



Church on Tribal Mission in India: Evangelisation Impact on Tribal Identity in Bihar and Jharkhand

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Abstract

Religious conversions in Bihar and Jharkhand have reached alarming levels, particularly affecting tribal communities. This paper investigates the socio-economic, cultural, and political dimensions of religious conversions, focusing on the role of missionary activities, demographic changes, and their long-term implications on tribal identity. The research is based on recent reports, census data, and historical accounts of religious conversions in these states. Missionary activities, including education and healthcare, have been major contributors to conversion trends. However, there is growing evidence of more coercive tactics being used, including the exploitation of vulnerable tribal populations through drugs, psychological manipulation, and even sex change operations. These methods often target the poor and uneducated, trapping them in a complex nexus of dependency and control. While conversions offer certain socio-economic benefits, they also disrupt traditional tribal structures and create divisions within communities. Political and legal debates surrounding anti-conversion laws have intensified, with varying stances on religious freedom versus cultural preservation. Demographic shifts resulting from conversions have also led to political repercussions, influencing electoral dynamics and governance in tribal-dominated regions. The research presents statistical data, including a comparative analysis of religious demographics over the years, and discusses community-led initiatives to counter forced conversions. The use of drug and sex change operations for spreading Christianity are used as tools, it requires urgent attention to preserve tribal identity in Bihar and Jharkhand.

Keywords: Religious conversion, Bihar, Jharkhand, missionaries activities, drug addiction.

I. Introduction

Religious conversions have been a highly debated topic in India, particularly in states like Bihar and Jharkhand, where tribal communities

form a significant portion of the population. Reports indicate that missionary activities have intensified, leading to a noticeable shift in religious demographics. While religious freedom is a fundamental right, concerns arise regarding the socio-cultural impact of conversions on indigenous communities¹. The historical context of religious conversions in these states dates back to the colonial era when Christian missionaries established schools and healthcare centers as part of their evangelization efforts. Over the years, missionary activities have evolved, incorporating socio-economic incentives that attract marginalized communities (David Hariman 2002). However, recent reports have uncovered more sinister methods being used for conversions, including drug addiction, sex trafficking, and gender-altering medical procedures designed to isolate individuals from their traditional social structures¹.

This research examines the factors driving religious conversions, including economic hardship, education, social discrimination, and the role of religious institutions. It also analyses political implications, legal frameworks, and the response of tribal organizations to the growing trend of conversions. Using qualitative and quantitative data, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and explore possible solutions to protect tribal heritage.

Socio-Economic Factors Driving Religious Conversions based on poverty index and after the identification of regions they supply basic need of those indigenous people³. The identification of the region have 10/40 windows of missionaries under the Joshua project (R. Trivedi, 2024). Bihar and Jharkhand are among the poorest states in India, with a significant portion of their population lacking access to basic amenities. According to the National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), approximately 26.59% of Bihar's population falls below the poverty line, while Jharkhand also experiences high levels of deprivation⁴. Recent investigative reports suggest that beyond traditional incentives, more coercive strategies are being



employed to trap tribal populations into religious conversions^{5,7}. These include the tools as:

Drug addiction: Vulnerable individuals, particularly youth, are introduced to addictive substances under the guise of “spiritual healing.” Once dependent, they become reliant on missionary groups for continued support and sustenance, leading them to convert (R.Trivedi, 2025).

Psychological conditioning: Many missionary organizations use sophisticated psychological manipulation techniques, including isolation from family and community, repeated exposure to religious indoctrination, and financial dependence to alter the belief systems of individuals¹².

Sex change operations and human trafficking: Some reports highlight cases where young tribal individuals, particularly women, have been subjected to gender reassignment surgeries and human trafficking as a means of severing their ties with their traditional community^{1,6,13}. Once distanced from their cultural identity, they become more susceptible to conversion and forced integration into new religious institutions (Voss, Roberts Michelle; 2021).

These tactics have raised serious ethical and legal concerns, leading to calls for stronger government intervention and protection mechanisms for tribal populations. Ensuring their cultural integrity and shielding them from coercive influence has become

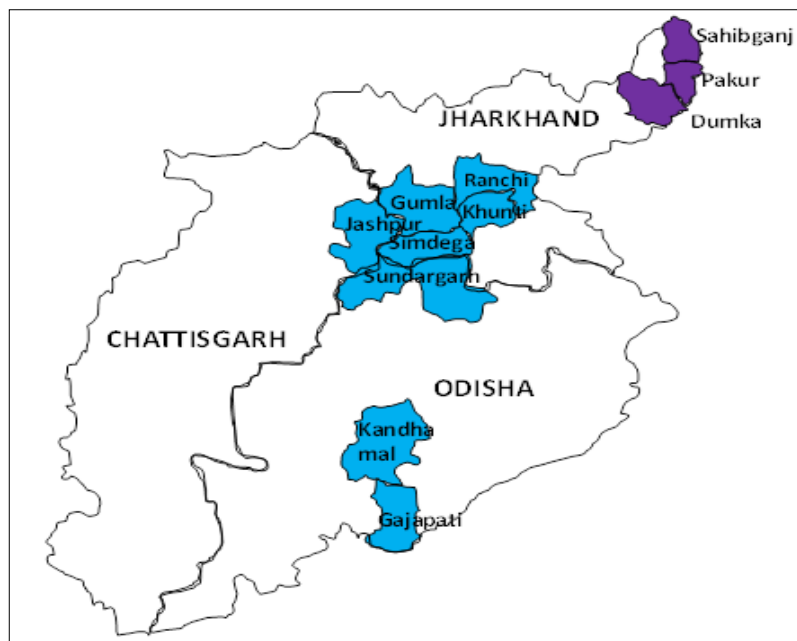
a pressing issues, necessitating comprehensive policies and enforcement mechanisms.

Cultural Disruptions and Challenges:

Tribal communities have distinct traditions, languages, and governing systems that are at risk due to religious conversions. Many converted individuals abandon their traditional customs, leading to generational cultural erosion (Golan, O., 2023). This has created divisions within tribal groups, where non-converted individuals resist the cultural shift promoted by religious institutions^{9,10,13}. The issue of religious conversions has gained political attention, with different parties taking opposing stances. Some advocate for strict anti-conversion laws to prevent coercion, while others argue that such regulations violate religious freedom^{4,12}. In states like Jharkhand, anti-conversion laws have been implemented, but their enforcement remains inconsistent.

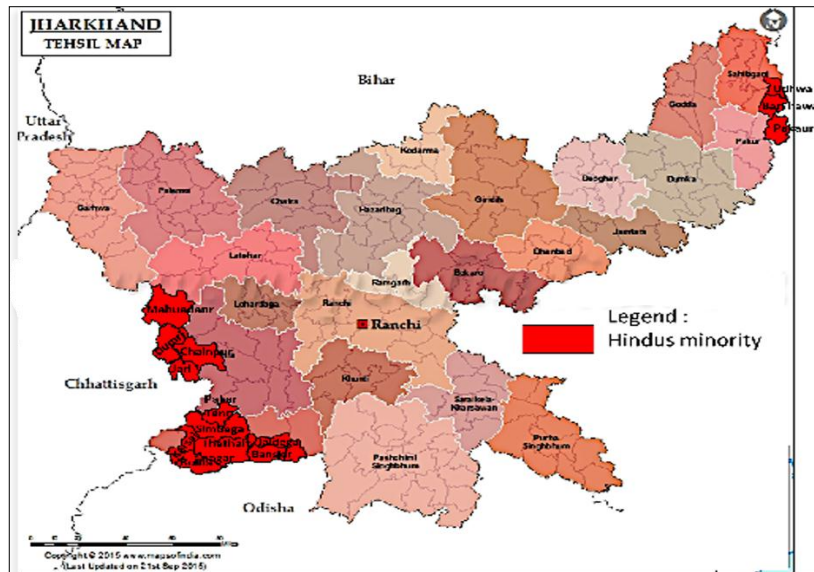
Demographic Changes and Their Effects:

The increase in converted populations has led to demographic changes in tribal-dominated districts, influencing electoral outcomes and governance (Map-1; Map-2). Political parties often engage in vote-bank politics, using conversions as a tool to mobilize specific communities^{1,8,10}.



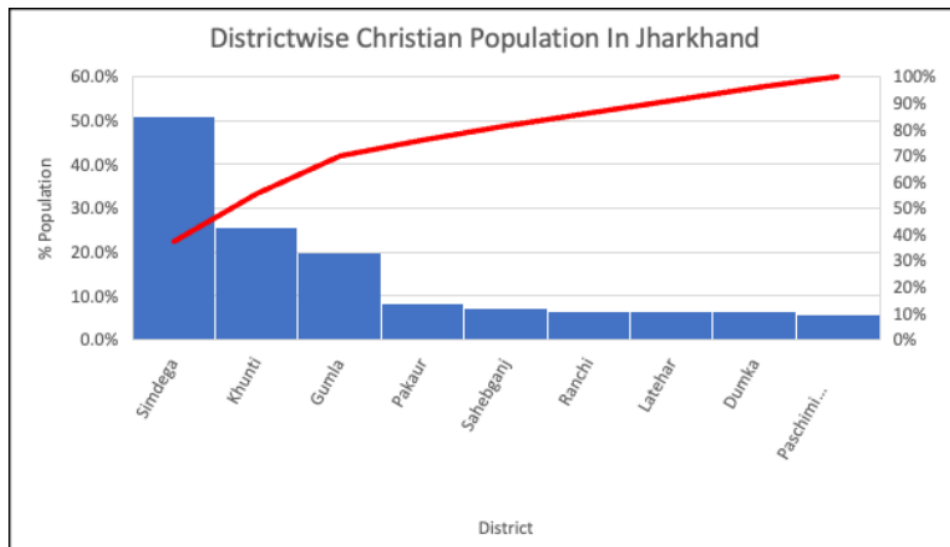
(Source- Mishra, A. (2024). Conversion activities in Bihar and Jharkhand reach alarming proportions

Map 1: The districts that have Christian population >5% have been marked on the map in blue. In purple are marked the districts where Christian populations are rising very sharply.



(Source- Mishra, A. (2024). Conversion activities in Bihar and Jharkhand reach alarming proportions

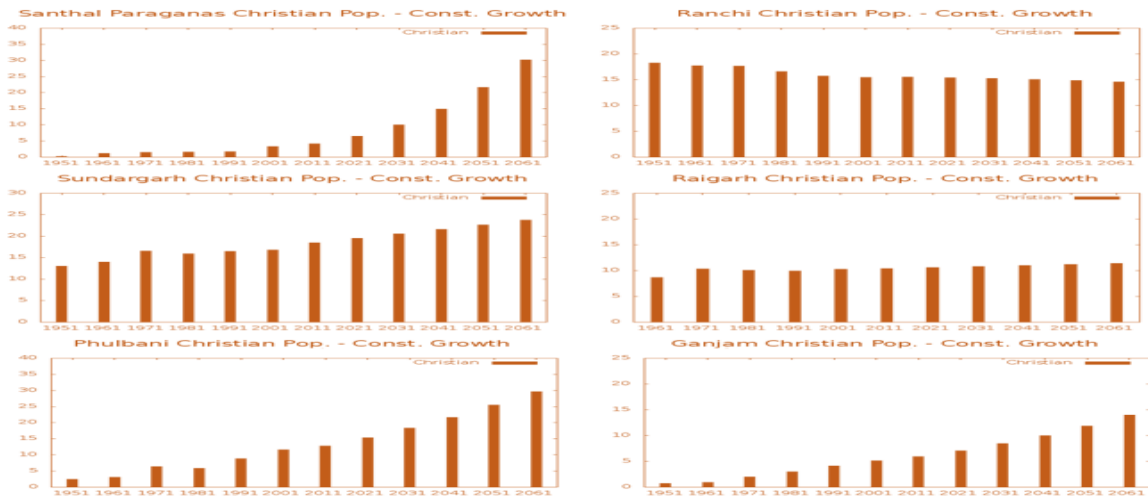
Map-2: The Hindu minority tehsils of Jharkhand. Most of them are along the Western and North eastern borders. Between Christians and Muslims, the Christians are dominant in the western border,



Graph-1: Districtwise Christian Population In Jharkhand

Christianisation is high in recent years. It makes its way further north via old Sambalpur (where Christianisation is just a shade below 5%) and then passes into Christianised Sundargarh (Graph-1). Here it swings in a wide fan northward, from Jashpur in Chhattisgarh and Simdega, Gumla, and Latehar in Jharkhand, before turning eastwards into Khunti, Ranchi and Paschim Singhbhum.

There is a small gap after this due to the industrial region of Dhanbad and Jamshedpur, but then Christianisation is again rising rapidly in the NE Jharkhand, in the eastern part of old Santhal Paraganas – Dumka, Sahebganj and Pakaur, where the Santhals are being organised under the Christian church.



Graph-2: Prediction population for Christianity in 2061

One sees the Christian population of Phulbani, Santhal Paraganas, and Sundargarh cross 20% by 2061 in this model. The Christian population of Ganjam rises from 0.7% in 1951 to 13.9% by 2061 (Graph-2). The Christian population of Ranchi has held its share, despite massive Hindu immigration from the other states to this district and is indeed, now beginning to rise again. In Raigarh, the Christian population has held its share despite heavy immigration from the other areas.

II. Conclusion

The rapid expansion of Christian missionary influence among tribal populations has also led to significant cultural disputes and demographic shifts. As conversions increase, traditional tribal customs, languages, and social structures face erosion, leading to tensions between indigenous communities and newly converted groups. This growing divide has resulted in disputes over land, religious practices, and governance, further destabilizing the social fabric of tribal regions. Additionally, large-scale demographic changes caused by missionary activities alter the political and economic landscape, raising concerns about the long-term survival of indigenous traditions and self-governance.

These strategies employed by Christian missionaries—leveraging drug addiction, psychological conditioning, sex change operations, and human trafficking—pose severe threats to the cultural and social fabric of vulnerable tribal communities. By exploiting individuals through substance dependency, mental manipulation, and forced alienation from their traditions, these groups systematically weaken indigenous identities, making

conversions an almost inevitable outcome. Such unethical practices not only violate fundamental human rights but also demand urgent government intervention to safeguard tribal populations from coercive and exploitative conversion tactics. Strengthening legal protections, raising awareness, and empowering indigenous communities with socio-economic support are critical measures to counter these systematic threats.

Foot Notes:

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