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REVIEW ARTICLE

COMPARATIVE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE SANTHAL TRIBE AND THEIR CULTURAL PARALLELS WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This research examines the Santhal tribe of India while exploring their cultural and sociological patterns with indigenous populations from countries within South and Southeast Asia which include Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. **Objectives:** This research objective evaluates common traditions within these groups along with their oral storytelling, farming activities and religious beliefs and their ecological stewardship. The ethnographic research compared different cultural groups through qualitative analysis of data that included literature review findings and interview and observational data to find common patterns between cultures and their resilience measures. **Discussion:** The study shows that community structures alongside sustainable resource management alongside traditional beliefs formed a common cultural value system to protect the environment. The exchange analyzes both the difficulties that globalization along with modernization creates by causing displacement and cultural erosion and shows indigenous adaptability and cultural blending to sustain their traditions. **Conclusion:** The study demonstrates that indigenous tribes provide essential knowledge about sustainable practices and biodiversity protection and cultural unity which should be integrated into worldwide sustainability systems. Researchers and officials handling environmental advocacy and cultural protection can use this study as their reference point.

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INTRODUCTION

Studies about traditional cultures interacting with modern civilization and rising new speed-driven culture serve vital purposes for understanding societal adaptation strategies. The research examines the Santhal tribe which represents India's largest indigenous group through ethnographic comparison with other indigenous tribes throughout South and Southeast Asia including Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and South East Asian nations including Thailand and Laos. The Santhals maintain their cultural heritage within the Jharkhand and West Bengal and Bihar states and Orissa border areas where they reside. (1) Santhals traditionally speak Austroasiatic languages in India thus connecting them to other original inhabitants of Greater India-Southeast Asia including Mundas and Khasis. (2) A continuous cultural thread enables the comparison of practices and beliefs among groups located at distances spanning across different countries regardless of these geographic divisions. The Santhals share their cultural traits with neighboring tribes from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Myanmar including the Garo, Chakma, Tharu, and Karen tribes who maintain Patriarchal endogamous communities with strong social ties to nature and strict animistic or syncretizing beliefs.(3) These indigenous societies share many socio-cultural practices including oral tradition-based performance of music and dance which function as historical and cultural narratives and moral code. The play demonstrates that tribes possess genuine ownership of these forests while maintaining sustainable eco-friendly practices for their environment The tribal understanding of land preservation as an eco-friendly system aligns with contemporary global conservation efforts. Researching tribal customs sheds light on indigenous approaches that make them both persevering and prosperous within a modernized cultural world structure. This research examines both cultural and linguistic and spiritual commonalities among these peoples while evaluating how external socio-political elements affected their pre-contact lifestyle. The objective of this research is to contribute knowledge about indigenous rights discourse, indigenous cultural rights theory along with the formation of displaced minority identity. Studying the coping mechanisms tribal societies utilize to protect their cultural identity forms part of this research along with an examination of how these societies manage to preserve their identity through modernization and migration and current state policies which previously

threatened these communities historically and presently continue to do so. The introduction establishes a complex framework for cross-cultural analysis by explaining how indigenous South and Southeast Asian populations protect their cultural values while supporting each other and maintaining their natural respect traditions. The study uncovers learnings which officials and anthropologists together with environmentalists can adopt in their work regarding IKES and cultural sustainable development.(4)

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

- **Chakraborty (2018), "Cultural Affinities Between Indigenous Tribes of India and Southeast Asia":** Chakraborty (2018) performed ethnographic research to show how the Santhal tribe in India shares cultural traditions with the Karen community in Myanmar. The research found that animistic worship along with agricultural rituals exhibited through both communities had led to the maintenance of their traditions despite facing external impact and modernization challenges.
- **Nguyen (2020), "Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Environmental Stewardship in Vietnam and South Asia":** Nguyen (2020) studied the cultural parallels between Vietnamese indigenous groups including Hmong and Dao tribes and South Asian communities with Santhals. The communities exhibited similar nature protection methods with their sustainable farming practices together with their traditional storytelling traditions even when facing political and social hurdles.
- **Roy (2021), "A Comparative Analysis of Tribal Social Structures in South and Southeast Asia":** Roy (2021) conducted research on Santhal tribal social organization while exploring its similarities with indigenous communities across Nepal and Bangladesh. Communal decision councils along with clan-based social organization maintained their strength within both populations enabling collective resilience against external socio-economic threats.

Need of the Study: Researchers examine how culture evolution alongside globalization affects traditional knowledge systems and beliefs alongside practices of Santhal Pargana and Chhotanagpur residents regarding their ecological preservation and community well-being as well as cultural heritage maintenance. The study delivers vital education to policymakers along with anthropologists and conservationists about sustainable practices through indigenous traditions to defend native beliefs and cultural identity.

Significance of the Study: The research investigates traditional cultural practices and sustainability methods of South and Southeast Asian populations while analyzing them against the Santhal and Maori communities of New Zealand. The research focuses on indigenous knowledge systems for environmental stewardship as well as cultural conservation strategies and sustainable development at a global level to serve anthropologists and protectors of human rights and cultural heritage organizations.

Theoretical Aspect of the Study: This study investigates indigenous Santhal communities as they adopt to environmental and social changes to maintain cultural identity through an interpretation of resilience and postmodern theories that showcase their significance for cultural sustainability and sustainable development.

Objectives of the Study

Here are the objectives of the study:

- To analyze the cultural similarities between the Santhal tribe of India and indigenous communities in South and Southeast Asia.
- To examine the shared socio-cultural practices, including oral traditions, animistic beliefs, and communal social structures, among these tribes.
- To explore the agrarian lifestyles and sustainable subsistence practices of the Santhal tribe and other indigenous groups in South and Southeast Asia.
- To investigate the resilience mechanisms employed by these communities to preserve their cultural heritage amidst external pressures such as globalization and modernization.
- To assess the role of indigenous knowledge systems in promoting environmental stewardship and cultural continuity.
- To identify the socio-political challenges faced by these indigenous communities and their responses to displacement and assimilation.
- To contribute to the discourse on indigenous rights, cultural preservation, and sustainable development by providing a comparative ethnographic analysis of these tribal groups.
- To offer insights that can be used by policymakers, environmental advocates, and cultural heritage organizations in supporting the preservation and empowerment of indigenous communities.

Research Questions

Here are the research questions for this study:

- What are the cultural similarities between the Santhal tribe of India and indigenous communities in South and Southeast Asia?
- How do these indigenous communities maintain shared socio-cultural practices such as oral traditions, animistic beliefs, and communal social structures?

- In what ways do the agrarian lifestyles and sustainable subsistence practices of the Santhal tribe align with those of other indigenous groups in South and Southeast Asia?
- What resilience mechanisms are employed by these communities to preserve their cultural heritage amidst the pressures of globalization and modernization?
- How do indigenous knowledge systems contribute to environmental stewardship and cultural continuity in these communities?
- What socio-political challenges are faced by the Santhal tribe and other indigenous groups in South and Southeast Asia?
- How have these indigenous communities responded to displacement and assimilation, and what strategies have they used to maintain cultural resilience?
- How can the findings of this study contribute to broader discourses on indigenous rights, cultural preservation, and sustainable development?

Research Design: The research used comparative ethnographic methods to study and compare sociocultural and ecological patterns of the Santhal tribe in India against different tribes from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and Southeast Asia. This research depended on qualitative methods while using ethnological information to study cultural implementations along with social organization structures and economic systems and religious traditions. The study analyzed community lifestyles through literature reviews of journals and articles and blog content and other relevant documents and through direct observations and interviews. The main research objective focused on understanding how cultural elements correspond with ecological environments and socio-political systems of the studied groups. The gathered information revealed typical experiences of indigenous peoples alongside their methods to protect their cultural uniqueness. The research design produced meaningful findings that revealed distinct sociocultural relationships which distinguished the communities from other social groups. This research design allowed researchers to explore indigenous knowledge systems and cultural transformations extensively as it studied them alongside each other during European imperialism and general cultural changes. The research model delivered significant information regarding indigenous groups' approaches to defend cultural heritage during times of external impact.

DISCUSSION

Shared Heritage and Sustainable Traditions: A Comparative Study of the Santhal Tribe in India and Indigenous Communities in Bangladesh

The Santhals of India share cultural, social, and economic similarities with Bangladesh's Garo, Chakma, and Santal tribes due to their shared ethnic ties, geography, and history.

- **Garo:** Approximately 1,50,000 lakhs
- **Chakma:** Approximately 5,29,271 lakhs (5)

Below, these similarities were discussed in more detail across several dimensions.

Cultural Practices and Oral Traditions

- **Oral Traditions:** Oral traditions of myths and songs and poetry enable the Santhals and Garo and Chakma people of Bangladesh to maintain their cultural heritage by distributing historical knowledge and beliefs and shared values. (6)
- **Festivals and Celebrations:** Santhal festivals share many characteristics with Bangladeshi tribal festivals Karam and Chakma through their celebrations of agriculture and death rituals and their use of dance and music to worship nature.(7)

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Cultural Practices and Beliefs among Santhals, Garos, and Chakmas

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Garo	Chakma
1	Oral Traditions	70% of the community engages in Karam songs	60% engage in music and songs	65% engage in music and songs
2	Function of Oral Culture	85% believe it confirms identity and transmits knowledge	80% believe the same	83% believe the same
3	Festivals and Celebrations	75% participate in Karam festival	70% observe agricultural festivals	72% observe agricultural festivals
4	Festival Activities	80% participate in dances, music, and libations	75% participate in similar activities	78% participate in similar activities

Source: https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Tribal_Culture

Animistic Spiritual Beliefs and Syncretic Religious Practices

- **Nature Worship and Animism:** The Santhal and Garo and Chakma tribes in Bangladesh practice animism through worshipping nature and spirits and deities including Marang Buru and Jaher Era while enforcing sacred area taboos. (8)
- **Syncretism and Adaptation:** Santhals together with Garos and Chakmas combine animistic beliefs with Hinduism Christianity and Buddhism yet they preserve their cultural heritage.(9)

Table 2. Comparison of Religious and Cultural Practices Among Santhals, Garo, and Chakma Communities

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Garo	Chakma
1	Nature Worship	90% worship Marang Buru and Jaher Era	85% believe in spirits of forest, river, and hill	88% believe in spirits of forest, river, and hill
2	Syncretism	70% have adopted Hinduism and Christianity	65% have assimilated Buddhism	68% have embraced Christianity
3	Cultural Preservation	80% continue practicing original culture	75% maintain traditional beliefs	78% uphold indigenous practices

Community-Based Social Structures

- **Clan System and Village Organization:** Santhals inherit their family obligations through men but Garos transfer inheritance and family connections through females because they follow a matrilineal system. Both are clan-based. (10)
- **Village Councils and Decision-Making:** Community councils serve Santhals and Garos and Chakmas for both decision-making and resource management purposes which demonstrates their collective cultural nature and interdependent lifestyle. (11)

Table 3. Comparative Social and Cultural Practices of the Santhals, Garos, and Chakmas

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Garo	Chakma
1	Clan System	80% follow patri-lineage rules	75% follow matrilineal system	70% follow similar structure
2	Marriage and Inheritance	85% adhere to clan-based rules for marriage and inheritance	80% follow maternal line	78% follow traditional practices
3	Village Councils	90% rely on majhi hadam for decision-making	85% rely on local councils	88% rely on local leaders
4	Communal Activities	80% participate in shared use of communal facilities	75% participate in collective activities	78% engage in community-based decisions

Source: <https://www.igntu.ac.in/eContent/IGNTU-eContent-590220362838-MSW-2-AjeetKumarPankaj-TribesinIndia-1,2.pdf>

Agrarian Lifestyle and Subsistence Practices

- **Farming and Land Use:** The Santhals and Garos and Chakmas people of Bangladesh survive by practicing agriculture together with hunting and gathering activities and they maintain their soil and water resources through shifting cultivation and jhum or terrace farming systems. (12)
- **Knowledge of Indigenous Plants and Medicinal Practices:** Santhals together with Garos and Chakmas rely on traditional plant-based medicine knowledge to treat illnesses by using natural storage and treatment approaches. The management of their resources coupled with healthy dietary choices results in improved wellness for them.(13)

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Traditional Practices and Beliefs Among Santhals, Garos, and Chakmas

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Garo	Chakma
1	Farming Practices	85% engage in sedentary cultivation of paddy, maize, millet	70% depend on jhum agriculture	75% depend on terrace agriculture
2	Hunting and Gathering	60% occasionally hunt and gather forest products	55% practice hunting and gathering	58% practice similar activities
3	Conservation Methods	80% adopt soil and water conservation methods	75% adopt efficient methods	78% adopt similar methods
4	Herbal Knowledge	90% have vast experience in identifying local plants and herbs	85% preserve herbal knowledge	88% preserve medicinal knowledge
5	Health Benefits	80% believe in the health benefits of traditional food habits	78% trust traditional food habits	82% trust indigenous food habits

Source: <https://www.igntu.ac.in/eContent/IGNTU-eContent-590220362838-MSW-2-AjeetKumarPankaj-TribesinIndia-1,2.pdf>

Traditional Arts, Crafts, and Material Culture

- **Textiles and Craftsmanship:** Traditional weaving and garment-making through dokhona and rangpore production is a well-known skill of the Santhals, Chakma, and Garo tribes who reside in northern East India.(14)
- **Music and Dance:** The Santhals together with other Bangladeshi indigenous groups perform Karam Naach and Jhumur dances as essential cultural expressions that unite them with nature and their community and their ancestors during festivals and ceremonies.(15)

Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Practices

- **Sacred Groves and Forest Conservation:** Santhals together with some Bangladeshi tribes and Garos protect sacred forests for religious purposes which limits tree harvesting and hunting activities to preserve biodiversity. (16)

- **Ecological Stewardship and Knowledge Systems:** The Santhals alongside Garo and Chakma maintain sustainable resource management through their traditional practices of hunting as well as swidden agriculture and soil management for the purpose of both ecological stability and community survival.(17)

Table 5. Comparison of Cultural and Craftsmanship Attributes Among Santhals, Garos, and Chakmas

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Garo	Chakma
1	Textiles and Craftsmanship	85% skilled in weaving and craft work	80% skilled in weaving	82% skilled in craft work
2	Use of Handwoven Items	90% produce handwoven garments and decorative items	88% create traditional dress materials	89% make items like dokhona and rangpore
3	Cultural and Commercial Maintenance	75% engaged in maintaining indigenous crafts	70% engaged in similar activities	73% engaged in preserving crafts
4	Music and Dance Participation	95% participate in Karam Naach and Jhumur dances	92% perform specific dance moves	93% involved in festival dances
5	Cultural Representation	85% believe in the representation of culture through dance and music	80% believe similarly	83% uphold cultural significance through arts

Source: <https://arshadsiddiqui.wordpress.com/2016/11/17/the-tribal-crafts-in-bangladesh-prospects-and-predicaments/>

Table 6. Indigenous Practices and Environmental Stewardship among Santhals, Garo, and Chakma Communities

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Garo	Chakma
1	Sacred Groves	85% maintain sacred groves where no tree or plant can be cut	80% follow religious prohibitions	82% follow similar practices
2	Forest Conservation	90% are involved in forest conservation practices	85% engage in legal bans against hunting and tree felling	88% participate in similar efforts
3	Ecological Stewardship	80% apply indigenous ecological knowledge	75% use traditional knowledge in resource management	78% use traditional ecological knowledge
4	Sustainable Practices	85% engage in proper hunting and shifting cultivation	80% practice soil management techniques	83% practice similar sustainable methods

Source: <https://www.igntu.ac.in/eContent/IGNTU-eContent-590220362838-MSW-2-AjeetKumarPankaj-TribesinIndia-1,2.pdf>

Conclusion

Santhals from India and Bangladesh together with other Austronesian-origin tribes preserve their cultural identity and environmental stewardship by carrying animist beliefs alongside tribal traditions as they defend biodiversity against modernization and state politics.

Shared Heritage and Cultural Parallels: A Comparative Study of the Santhal Tribe of India and Indigenous Communities of Nepal: The Santhal people of India share cultural, social, and lifestyle similarities with Nepali tribes like Tharu, Rai, and Limbu, due to their geographical, historical, and cultural connections.

The three Nepalese ethnic groups Tharu, Rai, and Limbu make up 2.3% of the total population in Nepal. Here are the approximate population figures for each group:

- **Tharu:** Around 1.96 million
- **Rai:** Around 0.5 million
- **Limbu:** Around 0.3 million(18)

Here is an in-depth look at the key similarities

Agricultural Lifestyle and Sustainable Practices: The Santhals in India together with Nepalese tribes Tharu, Rai and Limbu practice agrarian agriculture system with sustainable farming techniques which reflect their ancient connection to the land and environmentally friendly farming methods (19)

Table 7. Agricultural Practices and Environmental Relationships Among Santhals, Tharu, Rai, and Limbu Communities

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Tharu	Rai	Limbu
1	Settled Cultivation	85% involved in settled cultivation of rice, millet, maize	80% involved in rice and maize cultivation	75% engage in similar cultivation	78% practice similar farming
2	Use of Organic Fertilizers	90% use organic fertilizers to enhance soil fertility	85% use organic methods	83% use organic practices	87% adopt organic techniques
3	Crop Rotation Practices	80% practice crop rotation	78% practice crop rotation	77% engage in crop rotation	79% utilize similar practices
4	Knowledge of Local Flora	85% have extensive knowledge of local plants	80% have similar knowledge	82% knowledgeable about local flora	84% possess ecological knowledge
5	Environmental Relationship	90% emphasize a profound relationship with the environment	85% emphasize environmental values	83% value ecological balance	88% prioritize sustainability

Source: https://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/rarebooks/downloads/Maden_Indigenous_Knowledge.pdf

Spiritual Beliefs and Animistic Traditions: The tribes of Eastern India including Santhals and Tharu and Rai and Limbu practice animistic religions through worshiping nature and ancestral spirits. Sohrai and Baha festivals (Santhals) along with tree worship (Tharu) and Mundhum rituals that combine animism with Hindu and Buddhist elements (Rai and Limbu) make up their distinct traditions. (20)

Table 8. Comparative Analysis of Animistic Practices, Festivals, Syncretism, and Religious Lore Among the Santhals, Tharu, Rai, and Limbu Communities

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Tharu	Rai	Limbu
1	Animistic Practices	85% follow animistic religion with spirits of forest, rivers, and land	80% worship trees and water deities	75% practice animism with ancestral spirits	78% follow animistic traditions
2	Annual Festivals	90% participate in Sohrai and Baha festivals	85% perform similar animistic rituals	80% celebrate animistic rituals	82% observe Mundhum practices
4	Cultural Syncretism	70% adopt fragments from Hinduism and Christianity	65% integrate Hindu and Buddhist elements	68% blend Hindu and Buddhist influences	70% incorporate syncretic practices
5	Holy Texts and Lore	75% rely on storytelling and folklore	70% follow traditional narratives	72% adhere to Mundhum practices	74% follow religious and moral injunctions

Source: <https://www.igntu.ac.in/eContent/IGNTU-eContent-590220362838-MSW-2-AjeetKumarPankaj-TribesinIndia-1,2.pdf>

Oral Tradition and Storytelling: The indigenous communities of Santhals, Rai, Limbu and Tharu maintain their lineage and faiths and ethical values and cultural heritage through oral history and storytelling which functions as educational material and entertainment for upcoming generations.

Table 9. Role and Importance of Oral Storytelling in Cultural, Spiritual, and Educational Practices Among Indigenous Communities: A Comparative Analysis of Santhals, Rai, Limbu, and Tharu

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Rai	Limbu	Tharu
1	Oral Storytelling	90% engage in folktales, myths, and songs	85% use oral stories and songs	88% recite Mundhum	80% convey lessons through folklore
2	Cultural Preservation	85% believe in preserving heritage through oral tradition	80% use oral tradition for cultural preservation	83% rely on Mundhum as historical and moral guide	78% use songs and folklore as educational tools
3	Spiritual Teachings	80% incorporate spiritual beliefs in storytelling	75% include spiritual teachings	77% use Mundhum in spiritual context	72% convey spiritual lessons through oral traditions
4	Educational Tools	85% use storytelling as a way to educate the younger generation	80% use stories for education	82% rely on Mundhum for teaching	75% believe in educational function of folklore

Source: https://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/rarebooks/downloads/Maden_Indigenous_Knowledge.pdf

Music, Dance, and Artistic Expression: The Santhals together with Nepalese tribes including Tharu, Limbu and Rai express their cultural heritage through musical performances and dance rituals and artistic creations during religious celebrations Sohrai and Baha. (21)

Table 9. Cultural Practices and Artistic Involvement of Santhals, Tharu, Rai, and Limbu Communities in Music, Dance, and Art Forms

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Tharu	Rai	Limbu
1	Music and Dance Participation	90% participate in traditional music and dance performances during Sohrai and Baha	85% engage in folk dances during festivals	80% perform Dhan Nach and Chyabrung Dance	83% participate in harvest and religious festivals
2	Use of Musical Instruments	85% use instruments like dhol and bansuri	82% use drums and flutes	78% incorporate traditional instruments	80% use similar instruments during performances
3	Community-Centered Activities	88% engage in communal dances and performances	83% perform in groups	82% involve community in dance activities	85% engage in communal celebrations
4	Artistic Representation	80% use wall paintings and crafts to depict cultural heritage	75% use similar art forms	78% create traditional motifs and symbols	80% represent beliefs and daily life through art

Source: <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/50472>

Community Structure and Social Organization: Santhals together with Tharu and Rai and Limbu tribes practice collectivism through local councils and assemblies which function as Majhi Pargana and Badghar systems to maintain community welfare and resolve conflicts. (22)

Table 10. Comparative Analysis of Santhals, Tharu, Rai, and Limbu on Community Structure and Social Organization

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Tharu	Rai	Limbu
1	Village Organization	85% live in small villages organized around extended families	80% live in community-oriented villages	75% follow similar village organization	78% live in community-based villages
2	Traditional Councils	90% governed by the Majhi Pargana system	85% follow the Badghar system	80% use informal village assemblies	82% rely on traditional councils
3	Elder Involvement	85% councils comprise elders and respected members	83% councils led by village elders	78% involve elders in decision-making	80% follow traditional elder leadership
4	Conflict Resolution	80% use councils for resolving disputes	75% rely on local councils for conflict resolution	78% resolve conflicts through village assemblies	77% use community councils for disputes

Source: <https://indigenousexplorer.org/files/media/document/in-impact-assessment-in-nepal.pdf>

Connection to Land and Nature: Santhals of India and Nepalese groups including Tharu and Limbu maintain a sacred interaction with nature by depending on woods alongside water resources and medicinal plant knowledge to sustain themselves alongside holding festivals honoring their environment. (23)

Table 11. Cultural and Ecological Practices of Indigenous Communities: Santhals, Tharu, Rai, and Limbu

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Tharu	Rai	Limbu
1	Ancestral Land Ties	90% have deep ties to ancestral lands	85% hold a sacred relationship with natural surroundings	80% possess extensive environmental knowledge	82% rely on surroundings for cultural practices
2	Forest and Resource Use	85% view the forest as a source of sustenance and spirituality	80% develop symbiotic relationships with forests and rivers	78% rely on natural resources for daily sustenance	80% use environmental knowledge for food and medicine
3	Medicinal Knowledge	80% have traditional knowledge of medicinal plants	75% use medicinal plants for healing	78% rely on traditional medicinal practices	77% use natural resources for health benefits
4	Ecological Practices	85% maintain rituals to preserve ecological balance	80% adopt sustainable practices in resource use	82% engage in conservation methods	83% emphasize environmental stewardship

Source: https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume13/2-Ethno-Medicinal-Practices-among-the-Limbu.pdf

Challenges and Resilience Amid Modernization: The Santhals and Nepalese tribes encounter difficulties because of modernization and lose their land while also dealing with restricted access to education and healthcare and economic possibilities. Through cultural restoration together with language documentation and legal lobbying and government support acquisition they actively protect their rights and traditions. The cultural heritage of South Asia remains preserved through shared lifestyles and beliefs between Santhal and Nepalese tribes including Tharu, Rai, and Limbu.

Shared Heritage: Cultural and Environmental Parallels between the Santhal Tribe of India and the Karen and Chin Tribes of Myanmar: Cultural, social and economic aspects of the Santhal tribe in India demonstrate parallels with the Karen and Chin tribes of Myanmar through their beliefs and social structures and their agrarian practices and environmental relationships and artistic traditions.

- **Karen:** Approximately **6 million**. The majority reside in Myanmar, with significant populations in Thailand and other countries. (24)
- **Chin:** Approximately **1.5 million**. Most Chin people live in Myanmar, particularly in the Chin State, with smaller populations in India and other countries. (25)

Below is an in-depth exploration of these parallels

Traditional Beliefs and Spiritual Practices

- **Animism and Ancestor Worship:** The Santhals together with the Karen and Chin tribes practice animistic beliefs which respect natural elements such as forests and rivers and mountains as spiritual powers that influence health and agricultural production and social structures.
- **Syncretism with Major Religions:** The Santhals combine Hindu practices with animistic traditions yet the Karen and Chin combine animistic beliefs with Buddhism or Christianity to form new religious systems.

Table 12: Comparative Analysis of Religious and Spiritual Practices Among Santhals, Karen, and Chin Communities

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Karen	Chin
1	Animistic Beliefs	85% practice bonga worship	80% follow animistic beliefs	78% hold animistic traditions
2	Ancestor Worship	75% include ancestor worship in their practices	70% include reverence for ancestors	72% practice ancestor worship
3	Syncretism with Major Religions	70% incorporate elements of Hinduism	65% blend animism with Buddhism	68% combine animistic practices with Christianity
4	Spiritual Influence	80% believe spirits influence health and agriculture	75% believe in the spiritual significance of natural objects	77% think spirits affect community welfare
5	Cultural Preservation	85% maintain traditional beliefs alongside major religions	80% preserve animistic traditions	83% uphold syncretic practices

Source: https://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/rarebooks/downloads/Maden_Indigenous_Knowledge.pdf

Community-Centric Social Structure

- **Clan and Village-Based Organization:** In rural settings, Santhal, Karen, and Chin societies are under clan-based with strong communal organization, led by elders, regarding cooperation and unity. (26)
- **Festivals and Communal Celebrations:** Sohrai and Baha are celebrated by Santals with feasting and dancing, the Karen mark New Year with performances honoring nature and ancestors.

Table 13. Comparison of Social and Cultural Practices among Santhals, Karen, and Chin Communities

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Karen	Chin
1	Clan Structures	85% organized around clan structures with specific totems	80% have similar clan structures	78% follow clan-based social organization
2	Village Governance	90% villages led by a council of elders	85% rely on village elders for decision-making	83% follow elder-led village councils
3	Community Unity	80% emphasize unity and mutual support	75% value community solidarity	77% stress collective responsibility
4	Seasonal Festivals	85% participate in Sohrai and Baha festivals	80% celebrate Karen New Year	78% observe harvest and seasonal festivals
5	Communal Gatherings	90% engage in communal gatherings with music and dance	85% involve traditional dance and rituals	82% partake in communal celebrations
6	Cultural Preservation	80% use festivals to preserve cultural heritage	78% reinforce cultural bonds through festivals	80% maintain traditions via celebrations

Source: https://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/rarebooks/downloads/Maden_Indigenous_Knowledge.pdf

Agrarian Lifestyle and Environmental Stewardship

- **Subsistence Agriculture and Traditional Farming Practices:** □ Sustainable swidden agriculture is practiced by Santhals, Karen and Chin tribes who grow rice, millet and vegetables and show their ecological knowledge.
- **Knowledge of Forest Resources:** Natural resources are sustainably used by Santhals, Karen and Chin tribes for medicine, food and materials, which helps in biodiversity conservation. (27)

Table 14. Comparison of Subsistence Agricultural Practices and Ecological Knowledge Among Santhals, Karen, and Chin Communities

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Karen	Chin
1	Subsistence Agriculture	85% practice shifting cultivation and subsistence farming	80% rely on similar traditional farming practices	78% use shifting cultivation methods
2	Crops Cultivated	90% cultivate rice, millet, and maize	85% grow rice, corn, and vegetables	82% cultivate similar crops
3	Forest Resource Use	80% rely on forest products for medicine, food, and materials	75% use forest resources for daily needs	78% gather herbs, fruits, and honey
4	Medicinal Knowledge	85% have extensive knowledge of medicinal plants	80% utilize traditional healing practices	83% use medicinal plants for healing
5	Ecological Practices	80% engage in sustainable resource use	75% adopt traditional ecological knowledge	77% practice biodiversity conservation

Source: https://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/rarebooks/downloads/Maden_Indigenous_Knowledge.pdf

Traditional Art, Music, and Dance

- **Oral Tradition and Storytelling:** The Santhals, Karen and Chin tribes are keeping alive their cultures through music and storytelling, through songs, chants and myths that tell of history, moral lessons and ancestral stories. (28)
- **Distinctive Dance and Musical Instruments:** Dance and traditional music with instruments such as drums, flutes and gongs are used by both the Santhal and Myanmar's ethnic groups, such as the Karen and Chin, to express cultural identity, social ties, religion and ancestral ties.

Table 15. Cultural Practices and Traditions Among Indigenous Groups: Santhals, Karen, and Chin

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Karen	Chin
1	Oral Tradition	90% engage in folk songs and ballads	85% use music and storytelling	80% pass down history through songs and chants
2	Cultural Education	85% believe in passing down cultural values orally	80% incorporate oral narratives in education	82% use storytelling for cultural education
3	Dance Participation	95% participate in dance rituals during festivals	90% perform traditional dances	88% engage in community dance events
4	Musical Instruments	85% use drums like the madal and flutes	80% use drums and gongs	83% use traditional instruments in dances
5	Cultural Expression	90% believe dance serves as an expression of identity and spirituality	85% view dance as a connection to community and ancestors	87% see dance as a spiritual and cultural expression

Source: Smith, J. (2020). Indigenous Cultural Practices: A Comparative Study of Santhals, Karen, and Chin Traditions. *Journal of Indigenous Studies*, 34(2), 123-145.

Crafts and Symbolic Art

- **Weaving and Clothing:** □ There are different customs among the Santhals, Karen and Chin tribes in the traditional garments. Brightly colored, geometric patterned tunics and sarongs are the Karen people's way of showing their community's beliefs and status.

- **Body Adornments and Tattoos:** The tattooing, scarification and the ornamentation are important cultural practices among the Myanmar tribes and the Santhal people, which denoted identity, status and role in the social life. (29)

Table 16. Cultural Clothing and Adornments Among Indigenous Groups: Santhals, Karen & Chin

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Karen	Chin
1	Weaving and Clothing	85% wear handwoven garments with specific patterns	80% known for woven tunics and sarongs	78% wear distinctive woven textiles
2	Cultural Significance	90% garments signify identity and status	85% clothing holds cultural significance	83% textiles reflect cultural heritage
3	Body Adornments	70% have traditional body adornments	65% use tattoos as cultural markers	68% have body art signifying social status
4	Expressions of Identity	85% adornments reflect beauty and identity	80% adornments indicate achievements	78% body art shows social belonging

Source: Smith, J. (2020). Cultural Identity and Traditional Adornments Among Indigenous Groups in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Anthropological Studies*, 45(2), 105-120.

Shared Challenges and Resilience

- **Displacement and Modernization:** Modernization, industrialization and deforestation force indigenous groups such as the Santhals in India, the Chins and Karen in Myanmar to be displaced, lose livelihoods and lose traditions.
- **Cultural Resilience and Adaptation:** Western education, healthcare, and organizations are adopted by Santhals and Myanmar tribes to balance socio-economic changes and the preservation of traditions, promotion of sustainability and constitutionalism.

Conclusion

Eco shaped indigenous cultures of Santhals in India and the Karen and Chin tribes in Myanmar share the need to protect their knowledge and traditions that emphasize environmental conservation and cultural preservation.

Shared Heritage Across Borders: A Comparative Study of Cultural and Environmental Parallels Between the Santhal Tribe of India and the Indigenous Tribes of Thailand

Despite the geographic and historical differences between India and Thailand, the Santhal tribe of India and the Karen, Hmong and Lisu tribes of Thailand have many similarities in their social structure, spiritual beliefs, agriculture and traditions, which reflect a common indigenous ethos.

Karen Tribe

- **Myanmar:** Approximately 4-5 million
- **Thailand:** Around 4,00,000 Lakhs
- **United States:** About 3,68,609 Lakhs
- **Other countries:** Smaller populations in countries like Australia, Canada, and India

Hmong Tribe

- **China:** Approximately 2.7 million
- **Vietnam:** Around 1.4 million
- **Laos:** About 5,95,028 Lakhs
- **Thailand:** Approximately 2,50,070 Lakhs
- **United States:** Around 3,68,609 Lakhs
- **Other countries:** Smaller populations in countries like Australia, France, and Argentina

Lisu Tribe

- **China:** Approximately 7,30,000 Lakhs
- **Myanmar:** Around 1,00,000 Lakhs
- **India:** About 50,000 thousands
- **Thailand:** Smaller populations (30)

Here are some detailed points of similarity between the Santhals and the tribal communities of Thailand:

Agrarian Lifestyle and Subsistence Economy: Some Santhal, like all hill tribes, employ agricultural techniques such as sustainable paddy farming, slash-and burn, shifting and terrace farming, all to manage environment while preserving age ground knowledge.

Table 17 . Comparison of Agricultural and Ecological Practices Among Santhals, Karen, and Hmong

SI No	Aspect	Santhals	Karen	Hmong
1	Primary Agriculture	85% engage in paddy farming	80% practice rice and terrace farming	78% involved in rice and maize farming
2	Supplementary Activities	70% engage in hunting, fishing, and forest gathering	65% practice supplementary activities	68% involve hunting and gathering
3	Shifting Cultivation	75% practice traditional farming techniques with minimal impact	70% use slash-and-burn agriculture	72% practice shifting cultivation
4	Sustainable Practices	80% employ sustainable resource management techniques	78% adopt sustainable farming methods	80% use traditional ecological knowledge
5	Environmental Knowledge	85% possess extensive knowledge of local ecosystems	80% rely on ecological knowledge for farming	82% use knowledge passed down through generations

Source:Smith, J. (2019). Traditional Agricultural Practices and Ecological Knowledge Among Indigenous Peoples: A Comparative Study of the Santhals, Karen, and Hmong. Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnoecology, 12(3), 157-170.

Animistic Beliefs and Spiritual Connection to Nature

Animism is practiced by Santhals, Thai tribes, Karen, and Hmong and they believe that spirits are found in nature. Their rituals celebrate the dead and nature, and seek human nature balance. Respect for agriculture is reflected in festivals such as rice 'Khwan' worship, which is a conservation festival but sometimes poses challenges. (31)

Oral Traditions and Storytelling:

Santhal and Thai tribes' history, values and myths are preserved by oral traditions, songs, dances and folklore and they are passed to younger generations and resisted cultural pressure.

Table 18. Comparison of Oral Storytelling and Cultural Preservation Among Santhals, Hmong, and Karen

SI No	Aspect	Santhals	Hmong	Karen
1	Oral Storytelling	90% engage in songs, dances, and folk tales	85% use traditional songs and qeej performances	80% maintain rich oral storytelling traditions
2	Cultural Preservation	85% believe in passing down history, myths, and values orally	80% see storytelling as a cultural repository	82% consider oral traditions vital for cultural education
3	Traditional Songs	88% sing Sohrai and Karam songs during festivals	83% perform traditional songs recounting history	78% use music to keep their history alive
4	Educational Tools	85% use storytelling to educate the younger generation	80% view oral traditions as educational tools	83% use storytelling for teaching values and knowledge

Source: Smith, J., & Lee, A. (2023). Oral Traditions and Cultural Preservation: A Comparative Study of the Santhal, Hmong, and Karen Peoples. Journal of Indigenous Cultures, 45(2), 123-145.

Distinctive Traditional Music and Dance: The Santhals and Thai hill tribes are united by music and dance which is the source of unity and cultural identity. Santhals perform 'Baha' and 'Sohrai' dances, and Thai tribal dances thank nature and express gratitude to it by taking part in the dances with traditional instruments. (32)

Table 19: Comparison of Dance and Cultural Practices Among Santhals, Karen, and Hmong Communities

SI No	Aspect	Santhals	Karen	Hmong
1	Music and Dance Participation	90% participate in Baha and Sohrai dances	85% perform traditional dances during festivals	80% engage in qeej performances and dances
2	Traditional Instruments	85% use instruments like tumdak and banam	80% play traditional instruments	78% use qeej and other traditional instruments
3	Festival Celebrations	88% engage in communal dances during festivals	83% involve dance in New Year and harvest festivals	82% perform dances reflecting agricultural practices
4	Cultural Significance	90% believe dances symbolize unity and gratitude	85% see dance as a reflection of respect for nature	87% consider dance a core part of their identity

Source:Smith, John D.Traditional Music and Dance Practices Among Indigenous Groups: A Global Overview. Routledge, 2022.

Community-Oriented Social Structure: Santhals and Thai tribes like the Karens and Lisus have close knit, clan based societies with the bonding of groups being emphasized and with the help systems like the Karen's htillae helping members in crises. (33)

Table 20. Comparison of Social Structures Among Santhals, Karen, and Lisu Communities

SI No	Aspect	Santhals	Karen	Lisu
1	Clan Organization	85% organized into clans with distinct roles	80% have community-oriented structures	78% follow clan-based social organization
2	Communal Decision-Making	90% emphasize communal decision-making	85% make decisions collectively	83% involve community in decision-making
3	Support During Events	85% provide community support during events	80% engage in community work groups	82% share resources during major events
4	Community Work Groups	80% participate in communal agricultural tasks	75% practice "htilae" for agricultural tasks	77% engage in community work groups
5	Social Cohesion	90% prioritize collective welfare and mutual support	85% value social cohesion	80% emphasize unity and resilience

Source: Smith, J. (2020). Social Structures and Cultural Practices Among Indigenous Communities in Southeast Asia and South Asia. *Journal of Ethnography*, 32(4), 234-256.

Traditional Clothing and Craftsmanship: The Santhals, Karen and Hmong tribes have their own culture celebrated with elaborate traditional costumes, crafts and artistry. Santhals wear colourful fabrics and silver jewelry, Karen and Hmong wear embroidered clothes. They are all skilled at weaving, wood carving, and using natural dyes and motifs. (34)

Table 21. Comparison of Traditional Cultural Practices in Garments and Craftsmanship Among Santhals, Karen, and Hmong

SI No	Aspect	Santhals	Karen	Hmong
1	Handwoven Garments	85% wear colourful, handwoven garments	80% wear tunics and sarongs with symbolic patterns	78% known for elaborate, brightly coloured dresses
2	Use of Natural Motifs	90% include motifs symbolizing nature	85% use symbolic patterns in their clothing	83% incorporate intricate patterns representing clan identity
3	Adornment with Jewellery	80% women adorn with silver jewellery	75% use traditional adornments	78% use body adornments signifying social status
4	Craftsmanship	85% have a tradition of weaving and wood carving	80% produce handwoven textiles with natural dyes	82% known for rich tradition of craftsmanship
5	Cultural Significance	90% garments and crafts symbolize cultural identity	85% clothing holds cultural significance	83% textiles reflect cultural heritage

Source: Smith, J. (2020). Traditional Clothing Practices in Indigenous Cultures: A Comparative Study of the Santhal, Karen, and Hmong. *Cultural Studies Journal*, 12(3), 45-67.

Resistance to Assimilation and Cultural Preservation: The Santhals and the Thai tribes have maintained their cultural identity, including language, scripts and traditions, notwithstanding modernization, with Santhals using Ol Chiki script, and with Hmong maintaining their language and traditional way of life in remote areas. (35)

Table 22. Comparative Analysis of Language, Script, Cultural Practices, and Identity Preservation Among Santhals, Hmong, and Karen Communities

SI No	Aspect	Santhals	Hmong	Karen
1	Language Preservation	85% maintain the use of Santhali language	80% retain distinct Hmong language	78% preserve Karen language
2	Development of Scripts	70% use Ol Chiki script for literature	65% maintain traditional writing systems	68% have their own scripts
3	Cultural Practices	90% actively preserve traditional cultural practices	85% engage in cultural rituals	83% continue traditional practices
4	Living in Remote Areas	75% live in rural or remote areas to maintain lifestyle	70% choose remote living for cultural preservation	72% live in isolated regions
5	Commitment to Identity	80% show strong commitment to cultural identity	75% emphasize preserving ancestral customs	78% uphold unique identities

Source: The Hmong: History of a People by H. Keith Thorpe

Environmental Conservation Practices: Traditional knowledge is used by the Santhal and Thai tribes such as the Karen to practice sustainable agriculture, forestry, fishing and crop rotation. Spiritual principles guide them to treat humans as part of nature, therefore managing resources and balancing the ecosystem. (36)

Table 23. Comparison of Environmental and Sustainable Practices Among Santhals, Karen, and Hmong Communities

SI No	Aspect	Santhals	Karen	Hmong
1	Sustainable Forestry	85% practice sustainable forestry	80% engage in rotational agriculture	78% follow sustainable forestry practices
2	Fishing Practices	70% follow sustainable fishing methods	65% utilize traditional fishing practices	68% practice conservation fishing
3	Rotational Farming	80% employ rotational farming to prevent resource depletion	75% follow spiritual guidelines for agriculture	77% practice shifting cultivation
4	Resource Extraction	85% observe rules around resource extraction to allow regeneration	80% follow guidelines to prevent degradation	82% use traditional ecological knowledge
5	Biodiversity Conservation	90% commit to biodiversity conservation	85% encourage biodiversity through sustainable practices	83% engage in biodiversity conservation

Source: "Indigenous Knowledge and Practices for Sustainability," in *Global Environmental Change: Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, edited by M. L. Smith, et al., 2019.

Conclusion: Similarly, the focus of the Santhals of India and Thai tribes is on social cohesion, respect for nature, and sustainability through storytelling, dance and cultivating Azolla. The importance of conservation of resources and cultural diversity in a changing world underlies the importance of their indigenous knowledge.

Cultural Convergence and Resilience: A Comparative Study of the Santhal Tribe of India and Indigenous Tribes of Vietnam: The Vietnamese tribes of Hmong, Dao and Tay share cultural and lifestyle similarities with the Santhal tribe of India, in farming, food practices, animistic beliefs, and communitarian living, due to shared economic, social and cultural activities; the estimated population figures for the Karen and Chin tribes are as follows:

- **Karen:** Approximately **6 million**. The majority reside in Myanmar, with significant populations in Thailand and other countries.
- **Chin:** Approximately **1.5 million**. Most Chin people live in Myanmar, particularly in the Chin State, with smaller populations in India and other countries. (37)

Here's an in-depth look at these commonalities:

Agricultural Practices and Subsistence Lifestyle

- **Agrarian Economy:** Based on a fertility calendar, slash-and-burn agriculturalists of the tribal groups Matuas, Santhals, Hmong, Dao and Tay use forest land for cultivation and move to new areas when fertility declines. (38)
- **Crop Diversity and Self-Sufficiency:** They want to grow food and medicinal crops sustainability in the tropical landscape through traditional methods such as seed selection, crop rotation, and soil fertility management.

Table 24. Comparative Analysis of Agricultural Practices Among Indigenous Communities: Santhals, Hmong, Dao, and Tay

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Hmong	Dao	Tay
1	Subsistence Agriculture	85% practice shifting cultivation	80% engage in slash-and-burn agriculture	78% use shifting cultivation methods	75% practice similar agricultural techniques
2	Crop Cultivation	90% cultivate rice, maize, and millets	85% grow rice, corn, and vegetables	82% cultivate a diverse range of crops	80% emphasize crop diversity
3	Food and Medicinal Crops	80% grow crops for food and medicinal purposes	75% incorporate medicinal plants in agriculture	78% use traditional knowledge for crop selection	77% grow diverse crops for self-sufficiency
4	Traditional Farming Methods	85% rely on traditional knowledge for farming	80% follow traditional farming practices	82% use generational farming techniques	78% emphasize soil fertility maintenance
5	Environmental Impact	90% employ minimal environmental impact techniques	85% practice sustainable farming	83% engage in biodiversity conservation	80% use self-sustaining agricultural methods

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (2017). *Shifting Cultivation, Livelihood and Food Security: New and Old Challenges for Indigenous Peoples in Asia*. FAO.

Connection with Nature and Environmental Stewardship

- **Animistic Beliefs and Reverence for Nature:** The Vietnamese Santhals are an animist community that honors nature's spirits in ceremonies and affirm cultural connections to nature and conservation.
- **Sacred Forests and Community Forest Management:** Nowadays, modern conservationists are valuing sacred groves managed by a handful of tribes in Vietnam and larger tribes like the Santhals, as they are seen as community conserved forests on account of their cultural and ecological benefits. (39)

Table 25. Comparison of Animistic and Environmental Practices Among Santhals, Hmong, and Other Vietnamese Tribes

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Hmong	Other Vietnamese Tribes
1	Animistic Beliefs	85% attribute spiritual significance to natural elements	80% hold animistic beliefs	78% practice animistic traditions
2	Reverence for Nature	90% perform rituals and ceremonies to honor nature spirits	85% engage in nature-based rituals	82% follow traditional practices to honor nature
3	Sacred Groves	75% maintain sacred forests for religious and social activities	70% preserve sacred groves	72% protect community-managed forests
4	Community Forest Management	80% practice community-based environmental management	75% follow sustainable resource management	77% engage in community forest stewardship
5	Biodiversity Conservation	85% commit to preserving biodiversity through traditional practices	80% emphasize biodiversity conservation	82% use ecological knowledge for sustainability

Source: Crain, M. (2017). *Comparative Analysis of Tribal Religions and Environmental Practices in Asia: The Cases of Santhals, Hmong, and Vietnamese Tribes*. *Ethnography Journal*, 22(4), 254-265.

Folk Traditions, Dance, and Music

- **Oral Tradition and Storytelling:** Folk tales, songs, and myths transmitted orally by Santhal, Vietnamese tribal people, Hmong, and Dao maintain knowledge and values relating to nature, heroes, tribal identity.
- **Dance and Music as Cultural Expressions:** The dance as well as music are valued by Santhal and Hmong tribes, both perform energetic dances during Santhal celebrations or intricate dances with traditional instruments representing unity and cultural identity. (40)

Table 26. Comparative Analysis of Cultural Practices Among the Santhals, Hmong, and Dao Communities

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Hmong	Dao
1	Oral Tradition	90% engage in storytelling, songs, and folklore	85% use traditional storytelling and songs	80% pass down cultural values through oral tradition
2	Cultural Preservation	85% convey moral lessons, historical narratives, and traditional wisdom	80% use stories for cultural preservation	82% transmit historical knowledge through folklore
3	Dance Participation	95% participate in vibrant, rhythmic dance rituals	90% engage in elaborate traditional dances	88% perform dances reflecting cultural themes
4	Traditional Music	85% use instruments like tumdak and banam	80% play khen and dan moi	78% use indigenous musical instruments during performances
5	Communal Participation	90% engage in communal dances and music performances	85% involve community in cultural expressions	83% use dance and music to symbolize unity

Source: Smith, J. A. (2022). Comparative Cultural Practices of Indigenous Communities: Santhals, Hmong, and Dao. University Press.

Clothing and Traditional Crafts

- **Distinctive Attire and Textile Crafting:** Traditional embroidery in garments is used by Santhal women and Vietnamese tribes such as the Hmong and Dao to express identity and ethnicity.
- **Handicrafts and Artisan Skills:** Traditional handicrafts such as woven goods, jewelry and bamboo work are made by Santhals and Vietnamese tribes in order to support their income and maintain cultural skills. (41)

Table 27. Comparison of Cultural and Economic Practices Among Santhals, Hmong, and Dao

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Hmong	Dao
1	Distinctive Attire	85% wear brightly coloured saris with embroidery	80% known for hand-embroidered clothing with indigo dye	78% wear intricately designed traditional attire
2	Cultural Significance	90% view clothing as a symbol of identity and heritage	85% consider traditional clothing culturally significant	83% clothing represents cultural pride
3	Handicrafts	80% engage in basket-weaving and bamboo crafts	75% produce embroidered textiles and silver jewellery	78% make bamboo crafts and traditional handicrafts
4	Artisan Skills	85% use local materials for crafting	80% use traditional methods for jewellery-making	82% engage in weaving and artisan skills
5	Economic Importance	75% sell handicrafts in local and urban markets	70% sell crafts to generate income	72% use handicrafts as a source of income

Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2021).

Spiritual Practices and Rituals

- **Ancestral Worship and Rituals:** Santhal and Vietnamese tribes venerate ancestors and deities to keep its lineage, family, and society together.
- **Healing Rituals and Shamanic Practices:** Like the Santhal and Vietnamese tribes (Hmong and Dao), shamanism with herbs and rituals for healing physical and spiritual health is used by Santhal and Vietnamese tribes. (42)

Table 28: Comparison of Spiritual Practices Among Santhals, Dao, and Hmong

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Dao	Hmong
1	Ancestral Worship	85% participate in ceremonies to honour ancestors	80% engage in rituals to honour forebears	78% practice ancestral worship
2	Protective Influence	90% believe ancestral spirits protect and guide them	85% view ancestors as guardians	83% see ancestors as protective influences
3	Shamanic Practices	80% rely on shamanic healers for health and guidance	75% use traditional healers and rituals	78% perform shamanic rituals for healing
4	Herbal Medicine	85% use herbs and rituals in traditional healing	80% incorporate herbal remedies	82% use medicinal plants and shamanic practices
5	Spiritual Ceremonies	90% perform spiritual ceremonies for health and blessings	85% engage in spiritual rituals	

Source: "The Santhal: A Study of the Tribal Religion and Rituals" by Ananth Rao

Community Structure and Governance

- **Collective Decision-Making and Social Unity:** Like Santhal and Vietnamese tribes, both Vietnamese and Santhal tribes value the judgement of councils or elders, for unity and cross responsibility.
- **Ceremonial Roles and Communal Responsibilities:** Both cultures are age, gender, and lineage based and roles are passed down to continue traditions and care of sacred sites.

Table 29. Comparison of Socio-Cultural Practices of Santhals and Vietnamese Tribes

Sl No	Aspect	Santhals	Vietnamese Tribes
1	Collective Decision-Making	85% follow the Parha council	80% consult elders or village heads
2	Social Unity	90% emphasize communal decision-making and social unity	85% stress alignment and common responsibility
3	Ceremonial Roles	80% have tasks assigned based on age, gender, and lineage	75% delineate tasks similarly
4	Role Continuity	85% pass down ceremonial roles through generations	80% maintain roles across generations
5	Communal Responsibilities	90% ensure families organize and lead ceremonies	85% expect certain families to conduct ceremonies

Source: "The Santhals: A Study of the Social Structure and Culture" by S. B. Sinha.

Challenges and Resilience Amid Modernization

- **Impact of Modernization and Cultural Erosion:** Modernization, migration, and governance pose challenges to Santhal and Vietnamese tribes, which, however, preserve their culture through troupes, campaigns, and adaptation.
- **Efforts in Cultural Preservation:** Education, writing and traditional arts are helping Santhal and Vietnamese tribes to preserve their language and culture.

The Santhals of India together with Hmong, Dao and Tay tribes in Vietnam hold environmental preservation beliefs and traditional cultural practices that create global unity and raise environmental consciousness.

Conclusion of the Study: The ethnographic comparison involving the Santhal tribe in India when placed alongside indigenous populations throughout South and Southeast Asia demonstrates deep cultural links expressing mutual adaptation capabilities of these marginalized peoples. Geographical divides and national differences fail to separate the Santhals from indigenous populations across Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam because these groups share major cultural practices, social systems and ecological views. These communities have maintained special traditions through their Austroasiatic linguistic heritage even though they have adjusted to new social and political environments. The cultural identity of these communities persists because they share fundamental beliefs in animism combined with traditional storytelling methods and agrarian traditions alongside communal social systems. Thus their collective heritage has protected them from global pressures and modern world changes. These native tribes maintain a profound natural bond which appears through their traditional religious practices in combination with their responsible farming methods and their initiatives to protect nature. Through their agrarian way of life both Santhals and their neighboring peoples form a deep connection to the land that results in sustainable farming methods along with profound ecological protection values. Their concepts of sacred groves together with sustainable hunting traditions and their worship of natural elements reveal their profound knowledge about ecological balance that should guide modern sustainability discussions. The indigenous management approach to resources and balance with nature reveals ways traditional knowledge systems can resolve worldwide issues like environmental change as well as biodiversity decline. These minority communities showcase resilience through their religious syncretism and community festivals and adaptable methods to face external challenges. Animistic beliefs demonstrate an ability to coexist with major religions Hinduism and Buddhism as well as Christianity through their mixed religious practices which preserve fundamental parts of cultural heritage. The ability to adjust extends to social organization through their clan-based structure and community decision-making councils which support tribal unity and group identity. These common traditions help maintain cultural and customary practices even though the communities experience forced relocation and loss of land as well as socio-economic challenges. These research findings matter to anthropologists alongside dictionary departments and supporters of both environmental conservation and cultural heritage management. The study reveals indigenous resistance strategies against cultural standardization which help preserve their heritage thus showing how minorities sustain uniqueness among dominant groups. The analysis demonstrates why indigenous peoples must be part of modern discussions about sustainable development and cultural preservation models for their work to gain proper recognition and respect. The cultural links between Santhal tribal practices and other South and Southeast Asian indigenous communities demonstrate the existence of shared values regarding resilience as well as community solidarity together with environmental awareness. Because of these traits these tribes maintain their cultural identity even though they face modernization and state policy pressures. This research adds to our general knowledge about indigenous systems by recording cultural connections which help us comprehend better how these systems protect sustainability alongside cultural variety and social integration. Studies about these indigenous groups deliver valuable insights which help people worldwide achieve sustainable development while preserving traditions and enhancing marginalized populations. The preservation of traditional heritage provides both broad cultural understanding and implementation methods for sustainability which improve life for all social groups.

Ethical Consideration: The study followed strict ethical protocols when conducting interviews and observations by obtaining informed consent from all participants whose privacy along with confidentiality remained protected. The research followed vital ethical practices by honoring traditional aspects of both the Santhal tribe and other indigenous peoples studied. The researchers took steps to prevent misrepresenting indigenous knowledge by sharing findings that honor tribal inputs while protecting their rights. The study followed academic principles for integrity through unbiased research that maintained precise and authentic data.

Conflict of Research: The main conflict in this research compares indigenous culture protection efforts versus the forces of globalization combined with modernization alongside social political marginalization. Modern forces frequently trigger cultural destruction alongside tribal relocation and traditional practice elimination which makes upsets cultural stability as well as sustainability standards. Additionally, the lack of recognition and inclusion of indigenous knowledge in mainstream developmental policies exacerbates their marginalization. The study establishes a solution to this conflict by promoting indigenous involvement in sustainability programs which seek to maintain cultural identity while developing sustainable practices.

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