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Influence of Media on Tribal Lifestyle Dimensions of West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research, "Influence of Media on Tribal Lifestyle Dimensions of West Bengal," is to investigate how the media have a profound impact on the economic, social, and behavioral elements of tribal populations. Traditional beliefs, social connections, and livelihood patterns have been impacted by the media's increased penetration into distant tribal territories. This study uses a survey methodology to examine the effects of print, electronic, and digital media on several aspects of tribal peoples' way of life. In order to guarantee trustworthiness and representation, 320 respondents were chosen at random from different tribal regions of West Bengal. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to gather data on media exposure, perception, and behavioral changes caused by media engagement. The results show that media has a twofold impact on people's way of life; on the one hand, it raises people's consciousness about the need of health, education, and social welfare programs; on the other, it causes indigenous peoples' cultural practices and traditional beliefs to go away. Culturally sensitive media material that empowers indigenous peoples without watering down traditional values is crucial, according to the research. All things considered, the study sheds light on the intricate web that exists among West Bengali tribal tribes about the interplay of modernity, communication, and traditional preservation.

Keywords: *Media Influence, Tribal Culture, Cultural Transformation, West Bengal, Community Empowerment.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The media has become one of the most effective tools for social and cultural change in today's world. In India, especially in West Bengal, tribal tribes have long been on the outside of mainstream communication and development. But with the rise of mass media and internet platforms, a new age of cultural exchange and integration has started. The Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Bhumij, and Ho tribes are some of the tribal groups of West Bengal. They have a rich cultural legacy with unique customs, stories, music, dance, and social systems. These distinct cultural manifestations, formerly limited to their local contexts, are now undergoing upheaval due to the impact of contemporary communication technologies, such as television, radio, print, and social media. In the past, tribal cultures in West Bengal used oral traditions as their main way of talking to each other. Folk stories, songs, and rituals passed down cultural information from one generation to the next. But with the rise of newspapers, community radio, and more lately, the internet, the flow of knowledge has changed. Media serves as



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a conduit between traditional tribal existence and the modern world, enabling the transmission of information on education, health, livelihood, and government. However, this process of exposure and integration also presents obstacles, especially for the preservation of indigenous identity and cultural autonomy.

Media has had two effects on the cultural change in tribal societies. On one side, it has made them stronger by giving them a voice, encouraging them to read and write, and getting them involved in social and political processes. Conversely, it has facilitated the progressive decline of conventional norms and habits. The impact of mainstream entertainment media, advertising, and popular culture on tribal youth has caused changes in their clothing, diet, language, and way of life. Tribal festivals and dances that used to represent a group identity are now frequently changed for public performances or tourists, which might change their original meaning. In the tribal areas of Purulia, Bankura, Jhargram, and West Midnapore, the media has helped people become more conscious and change their behavior. Regional television networks and local radio shows have begun to include tribal languages and traditional programming, which helps keep cultural variety alive. At the same time, tribal people have been able to show off their culture and express themselves throughout the world thanks to cellphones and social media. Young tribal artists may now share their music, dances, and crafts on sites like YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp. This has opened up new ways for them to make money and get their culture out there. This participatory media culture represents a significant transition from passive consumption to active production.

Media-based education and awareness efforts have also had a big effect on culture. Programs that concentrate on women's empowerment, protecting the environment, and raising health awareness have changed the beliefs and social norms of tribal groups. People who are media literate are more able to grasp their civic rights, social justice, and government programs. But there is some conflict when indigenous people join mainstream communication networks. The portrayal of tribal culture in mainstream media is either stereotypical or idealized, simplifying complex identities into basic depictions of "exotic" ways of living. These kinds of depictions may make it harder to comprehend other cultures and keep people on the outside of society. Another thing that affects the tribal world is cultural globalization, which is caused by the media being connected. Global and national media outlets promote modern consumerist and metropolitan ideals that are different from the tribal civilizations' communal and nature-based values. Young people sometimes move away from ancient norms because of current fashion, music, and social trends. This may cause gaps between generations and cultural disputes. So, the problem is to find a balance between keeping cultural traditions alive and moving forward.

Academics and social activists stress the need for community-based media projects that let indigenous people tell their own tales. Community radio stations, documentary filmmaking, and folk media efforts have been successful in keeping oral traditions alive and getting people to talk to one other. When tribal tribes are involved in making media, it makes sure that the culture is real and



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helps fight against false representations from outside sources. Also, including tribal material in school curriculum, local radio, and government communication policies might help keep cultures alive. The media has a lot of different effects on the culture of tribal tribes in West Bengal. It is not only a way to talk to each other; it is also a way to change things. It helps with growth and modernization, but it also introduces new cultural dynamics that change old beliefs and identities. The changing link between media and tribal culture is a constant debate between tradition and change. In a world that is becoming more connected, adapting is the key to survival. To make sure that this change stays open and respectful, media rules need to acknowledge the cultural rights of tribal people and promote communication that includes everyone and gives them power instead of forcing them to fit in.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kamran, M Adeel et al., (2023) Examining how indigenous communities' exposure to international media shapes their sense of cultural identity was the overarching goal of this research. Dera Ghazi Khan District's tehsil tribal region was the site of the research. Using a multistage process, we chose 420 tribal males to participate in the study. We then interviewed them using a standardized interview schedule. People who participated in the survey tended to be young, well-educated, and to spend over three hours a day consuming global media. Although tribal men's exposure to global media greatly enhanced their tendency to embrace global cultural identification, it had less effect on their preservation of local cultural identity. Media use and cultural assimilation were more prevalent among younger tribal males, who were also more prone to identify with global cultures, compared to their more traditional, older counterparts.

Chatterjee, Babita & Dwivedi, Amrita. (2023). To illustrate the nature-culture reciprocity, "culture" refers to the universally shared ideas, values, ethos, conventions, lifeworlds, and activities. Traditional folklore and practices continue to thrive in some of India's most remote regions. In this context, the location known as "Jangal Mahal" in the southwestern region of West Bengal has been examined in this study. Tribal groups such as the Mahato, Kurmi, Lodha, Santal, Bauri, and others provide the primary means of subsistence for around 40% of the local population. Tusu, Kirtan, Baul, Bhadu, and folk dances like Chhau and Khati help to identify these indigenous people and their unique culture. Nonetheless, this people's culture and way of life have seen significant changes as a result of metropolitan areas and the entertainment options of inhabitants. It seems that the cultural traditions of these communities are gradually fading away as a result of this rapid transformation. Cultural crises, declining legacy values, and placemaking are hence the topics of this study's emphasis. Participatory approaches, such as group discussions, interviews, and field observation, have been followed. In addition, a semi-structured survey schedule was used to conduct door-to-door surveys in twelve villages across four districts. For the purpose of conducting interviews and FGDs, sixty troupes were chosen. The results demonstrate that cultural practices and beliefs evolve with time, eventually becoming unrecognizable. Many people's livelihoods and way of life are severely



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disrupted as a consequence of the placemaking of popular culture. The increasing acceptance of non-traditional means of subsistence is posing an even greater danger to their way of life. In order to protect livelihoods and skill sets while preserving virgin traditional art forms, this research seeks to propose appropriate remedial actions.

Chattopadhyay, Kaushik & Mohanty, Seemita. (2022) the purpose of this qualitative research was to investigate the impact of digital media accessibility on the social and cultural lives of the younger generation of Lodha tribals residing in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district. Additionally, it examined if there was a connection between the presence of new media and cultural marginalization experienced by young people. To gather and analyze data, researchers used observational techniques, focus groups, and in-person interviews. The research focused on five villages where the Lodha population was more than 70%. To choose the sample, a stratified random sampling technique was used. Among the young of Lodha, the data establish a clear correlation between the use of new media and a lack of cultural connection. This new generation of indigenous people was abandoning their long-established cultural practices in favor of a modern, metropolitan lifestyle, drastically different from that of their elders.

Bhadra, Abhirup & Amin, Rahul. (2022) it is often believed that tribal societies face significant socioeconomic disadvantages as a result of their historical context. The tribal community's general growth and development are not adequately highlighted or addressed by the mass media. This research set out to fill a gap in our knowledge by investigating the Sabar people of Galudih, in the East Singh hum district of Jharkhand state, and their exposure to and use of several forms of mass media, including radio, television, print, and social media. There can be no doubt about the impact of the media on society and progress. The media's portrayal and accessibility to the marginalized Sabar tribal tribe is the focus of this paper's research and analysis. People in the neighborhood have low levels of media literacy and exposure, according to the report, which means they are unaware of government development programs aimed at improving their standard of living. Field data shows that, with the exception of a small percentage (less than 7%), none of the respondents included in the research had any kind of exposure to mainstream media. Conversely, nobody in this group uses any kind of social media. The data also shows that people in the neighborhood don't watch TV or have easy access to it. When it comes to Sabar community communication, this article concludes that gram Sabha and traditional media are the best and most preferred options.

Bhattacharya, Souren & Pal, Subhasree. (2022) Culture is the sum of a society's preexisting conventions, beliefs, traditions, and practices. Regional differences exist in social mores. Gender roles and relationships are dictated by a society's established culture. The Western idea of gender originally referred to the traditional roles of men and women in the workplace. Gender, in contrast to sex, is a social construction, not a biological one. In many parts of society, men and women are expected to play different roles when it comes to production, reproduction, and power dynamics. This is called gender. Culture develops and changes throughout time to become what it is now. There



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is a strong relationship between gender and cultural influences. There are more indigenous peoples in India than anywhere else on Earth. Compared to women from other social classes, indigenous women are seen to have much more agency, say in business matters, and overall empowerment. Relationships and expectations between the sexes differ across the country's indigenous groups. Furthermore, their traditional culture and gender interactions have been profoundly transformed by the processes of mainstreaming, displacement, and globalization. The idea of women's empowerment is fast evolving within indigenous communities as a result of contact with and exposure to contemporary economic practices. Tribal women's responsibilities in society and the family were transformed as they were exposed to a market-oriented economy and industrialized culture. This article will shed light on how gender roles and cultural practices are evolving among the country's indigenous tribes.

Khatun, Nadira. (2022). The purpose of this essay is to take a look at the YouTube channel "Original Village Cooking" and how it promotes cultural diversity by showcasing the selected lifestyle of the Scheduled Tribe people that it represents. In specifically, the research focuses on the living situations of tribal people in India and how YouTube has empowered them. An analysis of the vectoralist class and the ways in which it is disrupting the power dynamic is presented in this article. Both in-depth interviews and the textual analysis approach (reading YouTube videos as texts) are used in the paper. In this essay, we will look at how tribal people are portrayed on YouTube from two main angles: first, the Schedule Tribes of India and how diversity and inclusion are addressed on the platform; and second, the role of YouTube as a means of subsistence for tribal people and digital labor.

Guha, Subrata & Ismail, Md. (2015). Tribes are groups of people that continue to exist in a more traditional way, away from the influence of contemporary society. Numerous indigenous communities dot the landscape of India and the rest of the globe. The majority of India's indigenous peoples—about 55 percent—live in central regions like Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh. The remaining 35 percent call the Himalayan belt, Western India, the Dravidian area, and the islands of Andaman, Nicobar, and Lakshadweep home. Tribes, in the view of D.N. Majumdar, are social groups that share a common language or dialect while acknowledging social isolation from other tribes or castes. They are also known as endogamous groups that are not administered by a tribal king or anyone else. Among them, the Santhal are notable since they make up over half of India's tribal population. The paper's goal is to provide an encouraging account of the plight of Indian tribal populations, namely the Santhal people of Birbhum district, by exploring their dietary patterns, religious practices, social structures (such as marriage), and levels of self-awareness. Many factors, including social change, influence how far society has come and how people's habits have evolved. In the perspective of L.M. Lewis, tribal cultures are characterized by their tiny size, limited social, legal, and political spheres of influence, and correspondingly modest moral codes, religious beliefs, and worldviews.



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III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

Research Design

The study used a survey style of research design.

Sample

A total of 320 participants were selected at random from the population of West Bengal for the study.

Research Tool

Research instrument creation is a crucial aspect of the research process. The researchers relied on a robust, in-house survey instrument.

Techniques Employed

The necessary information or data was gathered from the appropriate source using a questionnaire instrument in order to use the survey approach. The media consumption habits of household heads as well as all aspects of their lives (language, festivals, cuisine, clothing, and utensils).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Usage of Media Among Tribes

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	180	56.3
No	140	43.7
Total	320	100.0

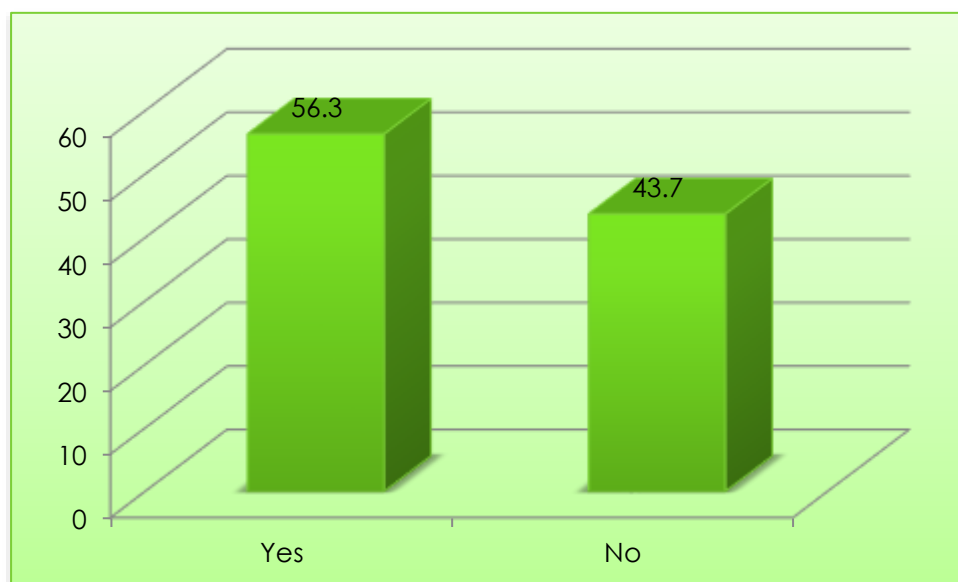


Figure 1: Usage of Media Among Tribes



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The amount of media consumption among indigenous peoples is shown in Table 1. In a survey of 320 participants, 180 people (or 56.3%) said they use media on a regular basis, while 140 people (or 43.7% of the total) said they don't use media at all.

Table 2: Influence of Media on Tribe's Lifestyle

Dimensions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Language Usage		
Speak only native language	97	30.3
Don't speak native language	5	1.6
Speak native and other languages	218	68.1
Total	320	100.0
Festival Celebration		
Celebrates only their festival	66	20.6
Celebrates other festivals	285	89.1
Don't celebrates any festivals	4	1.3
Total	320	100.0
Food Habit		
Cook only traditional meal	75	23.4
Cook traditional & non-traditional meal	160	50.0
Fond of fast food	85	26.6
Total	320	100.0
Dressing		
Always wear traditional dresses	28	8.8
Wear only in festivals	69	21.6
don't wear traditional dress	37	11.5
Prefer wear modern outfit	186	58.1
Total	320	100.0
Using Utensils		
Always use traditional utensils	195	60.9
Use it occasionally	38	11.9
Use modern utensils	87	27.2
Total	320	100.0



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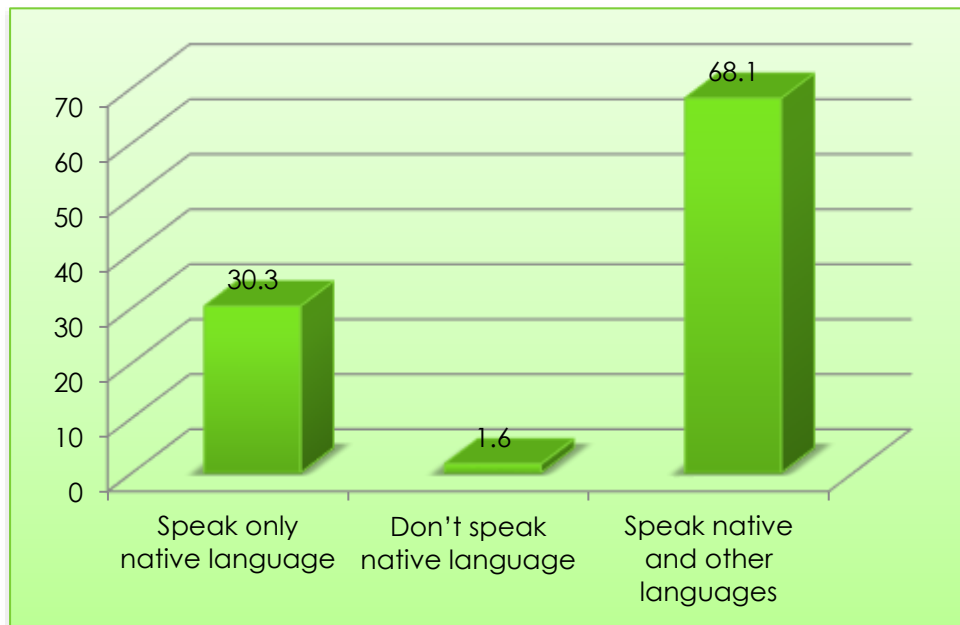


Figure 2: Influence of Media on Tribe's Lifestyle on Language Usage

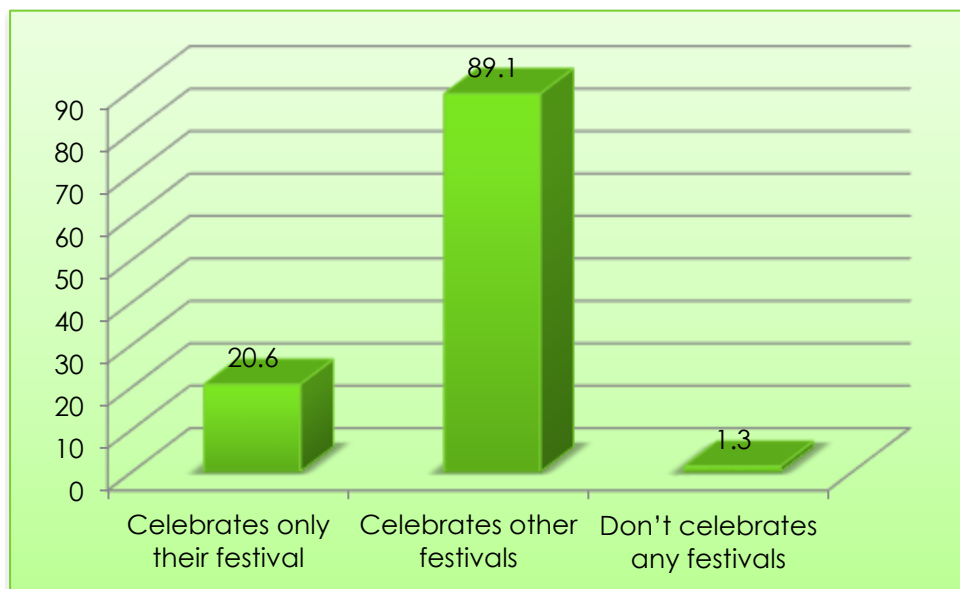


Figure 3: Influence of Media on Tribe's Lifestyle on Festival Celebration



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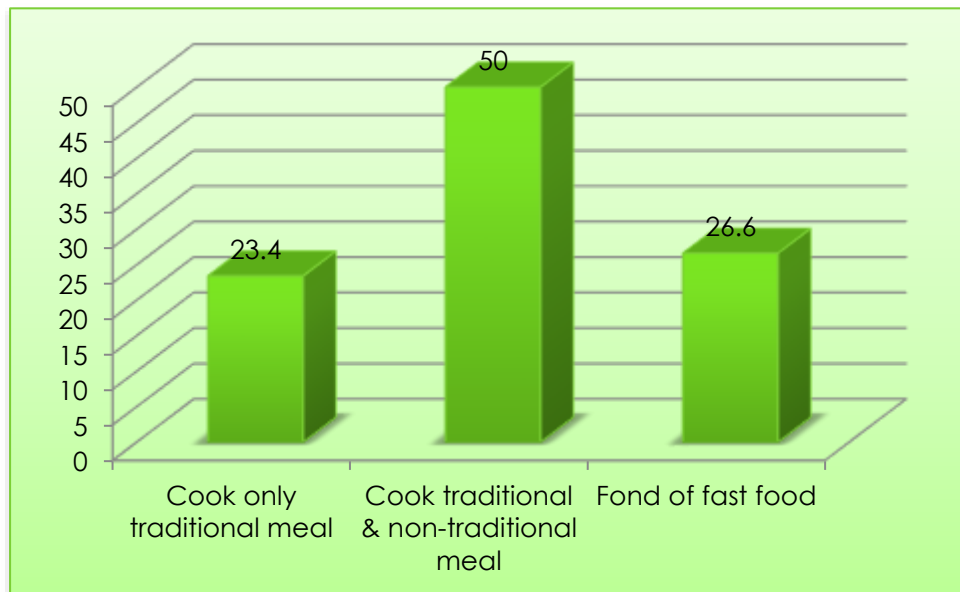


Figure 4: Influence of Media on Tribe's Lifestyle on Food Habits



Figure 5: Influence of Media on Tribe's Lifestyle on Dressing



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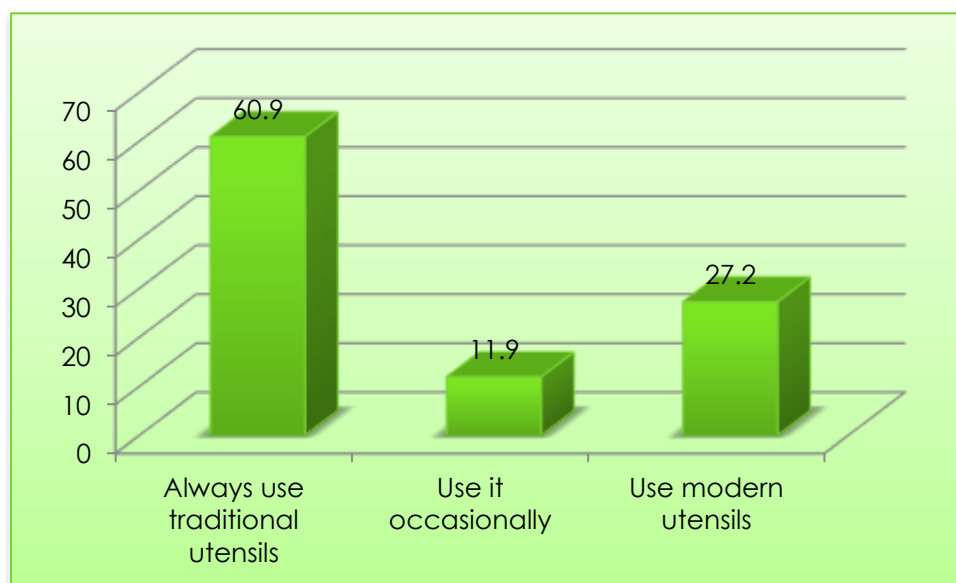


Figure 6: Influence of Media on Tribe's Lifestyle on Using Utensils

Table 2 provides an extensive synopsis of the ways in which the media has affected several parts of the way of life of West Bengali tribal tribes. It is evident from the statistics that media exposure has promoted cultural integration and flexibility, since the majority of respondents (68.1% to be exact) now speak both their native and foreign languages. Among those who still speak their original language solely, only 30.3% are native speakers; a tiny fraction, 1.6%, does not. In terms of celebrating holidays, over 90% of people said they do so for both their own and other people's traditional celebrations. But only 20.6% of those who took the survey celebrate just indigenous holidays, and a pitiful 1.3% doesn't celebrate at all.

Half of the people who took the survey make a variety of conventional and non-traditional meals at home, while 26.6% say they prefer fast food. This information comes from the food habit dimension. At the same time, 23.4% still solely make traditional meals. There has been a clear shift in the way people dress; 58.1% of those surveyed now choose more contemporary styles, while 21.6% save more traditional garb for special occasions. Less than ten percent (11.5%) still routinely wear traditional attire, and even fewer (8.8%) do so at all. The majority (60.9%) still utilize conventional utensils when it comes to utilizing them. But whereas 27.2% use entirely contemporary utensils, 11.9% use old ones sometimes.

V. CONCLUSION

For West Bengal's indigenous peoples, the media has emerged as a potent cultural catalyst. It has changed old beliefs and ways of life while also opening new channels for knowledge, education, and agency. Tribal communities now have more options than ever before to express themselves and get information via various media such as television, radio, print, and internet platforms. But, as mainstream and global influences enter indigenous life, there is a danger of cultural dilution and



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identity loss due to this exposure. Thus, the task at hand is not to fight change but to wisely direct it, making sure that progress enhances rather than supplants cultural traditions. One way to achieve this balance is to support community-based media activities. Another is to encourage tribal involvement in media creation and to include indigenous languages and material in local broadcasts. Instead of only being a conduit for outside influences, media could serve as a tool for cultural empowerment and preservation. The media's ability to balance tradition and development, maintaining tribal identity while taking use of current communication capabilities, will determine the fate of West Bengali tribal culture.

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