

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

India is a rich mosaic of human and cultural diversity. Due to its huge geographical spread and history of cultural contacts, we have both autochthones and migrant populations coexisting together.

Of the total population of India, 8.6% belongs to the [Scheduled Tribes \(ST\)](#). ST is an artificial division created by the Government of India under Article 336 to provide some special arrangements for their upliftment. However, ST is not a homogenous group and it contains some sub-groups which have chosen to remain secluded and are deprived of any social benefits of government schemes. These groups are called Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

In this article, you can read all about the PVTGs in India, their characteristics, distribution, etc. for the [UPSC exam](#).

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

During the **Fourth Five Year Plan**, a sub-category was created within Scheduled Tribes to identify the most vulnerable groups which were considered to be at the lowest levels of development. Consequently, on the basis of the **Dhebar Commission** report, a criterion for identifying Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups was established as:

- Pre-agricultural level of technology,
- Low level of literacy,
- Economic backwardness,
- A declining or stagnant population.

PVTGs were formerly known as primitive tribal groups.

How many particularly vulnerable tribal groups are there?

As per Census 2011, there are a total of 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes, spread over 17 states and one Union Territory (UT).

- The categorization is done by the **Ministry of Home Affairs** and not by the Ministry of Tribal affairs.
- As per census 2001:
 - There are 12 PVTGs having a population above 50,000.
 - The remaining groups have a population of 1000 or less.
 - The PVTG of Sahariyas has the highest population of 4,50,217.
 - PVTGs of Sentinelese and Andamanese have a very small population of 39 and 43, respectively.
 - Odisha has the highest number of PVTGs in India while no PVTGs are found in the states of Punjab and Haryana.

The distribution of PVTGs are given in the table below:

STATE	TRIBES FOUND
Andhra Pradesh and Telangana	Bodo Gadaba, Bondo Poroja, Chenchu, Dongria Khond, Gutob Gadaba, Khond Poroja, Kolam, Kondareddis, Konda Savaras, Kutia Khond, Parengi Poroja, thoti
Bihar and Jharkhand	Asurs, Birhor, Birjia, Hill Kharia, Konvas, Mal Paharia, Parhaiyas, Sauda Paharia, Savar
Gujarat	Kathodi, Kohvalia, Padhar, Siddi, Kolgha
Karnataka	Jenu Kuruba, Koraga
Kerala	Cholanaikayan (a section of Kattunaickans), Kadar, Kattunayakan, Kurumbas, Koraga
Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh	Abujh Macias, Baigas, Bharias, Hill Korbas, Kamars, Saharias, Birhor
Maharashtra	Katkaria (Kathodia), Kolam, Maria Gond
Manipur	Marram Nagas
Odisha	Birhor, Bondo, Didayi, Dongria-Khond, Juangs, Kharias, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Sauras, Lodhas, Mankidias, Paudi Bhuyans, Soura, Chuktia Bhunjia
Rajasthan	Seharias
Tamil Nadu	Kattu Nayakans, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyans, Todas
Tripura	Reangs
Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand	Buxas, Rajis
West Bengal	Birhor, Lodhas, Totos
Andaman and nicobar islands	Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Sentinelese, Shorn Pens

Important case studies:

1. The decades-long movement by Dongria Kondh against bauxite mining in Niyamgiri hills was rewarded when the Supreme Court in 2013, decreed that the Dongria Kondh would have a decisive say in giving the go-ahead to Vedanta's mining project. The court recognized that the Dongria Kondh's right to worship their sacred mountain must be 'protected and preserved' and that those with religious and cultural rights must be heard in the decision-making process. Finally, the gram sabhas unanimously decided to prohibit the mining in their sacred hills and Vedanta Aluminum Ltd had to wind up its operations.
2. Mankedia, one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha, were denied habitat rights in the Similipal Tiger Reserve under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.
3. In the recent pandemic, Covid-19 has spread to the Great Andamanese tribals.

Issues faced by PVTGs in India

In this section, some of the issues and challenges faced by the PVTGs in the country are discussed.

1. The dearth of data – The census doesn't comprehensively capture data on the PVTGs.
2. Some PVTGs are not even recognized as STs.
3. Some PVTGs are located outside Schedule 5 and 6 areas, and remain bereft of special protections.
4. Problems of Culture Contact which causes:
 1. Degradation of the native culture.
 2. Bringing in foreign pathogens and diseases that can wipe out their entire populations. (Syphilis among Jarawas)
 3. Disruption of the tribal way of life due to economic exploitation of the resources of the area. (Resource curse)
 4. Rise of exploitative economic systems like the Goti system – a bonded labour system among Juangs.
5. The conflict between environmental conservation and upholding tribal rights.
6. PVTGs, being a near Mendelian population, are more prone to modern diseases, thereby increasing chances of extermination.
7. Poor socio-economic indicators. For example, Himalayan tribes suffer from goitre due to the paucity of iodine in their diet.

Government Schemes for PVTGs

The government has introduced several programmes and schemes for the development of the PVTGs. Some of them are discussed below.

1. Scheme for development of PVTGs on the lines of Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana mandates all states to prepare '**Conservation cum Development plans**' for PVTGs in that state.
2. Enactment of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 which for the first time, recognized the land rights of tribals.
3. Local initiatives by state governments like:
 1. Jan Swasthya Sahyog by Chhattisgarh
 2. Restricted Area Permits in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
 3. Formation of micro project agencies by Odisha.

Also read: [Economic Empowerment of STs](#)

Recommendations by the National Advisory Council:

- Identification of PVTGs and assessment of their vulnerabilities:
 - The Ministry of Tribal Affairs should create a specially designed census for PVTGs which includes the status of their socio-economic indicators.
 - Displacement of PVTGs should be considered as the last option. If the displacement is inevitable, appropriate rehabilitation measures should be formed beforehand to prevent any culture shock to the tribals.
 - Preparation of a vulnerability index for the PVTG and resources should be allocated on the basis of the degree of vulnerability.
- Creating awareness about the available laws like PESA, FRA, etc. among the tribals.
- Develop livelihood strategies and design development programmes on the basis of a rights-based and felt needs approach.
- Conservation and enhancement of their existing livelihoods via Tribal Research institutes and [TRIFED](#). (Irula – snake venom extraction; Kattunaikan – honey collection; Kotas- metal work)
- Extension of food security schemes to PVTGs on a priority basis.
- Involving NGOs and anthropologists for capacity building of tribals for social mobilization, governance, programme implementation, etc.

Conclusion

The principles of **Tribal Panchsheel** must be followed while working for the welfare of PVTGs and they must be allowed to catch up with the mainstream at their own pace. An enabling environment must be created in which communities are empowered to make their own life and livelihood choices and choose their path of development.