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Socio-Economic Challenges and Opportunities of Particularly vulnerable Tribal Groups in Jharkhand

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Abstract- Particularly vulnerable tribal groups (pvtgs) (ministry of tribal affairs,2013) are among the most marginalized Populations in Jharkhand, Consisting of tribes like Asur, Birhor, Brijiya, Korwa, Mal Paharia, Pahariya, Sauriya Paharia , Savar And hill Kharia . Despite possessing rich cultural traditions and profound ecological wisdom, these communities confront ongoing socio-Economic Difficulties such as low levels of literacy, inadequate healthcare access, unemployment, land dispossession, and Food insecurity. Structural obstacles including geographic isolation, insufficient infrastructure, and poor policy execution Intensify their vulnerabilities. Research indicates a high burden of disease, migration driven by poverty, and a lack of Sustainable employment options as critical issues (Baviskar, A. (2011). Nevertheless, there are notable opportunities Through governmental initiatives, community-Led efforts. The promotion of traditional handicrafts, eco-tourism, and Improvements in forest-based livelihoods. Promoting access to education, healthcare services, digital literacy, and Participatory governance could enable pvtgs to achieve economic and social resilience. This paper thoroughly examines Both the challenges and emerging opportunities, highlighting the necessity for culturally sensitive policies, enhanced Institutional support, and sustainable development strategies specifically designed to address the unique requirements of Pvtgs in Jharkhand.

Keywords: Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, Socio-economic challenges, Tribal livelihoods, Indigenous communities.

I. INTRODUCTION

The particularly vulnerable tribal groups (pvtgs) represent the most disadvantaged segment of the Scheduled tribe (st) population in india. Their identification is based on criteria such as dwindling or Stagnant population numbers, low literacy rates, a subsistence-level economy, and relative isolation from Mains Tream Society (government of india, 2013). Among the 75 officially recognized pvtgs across the Nation, Nine Are present in Jharkhand, Specifically the Asur, Birhor, Brijiya, Korwa, Mal Paharia, Pahariya, Sauriya Paharia , Savar And hill Kharia . As per the census of india (2011), the Total st population in the state was 8.6 Million From st communities, comprising 43,15,407 Males and 43,29,635 Females, Distributed across 24 Districts, with pvtgs making up a small Yet vastly vulnerable proportion. Traditionally, these groups engaged in shifting cultivation, for Aging, Pastoralism, And occupations related to the forest. However, factors like deforestation, industrial growth, and Globalization have increasingly Disrupted their livelihoods, resulting in widespread poverty, nutritional Deficiencies And land losses (Xaxa, 2014).

Although various schemes under the tribal sub-plan and special Assistance programs have been initiated, implementation suffers from short Comings due to administrative Neglect, geographic remoteness, and insufficient representation in governance (Rath, 2006). Pvtgs in Jharkhand Continue to face persistent cycles of deprivation concerning education, healthcare, employment, Housing. The socio-economic challenges confronting pvtgs in Jharkhand Appear across multiple areas. Education Is similarly lacking, with schools located in tribal areas often suffering from poor infrastructure, high Drop Out Rates, and a lack of culturally appropriate curricula (ministry of tribal affairs, 2020). Health statistics reveal Elevated maternal and infant mortality rates, chronic malnutrition, and limited healthcare access due to both Physical isolation and cultural barriers (Patnaik & Rajan, 2019).

Economically, numerous pvtgs continue To depend on seasonal wage labor, collecting forest products, and jobs in the unorganized sector, which are Both insecure and Poorly Paid (Rao, 2018). Additionally, the absence of land rights and limited access to Institutional credit traps them in cycles of poverty and debt (kumar, 2014). Despite these hardships, there Are opportunities for empowerment. Initiatives in eco-tourism, the revival of traditional medicinal knowledge, Forest-based businesses, and skill development have shown promise for sustainable progress (george, 2019). Community-focused development models that honor cultural identities while improving economic stability Have also demonstrated positive outcomes (Narayan & Singh, 2020). As global interest in indigenous right STAnd ecological sustainability grows, the unique knowledge systems and practices of pvtgs in Jharkhand Can be harnessed for both conservation efforts and livelihood improvement.

II. SOCIAL CHALLENGES OF PVTGS

The particularly vulnerable tribal groups of Jharkhand Including the Asur, Birhor, Brijiya, Korwa, Mal Paharia, Pahariya, Sauriya Paharia , Savar And hill Kharia Confront

ongoing social issues resulting from historical exclusion, cultural Seclusion, and systematic neglect. (Ganesh, Rajakumar, & Acharya, 2021). A primary concern is the stigma And social exclusion these pvtgs endure. Numerous individuals from these tribes face discrimination while Engaging with non-tribal populations, especially when seeking access to markets, educational facilities, and Healthcare services (Rao, 2018).

This exclusion is compounded by their geographical isolation in mountainous And forest Areas, restricting their involvement in social, political, and economic activities. Language and Cultural barriers make communication with officials and service providers challenging, leading to a lower Utilization of government welfare programs (Sasidevan, Santha, & Mccowan, 2025). Further More, Their Social structures and traditional customs are often misinterpreted or undervalued by the dominant Society,Causing A gradual loss of cultural identity. The youth, in Particular, confront a conflict While education and Migration provide chances for socio-economic Advancement, They simultaneously risk disconnecting from Traditional practices and knowledge systems. Thus, the social issues encountered by pvtgs encompass not Only deprivation but also the challenge of maintaining cultural identity amidst an Increasingly globalized Environment. Another critical aspect of the social challenges faced by pvtgs in Jharkhand Involves health disparities, Gender inequalities, and susceptibility to exploitation. Research indicates that pvtg communities frequently Experience insufficient access to healthcare, elevated maternal and infant mortality rates, and a significant Prevalence of preventable diseases, all of which are aggravated by poor nutrition and sanitation (PatNaik &Rajan, 2019). Women tribal SPecifically encounter multiple Disadvantages due to early marriages, lack of Reproductive health services, and restricted decision-making authority within families and communities (Janaki & Prabakar, 2025).

These gender-based inequalities further intensify the social exclusion of pvtgs, Particularly affecting women and children. Their social vulnerability is also highlighted by their susceptibility To exploitation by dominant groups. For instance, ignorance regarding land rights and entitlements can lead To displacement aNd indebtedness, while CulturalS Marginalization (Bijoy, 2003), SUbstance abuse, child labor, and seasonal migration are increasingly prevalent Among pvtgS Youth, driven by unemployment and the lack of meaningful skill development opportunities (George, 2019). The overall impact of these challenges is a sustained cycle of marginalization that restricts Upward mobility and perpetuates inequality. Tackling these intricate issues necessitates not just welfare Measures but also participatory strategies that honor tribal identity, enhance inclusive governance, and foster Environments conducive to social integration without compromising cultural uniqueness. Unless structural Discrimination is dismantled and policies that respect cultural sensitivities are prioritized, the social challenges Faced by pvtgs in Jharkhand Will remain entrenched, continuing their vulnerability for future generations.

III. ECONOMIC CHALLENGES OF PVTGS

The economic difficulties faced by particularly vulnerable tribal groups in Jharkhand Are fundamentally Linked to structural disparities, land dispossession, and the decline of traditional livelihoods. However, Significant deforestation, displacement due to developmental initiatives, and limitations imposed by forest Conservation regulations have drastically restricted their access to vital land and forest resources, which are Essential for their economic survival (Xaxa, 2014). Consequently, numerous tribal families are forced to Navigate the informal labor market as agricultural wage workers, construction laborers, or seasonal migrants, Where they encounter low pay, exploitation, and job instability (Rao, 2018). Their limited access to Institutional credit compels them to rely on local moneylenders, perpetuating cycles of debt and poverty (Kumar, 2014). Research further indicates that pvtgs remain marginalized from mainstream economic Development due to poor infrastructure in tribal areas, insufficient transportation connections, and Inadequate market opportunities for their traditional crafts and minor forest products (george, 2019).

Gender inequalities intensify their economic precariousness, as tribal women frequently bear a dual burden of poverty and a lack of recognition for their roles in forest-based and agricultural labor (Patnaik & Rajan,2019). Poor implementation of government initiatives, alongside bureaucratic challenges in obtaining land Titles, forest rights, and social benefits, continues to marginalize these groups economically (Rath, 2006). The ongoing nature of these Economic challenges significantly impacts the livelihood security and overall Advancement of pvtgs in Jharkhand. As agriculture becomes less viable due to land scarcity, diminishing Soil quality, and climate change, tribal households are increasingly driven toward insecure forms of income Generation, such as daily wage labor and migrant work, which lack social safety nets and sustainability (Narayan & Singh, 2020). The absence of educational opportunities and skill development programs further Limits their access to modern employment prospects, leaving them trapped in low-wage jobs (ministry of Tribalaffairs, 2020).

Healthcare-related financial pressures also play a crucial role; inadequate access to health Care Services means that treatable conditions can lead to substantial expenses for tribal families, further depleting Household resources (Sukumar, Peter, & joseph, 2025). Furthermore, while welfare initiatives like the Mahatma gandhi national rural

employment guarantee act (mgnrega) Now Viksit Bharat-guarantee for Rozgar And Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) V-ram-g And tribal sub-plan have Created avenues for additional income, their inconsistent execution has resulted in significant short-Comings In reaching the most remote pvtgS Communities (Bijoy, 2003). Digital exclusion and a lack of knowledge About available entitlements also impede these communities' ability to fully engage with government Sponsored Financial inclusion programs and livelihood initiatives. Therefore, addressing the economic Difficulties faced by pvtgs necessitates a comprehensive approach that guarantees access to land rights, Sustainable livelihoods, and financial inclusion while prioritizing education, healthcare, and gender Empowerment. Without addressing these inter-Connected challenges, economic marginalization will endure, Undermining both the resilience and cultural identity of pvtgs in Jharkhand.

1. Constitutional Laws of Protection of PVTGs

The indian constitution creates a legal framework designed to protect the rights of scheduled tribes (sts), Particularly focusing on the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (pvtgs), who are among the most Disadvantaged. The combined provisions of fundamental rights (part iii) and directive principles of state Policy (part iv) recognize the unique socio-economic conditions of tribal populations and require the state To improve their welfare. Article 14 guarantees equality under the law. Articles 15(4) and 16(4) allow the state To take special measures to uplift socially and educationally disadvantaged groups, specifically mentioning Scheduled tribes (Xaxa, 2014). Article 19(5) lets the state limit the general public's freedoms of movement Or settlement in scheduled areas to protect the interests of tribal communities.

Additionally, article 46 Instructs the state to promote the educational and economic welfare of scheduled tribes and safeguard them From social injustice and exploitation (government of india, 2013). Constitutional protections also include Land rights and political representation. Articles 244(1) and (2) address the governance and oversight of SchedulEd areas and tribal territories.

Articles 330 and 332 ensure reserved seats for scheduled tribes in both parliament and state legislative assemblies. Article 335 requires special Consideration for public employment Opportunities. These provisions recognize the historical disadvantages And vulnerabilities of tribal communities and lay the groundwork for protective and developmental programs In Jharkhand. However, constitutional measures alone are not enough to address the ongoing socio-economic challenges Facing pvtgs in Jharkhand. Despite affirmative action, many groups remain excluded from main Stream Education, healthcare, and job opportunities, mainly due to geographic isolation, cultural barriers, and poor Implementation of programs (Rath, 2006; Bijoy, 2003). While the reservations in education and employment Sectors under articles 15(4) and 16(4) provide a legal path to empowerment, the actual benefits for pvtgs Have been limited. They face high dropout rates and limited access to higher education (ministry of Tribalaffairs, 2020). Similarly, the protection for tribal communities outlined in article 46 is often under-Mined by Issues like land alienation, displacement, and inadequate rehabilitation policies (kumar, 2014).

The forest Rights act of 2006, which aims to confirm constitutional rights, recognizes the entitlement of forest-dwelling To land and forest resources. However, its implementation in Jharkhand Has been inconsistent, leaving many pvtg families struggling to secure their legal rights (Narayan & Singh, 2020). At The same time, state governments have used constitutional directives to create targeted programs such as the Tribal sub-plan (tsp) and pvtg development plans, which aim to combine welfare with cultural Conservation. More recent efforts, including community health projects and skill development initiatives, also Draw on the constitutional responsibility of the state to promote social justice (george, 2019). Therefore, While the constitution offers a strong foundation for protection, its effectiveness in improving the situations Of pvtgs in Jharkhand Depends on successful implementation, inclusive governance, and policies that Respect their cultural uniqueness. The main challenge is to turn constitutional promises into real benefits for Some of the most vulnerable citizens of the state.

IV. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES ADDRESSING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES OF PVTGS

The governments of india and Jharkhand Have put in place various strategies to tackle the social, economic, Cultural, and livelihood issues facing particularly vulnerable tribal groups. At the national level, the Development of pvtgs scheme, started in 2008 by the ministry of tribal affairs, plays a vital role. This Program, which is fully funded by the central government, helps states with housing, land distribution, Healthcare, education, skill development, and community infrastructure projects (ministry of tribal affairs,2020). In Jharkhand, This scheme is carried out through micro-projects in All 24 Districts Of jharkhand. Additionally, the tribal sub-plan (tsp) sets Aside dedicated funds for tribal welfare, emphasizing education, healthcare, housing, and skill-building Initiatives (Rath, 2006). Healthcare remains a major issue due to high rates of mal-Nutrition, maternal mortality, and common diseases. The national health mission (nhm) uses mobile medical units, tribal health camps, and nutrition programs To address these gaps. Programs like the integrated tribal development Programme (Itdp) and Janani Suraksha Yojana (Jsy) also work to improve maternal and child health in tribal communities (Patnaik &Rajan, 2019).

In education, the Jharkhand Government has increased access to quality Schooling through Ekalavya Model residential schools (emrss) and tribal hostels, which offer scholarships, free uniforms, Textbooks, and mid-Day meals to boost retention (ministry of tribal affairs, 2019; Jharkhand Tribal welfare Department, 2021).

To improve economic inclusion, programs such as the special central assistance to tsp (sca to tsp) and The pvtg development Programme Offer agricultural inputs, livestock, micro-credit facilities, and Community asset creation (government of india, 2013). Specific livelihood initiatives include honey Collection cooperatives for the Brijiya And Korwa Community in district Latehar, Dairy farming and handicraft promotion As well as eco-tourism Ventures For The Brijiya Community in Gumla, Latehar And Simdega Districts. (Ganesh, Rajakumar, & Acharya, 2021; George, 2019). The Jharkhand Tribal welfare department also Supports skill training in tailoring, bamboo crafts, carpentry, and digital literacy, along with subsidies and Loans for tribal youth through self-employment programs. Housing and land security are covered through programs like the Indira Awaas Yojana (Now pmay-g) and The forest rights act (2006), which aim to protect the rights and livelihoods of forest-dependent groups (Kumar, 2014).

Infrastructure projects, such as rural electrification, road connectivity through Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (Pmgsy), and clean drinking water initiatives, help reduce isolation in tribal Areas. Welfare programs like the public distribution system (pds), integrated child development Services(Icds), and pension schemes for widows, the elderly, and people with disabilities serve as crucial safety nets. Along with welfare measures, cultural presErvation is a priority. Non-governmental organizations also work with government agencies to Strengthen cooperatives, expand market access, and improve financial inclusion. Despite these important efforts, challenges remain, especially in effective program delivery, timely benefit Distribution, and the need for interventions that respect cultural sensitivities. Strengthening institutional frameworks, improving access to healthcare and education, and establishing sustainable livelihood options Are essential for turning constitutional and policy commitments into real improvements in the lives of Pvtgs.

V. CONCLUSION

The socio-economic realities of particularly vulnerable tribal groups (pvtgs) in Jharkhand Reveal their Historical marginalization and ongoing inequalities that hinder their growth. Even with constitutional Guarantees of equality, justice, and support, pvtgs like Asur, Birhor, Brijiya, Korwa, Mal Paharia, Pahariya, Sauriya Paharia , Savar And hill Kharia Remain stuck in poverty, illiteracy, poor healthcare, and social exclusion. Their reliance on Unstable forest-based livelihoods, worsened by land loss, displacement, and limited access to modern jobs, Makes them economically vulnerable. Social barriers, such as stigma, gender inequalities, and cultural erosion, Make their separation from mainstream society worse. However, the efforts of the government of india and The state of tamil nadu represent a significant attempt to fix these issues. Programs like the development of Pvtgs Programme, Tribal sub-plan, integrated tribal development Programme, And the forest rights act Aim to combine welfare with empowerment. Improvements in healthcare, education, job opportunities, ecotourism, And cultural preservation show a desire to boost material conditions while protecting indigenous Identity. Still, Bureaucratic delays, lack of community involvement, and geographical obstacles hold back the Success of these measures. For genuine change, policies must go beyond simply providing welfare and promote Sustainable, community-led development that respects cultural values and ecological balance. Empowering Pvtgs involves bolstering grassroots governance, ensuring land and resource security, improving access to Quality education and healthcare, and developing a variety of job options to help them fight poverty. If done Effectively, these integrated strategies can enhance the socio-economic status of pvtgs in Jharkhand While Also preserving their cultural uniqueness, ensuring their rightful place in the state's inclusive development Plan.

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