



Study on Socio Economic and Demographic Status of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Chhattisgarh, India

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Abstract:

There are 705 Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India with 8.6 percent of the population. Of them, there are 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in 18 states and 1 Union Territory with grave socio-economic problems. PVTGs are known to be primitive in nature, different in cultures, and geographically isolated with subsistence being the main source of livelihood and their access to education, infrastructure, and healthcare is very low. They are still disadvantaged economically, in spite of government efforts. This paper discusses the socio-economic status and cultural features of the Scheduled Tribes in the state of Chhattisgarh with the concentration on PVTGs, the most disadvantaged of them. It complies with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 which is No Poverty, and SDG 10 which is Reduced Inequalities since it points to their marginalization both social and economic. These challenges are critical issues that need to be understood in order to develop specific policies to enhance the living standards, social inclusion and sustainable development.

Keywords: Cultural Characteristics; No Poverty (SDG1); Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs); Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)

Introduction:

India is a pluralist and multi-cultural country, rich in diversity that is reflected through its multitude of cultures, religions, languages, and ethnic groups. The population comprises various castes, communities, and social strata, making it the second most populous nation in the world and home to the second largest concentration of tribal populations (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023a). The term "Adivasi" refers to Scheduled Tribes (STs), who are considered the indigenous people of India. Scheduled Tribes in India exhibit significant diversity, ranging in population size, languages spoken, and modes of livelihood. As recognized in the Indian Constitution's Fifth Schedule, there are 705 officially listed tribal communities (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023a). According to the Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011), Scheduled Tribes constitute 8.6% of the country's population, totaling over 104 million people. Tribal populations are predominantly rural, accounting for 11.3% of India's rural populace, compared to 2.8% in urban areas. Over the decade from 2001 to 2011, the tribal population grew by 23.66%, a notable increase compared to the national population growth rate of 17.69% (Panduranga & Honnurswamy, 2014). The diversity among these tribal groups is also geographically distributed, with Odisha having the highest number of notified Scheduled Tribes (62), followed by Karnataka (50), Maharashtra (45), Madhya Pradesh (43), and Chhattisgarh (42) (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023a). This extensive demographic variation among the Adivasi communities is a testament to India's complex social fabric and the significant role these indigenous populations play in the country's cultural and demographic landscape.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs):

The most marginalized section of Scheduled Tribes in India consists of the PVTGs. These groups are characterized by isolation, low levels of education, and poor socio-economic conditions, often residing in remote areas far from essential services (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023a). As per Clause (1) of Article 342 of the Indian Constitution, the recognition of Scheduled Tribes is state-specific, and their identification is based on several key traits: (a) primitive characteristics, (b) distinct culture, (c) geographical isolation, and (d) social shyness and backwardness (Government of India, 2022). However, studies, including the Dhebar Commission Report (1961), highlighted disparities in development among tribal communities. In response, the government introduced the category of Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) in 1975, identifying 52 such groups. This list expanded in 1993 to include 23 more groups, bringing the total to 75. In 2006, these PTGs were renamed as PVTGs. PVTG communities mainly rely on forest-based livelihoods, such as hunting, fishing, gathering and selling minor forest produce like roots, berries, timber, and herbs. They also engage in crafting simple items from straw and bamboo (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India, 2022). In India, a total of 75 such groups have been identified across 18 states and one Union Territory (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023a). This study is all about exploring and describing the socio-demographic status of PVTGs in Chhattisgarh.

The targets of SDG 1 and SDG10 emphasize that although there has been some improvement, poverty and inequality continue to be significant challenges worldwide. Still 1 in 10 people in the world lives in extreme poverty, and if the pace of progress is not accelerated, 8.9% of the world's population could be extremely poor by 2030. Social protection is available to over half of the world's population, but almost 3.8 billion still lack it. Meanwhile, in many countries, incomes of the poorest 40% have improved, while incomes of the richest have continued to rise, leaving a widening inequality gap due to lack of growth in earnings from work, discrimination, and escalating refugee flows (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2025).

These issues are especially pertinent in the context of PVTGs who still suffer from multidimensional poverty, social exclusion, low literacy, malnutrition, lack of health care access and inadequate livelihoods. PVTG communities live in conflict-affected and forest areas with limited access to education, social protection schemes, infrastructure, and employment. The targeted social protection, enhancement of education and healthcare facilities, promotion of sustainable livelihoods and inclusive development policies are key to reduce poverty and inequality among PVTGs and realise SDG 1 and SDG 10 in Chhattisgarh.

Review of Literature:

The Baigas are known as a unique tribal group with a rich cultural heritage, whose folk medicine and handicraft can shed light on early human development (Babu & Panda, 2016). Although this potential exists, there are a host of tribal areas in central and northeastern India that continue to be impacted by conflict, especially Maoist insurgency, and state-led violence, such as Salwa Judum, which has led to tribal displacement, violence, and tribal livelihood disruption. PVTGs need special and inclusive policy-based interventions to enhance their socio-economic status (Singh, 2017). The National Rural Livelihood Mission and Gram Antodaya Yojana are government programs that are aimed at improving livelihood, education, and health. Nevertheless, they should not overpower the ecological balance in the process of development since their sustainable lives are intricately tied to their natural environment. The Hill Korwas of Surguja have a good cultural identity that is influenced by traditional beliefs, clan structures, and forest-based livelihoods, and the practices of ancestral worship or agricultural festivals are a manifestation of their strong traditions (Khan, 2018). External factors notwithstanding, their social structure has not been eroded, which underscores the need to develop development policies that would not only ensure that cultural identity is retained but also facilitate socio-economic development. Technological changes and globalization have impacted the tribal communities more and more, putting pressure on cultural homogenization and, at the same time, providing opportunities for selective adaptation (Das, 2020). Tribal communities are likely to oppose the changes that will make their

language and culture be under threat, which makes it essential to create policies that will allow a balance to be established between modernization and cultural preservation. Sustainable development should therefore conserve tribal land, resources and identity and meet the basic needs such as education and healthcare. Education is an essential means of empowering tribal communities, but such issues like low enrolment and retention rates still negatively impact development (Rupavath, 2023). To resolve these problems, the culturally responsive pedagogy is needed to incorporate the indigenous knowledge and values in the curriculum. These strategies can make students more engaged, decrease psychological barriers, and create inclusive learning conditions that can help achieve socio-economic development in the long run. The Indians still experience multidimensional issues in terms of structural inequalities, social-economic exclusion, and physical seclusion, which cumulatively impede the development of the (tribal) Indian communities in general. The issue of healthcare is vital, and the number of people who can access medical facilities, substandard infrastructure, and a lack of awareness severely limit the use of medical services. These barriers are further complicated in the parts of the country like Jammu and Kashmir, where cultural dependence on traditional healing methods as well as late healthcare-seeking practices contributes to poor health results (Ahmed & Mushtaq, 2023). Likewise, malnutrition, poor maternal care, and poor accessibility to healthcare services adversely affect infant health in primitive tribal groups, leading to high morbidity and mortality rates (Kumar et al., 2006). Such conditions are also perpetuated in the demographics of the area where low population among the tribes in states such as Chhattisgarh is correlated with high maternal and infant mortality rates, malnutrition, and poor healthcare systems (Mahant et al., 2016). Additionally, increased susceptibility to health conditions is supported by increased rates of substance use among tribal populations, especially consumption of alcohol and tobacco, which are directly related to low levels of education and socio-economic disadvantages (Barman & Chowdhury, 2024). Learning among the tribal communities is also limited by structural and socio-cultural restrictions that restrict access and participation. Lack of access to quality education is limited by geographic isolation, insufficient infrastructure, and lack of qualified teachers, whereas poverty and low literacy rates keep parents dropping out and enrollment low (Baidya & Barik, 2023). Language variation and cultural disparities also pose a barrier to proper learning among the tribal learners because formal education systems have no connection with them. The challenges are especially acute in Primitive Tribal Groups, where levels of low literacy, social exclusion, and human development are still hindered due to the lack of awareness, and inclusive and culturally sensitive educational methods, in turn, should be used (Yoganandham, 2023). Another characteristic of tribal life, particularly in agriculture-based livelihoods, is economic marginalization. Tribal farmers tend to be smaller landowners and have lower income levels and access to small-scale agricultural inputs and institutional credit, leading to low productivity and poor market integration (Khan & Chauhan, 2021). The same limitation can be seen in other related areas like dairy farming, where the insufficient technical knowledge, inadequate infrastructure, and access to veterinary services limit productivity despite it being a secondary source of income (Mooventhan et al., 2015). Also, the socio-economic and psychological aspects of education, income, awareness and access to extension services influence the capability of tribal farmers to effectively manage agricultural information. The low literacy and insufficient exposure to information sources tend to limit informed decision-making and the use of better farming practices (Das & Mohapatra, 2023). Although these are present, some livelihood-based interventions have shown promise in improving the socio-economic conditions of tribal people, especially women. It has been identified that through their involvement in sericulture activities, women in the tribes have been able to enhance their income and employment and financial independence as well as their decision-making capacity and social status (Dewangan et al., 2011). Likewise, the membership in Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) has enabled them to have better access to the market, bargaining power, and skill development, which has helped the women to be economically empowered, yet the problems of lack of training, finances, and institutional support persist (Rathour et al., 2022). In general, the process of tribal development can be characterized by the interdependence of issues that affect the health, educational, and economic spheres, which is aggravated by social marginalization and insufficient enforcement of welfare programs. The ongoing poverty, unemployment, and poor

infrastructure keep impeding access to the necessary services and opportunities, further cementing the cycles of marginalization (Chandrakar et al., 2023).

The literature reviewed offers important perspectives on tribal health, education, economy and culture but does not have region-specific and integrated analyses of PVTGs in Chhattisgarh. Their demographic distribution and cultural dynamics are not given much empirical attention, which leaves a gap in the literature that this study bridges by connecting socio-economic conditions to cultural and spatial aspects.

The study is a descriptive and exploratory research to study the socio-economic status of the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and especially the PVTGs in Chhattisgarh. It is also based on secondary data to give a holistic picture of the demographic, cultural and developmental factors (Kothari, 2004). The target population involves STs in Chhattisgarh, particularly PVTGs, who are identified as the most marginalized (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023a). The sources of data are academic literature, i.e. journal articles, books, reports in order to put historical and socio-cultural aspects in perspective (Xaxa, 2008). The demographic information is based on the Census of India (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011), and the most recent governmental reports, such as Annual Reports of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2022-23; 2023-24), give an insight into policies and programs (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024). The data on health, education, and livelihoods were categorized through content analysis that provided an opportunity to identify trends, gaps, and policy focus areas such as DAPST expansion.

Objectives:

1. To examine the socio-economic conditions of STs in Chhattisgarh.
2. To assess the demographic distribution of PVTGs in Chhattisgarh.
3. To explore the cultural characteristics of PVTGs in Chhattisgarh.

Results and Discussion:

Demographic and Socio-Economic status of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Chhattisgarh:

Table 1: Demographic and Socio-Economic status of Abhujmadia Tribal Group

S. No.	Variable	Description
1.	Population	2002 Population: 19,401 Current Population: Over 22,000
2.	Location	Reside in Narayanpur, Dantewada, and Abujhmad areas of Bijapur district. Villages mainly in foothills or valleys.
3.	Economy	Originally practiced shifting cultivation (penda agriculture), now replaced by permanent agriculture. Primary crops: Maize, Kosra, Moong, Urad, seasonal vegetables. Collect and sell forest products like honey, Tendupatta, Lac, Gum, Dhawai flowers, etc. Some work as laborers for daily wages, receiving grains in exchange for work.
4.	Housing and Infrastructure	Houses made of wood, mud, and grass thatch Structures consist of 2-3 rooms without skylights Rooms: Verandah ("agha"), Kitchen ("angadi"), Storage room ("lonu") home to the family's deity. Women wear silver or imitation silver jewelry (bracelets, anklets, necklaces, nose rings).
5.	Cultural Practices	Ancestral and patriarchal system with divisions into dynasties and gotras (e.g., Akka, Mandavi, Dhurva, etc.) Marriage at a young age (boys: 18-19, girls: 16-17). Burial is the common death ritual; cremation is also allowed. Festivals: Pola, Kaksar, Pandum. Dancing and singing are integral parts of cultural life (folk dances: Kaksar, Gedi, Rilo; songs: Dadriya, Relogeet, etc.)

6.	Language	Speak the Madi dialect (variant of Gondi in the Dravidian language family).
7.	Literacy	Literacy rate (2002 survey): 19.25%

Source: <https://cgtrti.gov.in/abhujmadia-tribes>

The table shows the important socio-economic and cultural features of the Abhujmadia community. They are mostly found in the forested and hilly areas of Narayanpur, Dantewada and Abujmad in the Bijapur district and their population grew from 19,401 in 2002 to more than 22,000 in 2017. They have traditionally relied on shifting cultivation but now have settled agriculture and forest-based livelihoods. They keep it simple, dwelling on natural materials and in accordance with the traditional beliefs. Its culture is patriarchal and there are rich cultural practices such as festivals, dances and songs. They are Madi speakers of Gondi, though there is a low level of literacy of about 19.25, which suggests that they are poorly developed.

Table 2: Demographic and Socio-Economic status of Baiga Tribal Group

Sl. No.	Variable	Description
1.	Population	89,744 as per Census 2011.
2.	Location	Chhattisgarh: Kawardha and Bilaspur districts. Madhya Pradesh: Dindori, Mandla, Jabalpur, Shahdol districts.
3.	Economy	Agriculture: Bewar (swidden) farming; cultivating grains like Kodo, Kutki, Maize, Madia, Sathi paddy, Black gram, etc. Forest products: Collection of tendu leaves, lac, honey, gum, wild roots, and medicinal plants. Crafts: Bamboo mat and basket making by men, selling in weekly markets. Livestock: Rearing poultry (Kadaknath) and goats, which are sold in weekly markets. Beverages: Mahua liquor is a staple in festivities.
4.	Housing and Infrastructure	Houses are made of clay with grass thatch. Walls painted with white or yellow soil. Mud floors with cow dung. Basic household items: clay and metal utensils (steel, aluminum, brass), pestles, bamboo baskets, drums, and hunting tools. Simple infrastructure, lack of modern amenities.
5.	Cultural Practices	Shifting agriculture: Belief in leaving land after using a Plow. Marriage customs: Lamsena (seva marriage), Chori Vivah, Paithu Vivah (bribery), Guravat (exchange marriage). Tattooing (Godna): Traditional tattoos on women, considered symbols of beauty and permanence. Festivals: Hareli, Pola, Nawakhai, Dussehra, Diwali, Karama Puja, Holi. Music & Dance: Popular folk dances include Karma and Dadaria; instruments like Mandar, Dhol, Timki, and Nagara used in rituals and festivals.
6.	Language	Primary: Baigani (closely related to Chhattisgarhi and Gondi). Secondary: Hindi used for communication with outsiders.
7.	Literacy	40.6% literacy rate as per Census 2011.

Source: <https://cgtrti.gov.in/baiga>

The table describes the socio-economic and cultural picture of Baiga people. They have a population of 89,744 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011) and are predominantly found in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh districts. They base their economy on shifting cultivation (bewar), forest produce harvesting, bamboo crafts, and the rearing of livestock, which is complemented by trade activities on a weekly basis. Life is simple, since houses are made of clay and thatch, and modern facilities are still minimal. There is a rich cultural life with its own marriage traditions, traditions of tattooing and such festivals as Hareli and Nawakhai. Their languages are Baigani and Hindi, and the literacy level of 40.6 shows a slow socio-educational development.

Table 3: Demographic and Socio-Economic status of Bhunjia Tribal Group

S.No.	Variable	Description
1.	Population	10,603 as per 2011 Census. (1029 females per 1000 males.)
2.	Location	Native to Gariaband, Dhamtari, and Mahasamund districts in Chhattisgarh; also reside in the Sunabeda plateau.
3.	Economy	Primarily agricultural; major crops include paddy, jodhra, kodo, urad mole; also collect forest products like mahua, char, gum, and tendu.
4.	Housing and Infrastructure	Houses made of clay with 2-3 rooms, Lal Bangla (special kitchen for deity) kept clean and dismantled if polluted. Clay-coated floors maintained with cow dung. Limited but necessary household items, agricultural tools, and storage containers.
5.	Cultural Practices	Patriarchal society, practice Kaand Vivaha (pre-menstrual marriage). Deities include Budhadeva, Thakurdev, Budhimai. Festivals like Nawakhai, Hareli, Pola, Dashera, Diwali celebrated. Folk dances and songs like Bihav dance, Padaki, Mystic, and Ram Saptah performed. Tattooing (Godana): Bhunjia women have godana (tattoos) on arms, legs, faces. Tattoos are considered sacred and permanent, often done by a "Godnin" during the winter season. Diet: Staple foods include rice (chawal), kodo, hadiya, and seasonal vegetables. Non-vegetarians, but pork is not cooked in the kitchen. Marriage Customs: Marriages performed with arrows and bows (Kaand vivaha). Bride's family receives offerings like rice, lentils, and jaggery from the groom's family. Funeral Customs: Burial tradition; mourning observed with head shaving for men, and on the tenth day, a feast marks the end of mourning.
6.	Language	Bhunjia language (Indo-Aryan family); also speak regional dialects
7.	Literacy	The literacy rate of Bhunjias is 50.93 %, of which male literacy is 64.19% and female literacy is 38.04%.

Source: <https://cgtrti.gov.in/bhunjia>

The table gives a brief socio-cultural and economic profile of the Bhunjia tribe. According to the 2011 Census, they have a population of 10,603 with a good sex ratio of 1029 females per 1000 males (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011). They mainly reside in the Gariaband, Dhamtari and Mahasamund districts of Chhattisgarh with the Sunabeda plateau. They also have a mostly agrarian economy complemented by forest produce harvesting. Housing is easy to construct using clay and traditional methods. The Bhunjia people are patriarchal and have their own cultural, marriage and funeral practices. They have a moderate literacy level of 50.93, but a significant gender gap.

Table 4: Demographic and Socio-Economic status of Birhor Tribal Group

S. No.	Variable	Description
1.	Population	Total population: 3,104 (as per the 2011 Census) Male: 1,526 Female: 1,578)
2.	Location	Predominantly found in Jharkhand, with populations also in Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha. In Chhattisgarh: Jashpur, Surguja, Raigarh, Bilaspur, Korba districts.
3.	Economy	Primarily forest-based, formerly nomadic hunters and gatherers. Collect forest products like Mahua, Tendu patta, bamboo wood, and medicinal plants. Agriculture: Grow rice, pulses, corn, etc. Rice is the staple food. Domestication of animals: cows (milk), chickens, goats, dogs, and cats. Hunting is restricted by law; formerly hunted monkeys, pigs, and wild animals. Some also work as laborers in nearby factories and urban areas.
4.	Housing and Infrastructure	Birhors are divided into two groups: Uthalu (nomadic) and Jaghish (settled near villages). Live in simple huts, known as "kudias". Domesticated animals are kept for economic purposes.

5.	Cultural Practices	Strong belief in forest and nature spirits. Worship the Sun (Surya) as the primary deity. Other deities include Budhi Mai, Mary Mai, and ancestral spirits. Ritual sacrifices of roosters, goats, and pigs. Major festivals: Nawakhani, Dussehra, Sirhul, Karama, Sohrai, and Phagua. Marriage: Arranged marriages are common. Bride price is paid in the form of rice, lentils, liquor, and cloth. Widow remarriage and remarriage through Dhuku, Udharia, and Golat systems are accepted. Traditional caste panchayat system, led by the "Maalik", resolves disputes.
6.	Language	Birhor language is part of the Mundari language group. Birhor language is experiencing a decline due to exposure to mainstream languages and cultures.
7.	Literacy	Overall literacy: 39.0% (2011 census). Male literacy: 49.6% Female literacy: 28.7%

Source: <https://cgtrti.gov.in/bihor>

Table 4 shows the Birhor tribe, which is a small indigenous tribe with a population of 3,104 in total as of the 2011 Census, with slightly more females than males (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011). They are predominantly located in Jharkhand, although smaller groups can be found in the adjacent states. Their livelihood has traditionally relied on forests where they collect forest products, farm, and engage in labor on a few occasions. They inhabit basic huts and are separated into nomadic and settled people. They are cultured with strong spiritual relationships to nature and many festivals and traditional ways of marriage. The Birhor language is dying, and literacy rates are very low, particularly among women, which points to the developmental deficiencies in the society.

Table 5: Demographic and Socio-Economic status of Kamar Tribal Group

S.No.	Variable	Description
1.	Population	26,530 as per the 2011 Census. 13,070 males and 13,460 females.
2.	Location	Mainly found in the Gariabandh district (Gariabandh, Chura, Manipur) and Dhamtari district (Nagri, Magarlod) of Chhattisgarh state. Some families reside in Mahasamund and Bagbahara development blocks of Mahasamund district.
3.	Economy	Traditional occupations include: - Farming and manual labor, - Bamboo basket making (supa, tokni, jhampi), - Hunting, fishing, and collection of wild produce (honey, herbs, forest produce such as Mahua, Tendu, Sal seeds, bamboo, Chironji, Amla). Main crops: Kodo, paddy, black gram, green gram.
4.	Housing and Infrastructure	Houses made of grass thatch and mud, with bamboo or wooden doors. Floors made of layers of clay and cow dung. Household items include farming tools (mattock, shovel, sickle, axe), bamboo baskets, weaving tools, etc.
5.	Cultural Practices	Main deity: Vaman Dev (in the "Vaman Dongri" temple, Devdongar). Festivities: Hareli, Pora, Nawakhai, Dussehra, Diwali, Chherchera, Holi. Tribal worship includes hens and goats as offerings. Practices: Tattooing, drinking wine from Mahua, smoking beedi, traditional clothing (Pancha, lugda, polka). Gotra system: Jagat, Tekam, Markam, Sodhi, Marai, Chhedihia, Kunjam. Marriage prohibitions among the same gotra. Recognized widow remarriage. Social panchayat led by Mukhiya to resolve disputes related to marital or caste matters. Believe in witchcraft and ghosts (Baiga is a practitioner of black magic). Tattoos: Peacock on shoulders, scorpion on back of hands, circular dotted patterns on legs representing jewelry. Rituals: Teejanhavan (shaving after death), turmeric purification after death.

6.	Language	Kamar language (an Indic language).
7.	Literacy	47.7% overall literacy rate, 58.8% literacy among males, 37.0% literacy among females.

Source: <https://cgtrti.gov.in/kamar>

The table shows that the Kamar community has a population of 26,530 (2011 Census) with females slightly more than males. They are mainly concentrated in the Gariabandh and Dhamtari districts of Chhattisgarh, but they are found in small numbers in Mahasamund. They rely on agriculture, wage labor and forest-based work such as bamboo crafting, hunting and gathering of minor forest products as their economy. The housing is easy to construct with mud, thatch and bamboo. They are culturally Vaman Dev worshipers, traditional festers, gotra-based, and engage in rituals such as tattooing and remarriage of widows. They speak a language called "Kamar" and literacy is low, particularly in women.

Table 6: Demographic and Socio-Economic status of Pahadi Korwa Tribal Group

Sl. No.	Variable	Description
1.	Population	2005-06: 34,122 Current estimate: Over 40,000
2.	Location	Reside in the districts of Jashpur, Surguja, Balrampur, and Korba, Chhattisgarh.
3.	Economy	Historically relied on hunting, gathering forest produce, and dahiya farming. Current farming: Kodo-Kutki, Godali, Paddy, Maize, Black gram, Green pulse, etc. Low productivity due to rocky, non-irrigated land.
4.	Housing and Infrastructure	Traditional homes: Walls made of wood and bamboo, with thatch. Modern homes: Clay walls with local tile thatching. Houses typically have 1-2 rooms with clay floors coated with cow dung and mud.
5.	Cultural Practices	Religion: Ancestor worship and deities such as Sigr Dev, Gauria Dev, Mahadev, Parvati, and Khudia Rani. Important festivals: Dussehra, Nawakhani, Diwali, Holi. Dance forms: Karama, Bihava, Parghni, Rahas. Food Habits: - Staple foods: Kodo, Kutki, Godali, rice, wild root vegetables, seasonal greens. - Non-vegetarian diet: Birds, hens, fish, crab, goat, deer, pig. - Alcoholic beverages made from Mahua. Marriage Practices: - Marriage age: Boys (16-20 years), Girls (15-18 years). - Types of marriage: Guravat (exchange), Lamsena (service marriage), Paithu (infiltration), Udharia (elopement). - Widow remarriage is allowed. Funeral Practices: - Deceased are buried, and a ritual bath on the 10th day with food serving to relatives. - The hut where death occurred is destroyed and the family relocates to a new hut.
6.	Language	- Language: Mundari, part of the Austro-Asiatic family.
7.	Literacy	- Literacy rate: 2005-06: 22.02%, now increased.

Source: <https://cgtrti.gov.in/pahadi-korwa>

The Pahadi Korwa community described in table 6 has a population of more than 40,000 people who mostly live in the northern districts of Chhattisgarh, including Jashpur, Surguja, Balrampur and Korba. Previously relying on hunting and forest-based livelihoods, subsistence agriculture is currently practiced with crops such as Kodo-Kutki and paddy, but with low productivity. They have plain houses, which are built of bamboo, wood, and clay. They practice ancestor worship and hold key festivals as well as traditional dances, which are cultural. They consume both vegetarian and animal foods and liquor made

of Mahua. They have various marriage and burial traditions. They speak Mundari and literacy is low, although it is getting better.

Table 7: Demographic and Socio-Economic status of Pando Tribal Group

S. No.	Variable	Description
1.	Population	Total: 31,814 (Males: 16,522, Females: 15,292).
2.	Location	Primarily in the Surguja, Surajpur, and Balrampur districts of Chhattisgarh.
3.	Economy	Agriculture-based economy (primarily Bewar agriculture), hunting, fishing. Traditionally, extract oil from oilseeds using wooden pans. Participation in the local haat-bazaar for trade. Agricultural Tools: Nangar, Jhauhan, Tokni, spade, and a variety of traditional implements used. Slingshots and bamboo bows are used for hunting. Fishing tools like Choria and Sirsili are common.
4.	Housing and Infrastructure	Houses are made of clay, with mud tile roofs and coated with cow dung. Settlements are known as Pando Para. Homes have attached fences or farms.
5.	Cultural Practices	Strong belief in ancestral connection with the Pandavas from the Mahabharata. Religious festivals like Chhatti and Annaprashan are observed. Marriage rites last for 3-5 days. Death rituals and cremation customs followed. Belief in village deities and practices related to witchcraft and ghosts. Tattoo (Godana): Tattooing is practiced, especially among Pando women. Religious Beliefs: Worship village deities like Mahamai, Kudargarhi Mai, Dihri Mai, and Kali Mai. Food and Nutrition: Herbs, jaggery, dry ginger, sesame, and oil extracted from local seeds are common in their diet. Clothing: Men wear loincloth or dhoti; women wear a lugra made by the Panika community. Women adorn themselves with silver or gilt ornaments purchased from local markets.
6.	Language	Primarily speak local dialects (unspecified).
7.	Literacy	Overall literacy rate is 22.20%.

Source: https://cgtrti.gov.in/Pando_jati

With a population of 31,814, mostly based in the Surguja, Surajpur and Balrampur districts of Chhattisgarh, the Pando tribe is the largest tribe. Their livelihood is mainly on Bewar farming, hunting and fishing, and traditional oil mining. They take the native tools in farming and livelihood activities. The houses are constructed using clay and have a mud-tiled roof, which creates settlements called Pando Para. They also culturally have their roots in the Pandavas and observe different rituals, festivals, and tattoo cultures. They practice indigenous religious traditions centered on local deities, ancestral worship, and spiritual beliefs. Their food is plain and primordial, the clothes they wear are simple and the literacy level is still low at 22.20%.

Government initiative and schemes for upliftment of tribals:

Several specific policy interventions have been adopted to solve the socio-economic problems in the tribal communities in India, especially in states like Chhattisgarh. Van Dhan Yojana (2018) aims to improve livelihood opportunities by supporting the collection, processing, and marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) at Van Dhan Kendras, thus facilitating the generating of sustainable income (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023a; TRIFED, 2022). The Mukhyamantri Suposhan Abhiyaan aims to tackle nutritional issues by supporting the reduction of malnutrition rates in tribal women and children by feeding vulnerable areas with nutritious food and implementing specific interventions (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2022a). The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana -Gramin has addressed the issue of housing insecurity by offering financial support to build permanent houses, resulting in a better quality of life (Ministry of Rural Development, 2023). The Mukhyamantri Haat Bazaar Clinic Yojana has enhanced access to healthcare in the sector by providing mobile healthcare services to tribal communities in remote locations (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023b). Education development has been emphasized by means of such initiatives as Prayas Residential Schools and Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) offering free quality

education, residential facilities, and coaching of competitive exams, which also increase the representation of the tribes in higher education (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2022a; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023a). The Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) guarantees special financial assistance to the development of the areas with the majority of the Scheduled Tribe population, thus helping to decrease the socio-economic inequality (Planning Commission, 2020). Livelihood diversification is also backed by schemes such as the Godhan Nyay Yojana, which generates additional income by buying cow dung to produce organic fertilizers, and the scheme of Chhattisgarh Tribal Entrepreneurship Development Program, which promotes self-employment by providing training and financial support (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023b). Additionally, the Forest Rights Act (FRA) that acknowledges land and forest rights of tribal communities has been enforced, which has strengthened structural empowerment by increasing tenure security and access to resources (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2022b; Oxfam India, 2015). The Chhattisgarh Millet Mission also promotes agricultural sustainability and nutritional security by promoting the cultivation of millets and enhancing market access to tribal farmers (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023b; FAO, 2022). Together, these efforts are a multidimensional way of tribal development, which includes livelihood creation, health, education, shelter, and rights-based empowerment, thus leading to inclusive development and the elimination of historical marginalization of the tribal people.

Limitation

The study primarily relies on secondary data, such as academic literature, journal articles, books, and census reports, rather than primary field observations. This dependence on existing records, particularly the Census of India 2011, may not fully capture the most current demographic shifts or the real-time impact of recent government interventions. While the paper identifies a lack of region-specific and integrated analyses of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Chhattisgarh, it acknowledges that its own empirical focus on cultural dynamics and demographic distribution remains limited by the scope of available secondary sources. Additionally, the research notes that structural and socio-cultural restrictions, such as geographic isolation and language variations, often hinder a complete understanding of tribal life, suggesting that external data might not fully reflect the internal perspectives of these communities. Finally, the study describes that the insufficient enforcement of welfare programs and ongoing issues like poverty and poor infrastructure make it difficult to assess the actual success rates of development initiatives purely through a descriptive lens.

Conclusion

The Indian social fabric is very diverse and has many ethnic and cultural groups; Scheduled Tribes (STs) or Adivasi, comprise a large percentage of the population. Within the STs, the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are the most marginalized communities that are isolated, have low levels of education, and are economically challenged. These groups are intimately related to their traditional ways of life and are dependent on forest-based subsistence activities. Focusing on the state of Chhattisgarh, the paper discusses the socio-economic situation of STs, with a particular focus on PVTGs. Despite government interventions, PVTGs are economically and socially vulnerable, residing in geographically isolated locations with limited access to basic services (education, healthcare, and infrastructure). These communities need to preserve their culture, and any development process should be cautious of not overstepping the development at the expense of the communities and their culture. Programs run by the government, such as the National Rural Livelihood Mission, are promising, but they should be scaled down to suit the needs of these communities without interference in their relationship with nature. Sustainable and inclusive growth should also be maintained and PVTGs may flourish economically as well as culturally. Despite the richness in culture, the tribes are also confronted with challenges in terms of low literacy rates, economic hardships, and lack of modern infrastructure. Housing is still simple and constructed of locally available materials and such traditional practices as tattooing, early marriages and ritualistic celebrations are deeply ingrained. Each community is a unique medley of languages, with the languages of most tribes being dialects from the Dravidian, the Indo-Aryan or the Austro-Asiatic languages, supplemented in most instances by Hindi for communication outside the community. The literacy levels among these tribes are still low, as a reflection of the need for more educational opportunities to be made available, though some progress has been made over

time. Traditional beliefs, worship of nature and ancestral deities, and a strong connection to their heritage are some of their cultural practices. Overall, these tribes are a combination of ancient traditions and slow adaptation to modern pressures while retaining their identity within the areas they live in. The different government programs and initiatives initiated by the Chhattisgarh government can be seen as an all-round manner of improving the socio-economic position of the tribal populations. These programs are focused on improving livelihoods by establishing sustainable activities such as harvesting forest produce (Van Dhan Yojana) and farming organic (Godhan Nyay Yojana) as well as on solving such serious problems as malnutrition (Mukhyamantri Suposhan Abhiyaan), housing (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana), education (Prayas Schools and Eklavya Model Schools) and access to healthcare (Haat Bazaar Clinic Yojana). In addition, entrepreneurship and rights in land are being encouraged through the Tribal Entrepreneurship Development Program and the implementation of the Forest Rights Act. All in all, such efforts help to eliminate socio-economic inequalities, empower the tribal communities with education and entrepreneurship, and encourage sustainable resource utilization.

Future Scope

Future research should bridge the current literature gap by conducting empirical and integrated analyses that connect socio-economic conditions directly to the unique cultural and spatial aspects of PVTGs in Chhattisgarh. There is a significant need for primary field studies to explore the evolving demographic distribution and cultural dynamics that secondary data often overlooks. Specific attention could be given to developing culturally responsive pedagogy to improve education by incorporating indigenous knowledge and values into the curriculum. Furthermore, researchers should investigate the impact of technological changes and globalization on tribal communities to find a balance between modernization and the preservation of cultural identity. Future studies could also examine the effectiveness of livelihood-based interventions, such as sericulture or Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), particularly regarding their role in the economic empowerment and social status of tribal women. Finally, more work is needed to design inclusive healthcare strategies that address the cultural dependence on traditional healing and the high rates of maternal and infant mortality within these groups.

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Conflict of interest:

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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