seeds and water management practices are being adopted more and more. There have also been some attempts by tribal communities to engage in commercial farming that has helped to boost agricultural production. But on the other side, land acquisition for various industrial projects, roads, dams and other development activities have led to the loss of land for some tribal families and in addition, large scale deforestation has taken place. This has in turn resulted in many households being evicted from their customary habitats. This has put their traditional livelihoods at risk and aggravated the economic inequalities.

Employment and migration in the province and nation

Employment within the province and the country

Along with industrial development and globalization, there are new jobs to be had but they are very unevenly distributed and are mostly held in cities. This economic transformation has directly impacted to the youth of tribal areas like J Shahapur, Bhiwandi, Ambarnath, Murbad in Thane district. Many of the young population move towards the cities like Mumbai, Thane, Navi Mumbai, Kalyan, Bhiwandi, etc. because there is no sustainable employment opportunity in the villages. Their primary occupations include construction job, works as security guards, domestic workers, delivery workers and unorganized workers in warehouse at Bhiwandi. Seasonal migration is also high. When the agricultural season decreases after the monsoon, whole families will leave for jobs with brick kilns and other wage work opportunities from October to May. Migration has enabled tribal and rural families to generate an extra source of livelihood. The constant flow of remittances from the city has helped to improve the economic status of some families. They have been able to replace mud houses with permanent houses, and to buy modern products like mobile phones, TVs and two-wheelers. They have also enjoyed an increase in their funding for education and healthcare. But there have also been high social and family costs to these economic gains. Since young members of families migrate to cities for employment, elderly parents and young children often remain in villages. This has a negative impact on the welfare of older people and the good upbringing of children. Children's primary and secondary school education is often disrupted during family migration, which can lead to child labour. Furthermore, in cities migrant workers are often forced to live in non-sanitary and insecure settlements due to low wages. Due to the process, the traditional relationship between the tribal community and nature is slowly being eroded. The neglect of traditional festivals, Warli painting and Tarpa dance are all cultural events which are being forgotten. To summarize, in the short-term, the economic development opportunities afforded to the tribal youth of Thane district through globalization have introduced new economic opportunities, but it has also brought them a fair distance from their traditional family life, social relationships, and lifestyle.

Social Changes

Social awareness has risen among tribal communities and social development has been contributed by globalization. The translation of education has resulted in more awareness of health,

sanitation, women empowerment and family planning. Role and participation of the tribal women has been enhanced through the implementation of Government schemes, Non-governmental organizations and various social programmes. There has also been an increased awareness of tribal rights and responsibilities among tribal communities. But, traditional social values and feeling of community have weakened a bit due to the growing influence of modern lifestyles. Greater contact with other communities has also led to a threat to the gradual extinction of traditional social practices.

Cultural Changes

Thane district's tribal society has a rich cultural heritage. Warli painting, folk dances, folk music and traditional festivals are an important part of their culture. Thanks to the process of globalization these art forms have gained national and international recognition. In particular, the spread of the markets of the paintings of Warli have benefited some tribal artists, who earn income from this art. Traditional tribal communities like the Warli, Thakur, Katkari and Malhar Koli have undergone tremendous changes in their cultural and social activities with the advent of globalization, industrialization and urbanization. The close proximity of Mumbai and Thane with tribal areas and the evolution of modern technology have given a new form to their lifestyle.

While Warli painting, nature worship and traditional festivals are popular around the world, globalization has had a negative impact on the traditional culture. With the development of modern education, mass media and migration of young people to cities for jobs, the link between the younger generation and their mother tongues and traditional folk arts has been gradually reduced. There is a growing trend for modern clothing, eating and lifestyles, which are undermining their natural and self-sufficient way of life. Also, their religious and cultural practices that traditionally are linked with nature have been negatively influenced by industrialization, transfer of land, and reduction in access to nature. Hence, the tribal community of Thane district has been given a global platform with globalization, though it has posed challenges to their traditional identity, dialects and cultural values.

Educational Changes

Globalisation has increased educational access for tribal people. Schools, hostels, scholarship programs, and a plethora of educational programs are available in tribal areas. Ashram schools offer residential facilities and education to students. Ashram schools in some of the places also offer education in English medium. Mobile telephones, the internet and digital technology have facilitated access to information. Consequently,

awareness about education is rising among tribal students. In addition, tribal hostels in urban areas have also facilitated access to education in cities for students from tribal communities. Higher and foreign education has become available too, through globalization. There have been some tribal students that have been awarded scholarships and have studied overseas by the Government of India. But, in the field of education, very few tribal students from Thane district have gone abroad. Despite these developments, educational facilities in remote areas are still inadequate. There is shortage of teachers and lack of infrastructure. Another significant issue in Thane district is the dropout of tribal children from school. Educational facilities and benefits provided for tribal students are not effectively reaching them in some instances; and, there have been reports of irregularities and corruption.

Environmental Changes

Forests, land and water play a significant role in the lives of the tribal communities in Thane district. Globalization has helped to kick up industrialization, urbanization and infrastructure construction, which have caused significant changes in the environment. Thane district is near Mumbai, one of the major metropolitan cities, which is due to the demand for drinking water, has led to the development of various dams in the tribal areas of the district. These changes have impacted forest lands and curtailed the natural mobility and livelihoods of tribal people. In certain regions, the rate of deforestation has decreased forest resources. Tribal communities are also facing challenges in the collection of forest produce due to increasing restrictions and administration. This has impacted their way of life, thus their traditional livelihoods.

Transformation of food habits

The tribal people of Thane district have always had a close relationship with nature and have been residing in forest areas for centuries. Therefore, their food habits have been closely connected with forests. Traditionally they have eaten naturally available and chemical free food items like forest produce, wild vegetables, roots and tubers. They have also grown rice, vari, ragi and other pulses mainly organically. Consequently, their traditional diet was healthy and was closely related to their environment. But globalization, connectivity with the outside world and close proximity to the cities like Mumbai has brought about some major changes in their eating habits. They have increasingly consumed agricultural products that are themselves produced with the help of chemicals. Agricultural products that are treated with chemicals have become a regular part of their diet. With the urbanisation and lifestyle changes, fast food and Chinese food are also incorporated into their eating habits. Eating

excessive amounts of junk and quick food can have a negative impact on health and make one more susceptible to numerous lifestyle-related health issues.

Technological Changes

Globalization has brought technology at a very fastest pace, which has greatly affected the lifestyle of the tribal community of Thane district. In the tribal areas, the technological revolution has introduced a number of positive changes. There is a connection between the mobile phone, internet and digital media, and tribal youth in the remote areas are now linked with the rest of the world. Access to information on Government schemes, health services and education via e-learning is increasing. Traditional farming practices have also been enhanced by the use of modern farm machinery and mobile applications that deliver weather forecasts. Technological advances have also brought a number of challenges, however. Some tribal groups have been displaced from their traditional habitats and lands due to the large scale infrastructure development, industrialization, and highway development under globalization. Increased technology has also played its part in the erosion of traditional knowledge systems, indigenous farming techniques and traditional crafts, which are closely linked to nature. Moreover, issues of the Digital Divide are still serious. There are remote and hilly areas in tribal population group in Thane district where supply of electricity is inadequate, Internet connectivity is poor and there is lack of awareness on Digital literacy. As a result, technology has not been equally available to all tribal communities. The impact of social media and modern technology has also helped the younger generation gradually move away from the traditional dialect, festival, tradition and cultural norms.

Conclusion

The study "A Study of Changes in the Tribal Society of Thane District in the Context of Globalization" clearly shows that the tribal society has undergone a number of economic, social, cultural, educational, environmental and technological changes due to globalization in Thane district. Some of these changes are beneficial, others are detrimental. Access to jobs in industries, construction, services and the unorganized sector has created employment opportunities for tribal youth and helped to improve the economic status of some families. The insecurity of employment and the seasonal migration have had a negative impact on family structures, education and social life of children, however. In the field of education and technology, opportunities have opened up for education and information through the development of Ashram schools, hostels, scholarships, mobile phones and the Internet, and digital media. However, poor

infrastructure in remote areas, lack of teachers, educational dropouts and the digital divide are still a big problem. In the cultural field, there is an increased market and recognition of the Warli painting, folk arts and handicrafts. But traditional dialects, festivals, dresses, food culture and social traditions are being impacted by modern life, urbanization and migration. The traditional association of tribal people with forests, land and natural resources has also been diminished by industrialisation, urbanisation and different development initiatives. In the same way, their lifestyle and diet have changed as they are replacing the traditional nutritious foods with fast food and processed food products. Overall, globalization has been beneficial and harmful to tribal society in a number of ways. It is therefore also imperative to recognize the rights of tribal communities to protect their land and forests, natural resources, traditional knowledge, culture and social identity while maximizing the benefits that globalization offers them in modern times. Development policies should have balanced, inclusive and sustainable development as the main goal.

Suggestions

1. Develop more jobs at the local level in tribal areas.
2. Skill training for tribal youth should be provided with the emphasis on employment skills and encouraged to be self-employed.
1. It should be ensured that there are jobs in villages throughout the year to decrease seasonal migration.
2. Increase quality education, scholarships, hostels and digital learning facilities for tribal students.
3. Digital infrastructure, electricity and internet connectivity in remote tribal areas should be increased.
4. Initiatives for the preservation and promotion of Warli painting, folk arts, folk dances, folk music and traditional tribal dialects should be encouraged.
5. Appropriate markets and fair compensation for traditional artworks should be made available to tribal artists.
6. Protecting tribal rights to forests, land and natural resources must be done in an effective way.
7. The displacement caused by development projects should be avoided as much as possible and whenever necessary, fair rehabilitation and compensation should be provided.
8. Promote and preserve traditional nutritional foods like wild vegetables, roots and tubers, ragi, vari and other indigenous food products.

9. Tribal communities need to be sensitized on health awareness programmes with the rising consumption of fast food and junk food.
10. Economic empowerment of tribal women by providing them with skill development programmes, small scale industries and self-help groups.
11. Strengthening of health centres, mobile medical units and basic health care facilities in tribal areas.
12. Ensuring balance between development and protection of the social identity, traditional culture, environment and social identity of the tribes, while utilizing the opportunities created by the globalization of the modern era.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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