

Rethinking Development in Jharkhand: Towards an Inclusive and Sustainable Vision Focused on Marginalities

Ajit Murmu

Assistant Professor, Srinath University

Abstract:

Jharkhand, a state rich in natural resources and cultural diversity, has long grappled with the paradox of abundant resources and pervasive poverty. Jharkhand's development has been uneven, with marginalized communities facing socio-economic disparities. A critical analysis of existing literature shows that economic growth often prioritizes social equity and environmental sustainability. The study proposes a framework for inclusive development that emphasizes community participation, protection of indigenous rights, and sustainable use of natural resources. It advocates for policy interventions that integrate traditional knowledge systems with modern development practices. The paper concludes with recommendations for policymakers, emphasizing the need for a multi-stakeholder approach that includes government, civil society, and communities. By promoting a development vision that balances economic growth with social justice and environmental stewardship.

Keywords: Marginalities, Inclusive Development, Indigenous Communities, Sustainable Development, Resource Exploitation

Introduction

Jharkhand, a state carved out of Bihar in 2000, was created with the vision of harnessing its vast natural resources to promote economic growth and development for its local population. The state is rich in minerals like coal, iron ore, copper, and uranium, making it a significant contributor to India's industrial sector. However, the state's development narrative has been marred by persistent socio-economic inequalities, environmental degradation, and the marginalization of its indigenous communities and rural poor. This paper seeks to explore the complex dynamics between development and marginalization in Jharkhand. It proposes a reimagined development vision that is not only inclusive but also sustainable, ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are equitably distributed among all residents, especially those who have been historically marginalized. The study focuses on the indigenous tribes, rural poor, and other vulnerable groups in Jharkhand, analysing the impact of current development policies on these communities and proposing a framework for more inclusive and sustainable growth.

Objective of the study

To assess the key developmental challenges faced by the marginalized communities in Jharkhand.
To investigate sustainable practice that are culturally and environmentally appropriate for Jharkhand.

To develop recommendations for policy interventions and development programs that ensures inclusion of marginalized groups.

Literature Review

The literature on development and marginalization in Jharkhand is extensive, focusing on various aspects such as resource exploitation, socio-economic inequalities, and the challenges faced by indigenous communities. Scholars like Guha (1983) and Mahasweta Devi (1997) have highlighted the historical marginalization of tribal communities in India, particularly in resource-rich states like Jharkhand. Their work provides a foundation for understanding the socio-economic dynamics that continue to marginalize these communities.

The development policies in Jharkhand have often prioritized industrial growth, particularly through mining and other extractive industries. According to a study by Mukhopadhyay (2010), these policies have led to significant environmental degradation, displacement of local communities, and a widening gap between the rich and the poor. Furthermore, the literature emphasizes the lack of adequate representation of marginalized communities in policy-making processes, leading to their exclusion from the benefits of development.

Sharma (2015) highlights the significant impact of industrialization and urbanization on indigenous cultures. Sharma argues that as industrial growth accelerates and urban areas expand, traditional cultural practices are increasingly marginalized. This process results in a gradual erosion of cultural identity among indigenous communities, as urban migration disrupts traditional lifestyles and community bonds. Sharma's study underscores the urgent need to address the negative consequences of rapid development on cultural heritage.

Sinha (2010) further explores the effects of urbanization on indigenous communities by examining how migration to urban areas alters traditional community structures. According to Sinha, this shift not only affects social dynamics but also weakens cultural practices and identity. The displacement of indigenous populations often leads to a loss of traditional knowledge and practices, which are crucial for maintaining cultural heritage. Sinha's findings reinforce the importance of developing strategies to mitigate these impacts and support cultural preservation.

Bhatia (2018) discusses effective strategies for cultural preservation, emphasizing the role of cultural centres and museums. Bhatia argues that these institutions are essential for safeguarding traditional knowledge and practices. By providing a space for the documentation and exhibition of indigenous cultures, cultural centres and museums help in preserving cultural heritage amidst ongoing development pressures. Bhatia also highlights the importance of these institutions in educating the broader public about the significance of indigenous traditions, thus fostering greater appreciation and respect.

Chakraborty (2021) addresses the role of educational initiatives in cultural preservation. Chakraborty advocates for integrating indigenous history and cultural content into educational curricula. This approach not only helps in sustaining cultural practices but also promotes a sense of identity and belonging among younger generations. Educational programs that focus on indigenous traditions can play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage by raising awareness and encouraging the continuation of traditional practices.

Jha (2017) examines the potential benefits of integrating traditional agricultural practices into modern development frameworks. Jha contends that these practices, which are often environmentally sustainable and culturally significant, offer valuable alternatives to industrial farming methods. By incorporating traditional agricultural knowledge, development practices can become more environmentally friendly and

culturally sensitive. Jha's research highlights the need for development policies that recognize and support traditional knowledge systems.

Kumar (2022) extends the discussion to forest management, arguing that indigenous knowledge can significantly contribute to sustainable resource use. Kumar's study shows that traditional forest management techniques are effective in enhancing biodiversity conservation and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources. This integration of indigenous knowledge into contemporary environmental practices demonstrates the practical benefits of preserving and utilizing traditional ecological knowledge. Sen (2016) advocates for the incorporation of cultural preservation objectives within development policies. Sen argues that explicitly addressing cultural preservation in policy frameworks is essential for supporting indigenous communities and promoting social equity. This approach ensures that cultural heritage is not only preserved but also respected within the context of ongoing economic and social changes. Sen's recommendations highlight the need for inclusive development models that integrate cultural considerations.

Chandhoke (2020) explores the role of Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) in enhancing local governance and democratic participation in rural India. In *Governance and Democracy: The Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India*, Chandhoke examines how PRIs, established under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, function as a form of local self-government that can effectively address local needs and promote democratic practices. The book provides a critical analysis of the challenges faced by PRIs, such as limited autonomy and resources, and suggests strategies for empowering these institutions to improve governance and development outcomes.

Sharma and Singh (2019) focus on the transparency and accountability within PRIs in their article, *Transparency and Accountability in Rural Development: The Case of Panchayati Raj Institutions*, published in the *Journal of Rural Development*. Their study highlights the importance of mechanisms like public audits and community monitoring in ensuring effective governance. By analyzing case studies, Sharma and Singh demonstrate that increased transparency leads to better resource management and enhanced community trust. However, they also acknowledge ongoing issues such as corruption and the need for greater public engagement.

Verma (2021) addresses the participation of women and marginalized groups in PRIs in the article *Women's Participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions: Challenges and Opportunities*, published in the *International Journal of Social Studies*. Verma discusses the historical underrepresentation of these groups and the obstacles they face in engaging with local governance. The article highlights various policy interventions aimed at increasing their inclusion and the benefits of diverse representation in PRIs. Verma's findings underscore the need for targeted efforts to ensure that the voices of marginalized populations are included in decision-making processes to achieve more equitable and inclusive governance.

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in the concepts of marginalization and inclusive development. Marginalization refers to the systematic exclusion of certain groups from social, economic, and political life, leading to their disenfranchisement and poverty. Inclusive development, on the other hand, advocates for growth strategies that ensure all members of society, especially the marginalized, benefit from economic progress. This framework is particularly relevant in the context of Jharkhand, where development has often been synonymous with exploitation rather than empowerment.

Identifying Marginalized Groups in Jharkhand

Jharkhand is home to a significant population of indigenous tribes, who constitute around 26% of the state's population. The major tribes include the Santhal, Munda, Oraon, and Ho, each with its own distinct cultural heritage, language, and social structures. These communities have historically relied on their traditional knowledge systems and natural resources for survival, but the advent of industrialization and resource extraction has disrupted their way of life.

Indigenous Tribes

The indigenous tribes of Jharkhand have faced systematic marginalization due to the state's focus on resource extraction. The displacement of tribal communities due to mining projects is a significant issue, leading to loss of land, livelihood, and cultural disintegration. A report by the Jharkhand Government (2018) indicates that more than 2 million people, mostly tribals, have been displaced due to mining activities since the state's formation. This displacement often occurs without adequate compensation or resettlement plans, further exacerbating the socio-economic vulnerabilities of these communities.

Rural Poor

In addition to the indigenous tribes, the rural poor in Jharkhand constitute another marginalized group. The rural population of Jharkhand, which makes up about 75% of the state's total population, faces significant challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to basic services like education, healthcare, and sanitation. According to the National Family Health Survey (2019-20), Jharkhand has one of the highest poverty rates in India, with nearly 37% of the population living below the poverty line. The rural poor are often excluded from the benefits of development projects, which are primarily focused on urban and industrial areas.

Women and Gender Minorities

Although this paper focuses primarily on marginalities broadly, it is important to acknowledge the compounded challenges faced by women and gender minorities within these marginalized groups. Women in Jharkhand, particularly those from tribal and rural backgrounds, face significant barriers to education, employment, and political participation. According to the Jharkhand State Minority Commission, the literacy rate for women in rural Jharkhand in 2022 was 48.91%, compared to 72.86% for men. Gender discrimination, coupled with the socio-economic disadvantages of being part of a marginalized group, limits their opportunities and exacerbates their vulnerability.

Development and Marginalization in Jharkhand

The relationship between development initiatives and the marginalization of vulnerable communities in Jharkhand is complex and multifaceted. While the state's natural resources have attracted significant industrial investment, this has often come at the cost of environmental degradation and social dislocation, particularly for marginalized communities. The economic and societal development of marginalized community goes in an opposite direction.

Resource Exploitation

Jharkhand's economy is heavily dependent on mining and industrial activities, which contribute significantly to the state's GDP. However, the exploitation of natural resources has had severe

consequences for the environment and the local population. Mining activities have led to deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity. The indigenous communities, who have traditionally relied on forests for their livelihoods, are the worst affected by these environmental changes. The depletion of natural resources has also led to conflicts over land ownership and access to resources, further marginalizing these communities. A study by Singh (2015) highlights the environmental and social costs of mining in Jharkhand, pointing out that the benefits of resource extraction are often concentrated in the hands of a few, while the costs are borne by the marginalized communities. Adivasis in Jharkhand are being displaced for large development projects, including irrigation dams, hydroelectric and thermal power plants, coal mines and mineral-based industries and despite the National Policy for Rehabilitation and Resettlement, Adivasis continue to be displaced forcefully without satisfactory rehabilitation. (Pingali, 2022). The displacement caused by mining projects not only leads to loss of livelihood but also disrupts the social and cultural fabric of indigenous communities, leading to a loss of identity and social cohesion.

Poor Human Capital

Jharkhand's underdevelopment is largely due to the marginalization of human capital, particularly in education, health infrastructure, and employment opportunities. Educational attainment in the state remains critically low, especially among tribal and rural populations, due to insufficient infrastructure, high dropout rates, and limited access to quality education (Kumar, 2020). This educational gap results in a workforce that is inadequately prepared for economic participation, thereby perpetuating poverty and hindering economic growth. Furthermore, Jharkhand's health infrastructure is severely lacking, particularly in rural areas, leading to poor health outcomes that diminish productivity and overall well-being. High rates of malnutrition, maternal and infant mortality, and preventable diseases highlight the state's failure to invest adequately in public health. Additionally, the scarcity of employment opportunities, especially in the formal sector, exacerbates the situation, as many individuals are forced into low-wage, precarious jobs that do not offer a path out of poverty. The combination of these factors has created a cycle of underdevelopment that continues to challenge the state's progress (Sharma & Thakur, 2022; Gupta, 2021).

Inadequate Representation in Policy-Making

One of the key reasons for the marginalization of certain groups in Jharkhand is their inadequate representation in policy-making processes. The state's development policies have often been designed and implemented without consulting the communities that are most affected by them. This lack of representation has led to the exclusion of marginalized groups from the benefits of development and has perpetuated socio-economic inequalities. For instance, the Land Acquisition Act has been a contentious issue in Jharkhand, with many indigenous communities opposing it due to the lack of adequate compensation and resettlement provisions. The act has been criticized for favouring industrial and commercial interests over the rights of indigenous communities. The absence of a participatory approach in the policy-making process has led to widespread discontent and protests among marginalized groups, further alienating them from the development process.

Towards an Inclusive Development Vision

Given the challenges highlighted above, it is imperative to rethink the development paradigm in Jharkhand to ensure that it is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. This section proposes strategies for achieving this

vision.

Participatory Development

One of the most effective ways to ensure that development benefits all sections of society is to adopt a participatory approach. Participatory development involves engaging marginalized communities in the decision-making process, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are addressed (Gupta, 2021). This can be achieved through community consultations, local government structures, and capacity-building programs that empower marginalized groups to take control of their development. For example, implementing community consultation processes allows for direct input from those who are often overlooked, ensuring that development projects align with their actual needs and priorities (Sharma & Thakur, 2022). In Jharkhand, participatory development could involve setting up platforms where indigenous communities and the rural poor can actively participate in the planning and implementation of development projects. This approach not only ensures their interests and representation but also helps build trust between the government and marginalized communities by fostering transparency and mutual respect (Kumar, 2020). Moreover, participatory development can lead to more sustainable outcomes as it encourages the integration of local knowledge and practices into development strategies. By incorporating local perspectives and expertise, development efforts are more likely to be contextually relevant and effective, ultimately leading to improved development results for all segments of society.

Equitable Resources Distribution

To address the issue of resource exploitation and its impact on marginalized communities, it is essential to promote equitable resource distribution. This means ensuring that the benefits of natural resource extraction are shared fairly among all residents of Jharkhand, particularly those who are most affected by these activities (Gupta, 2021). Equitable resource distribution can be achieved through policies that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities, such as land resource reforms, social welfare programs, and targeted investment in education, healthcare, and infrastructure (Sharma & Thakur, 2022). For example, land reforms that recognize the traditional land rights of indigenous communities could help address the issues of displacement and loss of livelihood, which are prevalent due to resource extraction activities (Kumar, 2020). Similarly, social welfare programs that provide financial assistance, education, and healthcare to marginalized groups could help lift them out of poverty and improve their quality of life. Targeted investment in rural infrastructure, such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities, could also help bridge the urban-rural divide and ensure that the benefits of development reach the most remote areas of the state. This balanced approach to growth ensures that development is inclusive and that marginalized communities are not left behind as the state progresses.

Cultural Preservation and Integration

The rich cultural heritage of Jharkhand's indigenous tribal tribes, including unique language, art forms, and traditional practices, is an integral part of the state's identity (Sinha, 2010). However, rapid industrialization and urbanization threaten these cultural elements, leading to their gradual erosion (Sharma, 2015). Preserving and integrating this heritage into development policies is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and identity among marginalized communities (Bhatia, 2018). This can be achieved through the establishment of cultural centres, museums, and educational programs focused on the history and traditions of indigenous communities (Chakraborty, 2021). Such initiatives not only preserve cultural

heritage but also educate the broader public about its significance. Additionally, integrating indigenous knowledge systems into development practices, particularly in agriculture, forest management, and healthcare, can lead to more sustainable and culturally sensitive outcomes. For example, traditional agricultural practices that align with the environment could be promoted as alternatives to environmentally damaging industrial techniques (Jha, 2017). Similarly, incorporating indigenous knowledge in forest management can help conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable resource use. By integrating cultural preservation into development policies, Jharkhand can create a more inclusive development model that respects and values its indigenous communities.

Strengthening Local Governance

Strengthening local governance through Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) is essential for fostering inclusive and sustainable development in rural areas, especially for marginalized communities that often remain underserved by broader national policies. PRIs, established as local self-government bodies under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, have the unique advantage of being deeply embedded within communities, allowing them to directly address and respond to local needs (Chandhoke, 2020). Empowering these institutions with greater autonomy, such as by decentralizing decision-making powers and increasing their financial resources, can significantly enhance their ability to manage local resources—like water, land, and infrastructure—more effectively (Sharma & Singh, 2019). Moreover, targeted capacity-building initiatives, including training in governance, financial management, and social justice, are crucial for ensuring that PRI members are well-equipped to implement development projects that are both efficient and aligned with the specific priorities of their communities (Sharma & Singh, 2019).

In addition to enhancing the operational capacity of PRIs, it is equally important to focus on inclusivity within these institutions. Historically, marginalized groups, including women, Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs), have been underrepresented in governance structures, leading to policies that do not fully address their unique challenges (Verma, 2021). Ensuring that these groups are adequately represented in PRIs not only promotes social justice but also helps in crafting development strategies that are more equitable and reflective of the diverse needs within the community (Verma, 2021). This can be achieved through the enforcement of quotas, as well as by providing support to overcome the social and cultural barriers that often prevent marginalized groups from participating in local governance.

Furthermore, promoting accountability and transparency within PRIs is critical for building trust between the government and the community. Mechanisms such as public audits, community monitoring, and regular reporting can ensure that development initiatives are implemented in a manner that is transparent and participatory, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of PRIs (Sharma & Singh, 2019). By fostering greater community engagement in the governance process, PRIs can ensure that the voices of all community members, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, are heard and respected. This approach not only leads to more effective and locally relevant development outcomes but also contributes to the broader goal of reducing poverty and improving the overall quality of life in rural areas. In summary, by empowering PRIs through capacity building, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring transparency, these institutions can play a pivotal role in making development more responsive, equitable, and sustainable for all members of the community (Chandhoke, 2020; Sharma & Singh, 2019; Verma, 2021).

Sustainable Development and Environmental Justice

Sustainable development is a key component of an inclusive development vision for Jharkhand. This involves promoting economic growth in a manner that is environmentally sustainable and socially equitable. Environmental justice, which emphasizes the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, is particularly relevant in the context of Jharkhand, where marginalized communities have borne the brunt of environmental degradation caused by industrial activities. To achieve sustainable development, it is essential to adopt a holistic approach that balances economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity. This can be done through the promotion of green technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable agricultural practices. Additionally, policies that protect the environment, such as strict regulations on mining and industrial activities, should be enforced to prevent further environmental degradation. Environmental justice can be promoted by ensuring that marginalized communities have access to clean air, water, and land, and are not disproportionately affected by environmental pollution. This can be achieved through environmental impact assessments that take into account the needs and rights of these communities, as well as through compensation and rehabilitation programs for those who have been adversely affected by industrial activities.

Policy Implications

The proposed inclusive and sustainable development vision for Jharkhand has significant policy implications. To implement this vision, the state government must adopt a multi-dimensional approach that addresses the economic, social, cultural, and environmental needs of marginalized communities. The following policy recommendations are crucial for achieving this vision:

- 1. Adopt a Rights-Based Approach:** Development policies should be established on a rights-based foundation that recognizes the rights of marginalized communities to land, resources, and participation in decision-making processes. Displacement without guaranteed rehabilitation remains a significant challenge for marginalized populations. A one-time compensation for displaced land is insufficient for their resettlement, especially as the company utilizing the land continues to profit from it for many years. This requires ensuring that these communities have legal ownership of their land and resources, as well as facilitating their active involvement in the planning and implementation of development projects.
- 2. Promote Social and Economic Inclusion:** Social and economic inclusion can be promoted through targeted social welfare programs that provide education, healthcare, food security and employment opportunities to marginalized groups. The programs like Sarva Siksha Abhiyan ensuring education to all, Indradhanush Program through Anganwadi ensuring infant and mortality health and basic education to children below 5 years, MANEREGA ensuring employment to rural marginalized and Targeted Public Distribution System ensuring food security and poverty alleviation. These programs should be designed in consultation with the communities they aim to serve, ensuring that they are responsive to local needs and challenges.
- 3. Integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems:** The integration of indigenous knowledge systems into development practices is essential for achieving sustainable and culturally sensitive outcomes. This involves recognizing and valuing the contributions of indigenous communities to areas such as agriculture, forest management, and healthcare, and incorporating their knowledge into modern development strategies. Indigenous people consider forest as their god, an ideal to worship. If this

practice is inculcated by the whole mass, then environmental preservation can be wider and sustainable practice.

4. **Strengthen Local Governance:** Empowering local governance structures, such as PRIs, is crucial for ensuring that development policies are responsive to the needs of marginalized communities. Local government has the potential to identify the need of the local marginalized population. Participation of local people through local governance ensures fostering economic and societal development of marginalized population in rural areas. This involves providing PRIs with the necessary resources, authority, and training to effectively manage local resources and implement development projects.
5. **Enforce Environmental Regulations:** To prevent further environmental degradation, the state government must enforce strict regulations on mining and industrial activities. Environmental impact assessments and cost-benefits assessment should be conducted to ensure that these activities do not disproportionately affect marginalized communities, and compensation and rehabilitation programs should be implemented for those who have been adversely affected. There is trade-off between development and environmental conservancy. To ensure sustainable growth cost and benefits analysis in a long term need to be done.

Conclusion

Rethinking development in Jharkhand requires a shift from the traditional growth-centric model to one that prioritizes inclusivity, sustainability, and equity. By addressing the needs of marginalized communities, integrating indigenous knowledge systems, and promoting sustainable development practices, Jharkhand can create a development model that benefits all sections of society. The proposed inclusive and sustainable development vision for Jharkhand is not just an economic necessity but also a moral imperative. It calls for a re-evaluation of existing development policies and the adoption of a more holistic approach that takes into account the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of development. By embracing this vision, Jharkhand can pave the way for a more just and equitable future for all its residents, ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of progress.

Jharkhand's development strategies prioritize economic growth over social equity and environmental sustainability. Despite this, marginalized communities face high poverty rates, limited access to essential services, and displacement due to industrial and infrastructural projects. The paper proposes a framework for inclusive development that emphasizes community participation, protection of indigenous rights, and the sustainable use of natural resources. This approach could serve as a model for other regions facing similar challenges. The recommendations for policymakers emphasize the need for a multi-stakeholder approach that includes government, civil society, and communities.

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