

# Issues of Minorities in India and Afghanistan: A Comparative Analysis of Particular Vulnerable Tribal Group (Pvtgs) and Hazara Group

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## **Abstract:**

This research paper is an analysis and examines the systemic marginalisation of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTGs) in India and the Hazara community in Afghanistan, focusing on their socio-economic, cultural, and political challenges. In Afghanistan, Hazaras face severe persecution under Taliban rule, including targeted killings and violence, political exclusion, cultural erasure, and restricted access to education and economic opportunities, rooted in historical ethnic tensions and exacerbated by the 2021 Taliban resurgence. In India, PVTGs, comprising 75 distinct communities, endure extreme socio-economic deprivation, characterized by low literacy, declining populations, geographic isolation, limited access to healthcare and livelihood, compounded displacement, and cultural disconnect. Despite differing contexts – authoritarian repression in Afghanistan and systemic neglect within India's democratic framework – groups experience exclusion, loss of cultural identity, and barriers to basic rights. The analysis underscores the urgency of addressing intersectional vulnerabilities – gender, caste, indignity, and religion – to ensure equitable development and human rights protection, aligning with global frameworks like the UN sustainable development goals.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This research report explores concerns of minority groups, based on religion, ethnicity or culture, particularly in PVTGS in India and Hazara in Afghanistan. The protection and empowerment of marginalised communities are central to achieving equitable socio-economic development and upholding human rights globally. The systematic violation of minority rights in Afghanistan and the socioeconomic challenges faced by PVTGs in India.

Afghanistan established as a state in 1747 under Ahmad Shah Abdali, Afghanistan is home to diverse ethnic groups, including Pashtuns (50-54%), Tajiks (26-30%), Uzbeks (8%), Hazaras (7%), and smaller communities like Turkmen, Nuristani, Baloch, Sikhs, and Hindus. The country's official languages are Pashto and Dari, alongside approximately 30 other local languages, reflecting its cultural mosaic. Despite achieving full independence in 1919, Afghanistan has struggled with political instability, ethnic rivalries, and weak governance, exacerbated by events such as the 1979 Soviet invasion, the 1996 Taliban takeover, and the 2021 Taliban resurgence. Hazara's came into being in Afghanistan in 13 centuries. The Hazara Autonomy ended in late 18 century under Pashtun ruler Amir Abdur Rahman Khan. At that era, Hazara uprisings were reported over oppressive taxes, and abuses and they declare jihad against Shia's Hazara. 60 per cent of Hazara massacred. During Soviet- Afghan War (1979-1989), and during civil war, Hazaras faced violence from various factions. First time in 1989, under Abdul Ali Mazari, advocating the rights

The Taliban's rise in 1966 brought severe persecution against them, thousands of Hazaras were killed in between 1998-2002. They face political exclusion, targeted violence, cultural erasure, restricted to education and economic exclusion and lack of opportunities. The Taliban's Pashtun-centric policies and strict Sunni Islamic governance have escalated historic ethnic tensions, with Hazaras facing extrajudicial killing, forced displacements, and discriminatory practices like bad hijab.

In India, PVTGs comprise 75 distinct communities. Bondo Porja; Chenchu ; Gadabas; Khond Porja; Konda Savaras; Kolam etc., Initially, they known as "Primitive Tribal Groups" by the Dhebar Commission in 1973, it renamed as PVTGs based on their pre-agricultural economies, low literacy, declining populations, and geographic isolation.

PVTGS face extreme socio-economic deprivation, characterised by low literacy, declining population, and limited access to healthcare, education, and livelihoods. The Xaxa Commission Report (2014) highlights socio-economic disadvantages faced by tribal groups, with PVTG women being particularly vulnerable to health issues, poverty, and limited access to education and employment opportunities and suggests 111 recommendations of policy initiatives as well as effective outcomes-orientated measures to improve development indicators, (i) Legal and Administrative Framework, (ii) Livelihoods and Employment Status, (iii) Education, (iv) Health, (v) Land Alienation, Displacement and Enforced Migration, (vi) Legal and Constitutional Issues and (vii) Delivery of Public Goods and Services. Addressing the concerns of this vulnerable population is crucial for India's socioeconomic transformation and the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals such as "No poverty" (SDG1) and "Good health and well-being" (SDG3) Women and children grappling with high rates of undernutrition, anaemia, and gender-based barriers such as inadequate menstrual hygiene and restricted reproductive healthcare. Geographical isolation, cultural disconnect with mainstream systems, and displacement due to environmental hazards or development projects.

Despite their distinct geopolitical contexts, minorities in Afghanistan and PVTGs in India share common struggles: systemic exclusion, loss of cultural identity, and barriers to accessing basic rights and services. Both groups highlight the need for context-specific interventions that combine policy reforms, community-driven solutions, and global cooperation to dismantle structural inequalities. For Afghanistan, international frameworks and sanctions can pressure compliance with human rights standards, while in India, micro-level projects and inclusive governance can empower PVTGs. Future research and advocacy must prioritize intersectional approaches to address gender, caste, indigeneity, and religious discrimination, ensuring that these communities are not left behind in the pursuit of sustainable development and social justice.

Minorities, defined as ethnic, religious, or cultural groups with distinct identities within a larger population, often face systemic marginalisation and social, economic and cultural exclusion. Academic writings on minority rights provide critical frameworks for understanding and addressing these challenges. Will Kymlicka (1995) in *Multicultural Citizenship* argues for group-specific rights to protect minorities' cultural integrity, emphasising liberal principles of autonomy and equality. Hurst Hannum (1996) in *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination* advocates for legal mechanisms to balance minority rights with state sovereignty, highlighting autonomy as a tool for inclusion. James Anaya (2004) in *Indigenous Peoples in International Law* underscores the importance of cultural preservation and self-determination for indigenous minorities, applicable to groups like India's PVTGs. Amartya Sen's seminal work, *Development as Freedom* (1999), redefines development as the expansion of human freedoms, emphasising the removal of "unfreedoms" such as poverty, oppression, and lack of opportunities. Sen

argues that development is not merely economic growth but the enhancement of individuals' capabilities to lead lives they value. This framework is highly relevant to understanding the challenges faced by minorities in Afghanistan and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India, as outlined in the provided documents.

### Research Problem

The systemic violation of minority rights in Afghanistan, particularly under Taliban rule since their 2021 takeover, poses a severe threat to the cultural, political, and physical survival of ethnic and religious minorities such as Hazaras, Sikhs, Hindus, Tajiks, and Uzbeks. This research problem is multifaceted, encompassing political exclusion, targeted violence, cultural and educational restrictions, economic marginalization, and weak legal protections. These issues are rooted in Afghanistan's history of ethnic tensions, weak state-building, and external interventions, with significant implications for social cohesion, regional stability, and global human rights frameworks.

**Political Exclusion:** Ethnic minorities, particularly Hazaras and Tajiks, lack representation in Taliban governance, which reinforces Pashtun dominance. No senior government positions have been allocated to Hazaras in provinces like Bamiyan, Daikundi, and Ghazni (Ahmadzai & Khan, 2022). The Taliban's exclusionary policies exacerbate historical ethnic tensions and undermine inclusive governance.

**Violence and Discrimination:** Targeted attacks against minorities, especially Hazaras, persist. For instance, the September 2022 bombing of a Hazara educational center killed 52 female students (Bono, 2023). Hazaras face land grabbing and forced displacements in areas like Daikundi, driven by ethnic and religious prejudice (Akbari, 2022). The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported at least five targeted attacks against Hazaras in October and November 2023 (UNAMA, 2024). The Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP) continues to target Hazaras, compounding their vulnerability (Bhattacharya, 2024).

**Historical context,** such as the Afghan state's war against Hazaras (1891–1893), highlights longstanding issues of land rights exploitation and slavery, with gendered dimensions of marginalization (e.g., Shirin's Petition, 19th century).

**Restrictions on Women's Rights and Gendered Impacts:** Taliban policies, such as banning coeducation and suspending women's university education, disproportionately affect minority women, particularly Hazara women, who face additional restrictions like "bad hijab" enforcement (UNAMA, 2023). The Taliban's governance raises questions about the legacy of Western interventionism in the Afghanistan-Pakistan (Af-Pak) region. Interventions justified on humanitarian and feminist grounds often obscured complicity with regional partners like Pakistan, facilitating transnational Islamism and deteriorating human rights (Sumanth & Martin Lara, 2025).

**Orientalist representations** in the "war on terror" narrative further marginalized Afghan women and minorities, complicating human rights advocacy.

**Cultural and Educational Restrictions:** Taliban policies, including bans on coeducation and women's higher education, severely limit access for minority groups. Sikh and Hindu communities face near-total exclusion from higher education, violating Article 22 of the 2003 Constitution (Yawar, 2025). The Taliban's Ministry of Higher Education ordered the removal of all Shia-authored books or those written by political opponents in 2023, targeting Hazara cultural heritage (UNAMA, 2023). Inter-sectarian marriages (Shia-Sunni) are banned, and Provincial Ulema Councils exclude Shia and female representation, further marginalizing minorities.

**Economic and Social Marginalization:** Minorities like Hazaras and Uzbeks face limited access to healthcare, employment, and economic opportunities, worsened by the Taliban's restrictions on women and Afghanistan's economic collapse (Truppa et al., 2024; Safi, 2024). Historical and ongoing persecution has driven Hazara migration to Pakistan, Iran, Australia, the UK, and Indonesia, where they often face further discrimination (Bhattacharya, 2024).

**Weak Legal Protections:** The suspension of the 2003 Constitution and the absence of an independent judiciary leaves minorities without legal recourse (Powell & Paldino, 2025). The Taliban's governance lacks mechanisms to enforce minority rights, violating international human rights standards. UNAMA's 2023 Annual Report highlights the Taliban's failure to address the broader persecution of Hazaras, despite noting specific attacks.

**Significance of the Research Problem: Social Cohesion in Afghanistan:** The systemic marginalization of minorities undermines national unity and perpetuates cycles of ethnic and sectarian violence. **Regional Stability:** Forced migration and cross-border tensions, particularly in the Af-Pak region, contribute to instability, with Pakistan's role in facilitating transnational Islamism worsening the issue (Sumanth & Martin Lara, 2025).

**Global Human Rights Frameworks:** The Taliban's violations challenge international norms, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, necessitating stronger global accountability mechanisms.

**Historical Context:** Afghanistan's history of weak state-building, ethnic tensions, and external interventions (e.g., Western policies in the "war on terror") has failed to foster inclusivity or sustainability, perpetuating minority marginalization (Safi, 2024).

The socio-economic and health challenges faced by PVTGs in India remain a critical and unexplored area, despite their recognition as some of the most marginalized communities under Indian constitution (Article 342 and 366 (25)). The intersectionality of poverty, gender, and indigeneity, and geographical isolation, system exclusion, limiting them to access to essential services and opportunities, Das et al. (2024) highlight severe health disparities, noting that 75.26% of PVTGs in Odisha are underweight, with 55.42% experiencing stunting and 60.00% suffering from wasting, particularly among girls. Women of reproductive age face heightened anaemia prevalence (36.5%), exacerbating maternal and child health risks. Bhoi and Acharya (2024) further identify infections and vector-borne diseases as major concerns among Odisha's PVTGs, such as the Bonda and Dongria Kondh, underscoring inadequate healthcare access. Gender-specific barriers compound these challenges. Mudi, Pradhan, and Meher (2023) report that 85% of Juang women in Odisha use cloth as menstrual absorbents due to financial constraints and lack of awareness, reflecting limited reproductive health resources. Sahoo and Pradhan (2021) emphasize that displaced PVTG women face higher unmet needs for family planning (57%) and domestic violence, curtailing their reproductive healthcare access. Displacement further disrupts traditional livelihoods and social cohesion, with Subramanyam (2023) noting that Andhra Pradesh's PVTGs, reliant on forest-based economies, face food insecurity and exclusion from political and economic domains due to remote settlements in the Eastern Ghats. Despite government initiatives like the PM-JANMAN scheme (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024), there is a lack of systematic evaluation of welfare program effectiveness. Bhattacharjee et al. (2023) point to bureaucratic and cultural barriers hindering PVTGs' access to nutrition and health services, while Thamminaina (2021) highlights declining populations among PVTGs like the Sentinelese and Great Andamanese, threatening cultural identity and participation in literacy programs. The role of digital literacy, vocational training, and environmental threats like deforestation on PVTG

livelihoods remains under-researched (Soren et al., 2024; Mutluri, 2020). This research problem seeks to address these gaps, exploring how intersecting factors and policy shortcomings limit PVTGs' capabilities, as framed by Sen's (1999) concept of social exclusion as capability deprivation, to inform targeted interventions for inclusive development.

### **Solution**

A viable solution to the issue of minority exploitation in Afghanistan includes support from international advocacy groups such as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Ensuring access to education and basic rights is crucial. Moreover, international pressure is necessary to advocate for the revival or development of the 2003 constitution, along with the establishment of a land dispute resolution mechanism to address conflicts between Pashtuns and Hazaras. Foreign investment focused on rural development would also help uplift marginalized communities.

One of the major challenges faced by minorities in Afghanistan is the lack of legal recognition and the absence of a welfare state to protect their rights.

In the context of India, although it is a democratic state, the core issue lies in the negligence and ineffective administrative and economic policies directed at tribal minorities. Addressing this requires implementing training and awareness programs, including vocational studies. For instance, initiatives like the Jiban Sampark program offer various activities such as promoting maternal nutrition, improving newborn survival, immunization, preventing early marriage, managing anemia in adolescents and pregnant women, promoting appropriate infant feeding practices, and managing acute malnutrition.

Similarly, partnerships between organizations like UNICEF and the Government of Odisha focus on four key areas: nutrition, health, WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), and the prevention of child marriage. Furthermore, Amartya Sen's Capability Approach emphasizes enhancing individual freedoms and suggests developing initiatives that improve the capabilities of youth, particularly among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

### **Conclusion**

The situation of ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities in Afghanistan and PVTGs in India illustrates two contrasting yet overlapping forms of systemic marginalisation shaped by historical, political, and socio-economic factors. Afghanistan, under Taliban rule, exemplifies state-driven repression within an authoritarian regime, while India represents exclusion within a democratic structure. In both cases, minorities face deep-rooted barriers to basic rights, cultural survival, and socio-economic development. The Taliban's theocratic and ethnocentric policies have institutionalised the persecution of Afghan minorities amid the absence of legal protections and democratic governance. In contrast, India's PVTGs, though constitutionally recognized, continue to experience administrative neglect, poor implementation of welfare programs, and limited representation. Despite differences in context—violent oppression in Afghanistan and systemic neglect in India—both highlight the urgent need to centre minority rights in development agendas. Afghanistan requires international advocacy, legal reforms, and humanitarian support, while India must focus on inclusive, decentralized, and culturally attuned governance for PVTGs. Both the cases experiences lack of fulfillment of human rights of minorities. Minority always remain a core concern of development context and its dynamics.



### Scope for further Work

How minority vulnerabilities intersect with gender, especially in the case of the Hazara community and Afghan women, who face combined discrimination and renunciation of basic human rights. The study also explores the issue of minority displacement and its consequences on the lives, security, and social well-being of affected communities. Scope to address issues faced by women in the minority. Health crises of women in minority groups. Political representation of the minority group under the Taliban government. There is a chance of case study research on a particular minority group.

In the Indian context, the research evaluates the effectiveness of the PM JANMAN Scheme (2023), which allocated ₹24,000 crore for the development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). It delves into how caste, gender norms, and indigenous identity intersect to shape the lived experiences of marginalised groups. The impact of forced relocation on traditional livelihoods and community cohesion is assessed, alongside an analysis of whether occupation-based resettlement colonies provide sustainable economic opportunities.

Additionally, the study investigates the effectiveness of vocational training programs in reducing social and economic vulnerabilities among tribal populations. It also examines the adverse effects of deforestation, mining, and industrial expansion on the health and environment of minority communities. Finally, the research explores the extent of political participation and representation of these marginalized groups within national policy frameworks.

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