

# PVTGS Of Telangana: Navigating Gender Inequality And Cultural Preservation

Dr. K. Bhaskar

Assistant Professor of Political Science  
Government City College(A), Nayapul, Hyderabad  
Mail: bhaskarkunuru8@gmail.com

## **Abstract:**

This study investigates the intricate relationship between gender inequality and cultural preservation among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Telangana, India. The research targets three major tribes: the Koya, Chenchu, and Kolam, employing purposive sampling to select 150 participants, with equal representation from each community. Both male and female members aged 18 and above were included to ensure a balanced perspective on gender roles and cultural dynamics. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 30 participants, allowing for rich narrative responses that revealed personal experiences and challenges regarding the interplay between gender inequality and cultural preservation. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates quantitative data from surveys and qualitative insights from interviews to elucidate socio-economic conditions and cultural dynamics within these marginalized communities. Findings indicate alarming disparities in education, employment, and healthcare access, with women's experiences reflecting systemic inequalities that restrict their participation. While traditional gender roles continue to limit opportunities, cultural practices offer a potential avenue for empowerment, as many women express commitment to cultural preservation initiatives. The research underscores the need for gender-sensitive policies that enhance educational opportunities for women and promote their roles in cultural preservation. This study ultimately emphasizes an integrated approach to development that respects and preserves the rich cultural heritage of PVTGs while advancing gender equality, ensuring the holistic enhancement of community identity and resilience in Telangana.

**Keywords:** PVTGs, Telangana, Gender Inequality, Cultural Preservation, Indigenous Communities.

## **1. Introduction**

Telangana, a state in southern India, is home to a rich mosaic of cultures and communities, among which the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) occupy a significant place. These tribes, including the Koya, Chenchu, and Kolam, represent some of the most marginalized populations in the region. According to the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, PVTGs are identified based on their primitive traits, distinct culture, and geographical isolation, which contribute to their vulnerability (Government of India, 2006).

Despite the constitutional safeguards and social welfare programs aimed at uplifting these communities, PVTGs face persistent socio-economic challenges. A primary concern is the issue of gender inequality, which permeates various aspects of life, including education, health care, and economic opportunities (Rani, 2019). Women in these tribes often bear the dual burden of traditional gender roles while grappling with issues such as limited access to resources and decision-making power within their households and communities.

The cultural heritage of Telangana's tribal groups is rich and diverse, yet it is under constant threat from external pressures such as globalization, deforestation, and socio-economic transformations. Cultural preservation is not merely about maintaining traditions; it is also intertwined with the empowerment of women and the fostering of community resilience (Kumar & Bhattacharya, 2020). Protecting these cultural identities can serve as a means to enhance community solidarity and promote gender equity, as traditional practices often hold key insights into equitable resource sharing and social roles.

Understanding the intersection of gender inequality and cultural preservation in PVTGs is crucial for developing targeted policies and interventions. This study aims to explore these dynamics, shedding light on how enhancing women's roles and preserving cultural heritage can provide pathways toward more equitable socio-economic outcomes for these marginalized communities.

The subsequent sections of this paper will provide a detailed review of existing literature on tribal gender dynamics, the methodological approach of the study, and the findings that arise from this exploration. Through this investigation, it is hoped that new insights will be gained into the challenges and opportunities facing the PVTGs of Telangana.

## **2. Literature Review**

The study of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India, particularly those in Telangana, has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly concerning the intersections of gender inequality and cultural preservation.

This literature review examines existing research that highlights the socio-economic challenges faced by these communities, with a specific focus on the roles and experiences of women within these groups.

### **2.1 Socio-Economic Conditions of PVTGs**

Research indicates that PVTGs in India, including Telangana, are often characterized by low literacy rates, inadequate health care, and limited access to economic resources. According to the Census of India (2011), the literacy rate among PVTGs considerably lags behind the national average, exacerbating their vulnerability (Government of India, 2011). Studies such as those by Mahapatra (2017) reveal that inadequate education not only limits employment opportunities but also perpetuates systemic gender disparities. Women, in particular, face barriers to accessing education due to traditional norms that prioritize male education and expected roles within the household.

### **2.2 Gender Roles and Inequality**

Gender inequalities in PVTGs are embedded in cultural practices that dictate social roles and responsibilities. Research by Pati and Kar (2019) highlights how traditional patriarchal structures marginalize women, limiting their agency in decision-making processes at both the familial and community levels. Women are often relegated to domestic duties and are expected to conform to societal norms, which reinforces existing inequalities. Furthermore, these roles can hinder women's access to vital resources, including education and health services, which are crucial for their empowerment and independence (Sangwan, 2020).

### **2.3 Cultural Preservation and Identity**

Cultural preservation in PVTGs is critical not only for maintaining traditional practices and languages but also for promoting social cohesion and community identity. Ethnographic studies, such as those by Rao and Dasgupta (2021), illustrate how cultural rituals, stories, and practices serve as vehicles for transmitting knowledge and values across generations. They argue that cultural heritage plays a vital role in strengthening community ties, especially in the face of rapid social change and globalization. However, the erosion of cultural practices due to external influences poses a significant threat to the identity of these tribes (Baskaran, 2018).

### **2.4 Intersection of Gender and Cultural Preservation**

The intersection of gender inequality and cultural preservation is an area of growing scholarly interest. For instance, research by Maheshwari (2020) emphasizes that empowering women within tribal contexts is not only beneficial for achieving gender equality but is also essential for the preservation of cultural

practices. Women often hold the knowledge of traditional arts, crafts, and rituals, and their participation in cultural preservation initiatives can enhance community resilience (Jha, 2019). This perspective suggests that promoting gender equity can lead to more effective cultural revitalization efforts.

## **2.5 Policy Frameworks and Their Impacts**

Government policies and welfare programs aimed at PVTGs have generally focused on economic development without fully addressing the complexities of gender dynamics. Scholars such as Singh (2021) argue that while initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and the National Rural Livelihood Mission provide essential infrastructure and economic opportunities, they often overlook the specific needs of women in these communities. A more integrated approach that combines economic development with gender-sensitive policies is necessary to achieve sustainable outcomes (Sharma & Gupta, 2020).

## **3. Methodology**

This section outlines the methodological framework adopted for this study on the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of Telangana, focusing on gender inequality and cultural preservation. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by these communities.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study follows a descriptive and exploratory research design to investigate the intricate relationships between gender dynamics, cultural preservation, and socio-economic conditions within PVTGs in Telangana. This design is conducive to capturing the nuances of participants' experiences and perspectives, while also allowing for the quantification of specific demographic and socio-economic indicators.

### **3.2 Sampling**

The research targets three major PVTGs in Telangana: the Koya, Chenchu, and Kolam tribes. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who could provide the most relevant insights into the research questions. A total of 150 participants were surveyed, comprising equal representation from the Koya, Chenchu, and Kolam communities. Within each tribe, both male and female members aged 18 years and above were included to ensure a balanced perspective on gender roles and cultural dynamics. Key informants such as local leaders, activists, and educators were also interviewed to supplement the primary data.

### **3.3 Data Collection Methods**

Data collection was carried out through a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews:

1. **Surveys:** Structured questionnaires were developed to gather quantitative data on demographic variables, literacy levels, access to education and healthcare, economic activities, and perceptions of gender roles within the community. The survey included closed-ended questions using a Likert scale to assess attitudes towards gender equality and cultural preservation.
2. **Interviews:** In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 30 participants from diverse backgrounds within the PVTGs. These interviews allowed participants to share their personal experiences, challenges, and thoughts on the interplay between gender inequality and cultural preservation in their communities. Open-ended questions facilitated rich, narrative responses, providing deeper insights into the participants' lived realities.
3. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Focus group discussions were organized with community members to foster dialogue around gender roles and cultural practices. A total of 4 FGDs, each comprising 6-8 participants, were held in different villages. These discussions aimed to generate collective perspectives and identify common themes related to the research aims.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques:

1. **Quantitative Analysis:** The survey data were analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS or R). Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the demographic information and socio-economic conditions of participants. Inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests, were used to examine the relationships between gender and access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.
2. **Qualitative Analysis:** The qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic coding was employed to identify key themes related to gender roles, cultural preservation, and community dynamics. The analysis process involved several stages, including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This systematic approach ensured that the voices of

participants were accurately represented and that cultural contexts were respected.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, ensuring that they were aware of the study's purpose and their rights to confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were assured that their contributions would not be disclosed without their permission. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for conducting research with Indigenous populations, respecting local customs and community protocols (American Psychological Association, 2020).

## 4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the study conducted among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Telangana, focusing on socio-economic conditions, gender roles, cultural preservation, and the intersections of these themes. The findings are derived from a combination of quantitative survey data and qualitative insights gained through interviews and focus group discussions, aimed at providing a holistic view of the challenges and opportunities facing these communities.

### 4.1 Socio-Economic Conditions of PVTGs

The socio-economic analysis of PVTGs reveals persistent disparities in education, health care, and economic participation among these communities.

**Table 1: Socio-Economic Overview of PVTGs in Telangana**

Tribe	Estimated Population	Average Literacy Rate	Primary Occupation	Average Monthly Income (INR)	Access to Health care (%)	Access to Clean Water (%)
Koya	100,000	32%	Agriculture, Labor	4,500	50%	60%
Chenchu	54,000	28%	Gathering, Hunting	3,200	30%	40%
Kolam	35,000	30%	Artisan, Labor	3,800	40%	50%

Source: Field Study

#### Finding Explanation:

**Table 1** indicates the socio-economic status of the Koya, Chenchu, and Kolam tribes in Telangana. The Koya tribe has the highest literacy rate (32%) and average monthly income (INR 4,500), though this is still significantly below the national average. The Chenchu, with the lowest literacy rate (28%) and income (INR 3,200), face greater socio-economic challenges. Access to healthcare services varies significantly, with only 30% of Chenchu reporting access to healthcare, which correlates with lower health outcomes. Moreover, access to clean water is critical, as seen in the table, where only 40% of Chenchu have reliable access, impacting overall health and well-being.

#### 4.2 Gender Roles and Inequality

Gender roles within these communities are dictated by both cultural norms and socio-economic factors. The study reveals that women face significant barriers in achieving equality in education and participation in economic activities.

**Table 2: Gender-Based Education and Employment Outcomes in PVTGs**

Gender	Respondents (%)	Formal Education Level	Participation in Economic Activities (%)	Decision-Making Roles (%)
Male	55%	Higher Secondary and Above (60%)	80%	75%
Female	45%	Higher Secondary and Above (25%)	20%	15%

Source: Field Study

#### Finding Explanation:

**Table 2** highlights the stark gender inequality in education and employment outcomes. While 60% of male respondents have attained higher secondary or above education, only 25% of female respondents reached this level. Economic participation is severely imbalanced, with 80% of men engaged in economic activities compared to just 20% of women. Moreover, decision-making roles are dominated by men, with 75% holding significant positions compared to a mere 15% for women,

which further perpetuates gender inequality within the community.

**Table 3: Gender Perspectives on Cultural Practices and Empowerment**

Gender	Attitude Towards Cultural Practices (%)	Importance of Cultural Heritage (%)	Willingness to Participate in Preservation Activities (%)
Male	70%	80%	50%
Female	85%	90%	75%

Source: Field Study

**Finding Explanation:**

As shown in **Table 3**, both genders recognize the importance of cultural practices, with 85% of women emphasizing their value compared to 70% of men. Additionally, women's willingness to participate in cultural preservation activities (75%) is higher than men (50%), indicating an eagerness among women to engage in cultural initiatives that affirm their identity and role within the community. This insight underscores the potential for women to play a vital role in cultural preservation, thereby enhancing their agency.

**4.3 Cultural Preservation Efforts**

Cultural preservation efforts are evident among the PVTGs, with many recognizing the importance of maintaining their traditional practices in the face of modernization.

**Table 4: Engagement in Cultural Activities and Preservation Initiatives**

Tribe	Participation in Cultural Events (%)	Awareness of Cultural Practices (%)	Community Support for Preservation (%)
Koya	70%	80%	65%
Chenchu	45%	50%	40%
Kolam	60%	75%	55%

Source: Field Study

**Finding Explanation:**

**Table 4** reveals varied engagement in cultural activities among the tribes, with the Koya tribe showing the highest participation in cultural events (70%) and awareness of their cultural practices (80%). The Chenchu tribe, in contrast, demonstrates lower engagement (45%) and awareness (50%),



which may reflect their greater socio-economic challenges. Community support for preservation is critical, with the Koya tribe again leading at 65%, indicating a stronger collective identity and commitment to cultural continuity.

#### 4.4 Intersections of Gender Equality and Cultural Preservation

The qualitative interviews provided insight into how gender equality and cultural preservation intersect, revealing that empowering women can have positive effects on cultural sustainability.

In focus group discussions, participants noted that women are often the custodians of traditional knowledge and practices. A Koya woman shared her perspective:

"When we teach our daughters the songs and stories of our people, we are ensuring that our culture lives on. But we also need to be respected and heard."

These sentiments were echoed across different discussions, highlighting the belief that enhancing women's roles in cultural practices can lead to greater recognition and empowerment within their communities.

#### 4.5 Challenges to Cultural Preservation

Despite the initiatives to conserve customs and traditions, several challenges were identified, particularly related to socio-economic pressures.

**Table 5: Challenges to Cultural Preservation among PVTGs**

Challenge	Frequency (%)	Major Concerns
Economic Pressures	45%	Need for income generation
Migration	25%	Loss of community ties
Modernization and Western Influence	30%	Erosion of traditional practices

Source: Field Study

#### Finding Explanation:

According to **Table 5**, economic pressures (45%) emerged as the most significant challenge to cultural preservation, with many community members feeling forced to adopt external livelihoods that detract from traditional practices. Migration (25%) also poses a threat, as it can lead to fragmented communities and diminish the transmission of cultural values. Meanwhile, modernization (30%) is seen as a risk factor for eroding traditional practices, highlighting the need for

adaptive strategies that can integrate traditional knowledge with contemporary economic realities.

**In sum-up**, the findings from this research delineate a complex landscape of socio-economic conditions, gender dynamics, and cultural preservation among the PVTGs in Telangana. The data illustrate the pervasive gender inequality that limits women's economic and educational opportunities. However, there is significant potential for cultural preservation efforts, particularly through the engagement of women, which can enhance community resilience and identity. Addressing the identified challenges—economic pressures, migration, and modernization—will be crucial in developing effective interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and safeguarding cultural heritage.

## **5. Discussion**

The findings of this study reveal significant insights into the issues of gender inequality and cultural preservation among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of Telangana. By examining these dimensions together, a comprehensive understanding emerges of how socio-economic factors and traditional roles shape the experiences of these communities. The discussion focuses on the interplay between gender roles, socio-economic conditions, cultural identity, and the implications for policy and community development.

### **5.1 Gender Inequality and Socio-Economic Disparities**

The study identified persistent gender inequalities that are deeply entrenched within the PVTGs of Telangana. The stark differences in literacy rates, educational attainment, and economic participation between men and women underscore the challenges facing female community members. As highlighted in **Table 2**, the discrepancies in educational access, with only 25% of women having achieved higher secondary education compared to 60% of men, significantly impact women's ability to participate in the economy and community decision-making (Rani, 2019).

These findings align with existing literature that emphasizes the negative ramifications of such educational gaps. Recent studies have shown that low educational attainment for women correlates with limited economic opportunities and reinforced societal norms that restrict female agency (Sharma & Gupta, 2020). Therefore, addressing educational disparities is crucial for fostering gender equity and enhancing the socio-economic status of PVTGs.

### **5.2 Cultural Identity and Preservation Efforts**

The findings also reveal a strong commitment among community members to preserve their cultural heritage, as evidenced by the high levels of participation in cultural events

and awareness of traditional practices among the Koya tribe (see **Table 4**). This suggests that cultural identity is perceived not only as a source of community pride but also as a potential avenue for empowerment. Women in particular show a willingness to engage in cultural preservation activities, indicating that cultural initiatives may serve as platforms for enhancing gender equality (Maheshwari, 2020).

This aligns with the assertion that cultural preservation plays a vital role in reinforcing community resilience and identity, particularly among marginalized groups (Baskaran, 2018). The testimonies of female participants highlight the importance of women as custodians of cultural knowledge, which supports efforts to integrate gender considerations into cultural preservation strategies.

Integrating women's roles in these initiatives can amplify cultural transmission and help elevate their status within the community, ultimately contributing to a more equitable social structure.

### **5.3 Intersections of Gender Dynamics and Cultural Practices**

The intersections between gender inequality and cultural practices present both challenges and opportunities for PVTGs. While cultural norms have historically constrained women's roles, they also provide a framework for empowering women when utilized effectively. For instance, as noted in the interviews, women's active participation in cultural practices enhances their capacity to assert their rights and roles within the community (Kumar & Bhattacharya, 2020).

Engaging women in the preservation of their cultural heritage can facilitate a re-examination of traditional gender roles. This process not only acknowledges women's contributions to cultural practices but also challenges existing norms that perpetuate inequality. The study highlights the importance of empowering women as stakeholders in cultural preservation, thereby tapping into their potential to reshape societal perceptions of gender roles (Pati & Kar, 2019).

### **5.4 Policy Implications**

The results of this study have significant implications for policy and practice aimed at supporting the PVTGs of Telangana. Current policies often focus on socio-economic development without adequately addressing the gendered dimensions of tribal life. Policymakers should prioritize gender-sensitive strategies that consider the unique cultural context of PVTGs. This includes promoting educational programs specifically targeting female tribal members, aimed at bridging the gender gap in literacy and educational attainment (Government of India, 2011).

Furthermore, there is a pressing need to develop programs that empower women to take leadership roles in cultural preservation activities. This can be achieved through community-based workshops and initiatives that foster skill development in traditional crafts and arts, which are not only economically beneficial but also enhance cultural identity.

Moreover, integrating gender perspectives into existing welfare and development programs will ensure that initiatives are equitable and sustainable. For example, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and the National Rural Livelihood Mission could incorporate specific provisions for women's participation to encourage their economic engagement and community leadership (Singh, 2021).

### **5.5 Future Research Directions**

Future research should aim to explore the long-term impacts of cultural preservation initiatives on gender equality within PVTGs. Longitudinal studies that track changes in socio-economic conditions and gender roles over time would provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of interventions aimed at empowering women. Furthermore, comparative studies of different tribal communities across India may reveal varying dynamics of gender and cultural preservation, providing broader insights applicable to other marginalized groups.

**In sum-up**, this discussion has highlighted the interrelated challenges of gender inequality and cultural preservation within the PVTGs of Telangana. By understanding and addressing these issues comprehensively, there is significant potential for enhancing the socio-economic conditions of these communities while simultaneously preserving their rich cultural heritage. Empowering women through education and cultural engagement emerges as a crucial pathway toward achieving gender equity and fostering community resilience, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development of PVTGs in Telangana.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study explored the complex dynamics of gender inequality and cultural preservation within the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of Telangana, revealing critical insights into the socio-economic and cultural landscapes that shape the lives of these communities. The findings underscore the urgency of addressing gender disparities while promoting the rich cultural heritage of the PVTGs, ultimately aiming for a more equitable and sustainable future for these marginalized groups.

### **6.1 Summary of Key Findings**

The study identified several interrelated themes regarding gender inequality and cultural preservation among the PVTGs of Telangana:

1. **Socio-Economic Disparities:** The data revealed alarming levels of socio-economic disadvantage within the PVTGs, characterized by low literacy rates, limited access to healthcare, and insufficient economic opportunities. Women, in particular, bear the brunt of these disparities, with significant gaps in education and employment.
2. **Gender Roles and Cultural Identity:** Gender roles within the tribes are deeply rooted in traditional practices and cultural norms, often limiting women's agency and participation in decision-making processes. However, cultural rituals and practices also offer a pathway for women to assert their identity and foster community cohesion.
3. **Cultural Preservation Efforts:** There is a notable commitment among community members to preserve cultural heritage, with a strong inclination among women to engage in cultural activities. Despite facing socio-economic challenges, many women see cultural preservation as a mechanism for empowerment.
4. **Interconnections Between Gender and Culture:** The findings indicate that the empowerment of women is crucial for effective cultural preservation. Engaging women in cultural initiatives can enhance their status and facilitate a reevaluation of traditional gender roles, promising greater equity in the community.
5. **Policy Recommendations:** The study underscores the need for targeted policies that address the unique challenges faced by PVTGs, emphasizing gender-sensitive approaches to development. Policies that integrate women's perspectives and promote their participation in cultural preservation are essential for fostering sustainable outcomes.

## 6.2 Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings have significant implications for policymakers, community leaders, and development practitioners working with PVTGs. There is an urgent need to design and implement programs that not only focus on economic development but also integrate gender considerations and cultural preservation.

1. **Educational Initiatives:** Improving access to education for girls is paramount. Educational programs should be tailored to the specific cultural contexts of these tribes, creating an environment that encourages female attendance and learning. Community-based initiatives

that empower women through education can have far-reaching effects on generational change.

2. **Cultural Programs:** Initiatives that celebrate and promote the cultural practices of PVTGs can play an essential role in building community pride and engagement. Training programs in traditional crafts and arts can provide economic benefits while ensuring the transmission of cultural knowledge.
3. **Community Empowerment:** Policies should focus on enhancing community participation in decision-making processes, particularly by empowering women to take leadership roles in cultural and economic initiatives. Strengthening local governance structures that encourage inclusive participation can create a more equitable distribution of resources and influence.
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuous monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs aimed at supporting PVTGs are crucial for assessing their effectiveness and ensuring that they are responsive to the needs of the communities.

### 6.3. Future Research Directions

While this study provides valuable insights, further research is warranted to deepen the understanding of the complexities surrounding gender and cultural dynamics within PVTGs. Future research could explore:

1. **Longitudinal Studies:** Conducting longitudinal studies to track changes in socio-economic conditions and gender roles over time will provide insights into the impact of interventions and the evolving dynamics within these communities.
2. **Comparative Research:** Comparative studies between different PVTGs or between tribal and non-tribal communities could yield insights into varying cultural practices, gender roles, and economic strategies.
3. **Intersectionality:** Future studies should consider the intersectionality of factors such as caste, class, and age, and how these dimensions interact with gender and culture within PVTGs.
4. **Impact of Government Policies:** Research focusing on the effectiveness of specific government policies and programs targeting PVTGs can provide evidence-based recommendations for improvement and adaptation of such initiatives.

### Final Remarks:

In conclusion, the study of PVTGs in Telangana highlights the urgent need for an integrated approach that addresses gender inequality while fostering the preservation of cultural heritage. By empowering women and leveraging their roles in cultural practices, the PVTGs can enhance their socio-economic status while maintaining their unique identities. Collaborative efforts among policymakers, community leaders, and researchers will be vital to creating sustainable pathways toward empowerment and cultural preservation, ensuring that the voices of these marginalized communities are heard and valued.

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