

SOCIO ECONOMIC CHALLENGES OF THE TRIBES; A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON TRIBAL POPULATION OF PURULIA DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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Purulia district, of West Bengal, boasts a rich tapestry of tribes and diverse topographical features. This research paper endeavors to explore the intricate relationship between indigenous tribes and the natural environment. By delving into the cultural and geographical dimensions, this paper aims comprehensive understanding of the unique interplay between the tribes and the landscape they inhabit. Through field observations and analysis, the paper sheds light on the socio-economic dynamics, cultural practices, and environmental adaptations of the tribes in Purulia district.

Introduction

Purulia District, with its sprawling plains, undulating hills, and dense forests, presents a captivating canvas for exploration. Home to several indigenous tribes, including the Santhals, Mundas, Bhumij and many others, the cultural mosaic of Purulia is as vibrant as it is ancient¹. These tribes have not only shaped the socio-cultural fabric of the region but also maintained a harmonious relationship with its topography for generations². The topography of Purulia District is characterized by its diverse terrain, ranging from rugged hills and plateaus to fertile plains and meandering rivers³. This comprehensive analysis endeavors to delve deep into the intricate interplay between the tribes inhabiting this region and its varied topography.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are as follows;

- To profile the socio-economic conditions of tribal populations in the study area.

- To explore the relationship between tribal communities and their natural environment of the area.
- To recommendations some remedial measures to aimed at improving the socio-economic well-being, and overall development of tribal communities in Purulia District.

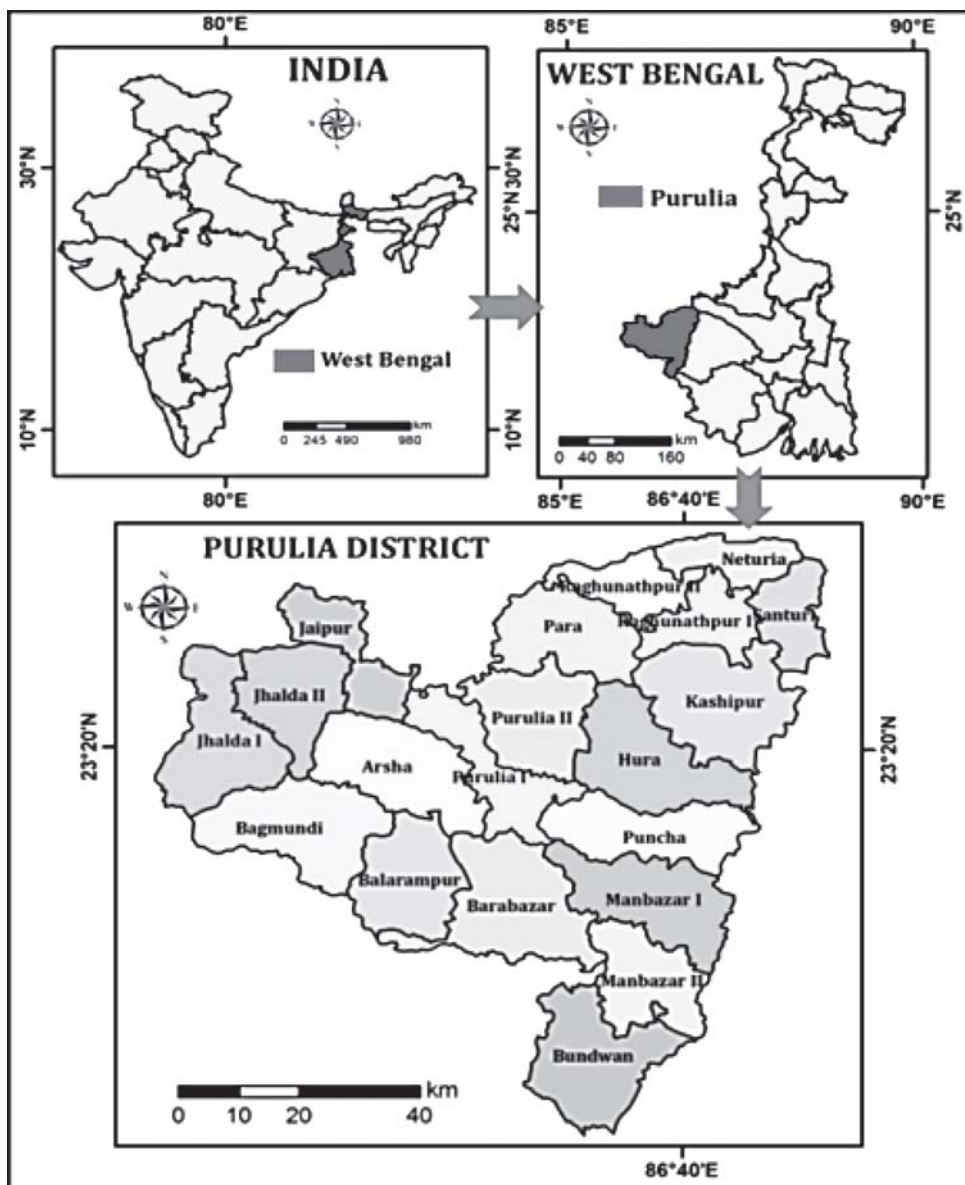
Study Area

Purulia is located in the western most part of the state of West Bengal. The northern, southern and western part of the district is bound by the districts of Burdwan, Bankura and Paschim Medinipur. The district lies between 22°4' and 23°45' North latitude and 85°55' and 86°55' East longitude. Total area of the district is 6259 sq km. The district has 28 urban units with municipalities and consists of 170 gram panchayats covering 2667 villages (census 2011).

Overview of Tribal Communities in the Study Area

Tribal people in Purulia district mainly belong of Proto-Australoid group, Santhal(61%), Bhumij(19%),

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Socio-Economic Structure

Livelihoods: Purulia are often tied to agriculture, forest-based activities, and traditional crafts. Subsistence farming, including cultivation of rice, pulses, and vegetables, is prevalent among many tribes, with agriculture forming the backbone of their economy.

Education and Healthcare: Access to education and healthcare tribes are facing lots challenges such as low literacy rates, inadequate school facilities, and limited availability of healthcare professionals persist.

Income Diversification: With changing socio-economic dynamics, there is a growing need for income diversification among tribal communities in Purulia. Initiatives aimed at promoting alternative livelihoods, such as eco-tourism, sustainable agriculture, handicraft marketing, and skill

Sabar(8%), Munda(7%) and Bihor(2%).Santhals are the largest tribal communities in Purulia, and they are known for their distinctive language, music, dance forms, and agricultural practices⁴.

development programs, are being explored to supplement traditional livelihoods and enhance economic resilience.

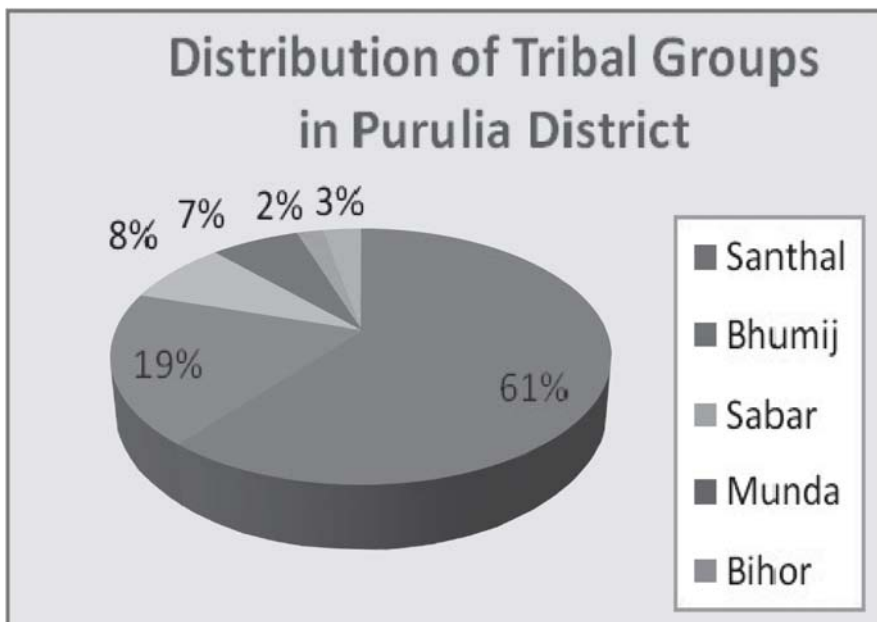
Comparison of Total Population with S.T. Population in Rural Urban Areas

Year	Total population	Decadal Growth (%)	Rural	Decadal Growth (%)	Urban	Decadal Growth (%)	S.T population	Decadal Growth (%)	Rural	Decadal Growth (%)	Urban	Decadal Growth (%)
1981	1853801	15.65	1687039	14.72	166762	25.98	348375	11.02	345442	10.91	2933	25.07
1991	2224577	20	2014571	19.41	210006	25.93	427766	22.79	423415	22.57	4351	48.35
2001	2536516	14.02	2281090	13.23	255426	21.63	463452	8.34	456573	7.83	6879	58.1
2011	2930115	15.52	2556801	12.09	373314	46.15	540652	16.66	531822	16.48	8833	28.41

Source: census of India

District	Literacy Rate			Gap in Male-female	Literacy Rate			Gap in Male-female
	TOT_LIT	LIT_M	LIT_F	Literacy Rate	ST_TOT_LIT	ST_M_LIT	ST_F_LIT	Literacy Rate
Purulia	64.48	77.86	50.52	27.34	53.68	67.71	39.54	28.17

Source: District Census Handbook, 2011



700 meters above sea level, the Ajodhya Hills offer breathtaking views, lush greenery, and numerous trekking trails. The rugged terrain of the hills is interspersed with dense forests, rocky outcrops, and cascading waterfalls, making it a popular destination for nature lovers.

Forests and Wildlife: Purulia District is endowed with diverse forest ecosystems, ranging from tropical deciduous forests to dry scrublands. These forests harbor a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna, including indigenous species of trees, shrubs, mammals, birds, and reptiles.

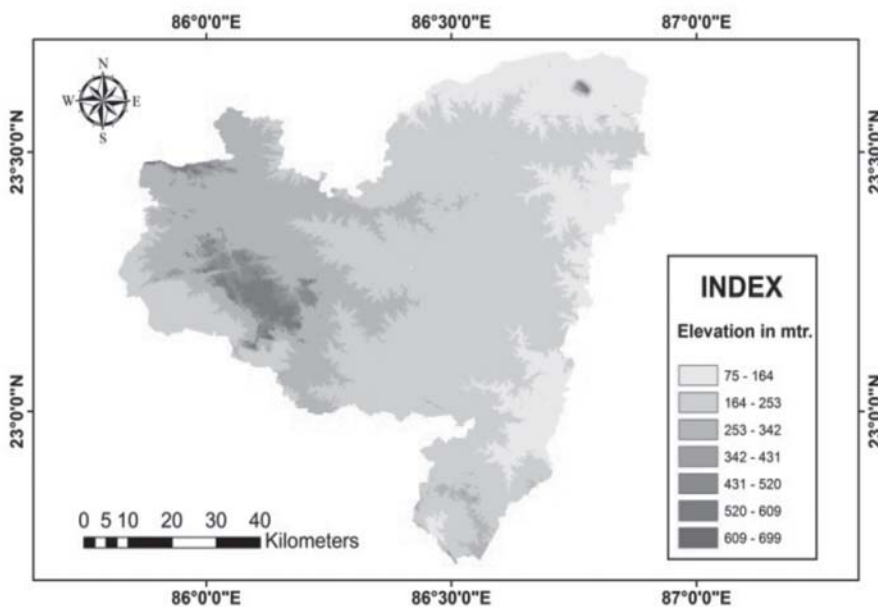
Challenges to the Tribes of the Study Area:

Limited Access to Education and Healthcare: Despite efforts to expand educational infrastructure and healthcare services, access remains limited in tribal areas of Purulia. Low literacy rates, inadequate school facilities, and insufficient healthcare professionals contribute to disparities in socio-economic development.

Socio-Economic Vulnerability: Dependence on traditional livelihoods such as agriculture and forest-based

activities makes tribal communities vulnerable to environmental changes, market fluctuations, and economic shocks. Limited access to alternative livelihood opportunities exacerbates economic vulnerability.

Elevation Map of Purulia District Using DEM

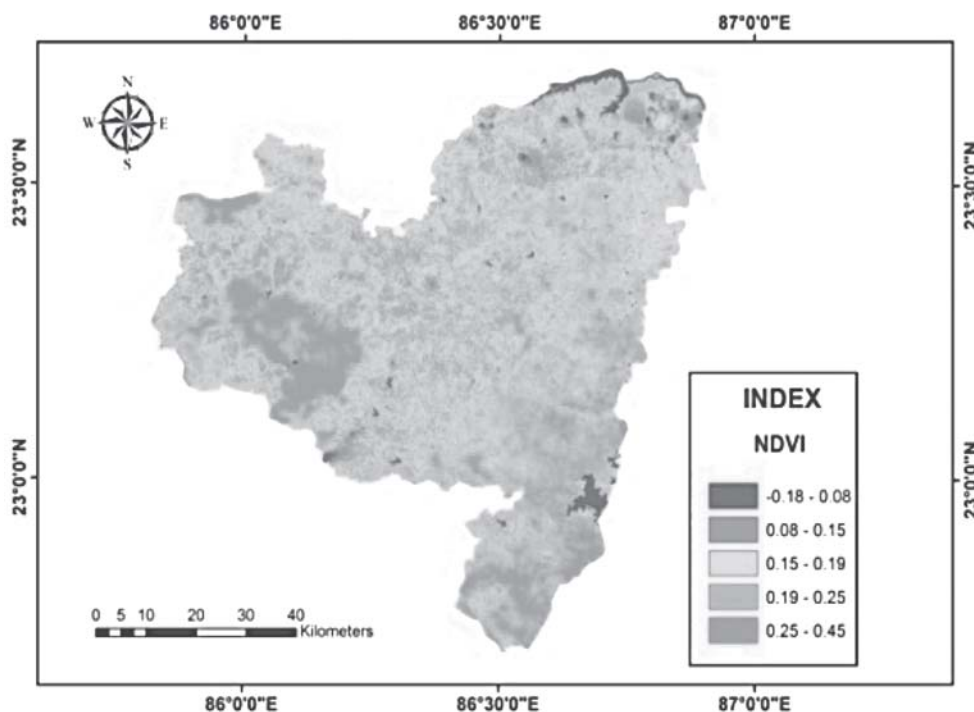


Geographical Features

Here are some key geographical features of Purulia District:

Hilly Terrain: The district being the most prominent geographical features. Rising to an elevation of around

Normalized Difference Vegetation Index Map of Purulia District



the area may face social marginalization, discrimination, and exclusion from mainstream society.

Summary of Findings:

- Santhals, Mundas, Kharias, Bhumij, are the dominant communities in Purulia District and contribute to the rich cultural tapestry of the region, preserving ancestral knowledge and heritage.
- The geographical features of Purulia District encompass rugged hills, dense forests, meandering rivers, and fertile plains. It shapes the socio-economic dynamics, settlement patterns, and cultural practices of the local inhabitants.
- The study are faces various socio-economic

challenges, including land tenure insecurity, limited access to education and healthcare, infrastructure deficiencies, and economic vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comprehensive study of the natural environment and socio-economic status of the tribal population in Purulia District, underscores the intricate interplay between human communities and their surrounding ecosystems. Through a nuanced examination of traditional knowledge, resource utilization patterns, and socio-economic indicators, this research illuminates the

challenges and opportunities facing indigenous tribes in the region. By recognizing the importance of preserving cultural heritage, promoting sustainable practices, and addressing socio-economic disparities, stakeholders can work towards fostering holistic development and ensuring the well-being of tribal communities. □

References

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