

# Impact of Modernization in Tangsa Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this paper is to understand the impact brought by the modernization in Tangsa tribal society especially the Tangsa community residing in the region of Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The study investigates the historical and contemporary factors driving modernization among the Tangsa people and explores the resulting social, cultural and economic transformations within the community. It analyzes the changes in livelihood patterns, social structures and cultural practices resulting from the modernization process.*

**Keywords:** Tangsa, Family, Community, Modernization, Social Change, Transformation, Changlang district

## 1. Introduction

Modernization, in sociological term refers to, the transformation from a traditional, rural, agrarian society to a secular, urban, industrial society. It is a continuous and open - ended process. According to Smelser, modernization refers to "a complex set of changes that take place almost in every part of society as it attempts to be industrialized. Modernization involves ongoing change in a society's economy, politics, education, traditions, and religion". Modernization has both positive and negative impacts on a society. Modernization can lead to positive changes such as exposure to new ideas, improved education, and greater access to information. While it can also lead to negative changes such as loss of traditional practices, cultural homogenization, conflicts over cultural values, and alienation.

Tangsa, also termed as 'Tangshang' in Myanmar, comprises of two words i. e. Tang = mountain/hill and Sa = people, meaning 'children of the hills' or 'people of the high lands'. Some people often call it as 'Tase' in lieu of 'Tangsa'. The Tangsa tribe are found both in India and Myanmar border. The majority of Tangsa people are mostly hailed and populated in the region of Kharsang, Jairampur and Changlang areas within Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh and few of them can be found in the neighbouring areas of Assam. The Tangsa tribe has over 40 sub - tribes each with their distinct tradition, dialects, customs, diversity of religion, ethnic grouping and are living through farming and allied activities. They do not have kingship system. All village disputes are settled by village council/village elders headed by village headman or gaon buras. With the growing modernization, spread of education and socio - economic development, aged old traditional customs, social structures, cultural practices and economic pattern of the inhabitants are changing gradually.

## 2. Background

The name Tangsa was coined in the 1950s by Indian Government officials to cover a range of diverse tribes inhabiting what is now Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh (including what is now the Tirap Transferred Area,

now in Assam state). With the name Tangsa, they are a scheduled tribe under the Indian Constitution (listed under 'other naga tribes').

The Tangsa society is traditionally organized around clans and village communities, each clan have its own customs, traditions, and territory. Clans are divided into smaller family units. They have a council of elders who play a significant role in decision - making and dispute resolution. Social gatherings and festivals are essential for community bonding. Traditional Tangsa attire varies among different sub - tribes but often includes distinctive clothing, jewelry, and accessories. Their houses are built on stilts and are known for their unique architecture. The Tangsa people are pretty much skilled in various crafts, including bamboo and cane work, which are used in the construction of houses and making tools and baskets. Tangsa people had clear roles and responsibilities for various members of the community. Men were often responsible for activities like hunting, while women played a crucial role in agriculture and household management.

Traditional Tangsa society had specific customs related to marriage and inheritance. Marriages were arranged, and inheritance typically followed a patrilineal system, with property and wealth passing down through male descendants. Tangsa rituals and ceremonies are an integral part of their life. They vibrantly celebrate various agricultural festivals to mark planting and harvesting seasons. Rituals often involve the sacrifice of animals and offerings to appease spirits and seek blessings. The people of Tangsa traditionally followed shamanism and animistic beliefs (or believed in spirits), both benevolent and malevolent, and had rituals and ceremonies to appease and seek protection from these spirits. The Tangsa people valued social cohesion and community cooperation and also interacted with neighboring communities, including other indigenous groups and, in some cases, external powers. These interactions influenced their social structure and way of life. With the advent of modernization and the influence of mainstream culture, the traditional social structure of the Tangsa has faced challenges. Younger generations often adapt to changing social dynamics and may be less bound by the traditional hierarchy.

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### 3. Objectives

To assess the impact of modernization in Tangsa tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, this paper has endeavoured a thorough empirical investigation with a view to analyse the following objectives:

- 1) To examine how modernization has impacted on Tangsa tribal people in different settings (rural/urban).
- 2) To analyze how modernization has affected the economic structure of Tangsa tribe.
- 3) To investigate the impact of modernization on Tangsa culture, traditions, religion, and social norms.
- 4) How modernization has influenced access to education and healthcare among the Tangsa people.
- 5) To investigate changes in gender roles, rights, and empowerment within the Tangsa tribe due to modernization.
- 6) To explore whether the Tangsa community has taken initiatives to preserve their cultural identity in the face of modernization.

### 4. Materials and Methods

During the research, the exploratory research method was used, primary and secondary data were collected and critically analyzed. Past records of Tangsa tribal people have been collected from the literatures, online sources and elderly persons from different villages, particularly from three focused areas namely Kharsang, Jairampur, and Changlang area. Close - ended questionnaires and secondary interview method was applied during the research through both online and offline mode.

### 5. Results and Discussions

The following impacts were noticed in Tangsa tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh through modernization:

#### Culture and Traditions

The Tangsa's culture and traditions are rich and diverse. Over the years, the culture and traditions of Tangsa people has evolved, with some embracing modern lifestyles while preserving their cultural and traditional practices. Some Tangsa people have already forgotten or discontinued to follow up some of the traditional practices of its own culture and traditions due to the impact of modernization. With the influence of the modernization, conversion into christianity and most probably education has impacted enormously in the Tangsa tribe. Rise of positivism among the Tangsa community has greatly impacted the society into a more progressive and peaceful one. The traditional rituals like chanting mantras, offerings and sacrifices are now considered to be evil practices by some Tangsa sub - tribes has been abated prodigiously. Moh - Mol festival is still widely celebrated with radiantly and vibrantly by the Tangsas every year in the month of April. Tangsa people now prefers to wear traditional attire occasionally only rather than putting on most of the time.

Speaking of the mother tongue of Tangsas is seen to be less spoken among the children, youth and some elders. Languages like Assamese and Hindi are most commonly

used medium of conversation in today's Tangsa society. Reasons could be the influence of modern technology and global connectivity such as movies, TVs, video games and other social medias. Ignorance of inter - process communication between parents and children has also apparently affected in learning to speak its own traditional dialect. The efforts and importance to maintain and promote Tangsas traditional languages are being put forth in this modernized world. Another efforts are being put forward to preserve and document the oral history and cultural heritage of Tangsa tribe.

#### Economic Structure

Basically, Tangsa's economic structure is traditionally based on agriculture, but it has evolved over the years. Historically, they have been engaged in subsistence agriculture, cultivating crops such as rice, maize, millet, and variety of vegetables. Jhum or shifting cultivation is a common practice among them. But now, due to the modernization, the economic structure of Tangsa people are changing drastically. In areas like Kharsang and Jairampur, almost every household have a tea garden and other cash crops to support their economy. Horticulture and livestock are important aspect of their economy which provide food and serve as a source of income. Today, Tangsa people are rather more dependent on ration and market food stuffs instead of cultivating by themselves. Some of the Tangsa people are now engaged in off - farm or non - agricultural work as a source of income. People are gradually shifting to the urban areas in search of better livelihood and job opportunities.

Traditional handicrafts are depriving among the Tangsa community due to the modernization. With the invention of the modern technologies and machineries, people rooting towards these new creations and not utilizing their skilled traditional craftsmanship has impacted cynically among the Tangsa people. Most of the Tangsa youth are unskilled in the traditional handicrafts in today's modern Tangsa society. The efforts are being put utmost among the Tangsa community for the sustainable development and also to teach the Tangsa youth that how important the traditional handicrafts are and to be skilled at it. With increased connectivity and exposure to the modern economy, some Tangsa people have diversified their income sources, including involvement in businesses, education, and government jobs.

#### Social Structure and Lifestyle

Traditionally, the Tangsas live in joint family. A common house is shared by a whole family consisting of parents, married sons and daughters. In some cases, modernization has led to a gradual weakening of the traditional clan system among the Tangsa people. Individualism may be on the rise, challenging the once - strong collective identity associated with clans. Most of the Tangsas accept that modernization has led to changes in the traditional way of life within the village community. During the research, about 64 % of Tangsas feel that traditional village lifestyle is evolving positively with modernization. Over the years, modernization has improve access to education for both genders, potentially leading to increased literacy rates and knowledge - sharing among men and women in the Tangsa tribe. With the introduction of new economic opportunities,

today, women may engage in non - traditional roles and contribute to the household income. Gender roles are now seem to be neutral among the Tangsa people compare to the previous traditional norms and roles of household settings. Modernization has also brought advancements in healthcare, impacting the overall wellbeing of the community. Both men and women may benefit from improved health services and awareness. But the constant modernization there has been gradual changes in social norms and values within the Tangsa community over the years.

There is an increasing trend of intermarriage between the Tangsa individuals and other members belonging to the other tribes. Modernization has also led to changes in the marriage systems and patterns of the Tangsa traditional marriage customs and ceremonies in some of the Tangsa communities. During the research, noticed that the changes in traditional food preferences and dietary habits among younger generations of Tangsas. With the impact of modernization on the Tangsa people's social structure and lifestyles is dynamic and multifaceted, with both positive and challenging aspects.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the impact of modernization on the Tangsa tribe is a complex and ongoing process that brings both opportunities and challenges. As the forces of modernity influence their social structure, the traditional clan system faces transformation, with individualism on the rise and new dynamics emerging in leadership and social hierarchies. The introduction of modern governance structures may reshape traditional authority, altering decision - making processes within Tangsa communities.

In terms of lifestyle, modernization brings a shift in livelihood patterns, with a move away from solely agrarian practices to a more diversified economy. Educational opportunities empower the younger generation, influencing occupational choices and aspirations. The integration of technology and access to information enhances connectivity but also introduces changes in communication patterns and cultural influences. Cultural adaptations become evident as Tangsa people navigate a balance between preserving their heritage and incorporating modern elements into their lifestyles. Traditional crafts face the dual challenge of meeting market demands while maintaining authenticity. Family dynamics undergo shifts with changing gender roles, marriage patterns, and the division of labor within households.

It is essential to recognize that the impact of modernization is dynamic and context - dependent. The Tangsa people navigate a delicate balance between embracing the benefits of modernity and preserving the core elements of their rich cultural heritage. As this transformative journey continues, local contexts, individual choices, and governmental policies will play crucial roles in shaping the trajectory of the Tangsa tribe amidst the currents of modernization.

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