

Retribalisation in India:

Retribalisation is a process of **going back to tribal way of living or demanding recognition of tribal identity**. It is a representation of a movement away from modern, individualistic, and cosmopolitan values toward a re-emphasis on collective identity, community ties, and cultural heritage.

The retribalisation reinforces what **F.G. Bailey** says that **tribe and caste should be viewed as continuum**. The reason for this phenomena could be multifaceted, which we can understand through Rajbanshis example.

The **Rajbanshis**, an indigenous community predominantly found in the Indian states of West Bengal, Assam, and Bihar, are seeking to revive and reaffirm their tribal identity and cultural practices. The retribalisation process among them can be understood within the broader context of cultural identity, political mobilization and upcoming changes in the society with time.

During the early 19th century, the Rajbanshis started a movement to obtain Kshatriya status to reposition themselves within the social hierarchy and achieve **upward social mobility**. **Panchanan Barma** and many other prominent leaders of the community spearheaded the **Rajbanshi Kshatriya movement** and eventually succeeded in attaining it in 1921 Census. However, following **India's independence**, the Rajbanshis again started to demand Scheduled tribe status due to following reasons,

1. Post independence they faced a **decline in political influence**.
2. Many of them were **displaced from their ancestral lands**, away from their roots, forced to live a life of social, economic and cultural poverty. .
3. They also **lagged behind in garnering other opportunities of education and employment**.
4. This further contributed to the changing socio-political landscape and challenges faced by the Rajbanshis.

Therefore, their demand for tribal status is rooted in their **aspirations for social recognition, representation, and access to benefits and protections** provided to Scheduled Tribes in India. They also cite historical and ongoing socio-economic marginalization in terms of access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and overall socio-economic development as a primary reason for seeking tribal status. Gaining which would enable them to access affirmative action policies and welfare programs aimed at uplifting tribal communities.

It is due to this reason, India is facing the issue of retribalisation in the present time not only among Rajbanshis but also by Chutia, Koch-Rajbongshi, Matak, Moran and Tai-Ahom tribes. To

get a holistics view of the process of detribalisation and retribalisation, “**study of tribes should not be as communities in their own right but in terms of affinity or non-affinity with mainstream communities.**”, says **V. Xaxa**.

Another Perspective on Retribalisation:

McLuhan argued that the **emergence of electronic interdependence** in the world was transforming it into a ‘global village’. Within this global village, McLuhan observed a process of retribalization, where **individuals were reconnecting and experiencing a new form of collective existence resembling numerous tribal communities.**

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