



## IMPACT OF MEDIA ON PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS IN SCHEDULE V AREAS OF CHHATTISGARH

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### **Abstract**

*The central India representing the various ethnic tribal groups like Gond, Baiga, Kol, Agaria, Panika, Birhor, Korwa, and so on. They practice primitive form of agriculture and cultivate traditional crop varieties such as kodo, kutki, sawa or dhunia, makka (maize), ram tilla along with paddy and wheat. Apart from this, majority of their economy depend on exploitation of forest and its resources through their age old traditional knowledge. To uplift their socio-economic condition, government has initiated many schemes and developmental programmes in several states including Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. But due to lack of proper communication and awareness, the benefits of such welfare measures are not reaching to the target population. Unlike major cities and urban centre, the coverage of news, success or failure stories, folklore are not adequately covered in print or electronic media at national, state or district level. As a result, majority of the problems in tribal areas cannot be solved and thus status quo was maintained. The media coverage and content with suitable and effective mode of communication is utmost important for tribal development. Communication through transport and mass media playing a catalytic role in access of remote or isolated tribal areas and helps in integrating them into mainstream population. As such, communication has become a key to understand the various developmental programmes undertaken by the government in their area and to improve their living conditions.*

*With this backdrop, the present paper highlights the impact of media on the life of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (here after PVTGs). Further an attempt is also make to understand the role of media in creating awareness about the political awakening, government schemes and developmental programmes launched for the welfare of the Baiga in Dhanoli Gram Panchayat of Bilaspur district in Chhattisgarh. Further this paper also tries to highlight the use of traditional media in creating awareness about the government measures.*

*To test this hypothesis, two Baiga hamlets i.e., Pakri Katchar and Khari Debra of Dhanoli Gram Panchayat of Bilaspur District in Chhattisgarh are selected and studied from anthropological perspective.*

### **Introduction**

In the Globalization process, mass media play a pivotal role in changing the lives of millions of people across the world including the developing countries like India. The utility of news paper, television, and computers, mobile phones and so on for communication with distant people in massive way witness the development benefits to the interior areas. It is having immense benefit for the society to understand the inherent social problems and render solutions for social change. Media transmits the massive information and knowledge by fastest means which will help during the times of natural exigencies like floods, droughts, earthquakes, tsunami, and so on. Besides this, it is also a means through which superstitions are removed through awareness. Even the State relies on media for introduction of new developmental programmes and its monitoring, evaluation and analysis. To uplift the status of tribal communities in terms of their socio-economic condition, government of India has initiated many schemes and developmental programmes in several states across India. But due to lack of proper communication and awareness, the benefits of such welfare measures are not reaching to the target population. Communication through transport and mass media playing a catalytic role in access of remote or isolated tribal areas and helps in integrating them into mainstream population. As such communication has become a key to understand the various developmental programmes undertaken by the government in their area and to improve their living conditions. It is believed that majority of the problems in tribal areas can be solved with suitable and effective mode of communication. Still some of the hilly tracts resided by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups are not having access to modern means of communication. However, efforts are being initiated by national and state governments, Non-Governmental Organizations in accessing the communication facilities to the marginal sections of the society.

### **Objective**

The present paper highlights the impact of media on the Baiga who belongs to one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups through both print and electronic media. Further an attempt is also make to understand the role of media in creating awareness about the political awakening, government schemes and developmental programmes launched for the welfare of the PVTGs of the study area.



### Study Area

To test the above mentioned objective, two Baiga hamlets of Dhanoli Gram Panchayat of Bilaspur District in Chhattisgarh are selected and studied from anthropological perspective. They are mainly Pakri Katchar and Khari Debra. Dhanoli is a major Panchayat comes under Gaurela Tehsil having six kilometers distance from Tehsil headquarter. It covers the villages like Pakri Katchar, Khari Debra, Chuila Paani, Media Katchar, Patra tola, Karangara, and Baidkudra. Of which, two Baiga villages names Pakri Katchar and Khari Debra were selected for the present study. The surrounding villages of the Dhanoli Gram Panchayat is inhabited by both tribal as well as non-tribal households i.e., Gond, Kol, Panika, Bhaina, Yadav, Gujjar, Choudhury, Brahman, Kachi, Namdeo, Rajput, Lohar, , Kewat, Rathore, Agrawal, Jaiswal, Srivastav, Sahu, Kumhar, Soni, Pradhan (Patari), etc. The study villages are located in a radius of three kilometers wherein the Baiga hamlets are interiorly located from the main village. The study area comes under the purview of 5<sup>th</sup> Schedule and their households are scattered inside the forest and can be reached on footpaths only. More than 90% of the villagers belongs to the Baiga community which comes under Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

### Criteria for Selection

The study was undertaken in 2015 as a part of the Indian Council of Social Science Research sponsored Major Research Project entitled “Resource Management and Changing Livelihoods among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups” (PVTGs)”. The villages got highlighted with the news of the failure of family planning operations to Baiga women and it is reflected in local, regional, national and even international media. Further the majority of Baiga population in Dhanoli Gram Panchayat are still in Below Poverty Line and needs attention of the policy makers for some ameliorative measures.

### Methodology

The present study is basically a qualitative anthropological study aimed at understanding the impact of media on *Baiga* socio-cultural, educational, economic, and religious life. To meet the above mentioned objectives, primary data was collected through intensive fieldwork in Dhanoli Gram Panchayat during October and December 2015. In order to fulfill the objectives of the study, qualitative anthropological techniques were conceived as important for the study. These are mainly observation, key informant interviews, focus group interviews, and formal and informal interviews using a detailed checklist.

Further, SWOT analysis i.e., to analyze the research objectives the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats of the media has been used. The secondary information was collected through the articles and news coverage published in old news papers, personal interviews with the editors of the local media, politicians, Panchayat officials and so on.

### About the Tribe

Baiga is listed as one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) and found mainly in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand. They are classified into seven sub-categories known as the Binjhvars, the Bharotiyas, the Narotias, the Raibhainas, the Kathbhainas, the Kondwans, and Gondwainas. They speak their own dialect known as Baigini in local parlance which is intermixed with Chhattisgarhi. Their social organization is divided into several endogamous jat (groups), which are themselves subdivided into exogamous garh and goti. Social relationships between the different jat are governed by a series of detailed and rather complicated regulations. The surnames of the Baiga are overlapping with Gond and identical with many surnames, clan and lineage names since they are residing close to the Gond dominated villages. Marriage by mutual love and elopement, marriage by service, and marriage by negotiation are the existing and socially approved forms of marriage. The practice of monogamy is widely observed in the study village. Divorce and remarriages are common. The custom of bride price is prevalent in the form of kind.

As per 2015 household census, the total population of the study villages comes to 346 consisting 162 male and 184 female. Interestingly the female population of Baiga is outnumbering the male population and the role of women in their family and economic life is noteworthy.

**Table 1: Population Details of Pakri Katchar and Khari Debra 2015**

S. No	Village	Male	Female	Total
1.	Pakri Katchar	100	98	198
2.	Khari Debra	62	86	147
Total		162	184	346



At present, they practice primitive form of agriculture by using simple technology in the study area. They cultivate traditional varieties of Kodo, Kutki, Ramtila, Ulsi, Teera, Masurdal Channa, Paddy, Wheat, and Maize. Pej (porridge) is a kind of semi-liquid staple food and prepared daily for consumption by the whole family members. It is made with pounded granules of new rice (*naya chaval*), maize (*butta/makka*), wheat (*gehu*), and traditional varieties like *kodo*, *kutki*, etc. They hunt small animals like *Chitar* (Deer), *Barha* (pig), *Khargosh* (rabbit) and fish in nearby water bodies. Further they depend on forest for both timber and non-timber forest produce for their sustenance.

*Baiga* villages appear to be governed autonomously, with leadership being exercised by the village *mukkadam* (headman). Other village officials include the *malguzar* (landlord) and *katwar* (watchman). Legal disputes and tribal offences are handled by the *panch*, a group composed of key village members who convene with a quorum of five. Though there are elected *Panchayat* representatives are present in the study area, they still depend on traditional council for dispute resolution.

Traditional *Baiga* jurisprudence governs tribal life to a greater extent than regulations established by state. This jurisprudence is concerned chiefly with the maintenance of tribal integrity and prestige. Control is maintained by tribal excommunication, fines, and beating. These matters are decided by both informal procedures (i.e., by nonstructural consultation of various community members) and formal procedures (i.e., by the village ward member). Tribal consensus obtained by both formal and in formal structures regulates social behavior.

*Gao Gossain* is the main sacred place of the *Baiga* which is located at adjacent of the *Sarai* and *Kammar* trees. All the community related festivals and agriculture related ones are celebrated communally at this place. Wherein *Maskasi Narayan Deo*, and *Thakur Deo* are believed to stay. Further they also worship *Bura Deo*, *Dharti Mata*, *Agni Deo*, *Ghamsaan Deo*, *Dulha Deo* similar to nearby Gond. *Bura Deo* is also worshipped once in three years. On that auspicious occasion, they sacrifice a goat or hen, pig, newly made *Mahuwa* liquor, ganja, and so on.

They believe that the trees belong to *Peepal jhaad*, *Bheeja jhaad* is considered as *Thakur Deo*. Chula (fire hearth) is considered as the abode of the deities since it is providing food to them. Some families worship *Siddh Baba* who is believed to reside inside the house.

*Baiga* men used to wear *dhotia* (dhoti), *patka* (langoti), *pagadi* (head scraf), *salukha* (neck), *lohgenuma* (waist cloth), peacock headgear, and *chaaknuma* whereas woman use *lugra* (sari with 16 or 12 *haat* length), blouse, *bilgaria* (a traditional cloth purse wear around waist), *pichora* (wear on back), and *mungi dhoti* (16 or 12 *haat* length). *Holi Tungi* half pant wear above the *gutana* (knee).

They perform local folk dance popularly known as *Karma* on various ritual occasions. The *Baiga* are expertise in making the musical instruments known as *Timki*, *Nangada*, *Chimni*, *Loda Siloti*, *Mandar*, *Dalki*, *Bansuri*, *Diski*, *Chatkola*, etc., and it is customary to operate these instruments during the occasions. *Torki*, is a kind of musical instrument used to scare the birds in their agricultural fields.

### Modern Media and Communication System

The mass media had tremendous impact on the socio-cultural profile of the tribal, rural and many other down trodden communities since Independence. It is one of the chief source of transmitting the cultural values of different communities and also helped in improving the quality of life. As such, mass media covering print as well as electronic in the study area were mainly categorized into three types. They were mainly Hindi daily news papers such as *Nav Bharat*, *Dainik Bhaskaran*, *Hari Bhumi*, *Nai Duniya*, *Patrika* followed by English daily news papers like Central Chronicle, Times of India are also entered in the Tehsil are covering the news coverage of the PVTGs of the study area frequently. The electronic media like Z-Chhattisgarh, *Sahara Samay*, *Deshbandhu*, E-TV Chhattisgarh, etc., also covering the local news as and when required.

Apart from the above stated regional and national level media, one local news paper is being operated from the Gaurela i.e., *Narmadanchal* weekly news paper. Officially, no reporter is engaged for collection of news. However, the local villagers, sarpanches, school teachers, principals, and political leaders are the resource persons who often visit to Tehsil headquarter and report the news. Further they also collect the news through e-mail by the concerned people. Due to dearth of local resource persons, now they are collecting news from Press Information Bureau (PIB) and covering major news of district and State level. The representation of local news as well as news pertaining to the existing tribal communities comes down drastically.



**Table 2: Existing Sources of Communication in the Study Area**

S. No	Name of the Village	Total Households	Mobile	Radio	Television	Dish Connection
1.	Pakri Katchar	49	34	03	05	03
2.	Khari Debra	39	11	Nil	03	03
	Total	88	45	03	08	06

From the above table it is evident that mobile phone users have dominated with possession of 69.38% in Pakri Katchar and 28.20% followed by Television 10.20% & 07.69%, dish connection 6.12% & 7.69% and Radio 6.12%. When compared to non tribal, the *Baiga* are using very less communication system. Even it is very less in case of Khari Debra since the hamlet is located inside the forest and network is less frequent and can be accessed at elevated point or the person concerned has to come to road point. Use of news paper is not found in the study villages as the resource persons like school teachers, *anganwadi* staff, ANM, and other officials' access to it and convey the news. However, the local news reporters access the villages and collect the news as and when require. The issues of serious nature with political interests are attracting the coverage in print as well as electronic media. The following two case studies of family planning are highlighted in the mass media as the issue got attention not only at local level but at national and international level.

### Impact of Media on Tribal Society

In Pakri Katchar, as per the compulsion of village level health worker (Asha worker) two *Baiga* women underwent family planning operation (*Nashabandi*) on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at Pendaroad government hospital. After discharge from the hospital, the tribal women developed the problem of bleeding at stitches. One woman (Chaiti Bai) died on the way to Bilaspur after consuming the medicine after discharge from hospital. Another woman (Mangli Bai) was rescued since she reached Bilaspur Hospital in time and given treatment at corporate hospital. During that time, many other similar cases were noticed in many districts of Chhattisgarh and became a sensation with the news coverage at regional, national and international print as well as electronic media.

### Media Coverage of the Event

The news reporters from Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, IBM 7, News 24, English news (name not remembered by the villagers), *Eenadu*-Chhattisgarh and *Eenadu*-Madhya Pradesh, *Hari Bhumi*, *Dainik Bhaskar*, *Navbharat*, *Narmadanchal* and so on rushed to Dhanoli Gram Panchayat since the villagers along with Sarpanch, village secretary, ward members, and local political leaders staged a protest by keeping the dead body in front of the Panchayat Bhavan. As a result of this, the bureaucrats and elected representatives located at Gaurela like Sub Divisional Magistrate, Tehsildar, Chief Executive Officer of Janpad Panchayat, Marwahi *Vidhayak* (Member of Legislative Assembly), rushed the spot and reported to higher officials of the District and State.

As a result of this, four lakh monetary compensation is given to the deceased Mother's husband and three lakh rupees were deposited in bank for take care of child. The child was also adopted by Marwahi *Vidhayak*. The survived mother got fifty thousand rupees as compensation and promised for construction of pucca house. The concerned doctor was suspended and the pharmacy was closed due to the coverage of news.

It is so that the *Midhani*, Asha worker, mobilized a group of *Baiga* women for *Nashabandi* and all are escaped during the mass operations and these two women were caught and picked up for operation. The *Baiga* of the study area famous for their ethno medicinal treatment i.e., *Baidya*. They rely on traditional medicine for sterilization which is not having side effects. Due to side effects, *Baiga* women are not showing interest towards sterilization operation.

### Indigenous Communication System

The *Baiga* of the study area is popular with the famous dance forms like *Karma*, *Tapadi*, *Jharpat*, *Bilma* and *Dassara* and they perform these dance forms during life cycle, agricultural, and annual rituals. Whenever marriage takes place, they do invite *Dhulia* or *Gond* community people for playing musical instruments. Due to its significance, the awareness of developmental programmes and elimination of superstitions are spread through these traditional folk dance forms. It is often observed that during school annual day celebrations, visit of dignitaries to the village, etc. Besides this, *Bazaar* (weekly market) is observed once in a week at one common point in the village where people from different villages throng at one place for sale and purchase of vegetables, minor forest produce, cereals, millets, and pulses, and other consumables. Apart from economic exchange, *Baiga* do exchange the information regarding life cycle rituals, mate selection, issue of daily requirements from the society, benefits of government plans and programmes, etc. The important messages are disseminated





through oral communication. The weekly markets are located within a radius of 5 to 10 kilometers throughout the area with different days. Thus these markets play an important role in exchange of intra and inter tribal communication.

Wall writing is another source of communication in the study area. The dates for pulse polio, vaccination, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, issue of Aadhar (Unique Identification Number) and ration cards, etc., are written on the walls where people assemble in groups, roadside, Panchayat office, anganwadi centre, school buildings.

### Impact of Media on Baiga Society

Television is one of the effective means of promoting socio-economic change not only in general population but also among the tribes. It is a status symbol in society and the advertisements floated in TV are having impact on children and adolescents it is observed in the weekly market that *Baiga* sell their harvest and minor forest produce to the non-tribal merchants who come from nearby towns. It is known as *Kallam* in local parlance. Thus procured money is being spent on purchase of products like plastic utensils, fancy jewelry, film star posters, beauty soaps, readymade garments, bangles, cosmetics, groceries, and other daily requirements. Now a days, the *Baiga* of the study area are also engaged in daily wage labour in road laying, house construction, crusher works, and so on. The hard earnings are spent on purchase of mobile phones and downloading songs, etc. due to increasing mobile consumption, the local merchants' deceit the *Baiga* by selling substandard mobiles and its accessories. They are exploited whenever it got problem of repairs, download of songs, etc.

The study area people often visit the Tehsil headquarter i.e., Gaurela which is also known as Pendraroad for each and every work located within 7 kilometers distance. The existing movie theatres also acting as important centers of communication system and acting like a change factor in the *Baiga* traditional life. With the influence of movies, the younger generation are imitating the film stars and following the dress and hair style, food habits, and so on.

Despite of their interior location, the mobile phones are used in large number to maintain relationship with distant relatives, music, and so on. Due to profuse use of multimedia and other communication system, the younger generation is attracted towards Chhattisgarhi and Hindi. They are not well versed with their local dialect i.e., *Baigini*. Regular visits to weekly markets, Tehsil headquarter and out migration, the *Baiga* of the study area drastically changed their attitude and behaviour. A traditional instrument of entertainment is replaced with radio, television, mobile, and direct to home (DTH) connection. The *Baiga* are now a days habituated to watch film songs, serials, movies and not showing interest towards their traditional folksongs, dances, gossiping, and observance of festivals. In marriage ceremony, playing of *dolak* and other musical instruments are replaced with loud speakers and modern film songs. Due to road connectivity and fast communication, they are moving outside their village in search of wage labour in road laying, construction works, cultivation works for non-tribals. Thus the alternative income generation activities are facilitating the *Baiga* to earn money during failure of rains and other exigencies. The local *mahuwa* was replaced with Indian made foreign liquor (IMFL) and habituated to *pan masala* (*gutka*), tobacco chewing, etc. Despite of such negative impact, still media has been playing a pivotal role in changing the poverty and improving the education standard of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups. However, some of the problems are come across during the research needs media attention to ameliorate the condition of *Baiga* community.

Problems in *Baiga* Hamlets that needs Media Intervention,

- The stone crushers operated by non-tribes located near to the study villages are causing environmental pollution followed by health hazard to *Baiga* along with Gond, Kol, and other tribal communities. Due to the dust emerged from the stone crushing; many cases of Tuberculosis, asthma and bronchitis are increasing.
- Further in recent past i.e., 2001 onwards, the illegal bauxite mining is extensively undertaken in the nearby area got affected the forest land and resources of the study area in massive way. Due to intensive mining, major chunk of forest coverage has come down drastically and *Baiga* facing problems of grazing of cattle, collection of forest produce, depletion of water level in springs, soil erosion, etc. Now they have to walk down long way to harvest forest resources and facing many problems in obtaining livelihoods.
- Due to crushers and mining, the drinking water got polluted. The bore water is yellowish in colour and as a result water born diseases are very frequent in the study area. Apart from this, many tribal women developing kidney stones and frequenting to Bilaspur for treatment.
- Due to illegal mining, the soil erosion is a major problem in the study area. In summer, water in tanks, *todi* (spring), and small rivulets are dried up soon and causing water scarcity for their daily requirement. To fetch fresh drinking water, they have to walk long distances in the village.
- The politically motivated issues like corruption in mid day meal programme, issues pertaining to school management committee, self help groups, problems in implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Forest Rights act and infrastructure development, are widely covered in both Hindi and English dailies. Unlike



wide coverage of those issues in the mainstream population, only few local news papers covering the news and major ones in unnoticed places.

- Due to lack of sufficient rains and soil erosion, the agriculture received a severe setback. As a result majority of the villagers are resorted to outmigration in search of employment. It has gross impact on the caring of children's education and cattle rearing.
- The villagers also engaged in quarrying work in nearby forest resources causing destruction of their own resource base keeping in view of its perceived temporary benefits. The non-tribe middle men encourage such quarrying work to supply stones for construction works.
- The *Baiga* in the study area are vulnerable to the superstitions regarding the affect of supernatural forces. The fake magico-religious practioners are rampant in the area and extract huge amounts of money for treatment. Awareness through advertisements in media is required to protect the *Baiga* from the exploitation of fake medicine men.
- Exploitation of *Baiga* by non-tribal merchants in purchase of minor forest produce is rampant in the study area. It is known as *Kallam* in local parlance wherein *Baiga* were cheated while in purchase of agricultural harvest as well as forest produce like *Mahuwa*, *Belwa* fruits, *Tendu* leaves, etc. The existence of tribal cooperative society and *Krishi Mandi* (agriculture market) is not known to them. Creation of awareness for better market price is essential to save them from the clutches of middlemen.
- The *Baiga* of the study area fetching fuel wood on headload from Karangara forest ghat which is far away from the study villages. Since the illegal mining is going on major chunk of the forest area. As a result they have to walk miles away for cattle rearing and collection of minor forest produce.
- Awareness of various developmental programmes i.e., economic, educational, agriculture, animal husbandry, vocational training, employment, etc., among the *Baiga* is very limited. As such, the benefits are availed by non-tribal on *benami* (dubious) tribal names in collusion with local level politicians and officials.
- The *Baiga* of the study area complain about the payment of low wages in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarentee Act (MGNREGA) by the local people. It is general nature of the tribal communities for not complaining or protest. Taking this advantage, many non-tribal exploiting them by paying mere amount of wages.

### Conclusion

From the above data, it is clear that mass media has reached the each and every corner of the tribal village and the study area is not exceptional to this fact. Due to their activism, the compensation for failure of family planning programme has reached to affected people in the study area. However, due to local politics, major tribal problems are not being highlighted either in print or electronic media. Since majority of the stakeholders are involved in exploitation of tribal people in the form of stone crushing, mining, stone quarrying, etc. It is due to political vested interests, the two cases of family planning highlighted. Otherwise, they also get the same fate as other issues are languishing the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups like *Baiga* since long. Further, impact of media can be seen each and every walk of *Baiga* life including observance of life-cycle rituals, annual and agricultural rites, economic, educational and health, etc. Further it had mixed impact as the vices of modernity are learned immediately rather than good manners. Despite of this, the role of media is noteworthy in reaching the development benefits to *Baiga*. It is the need of the hour to retrospect the ethnics of mass media to highlight the real problems of the society without any bias.

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