



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

HISTORICAL ASPECT OF PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS (PVTG) DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract:

The development of Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) in India has been an important concern of the government due to their extreme socio-economic vulnerability and isolation. These groups, now officially known as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), have historically lived in remote forests, hills, and inaccessible regions with limited contact with mainstream society. As a result, they faced severe challenges such as poverty, low literacy, poor health conditions, malnutrition, and lack of access to basic services.

After India's independence in 1947, tribal welfare became a significant part of national development policies. The Government of India began implementing special programmes under the Tribal Sub-Plan to improve the socio-economic conditions of Scheduled Tribes. In 1975, a special category called Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) was introduced to identify the most vulnerable tribal communities who required urgent and focused attention.

The identification of PTGs was based on specific criteria such as pre-agricultural level of technology, stagnant or declining population, extremely low literacy rates, and subsistence-level economy. Over time, several welfare measures were introduced, including housing support, healthcare services, education programmes, livelihood development, and food security initiatives. In 2006, the term PTG was officially replaced with PVTG to adopt a more respectful and appropriate terminology.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has played a central role in designing and implementing policies for these communities through targeted schemes and development programmes. These initiatives aim not only to improve living standards but also to protect the cultural heritage, traditions, and identity of tribal communities.

Although various efforts have been made over the decades, many PVTGs still face significant developmental challenges. Therefore, continuous policy attention, community participation, and sustainable development strategies remain essential for improving their quality of life while preserving their unique cultural identity.

Index Term: PVTG, Development, Primitive Tribal Group, Colonial, Tribal Sub-Plan -

I. INTRODUCTION

Tribal communities have historically lived in forests, hills, mountains, and remote rural regions, maintaining distinct cultural traditions, languages, and social systems. According to the Constitution of India, these communities are recognized as Scheduled Tribes (STs). Among them, some groups are considered more vulnerable because of their socio-economic backwardness, geographical isolation, low literacy rates, and declining population. These communities were earlier known as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and are now officially referred to as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

India is home to one of the largest tribal populations in the world. The historical development of PVTGs in India reflects the changing relationship between tribal communities and the state. During the colonial period, tribal societies experienced exploitation, displacement, and neglect. After independence, the Government of India introduced several constitutional safeguards and welfare programmes to improve their living conditions. However, despite decades of development planning, many PVTGs continue to face poverty, malnutrition, unemployment, poor health facilities, and lack of educational opportunities.

This paper examines the historical aspects of Primitive Tribal Group development in India. It discusses their traditional lifestyle, colonial experiences, post-independence policies, welfare programmes, developmental challenges, and the need for sustainable and inclusive development.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India, comprising 75 groups across 18 states and Andaman & Nicobar, were established as a distinct, high-need category in 1975 to address acute vulnerability. Rooted in the 1960–61 Dhebar Commission report, they are defined by declining populations, stagnant growth, pre-agricultural technology, and extremely low literacy, facing severe marginalization from historical neglect.

Historical Context and Evolution

- **The Dhebar Commission (1961):** The Commission highlighted that within the Scheduled Tribes (STs), there was a, "lowest layer" of communities in extreme underdevelopment, requiring special attention.
- **Initial Identification (1975):** Based on the Dhebar Commission's findings, the Government of India began formally creating a separate sub-category called Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)
- **Expansion:** Initially, 52 groups were recognized, with another 23 added between 1980–1993, bringing the total to 75.
- **Renaming to PVTG (2006):** In 2006, the government renamed "Primitive Tribal Groups" to "Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups"

Meaning and Identification of Primitive Tribal Groups

Primitive Tribal Groups were identified as the most vulnerable among the Scheduled Tribes in India. The Government of India introduced this category in 1975 to provide focused attention to tribal communities that were socio-economically backward and isolated from mainstream development.

The identification of PTGs was based on the following criteria:

1. Pre-agricultural level of technology
2. Stagnant or declining population
3. Extremely low literacy rates
4. Subsistence-level economy

These communities mainly depended on hunting, gathering, shifting cultivation, forest products, and traditional occupations for survival. Due to limited interaction with modern society, they lacked access to education, healthcare, transportation, and economic opportunities.

Initially, 52 tribal groups were identified as PTGs. Later, the number increased to 75 groups across different states and union territories. In 2006, the Government of India replaced the term "Primitive Tribal Group" with "Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group" to remove the negative meaning associated with the word "primitive" and to adopt a more respectful terminology.

Tribal Society in the Pre-Colonial Period

Before British colonial rule, many tribal communities enjoyed relative autonomy in their social and economic life. They lived in forests and hilly areas where they practiced traditional agriculture, hunting, fishing, and collection of forest produce. Tribal societies had their own customary laws, village councils, and systems of self-governance.

The tribal economy was largely based on community ownership of land and natural resources. Their relationship with nature was deeply spiritual and cultural. Forests were not only sources of food and livelihood but also important parts of religious beliefs and cultural identity.

Tribal communities maintained a balanced ecological relationship with the environment. They used natural resources carefully and sustainably. Social relations were generally based on cooperation and collective responsibility rather than class hierarchy. However, because of geographical isolation, tribal groups remained outside the political and economic structures of mainstream kingdoms and empires.

Impact of British Colonial Rule

The British colonial period brought major changes in tribal life. Colonial administrators introduced forest laws, land revenue systems, and commercial exploitation of natural resources. These policies negatively affected tribal communities and disrupted their traditional lifestyle.

The British government declared forests as state property through laws such as the Indian Forest Act of 1865 and later amendments. Tribal people lost access to forests, which had been their primary source of livelihood for centuries. Hunting, shifting cultivation, and collection of forest products were restricted.

The expansion of railways, mining industries, plantations, and commercial agriculture led to large-scale displacement of tribal populations. Moneylenders, landlords, and traders exploited tribal communities economically. Many tribal people lost their land due to debt and legal manipulation.

As a result, several tribal uprisings took place during the colonial period. Important tribal revolts included:

- The Santhal Rebellion (1855–56)
- The Munda Rebellion led by Birsa Munda
- The Kol Rebellion
- The Bhil Revolt

These movements reflected tribal resistance against exploitation, land alienation, and colonial oppression. Although many rebellions were suppressed, they highlighted the need for protection of tribal rights.

Tribal Development After Independence

After India achieved independence in 1947, tribal welfare became an important part of national development policies. The Constitution of India provided safeguards for Scheduled Tribes through various Articles and provisions.

Some important constitutional safeguards include:

- Article 46: Promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Tribes
- Fifth Schedule: Administration and control of Scheduled Areas
- Reservation in education, employment, and political representation
- Protection against social exploitation and discrimination

India adopted a welfare approach toward tribal development during the Five-Year Plans. The government focused on improving education, healthcare, housing, agriculture, communication, and employment opportunities for tribal communities.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru introduced the concept of “Tribal Panchsheel,” which emphasized respect for tribal culture and gradual development without destroying tribal identity. The five principles of Tribal Panchsheel promoted self-development, protection of tribal rights, and minimal interference in tribal life.

Introduction of Primitive Tribal Group Category

Despite general tribal welfare programmes, some communities remained extremely backward and isolated. Therefore, in 1975, the Government of India introduced the special category of Primitive Tribal Groups.

The objective was to provide focused developmental assistance to the most vulnerable tribal communities. Special programmes were launched to address issues related to:

- Food insecurity
- Illiteracy
- Poor healthcare
- Lack of infrastructure
- Economic backwardness
- Population decline

The government implemented area-specific and family-oriented schemes to improve their standard of living. Development programmes aimed to ensure basic necessities such as drinking water, roads, schools, healthcare centres, and housing facilities.

Welfare Programmes and Development Schemes

Several welfare schemes were introduced by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and state governments for the development of PTGs/PVTGs.

Educational Development

Education became a major focus area in tribal development. Residential schools, Ashram schools, scholarships, hostels, and free educational materials were provided for tribal students. Special incentives encouraged school enrollment among tribal children.

However, educational development among PVTGs remained slow because of poverty, language barriers, child labor, migration, and remote geographical conditions.

Healthcare Services

Many PVTGs suffer from malnutrition, anemia, tuberculosis, malaria, and other diseases due to poor healthcare facilities. To address these problems, the government established mobile health units, primary health centers, vaccination programmes, and maternal healthcare schemes in tribal regions.

Despite these efforts, healthcare accessibility remains limited in many remote tribal areas.

Livelihood and Economic Development

Economic programmes focused on agriculture, animal husbandry, forest-based industries, handicrafts, and skill development. Tribal cooperatives were established to protect tribal people from exploitation by middlemen and traders.

The government also promoted self-employment and income-generation activities through financial assistance and training programmes.

Housing and Infrastructure

Housing schemes were introduced to provide safe shelters for vulnerable tribal families. Infrastructure projects such as roads, electricity, drinking water, schools, and communication facilities were developed in tribal areas to improve connectivity and access to public services.

Challenges Faced by PVTGs

Despite decades of welfare measures, PVTGs continue to face several socio-economic and cultural challenges.

Poverty and Unemployment

Most PVTG families continue to live below the poverty line. Traditional occupations often provide unstable income, and employment opportunities are limited in remote regions.

Low Literacy and Educational Barriers

Literacy rates among PVTGs remain extremely low. Many children drop out of school because of poverty, lack of teachers, language differences, and inadequate infrastructure.

Health and Malnutrition

Poor nutrition and lack of healthcare facilities continue to affect tribal populations. Infant mortality and maternal mortality rates remain high in several tribal areas.

Land Alienation and Displacement

Industrial projects, mining, dams, and deforestation have displaced many tribal communities from their ancestral lands. Loss of forests and natural resources directly affects their livelihood and cultural identity.

Cultural Erosion

Modernization and outside influence have weakened traditional customs, languages, and indigenous knowledge systems. Many tribal communities fear the loss of their cultural heritage and identity.

Research Methodology

It is a doctrinal study on the basis of secondary sources and literature study.

Theoretical framework

Some contributing research had been done by Anthropologist, Sociologist and activist on the basis of their own field of research among PVTG in India, So few literatures are describe of their work....

In one of the earlier articles, P.K.Bhowmick (1966:68) described the socioeconomic transformation of the Lodhas since the British colonial period. Bhowmick's study was based on the Lodhas of present day Paschim (West) Medinipur. He observed that the Lodhas have never been incorporated in the mainstream Hindu society and culture, although since the withdrawal of the British Criminal Act in 1952, many governmental schemes had been introduced to improve the socio-economic condition of this marginalised community. Bhowmick also observed that the Lodhas in many cases were found to be used by the powerful sections of the rural society in illegal activities like theft, burglary and robbery. According to him, these local elite groups developed a vested interest to obstruct the developmental programmes earmarked for the Lodhas since economic upliftment of the Lodhas, might endanger the clandestine activities of the local power elite (Bhowmick, 1966: 70).

Another important observer of the marginalised condition of the Lodhas in West Bengal is Mahasveta Devi who is a famous Bengali litterateur and a human rights activist. Mahasveta Devi not only wrote on the abject poverty and exploitation of the Lodhas, she also worked for decades to fulfil the various demands of the community as regards their socio-economic condition. Although, not an anthropologist, Mahasveta Devi has firsthand personal experiences of the failures of governmental schemes and shortcomings of the government policies directed towards the development of the Lodhas in erstwhile Midnapore, and the adjoining districts of West Bengal. Unlike academic anthropologists, she practiced activism through the publication of a literary magazine in which many literate tribal persons including Lodhas wrote about their living conditions, violence committed to them by the state and higher classes of the society and the demands of the different tribal communities. Mahasveta Devi herself also wrote a number of articles in Bengali and English in which she depicted the ground realities regarding the problems of the implementation of development inputs and schemes among the Lodhas. In one of her articles published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* in 1983, Mahasveta Devi cited examples of some Lodha villages in the present Paschim Medinipur district in which government schemes have failed to reach the beneficiaries, although they were badly in need of the development programmes. In the article Mahasveta Devi categorically pointed out Usually, the schemes are made by people not knowing or caring to know what the tribal really need. The plan is then, after the usual procedures, left to the contractor.... I have seen contractor- made construction works meant for the Lodhas. It is better to make specious earthen huts. With a structure of cement, brick and sand, the inevitable contractor is bound to enter the scene. To whose benefit? Not the Lodhas'. Over three decades, huge sums have been spent in the name of the Lodhas and the community has gone much below the poverty lines. (Devi 1983:948).

The tribal groups considered here though numerically not so large but they are widely distributed with immense variation in their ecology and economy, physical features, etc. It is really a problem to generalize the whole situation because there are many PVTGs inhabiting in some specific areas. For example, literacy or formal education had negative impact or no beneficial effect among the isolated foraging tribes like the *Santenalese* next to the *Jarawas*. On the contrary, the parameters like education or literacy level, health and nutritional status, etc., required for those groups who were forced to leave their traditional life styles and have to live with surrounding domination of non-tribal population.

Role of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs was established in 1999 to focus specifically on tribal welfare and development. The ministry coordinates policies, programmes, and schemes for Scheduled Tribes and PVTGs across India.

The ministry has introduced several initiatives such as:

- Development of PVTG habitats
- Educational scholarships
- Forest rights implementation
- Skill development programmes
- Tribal research institutes
- Health and nutrition programmes

The ministry also works to preserve tribal culture and promote participation of tribal communities in development planning.

Need for Sustainable Tribal Development

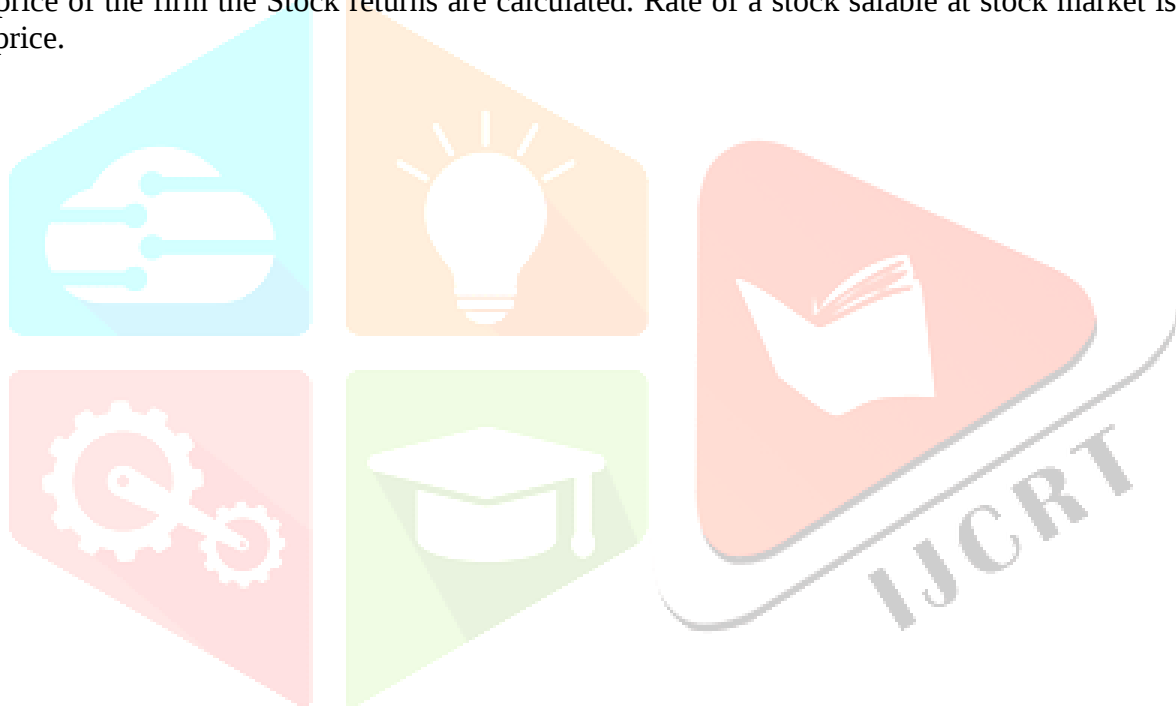
Development policies for PVTGs should focus not only on economic growth but also on cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. Tribal communities possess valuable indigenous knowledge related to forests, biodiversity, agriculture, and ecological conservation.

Sustainable tribal development requires:

1. Protection of land and forest rights
2. Improvement in education and healthcare
3. Community participation in decision-making
4. Preservation of tribal languages and traditions
5. Environment-friendly livelihood opportunities
6. Gender equality and women's empowerment
7. Respect for tribal identity and self-governance

Inclusive development can only be achieved when tribal communities actively participate in planning and implementation processes.

Variables of the study contains dependent and independent variable. The study used pre-specified method for the selection of variables. The study used the Stock returns as dependent variable. From the share price of the firm the Stock returns are calculated. Rate of a stock salable at stock market is known as stock price.



State wise PVTG in India

State	PVTG	State	PVTG
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Great Andamanese	Karnataka	Jenu Kuruba
	Jarawa		Koraga
	Onge	Kerala	Cholanaikayan
	Sentinelese		Kadar
	Shom Pen		Kattunayakan
Andhra Pradesh	Chenchu		Koraga
	Bado Gadaba		Kurumba
	Gutub Gadaba	Madhya Pradesh	Abujh Maria
	Dongria Khond		Baiga
	Kultia Khond		Bharia
	Kolam		Birhor
	Konda Reddi		Hill Korwa
	Kondasavara		Kamar
	Bondo Porja		Sahariya
	Khond Porja	Maharashtra	Katkari/Kathodi
	Parengi Proja		Kolam
	Thoti		Maria Gond
	Asur		Katkari/Kathodi
Bihar*	Birhor		Kolam
	Birjia	Odisha	Chuktia Bhunjia
	Hill Kharia		Birhor
	Korwa		Bondo
	Mal Paharia		Didayi
	Parhaiya		Dongria Khond
	Sauria Paharia		Juang
	Savar		Kharia
	Abujh Maria		Kutia Khond
Chhattisgarh	Baiga		Lanjia Saura
	Bharia		Lodha
	Birhor		Mankirdia
	Hill Korwa		Paudi Bhuyan
	Kamar		Saura
	Sahariya	Tamil Nadu	Irular
	Abujh Maria		Kattunayakan
Gujarat	Kolgha		Kota
	Kathodi		Korumba
	Kotwalia		Paniyan
	Padhar		Toda
	Siddi	UP	Bukha
Jharkhand	Asur		Raji
	Birhor	WB	Lodha
	Birjia		Birhor
	Hill Kharia		TOTO
	Korwa	Monipur	Maram Naga
	Mal Paharia	Rajasthan	Saharia
	Pahariya	Tripura	Riang
	Sauria		
	Savar		

Conclusion

The historical development of Primitive Tribal Groups in India reflects a long journey from isolation and exploitation to recognition and welfare-oriented development. During the colonial period, tribal communities suffered displacement, economic exploitation, and loss of traditional rights over forests and land. After independence, the Government of India introduced constitutional safeguards and development programmes to improve their socio-economic conditions.

The identification of Primitive Tribal Groups in 1975 marked an important step toward focused tribal welfare policies. Later, the adoption of the term Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups demonstrated a more respectful and human-centered approach. Although various schemes related to education, healthcare, housing, and livelihood have improved the lives of many tribal communities, significant challenges still remain.

Poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, displacement, and cultural erosion continue to affect many PVTGs across India. Therefore, there is a need for sustainable, inclusive, and culturally sensitive development strategies. Tribal development should not only aim at economic progress but also protect the dignity, identity, and traditional heritage of tribal communities. A balanced approach that combines modernization with cultural preservation can ensure social justice and long-term well-being for PVTGs in India.

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