

A Study on Empowerment of Brijjiya Community in Jharkhand

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Abstract:

Jharkhand is home to 8 PVTGs of India's 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), a designation for the most marginalized, isolated, and economically vulnerable tribal communities. These include the **Asur, Birhor, Birjia, Korwa, Mal Pahariya, Parhaiya, Sauria Pahariya, and Savar**. The study mainly focuses on the empowerment of PVTGs and their livelihood mainly focusing on Brijjiya community .

This study offers a thorough investigation into the socio-economic and living condition of Birjia tribes in Latehar district of Jharkhand. The research examines various key variables that play important roles in shaping the quality of life and socio-economic status among these tribal communities.

Keywords: PVTGs, Brijjiya

Introduction:

The Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are more prone to backwardness socially and economically. Their population is aging or stagnating, they have low literacy rates, primitive agricultural technologies, and they are economically backward. They typically live in isolated areas with weak administrative assistance and infrastructure. Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs), the least advanced among the tribal community, were established as a distinct category of tribal groups by the Dhebar Commission in 1973. When the Dhebar committee recommended a new name for this group of people in 1973 to aid them, they were given the term '*Primitive Tribal Group*' (PTG). The GOI agreed to their request, and in 1975 this legislation became enforceable. At that time, there were 54 PVTGs. There after , number of primitive tribal groups increased from 54 to 63 between 1992 and 1993. Primitive Tribal Group (PTG), which was officially recognized on the Dhebar Committee's proposal, was renamed as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group in 2006 bringing the total number of PVTGs in the country to 75, which are dispersed across 18 states and one Union Territory (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) as per 2011 census. Odisha has the highest number of PVTGs (13), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12), 9 groups in Jharkhand and Bihar, out of the 75 listed PVTGs (Nandy, 2013). PVTGs are individuals whose way of life and customs are distinct from those of other STs. These folks tend to reside distant from the major city and avoid mingling with other members of the community and each one has their own unique identity, language, and way of life. A plan for the development of primitive tribal groups was also implemented in 2008, and the number of these groups climbed from 54 in 1973 to 75 in 2008. A distinct characteristic

of most of the PVTGs are that usually they live in small habitations. Secondly, they greatly differ in terms of education level, economic situation and socio-cultural life.

Criteria for Identification of PVTGs are:-

- Pre-agricultural level of technology
- Low level of literacy
- Economic backwardness
- Declining or Stagnant population

Therefore, to provide them benefits of development in all aspects of life, number of schemes have been worked out both by Government of India as well as by different state governments to minimise the problems and issues of the PVTGs (Pancholi, 2018).

The Brijjya (or Birjia) are one of the 8 groups in Jharkhand identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). They are small, marginalized community primarily residing in the hilly, forested areas of the Latehar, Gumla, and Lohardaga districts.

Table 1. PVTGs Community in Jharkhand

S.No.	PVTGs	As per Census 2011
1	Asur	22459
2	Birhor	10726
3	Brijjya	6276
4	Korwa	35606
5	Mal Pahariya	135797
6	Pahariya	25585
7	Sauria Pahariya	46222
8	Savar	9688
Total		292359

Based on studies and reports regarding PVTGs in Jharkhand, here is an overview of the status of the Birjia community:

1. Demographic and Social Profile

- **Population & Habitat:** The Birjia live in small, often isolated, habitations built of bamboo, wood, or mud.
- **Cultural Identity:** They possess distinct traditional knowledge, which is intricately tied to their surrounding forests and ecological landscape.
- **Literacy:** While the literacy rate among PVTGs is generally low, it has been improving. A study showed that between 2001 and 2011, the literacy rate of the Birjia community improved by 19 percentage points.
- **PM-JANMAN & Infrastructure:** The Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN), launched in November 2023, focuses on 11 critical interventions (housing, electricity, clean water, health) for PVTG families.
- **Economic Empowerment via JSLPS:** The Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) works with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to create income opportunities, such as producing rice packets

for the Dakia Yojana and encouraging cash-crop cultivation (e.g., Barbatti) in areas like the Rajmahal hills.

2. Socio-Economic Conditions

- **Livelihood:** The Birjia traditionally rely on the forest product for their sustenance. Example- making rope , leaf-plate (pattal plate), honey farming, etc.
- **Vulnerability:** They face significant challenges including low income, food insecurity, and poor access to infrastructure (such as electricity and water).
- **Health:** The community suffers from high rates of illness and they often lack access to quality medical services.

3. Government Schemes

- **Dakia Yojana:** To tackle food insecurity and malnutrition, the Jharkhand government launched the **PVTG Dakia Yojana**, which provides 35 kg of rice packets directly to the homes of PVTG households.
- **Pension:** The state ensures a monthly pension of ₹1,000 per household for PVTG families.
- **Education:** There are special efforts by the Government of Jharkhand to improve education system, through Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV) in each block of all district of Jharkhand opening doors for pvtgs community.

4. Key Challenges

- **Isolation:** Due to their location, many families remain far from mainstream development and public services.
- **Aadhaar-related Issues:** Disruption in social security pensions and ration supply has been reported due to issues with Aadhaar-linked systems.
- **Exploitation:** Studies indicate that, in some areas, PVTG families face exploitation by intermediaries.

5. Educational Achievement

A notable success story from this community includes **Munita Birjia**, a girl from the Maoist-hit Tutuwapani hamlet in the Bishunpur block of Gumla district, who topped the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV) in the Jharkhand Academic Council (JAC) matriculation exam in 2020.

Table 2: District wise distribution of rural, urban, male and female population of Brijiyas.

S.no	District	Rural	Urban	Male	Female	Total
1	Garwa	115	0	58	57	115
2	Chatra	1	0	1	0	1
3	Koderma	8	0	2	6	8
4	Giridih	1	0	1	0	1
5	Dhanbad	0	3	1	2	3
6	Bokaro	2	1	1	2	3
7	Lohardaga	584	0	293	291	584
8	East Singhbhum	29	12	24	17	41
9	Palamu	9	7	9	7	16
10	Latehar	4110	14	2098	2026	4124
11	Hazaribagh	2	4	1	5	6

12	Ramgarh	17	0	6	11	17
13	Ranchi	16	33	23	26	49
14	Khunti	13	0	10	3	13
15	Gumla	1264	3	633	634	1267
16	Simdega	18	0	7	11	18
17	West Singhbhum	1	1	1	1	2
18	Saraikela Kharsawan	7	1	5	3	8
19	Total	6197	79	3174	3102	6276

Objective

The study mainly focuses on these objectives:-

- To analyse the socio-economic status of brijjiya community
- To explore the society of brijjiya community
- To provide an overview of geographical distribution of Birjia population in Jharkhand.

Research Methodology

The research is mainly based on Secondary Data and are descriptive in nature. This study has used the records and reports available from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Census of India, the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), annual reports from several State Tribal Research Institutes, NGOs, Journals, books etc.

Research Design

Approach	Quantitative
Type of research	Descriptive
Target Population	Brijjiya
Research area	Block-Bishunpur (Gumla) and Block-Mahuadanr (Latehar)
Data type	Secondary data Sources of Data- Census reports, Reports from the ministry of tribal Affairs, Government publications, Journals and articles

Issues of PVTGs

The lifestyle of PVTGs can not be regarded as good in the socio-economic context. Because it is not compatible with that of other communities. Slowly the social situation of PVTGs has slightly improved and continued to improve through different provisions of government.. Their way of life is slowly changing in the last decades which were not seen before that. The Children of the PVTG family are able to attend school. But the majority of them opt to work because of the family responsibility upon their shoulders. To combat this issue, GOI established a Conservation cum Development (CCD) initiative to support PVTGs people and enable them to work while simultaneously preserving the forest. The major issues that are identified are as follows:-

1. **1.Unequal Implementation of government schemes:** In certain circumstances, a PVTG only benefits in a small portion of a district, while the same group suffers in neighbouring blocks. The cause is that microprojects only provide advantages to those who fall under their purview. Still most of the pvtgs communities are far away from the government aids/benefits inspite of government efforts. Recently Viksit Bharat programme has played an important role in reaching to these communities.
2. **Insufficient baseline surveys hampering the welfare programs:** Out of 75 PVTGs, the Anthropological Survey of India found that baseline surveys are available for roughly 40 groups even after they have been designated as PVTGs. The implementation of community- focused welfare programs has been hampered by this. As a result majority of PVTGs experience poverty, which can result in hunger, malnutrition, bad health, illiteracy, etc.
3. **Education:** In comparison to other tribal groups, these communities, particularly the women, have relatively poor educational level. Compared to other cultures, the literacy rate of primitive tribes is quite low. Presently, about 38.99 percent of PVTGs are literate.
4. **Health:** The infant mortality rate (IMR), hunger, and other chronic illnesses including leukaemia and skin conditions are all quite high and widespread. The government is concern about their health issues and accordingly various steps have been taken for their good health.
5. **Infrastructure:** Insufficient access to clean water, unsanitary living conditions, hazardous terrain, and nutritional and medical services the survey found that most families lacked their own home in numerous areas. The homes built by prehistoric tribal members lack adequate lighting and ventilation. Families with pets, such as goat or sheep owners, typically confine them to a corner of the home, at least during the rainy season. The family and the members share the area with the animals. Their vulnerability has increased due to their rights' non-recognition and ignorance (S.C., 2019). Lack of infrastructure is still a big challenge for the government to win their hearts.

Expected Outcomes:

Expected Outcomes and People Perceptions Priority should be given to targeted efforts that address the core causes of high poverty and poor education of PVTGs and eliminate spatial obstacles to facility-based treatment. They must be linked with more comprehensive measures to lessen socio-economic mortality disparities in order to have an impact at the population level of the PVTGs. Community-based solutions can lessen many of the concerns and problems described above by reaching out to underprivileged communities(Sophie L.P. Busch, 2022). One of the best impacts over the changing lifestyle of the PVTGs in India were because of interventions in Education Sector. Education is one of the important factors in socialisation system of human beings.

A child's basic necessity is education. In spite of everything, the actual picture is not what it should be. Many people live their whole lives without ever attending school, both in India and many states like Guajrat, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand etc. the level of education in primitive tribal societies is quite low. Education and communication abilities are the cornerstones of economic progress. (Pancholi, 2018). The literacy rate of them has increased significantly during 2001 and 2011(Reddy, 2020). The Government Interventions with the help of many developmental organisation is leading towards the positive change in the lifestyle of PVTGs.

Conclusion:

The challenges and issues faced by the PVTGs are very crucial over the past few decades. For recognizing their rights and reacting to government-led socio economical, sociocultural, educational and health related efforts. They are somewhat protected from exploitation and domination due to changing norms. The educational and health needs of these populations would be addressed through the use of creative, and collaborative approaches. The majority of the PVTGs' socio-economic and socio-cultural issues would be resolved in addition to providing better health care services and education with the help of recent announcement of PM PVTG Development Mission. Intensifying measures to enhance housing, sanitation, employment opportunities, access to healthcare, and better road transportation infrastructure would ultimately improve the standard of living in tribal populated regions. Even though the significant progress made by PVTGs in terms of the aforementioned accomplishments is reason for the satisfaction. Immense amount of work must be done with a greater emphasis on the numerous unresolved issues like poverty, illiteracy, livelihood and migration, unavailability of drinking water and sanitation, lack of health care facilities, all- weather roads and affordable transportation, discrimination and exploitation.

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