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Significance of Birsa Munda's leadership in tribal struggles among rural and urban group: A research study at Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal, India

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Abstract

Birsa was born into a family that belonged to the Munda tribe, one of the indigenous tribes who had long since inhabited the area. The Mundas had a rich cultural history and a strong bond with their own land. Birsa Munda fought against Christian missionaries and championed the interests of the tribal people in the area of religion. He fought to restore ethnic pride, prohibited a number of superstitious rituals, introduced new doctrine, and sought to modify religious practises. This current research study was carried out to know the significance of Birsa Munda's leadership in tribal struggles among rural and urban group.

Keywords: Birsa Munda, case study, Leadership, Ulgulan Movement, rural area, urban area

Introduction

In the history of India's struggle to become free of British colonial authority, one name stands out among the tribal tribes of Chhotanagpur (current-day Jharkhand): Birsa Munda. The 'Ulgulan Movement,' a popular uprising against the oppressive British government and rapacious local landlords, was headed by Birsa Munda, a well-known tribal leader and freedom warrior who was born in the late 19th century in the hamlet of Ulihatu (Standen, 1979) [8].

Birsa Munda's remarkable life and impact have been well-documented by historians and academics. Birsa Munda's journey and the socio-political climate of his time are extensively described in the significant 1979 book "Birsa Munda and His Movement: 1874-1901" by B. P. Standen. In the insightful book "Birsa Munda: The Tribal Hero" (1983) by Bishwanath Mahato, Birsa's spiritual awakening and his desire of tribal freedom are extensively explored (Mahato, 1983) [3].

Understanding the significance of Birsa Munda's leadership requires a thorough examination of the history of British colonial rule in India throughout the 19th century. The British East India Company planned to utilise India's abundant resources, which had a detrimental impact on local indigenous groups including the Mundas, Santhals, and others in Chhotanagpur. Tribal tribes underwent extreme persecution as a result of being evicted from their ancestral lands, forced labour, and the gradual erosion of their cultural identity because of their strong attachments to the land and their traditional way of life (Singh, 2012) [7].

During this time, the tribal communities continued to follow their cultural norms and spiritual practises, finding solace in the worship of a number of deities, with "Dharti Aba" [Father Earth] occupying a central position in their pantheon. The reverence for 'Dharti Aba' was more than just a religious practise, according to Nirmal Kumar Bose in "The Religion of the Mundas and Other Essays" (Bose, 1962) [1]. It was the cornerstone of the tribal way of life, instilling a deep respect for the environment and strengthening the sense of community among the tribes.

In the chapters that follow, we will look at Birsa Munda's upbringing in the hamlet of Ulihatu, the early experiences that shaped his personality, the consequences of British colonial policy on tribal communities, and the spiritual bond between Birsa Munda and "Dharti Aba." We shall look at the crucial turning points that led to the growth of the "Ulgulan Movement" as well as the strategies employed by Birsa Munda to inspire the population. We'll also examine the long-term impacts of the 'Ulgulan Movement' on India's struggle for independence as well as the preservation of tribal heritage.

Leadership of Birsa Munda in tribal conflicts Implications

Birsa Munda's leadership in the "Ulgulan Movement" is crucial given the sufferings his people endured while living under British colonial rule. As depicted in Bishwanath Mahato's "Birsa Munda: The Tribal Hero" (1983), his early years in the Ulihatu hamlet shaped his mentality and provided him a keen grasp of the state of his people (Mahato, 1983) [3].

Birsa Munda was born into a family with deep ties to the tribe's traditional customs; the Munda tribe lived in Ulihatu, a little hamlet tucked away in the heart of Chhotanagpur. In "Birsa Munda and His Movement: 1874-1901" (Standen, 1979) [8], B. P. Standen claims that Birsa was exposed to the socioeconomic conditions that prevalent in the region throughout his formative years. The British colonists and local landowners' exploitation of tribal lands and resources had a direct impact on the life of the indigenous tribes (Standen, 1979) [8].

In the small settlement of Ulihatu, Birsa Munda encountered tribal elders and storytellers who related tales of fight against oppression. These encounters profoundly influenced his understanding of the injustices suffered by his people and ignited a burning desire to overturn the existing order.

Under Birsa, the 'Ulgulan Movement' evolved beyond straightforward political opposition to become a spiritual and cultural renaissance for the indigenous communities. The movement opposed British colonial rule and aimed to protect the tribal way of life, which was deeply rooted in their connection to nature and sense of community (Bose, 1925) [1].

Empathy, compassion, and a deep sense of duty to his followers were the characteristics that best characterised Birsa's leadership style. In displaying unwavering will and fortitude in the face of adversity, he provided an excellent example for others to follow and embodied the spirit of the tribes that 'Dharti Aba' stood for (Mahato, 1983) [3].

Despite only having lived for 25 years, the legendary Birsa Munda had a significant impact on India's fight against the British. a young tribal chieftain and freedom fighter whose actions in the late nineteenth century serve as a powerful emblem of defiance against British rule in India. Birsa Munda belonged to the Munda tribe and was a revered figure in his faith (Mohapatra, 2004) [4].

Birsa Munda led an Indian tribal mass movement in the tribal region of what are now modern-day Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Chattisgarh in the late 19th century under the British Raj. Munda, who was recognised as the leader of numerous tribes, including the Kharias and the Oraons in addition to the Mundas, was one of the most important characters in the Indian tribal struggles against the British.

Material and Methods

The present research study was conducted at Paschim

Medinipur, West Bengal, India. Together with a review of the research evidence, these visits also informed the design of three follow-up phases of data collection with the Department of gastro logy.

Sample size

A total of 100 subjects were studied: All participants of each group were within same age group (30-50), similar economic status (Poor & Moderate and high), non-smokers, and similar dietary habits. Consent was obtained from every subject.

Study Design and setting

This cross-sectional study used a residential sample of adults in Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal, India.

Subject

After permission was obtained from the subjects interviewed consumer. Participants were approached and asked to participate voluntarily in the survey. If the subject agreed to participate, informed consent was obtained when the participant was sober and was then asked to answer the questions in the questionnaire. Following this pattern, a total 100 participants who were introduced.

Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics and unpaired t test were analysed by GraphPad Prism software.

Case study	Rural area	Urban area
Mean (Score)	4.880	3.620
Std. Deviation	1.043	1.524
Std. Error of Mean	0.1475	0.2155

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Descriptive statistic of Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) among rural and urban area people

Case study	Rural area	Urban area
Mean (Score)	4.880	3.620
Std. Deviation	1.043	1.524
Std. Error of Mean	0.1475	0.2155

Table 2: Unpaired t test of Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) among rural and urban area people

P value	<0.0001
Significantly different (P < 0.05)	Yes
One- or two-tailed P value?	Two-tailed
t, df	t=4.825, df=98

After the analysis of unpaired t test, it was observed that there are significantly differences between rural and urban group at p-value $p < 0.05$).

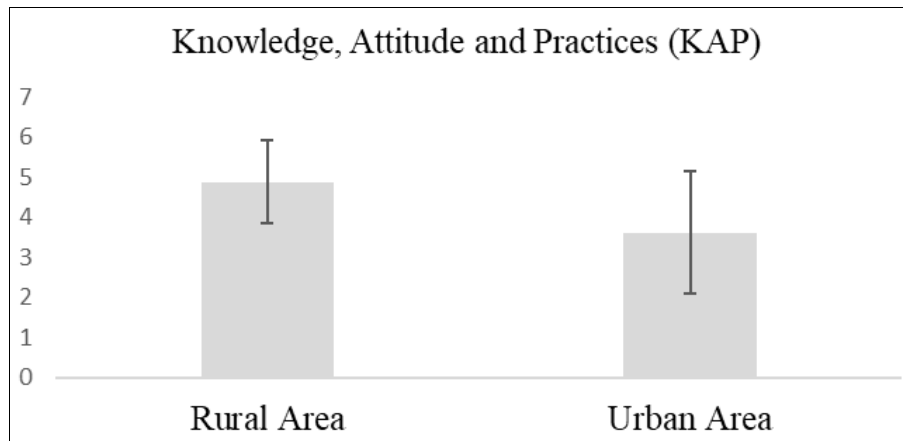


Fig 1: Graphical representation of Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) among rural and urban area people

Conclusion

The spiritual awakening of Birsa Munda had a profound impact on the way he developed his leadership abilities and his concept of tribal freedom. His connections to the Mundas' spiritual practices - specifically, their veneration of 'Dharti Aba' - gave him a strong sense of purpose and inspired him to lead his people towards a brighter future. Birsa's spiritual effect, which went beyond politics, prompted a massive struggle to reclaim tribal territory, defend their traditional heritage, and resist colonial oppression. His unwavering faith in 'Dharti Aba' and his people will be an example for future generations. From this research study it was observed that at a p-value of $P \leq 0.05$, there are statistically significant differences between the rural and urban groups.

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