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# Socio-Demographic Profile of Jenu Kuruba (a PVTG) and HakkiPikki (a Scheduled Tribe) Community of Karnataka: A Cross-Sectional Study

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## ABSTRACT

Tribal populations in India represent a significant segment of socio-cultural diversity, yet they remain among the most socio-economically marginalized groups. Understanding their demographic and social profiles is crucial for developing effective policies and interventions. This cross-sectional study examined the socio-demographic characteristics of two tribal communities in Karnataka: the Jenu Kuruba, categorized as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), and the Hakki Pikki, a Scheduled Tribe (ST). Data were collected from a total of 430 adults (Jenu Kuruba: 210; Hakki Pikki: 220) as part of a doctoral field study conducted in selected tribal hamlets. Using a structured schedule, information was gathered on demographic, educational, occupational, economic, and infrastructural parameters. The findings revealed substantial inter-tribal differences. The Jenu Kuruba community had a higher proportion of illiterates and individuals engaged in daily wage labor, reflecting limited access to education and occupational mobility.

In contrast, the HakkiPikki showed a relatively higher level of literacy and greater engagement in small businesses and self-employment, indicating exposure to semi-urban economies. Household infrastructure indicators, such as sanitation, access to safe drinking water, and the use of clean cooking fuel, were comparatively better among the HakkiPikki. The results highlight the persistence of socio-economic vulnerability among the Jenu Kuruba and a gradual transition among the Hakki Pikki toward improved living standards. These findings underscore the importance of tribe-specific development strategies and culturally sensitive policy planning to address disparities among Karnataka's tribal communities.

**Keywords:** Socio-demographic profile, PVTG, Scheduled Tribe, Jenu Kuruba, HakkiPikki, tribal livelihoods.

## INTRODUCTION

Tribal populations in India constitute 8.6% of the national population, representing over 104 million people belonging to 705 recognized tribes (Census of India, 2011). Despite constitutional safeguards, most tribal groups continue to experience limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013). Within the broad category of Scheduled Tribes (STs), certain groups are recognized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) based on criteria such as pre-agricultural technology, stagnant population, low literacy, and subsistence economy (Kshatriya & Acharya, 2016). Understanding the socio-demographic conditions of these communities is crucial for addressing structural inequalities and achieving inclusive development goals.

Karnataka is home to several tribal groups, of which the Jenu Kuruba and HakkiPikki are significant. The Jenu Kuruba, a PVTG, traditionally rely on forest-based livelihoods such as honey collection and non-timber forest produce, often residing in remote forest fringes of Kodagu and Mysuru districts (Prabhakar et al., 2009). The HakkiPikki, on the other hand, are a semi-nomadic tribe known for their background in hunting and trading, now transitioning to a settled life with greater exposure to urban and market environments (Prashanth Kumar

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&Shiddamallayya, 2015). These contrasting socio-economic pathways provide an opportunity to compare the demographic and livelihood structures of a PVTG and a Scheduled Tribe within the same ecological region.

Previous research on tribal health and nutrition in India has primarily focused on undernutrition and disease prevalence (Meshram et al., 2014; Rao et al., 2006), while paying limited attention to the social determinants that underlie these outcomes. The socio-demographic profile, encompassing education, occupation, household income, sanitation, and access to resources, serves as a foundational indicator of tribal well-being (Radhika et al., 2020). Examining these dimensions can reveal intra-tribal variations that shape health, nutrition, and overall human development.

The present study aims to describe and compare the socio-demographic and household characteristics of the Jenu Kuruba (PVTG) and Hakki Pikki (ST) communities in Karnataka. By identifying the social and economic disparities between these two groups, the study contributes to an anthropological understanding of inequality and development among tribal populations in South India.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study Design and Setting

This community-based, cross-sectional study was conducted as part of the doctoral research work of the first author in the Department of Anthropology, Karnatak University, Dharwad. The study aimed to document and compare the socio-demographic characteristics of two tribal communities in Karnataka—Jenu Kuruba, categorized as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), and HakkiPikki, listed as a Scheduled Tribe (ST). The fieldwork was conducted across selected tribal hamlets located in Mysuru and Kodagu districts, which are known for their significant distribution of tribal populations.

### Study Population and Sampling

The study population consisted of adult members (≥18 years) from the Jenu Kuruba and HakkiPikki communities. A total of 430 participants were included, comprising 210 Jenu Kuruba and 220 HakkiPikki individuals. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method, ensuring representation from both genders and different age groups. The inclusion criteria consisted of individuals residing in the selected hamlets for at least one year and who were willing to participate voluntarily. Individuals with severe illness or those unavailable during the survey period were excluded.

### Data Collection Tools and Procedure

Data were collected using a structured socio-demographic schedule designed by the researcher and validated by academic experts. The schedule comprised questions across the following domains:

1. Demographic Variables: Age, gender, and marital status.
2. Educational and Occupational Profile: Literacy level, highest educational attainment, and current occupation.
3. Economic Indicators: Monthly household income, landholding size, and indebtedness.
4. Household and Environmental Conditions: Type of housing, toilet and bathroom facilities, drinking water source, drainage system, lighting, and cooking fuel.
5. Livelihood and Subsistence Practices: Agricultural engagement and livestock ownership.

Of the above, only specific domains are considered for discussion in this article. All responses were recorded through face-to-face interviews conducted in the local Kannada dialect with the help of trained field assistants familiar with the tribal communities. Field observations complemented the questionnaire data to ensure contextual accuracy.

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### Ethical Considerations

This study forms part of the PhD fieldwork approved by the Doctoral Committee, Department of Anthropology, Karnatak University, Dharwad. Prior informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

### Statistical Analysis

Collected data were coded and entered into Microsoft Excel 2021 and analysed using Jamovi Statistical Software. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to describe the socio-demographic characteristics. Comparative analyses between the two tribes were performed using the Chi-square test for categorical variables and t-tests/ANOVA for continuous variables. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. The results are presented in tabular form, summarizing the distribution patterns and inter-tribal differences.

## RESULTS

A total of **430 individuals** participated in the study, comprising **220 HakkiPikki (51.2%)** and **210 Jenu Kuruba (48.8%)** adults. The overall findings indicate major differences in educational status, occupation, income, and infrastructure between the two tribal communities.

**Table 1. Age-wise Distribution of the Study Sample**

| Age Group | HakkiPikki | Jenu Kuruba | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 16–25 | 52 | 57 | 109 |
| 26–35 | 54 | 61 | 115 |
| 36–45 | 43 | 37 | 80 |
| 46–55 | 36 | 28 | 64 |
| 56–65 | 26 | 20 | 46 |
| 66–75 | 9 | 7 | 16 |
| **Total** | **220** | **210** | **430** |

The most significant proportion of respondents (≈approximately 54%) in both tribes belonged to the 26–45-year age range, representing the productive working-age population. This result indicates a relatively young age structure, typical of rural tribal populations with lower life expectancy.

**Table 2. Gender-wise Distribution of Study Sample**

| Gender | HakkiPikki | Jenu Kuruba | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 110 | 105 | 215 |
| Female | 110 | 105 | 215 |
| **Total** | **220** | **210** | **430** |

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Gender distribution was perfectly balanced among both tribes (50% males and 50% females), ensuring equitable gender representation in the study sample.

**Table 3. Educational Status**

| Education Level | HakkiPikki | Jenu Kuruba | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Illiterate | 46 (21.0%) | 93 (44.3%) | 139 |
| Primary | 73 (33.2%) | 56 (26.7%) | 129 |
| Secondary | 44 (20.0%) | 31 (14.8%) | 75 |
| High School | 34 (15.5%) | 19 (9.0%) | 53 |
| PUC | 15 (6.8%) | 7 (3.3%) | 22 |
| Graduation | 8 (3.5%) | 4 (1.9%) | 12 |
| **Total** | **220** | **210** | **430** |

Illiteracy was substantially higher among Jenu Kuruba (44.3%) than HakkiPikki (21%). Conversely, higher secondary and graduate education were more common among HakkiPikki, reflecting better access to educational opportunities.

**Table 4. Occupation of Respondents**

| Occupation | HakkiPikki | Jenu Kuruba | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agriculture | 59 (26.8%) | 76 (36.2%) | 135 |
| Dairy/Allied | 21 (9.5%) | 13 (6.2%) | 34 |
| Salaried Job | 27 (12.3%) | 6 (2.9%) | 33 |
| Housewife | 48 (21.8%) | 41 (19.5%) | 89 |
| Self-Employed | 44 (20.0%) | 17 (8.1%) | 61 |
| Unemployed | 21 (9.5%) | 57 (27.1%) | 78 |
| **Total** | **220** | **210** | **430** |

Jenu Kuruba participants were primarily agricultural labourers and coolie workers, while HakkiPikki were more engaged in self-employment and allied activities, reflecting occupational diversification due to market exposure.

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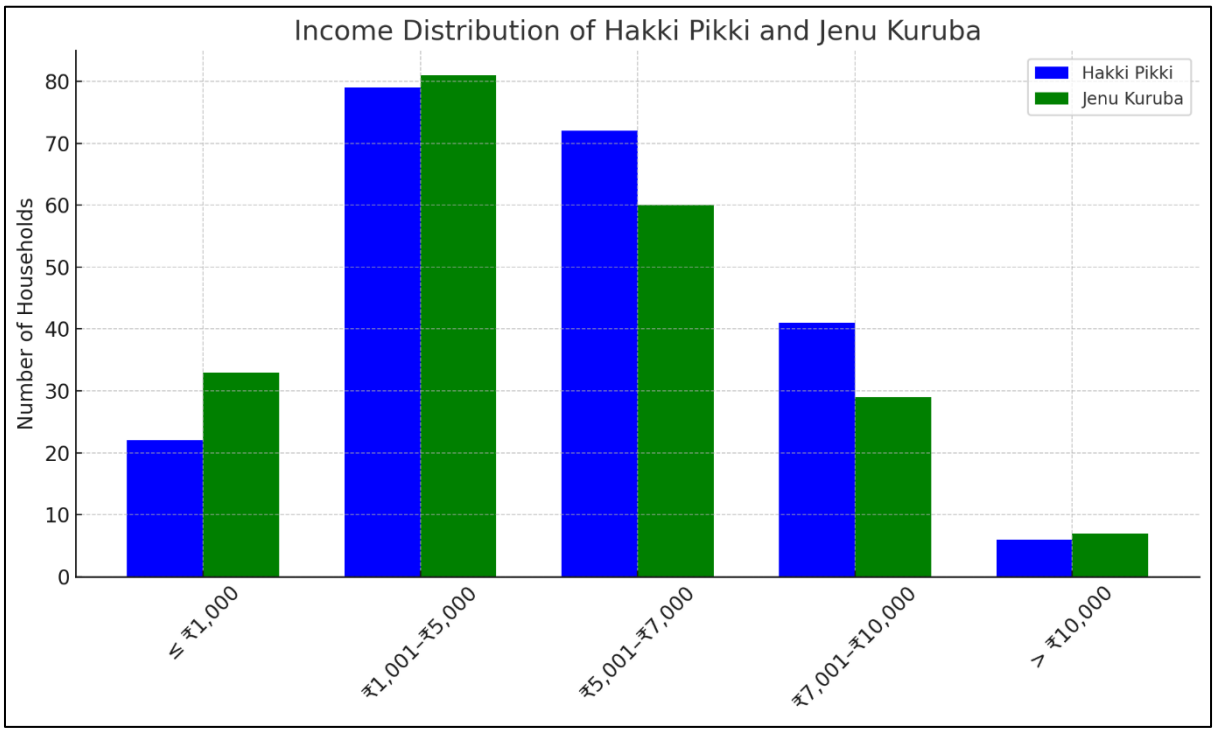
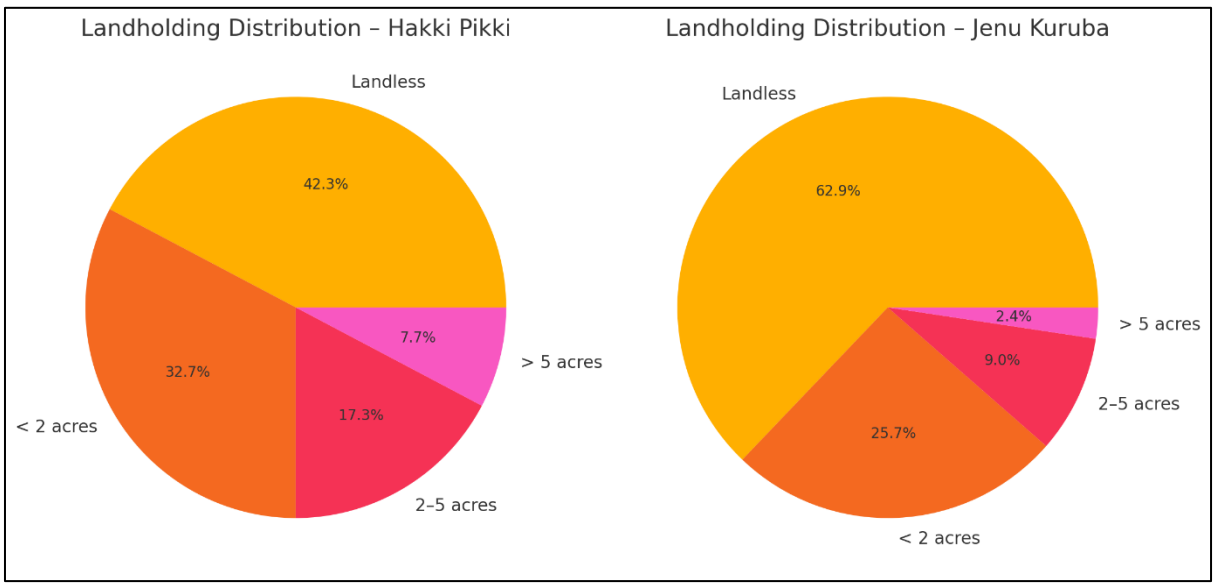
**Table 5. Monthly Household Income**




The income distribution among the Hakki Pikki and Jenu Kuruba households shows notable variation across categories. Among the Hakki Pikki, 10.0% fall within the lowest income group of ≤ ₹1,000, while a slightly higher proportion, 15.7%, of Jenu Kuruba households are in this category. The majority of both communities are concentrated in the ₹1,001–₹5,000 range, comprising 35.9% of Hakki Pikki and 38.6% of Jenu Kuruba households. In the ₹5,001–₹7,000 bracket, 32.7% of Hakki Pikki and 28.6% of Jenu Kuruba households are represented. A smaller share falls in the ₹7,001–₹10,000 range, accounting for 18.6% of Hakki Pikki and 13.8% of Jenu Kuruba. Only a marginal proportion—2.7% of Hakki Pikki and 3.3% of Jenu Kuruba households—report monthly incomes exceeding ₹10,000. Altogether, the sample consists of 220 Hakki Pikki and 210 Jenu Kuruba households, totaling 430.

The majority of households in both groups earned below ₹7,000 per month; however, HakkiPikki had a slightly higher representation in the upper income brackets, indicating a modest economic advantage.

**Table 6. Landholding Pattern**



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A majority of Jenu Kuruba households were landless (62.9%), while 57.7% of HakkiPikki owned some land, reflecting relatively better settlement security.The charts show that most households in both communities are landless, with a higher proportion among Jenu Kuruba. Small landholdings below two acres form the next largest category for both groups. Medium and large holdings are less common, with Jenu Kuruba having fewer households in these categories compared to Hakki Pikki.

**Table 7. Source of Drinking Water**

| Water Source | HakkiPikki | Jenu Kuruba | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Individual Tap | 41 (18.6%) | 29 (13.8%) | 70 |
| Common Tap | 118 (53.6%) | 82 (39.0%) | 200 |
| Purifier Plant | 39 (17.7%) | 19 (9.0%) | 58 |
| Well/Lake/Pond | 22 (10.0%) | 80 (38.1%) | 102 |
| **Total** | **220** | **210** | **430** |

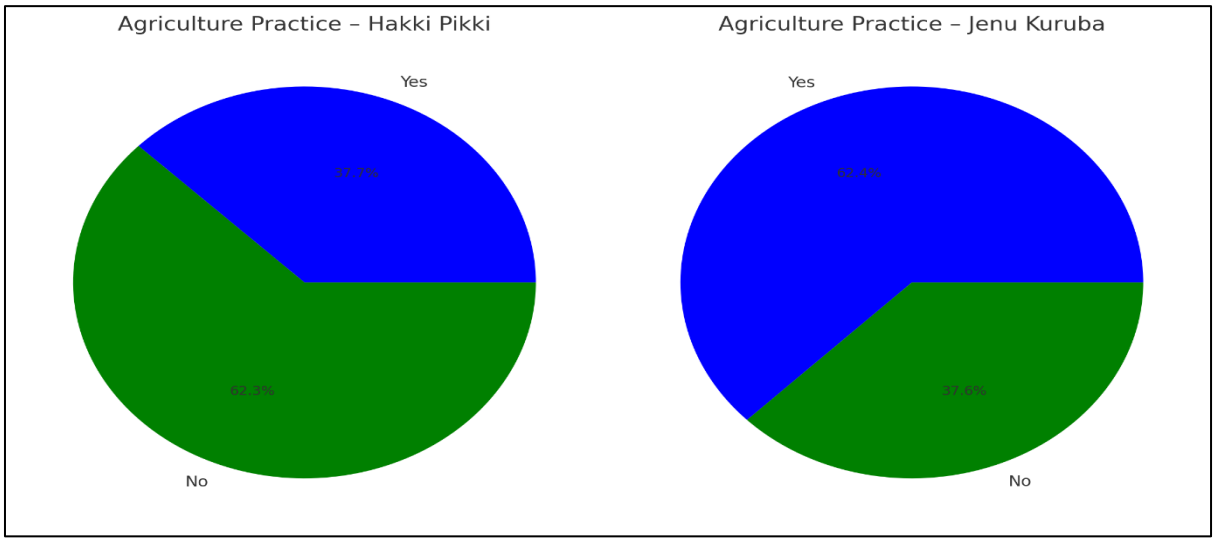
More than one-third of Jenu Kuruba households relied on unsafe water sources (wells, ponds), whereas most HakkiPikki used treated or tap water.

**Table 8. Livestock Ownership**

| Livestock Type | HakkiPikki | Jenu Kuruba |
|---|---|---|
| Dairy | 41 (18.6%) | 26 (12.4%) |
| Goatery | 34 (15.5%) | 18 (8.6%) |
| Poultry | 18 (8.2%) | 12 (5.7%) |
| None | 127 (57.7%) | 154 (73.3%) |

HakkiPikki reported higher livestock ownership than Jenu Kuruba, indicating better access to productive assets for income diversification.

**Practice of Agriculture**



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Agriculture remains the mainstay of the Jenu Kuruba's (62.4%) livelihood, whereas a majority of theHakkiPikki have moved away from traditional farming.

In summary, these tables collectively show that **HakkiPikki households** are more literate, economically diversified, and better served by infrastructure. In contrast,**Jenu Kuruba households** continue to face barriers in education, income, sanitation, and land ownership — underscoring the persistent socio-economic vulnerability among PVTGs.

## DISCUSSION

The present study provides an in-depth understanding of the socio-demographic and household characteristics of two tribal communities in Karnataka: theJenu Kuruba, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), and the Hakki Pikki, a Scheduled Tribe (ST). The findings highlight the persistent socio-economic gap between these two groups, reflecting the heterogeneity of India's tribal population.

### Demographic Structure

Both communities were characterized by a young population, with a majority belonging to the 26–45-year age group. This pattern is consistent with national tribal demographic trends reported in the Census 2011 and subsequent NFHS-5 data, which show lower proportions of elderly individuals among Scheduled Tribes compared to the general population (Census of India, 2011; NFHS-5, 2021). The near-equal gender distribution in both tribes suggests demographic stability. However, the slightly higher widowhood rate among Jenu Kuruba may reflect socio-economic hardships and reduced life expectancy linked to poverty and occupational stress.

### Educational Attainment

The study reveals striking educational disparities. Nearly 44% of Jenu Kuruba participants were illiterate, compared to 21% among HakkiPikki, aligning with reports that PVTGs in India exhibit the lowest literacy rates among all tribal categories (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013; Kshatriya & Acharya, 2016). The limited access to schooling among the Jenu Kuruba can be attributed to their forest-based habitation, the remoteness of schools, and their economic dependency on daily labor. In contrast, the HakkiPikki, being semi-urbanized and mobile, have benefited from improved educational exposure and state-led inclusion programs. Similar inter-tribal variations in literacy have been observed in Odisha and Jharkhand, where PVTGs lag behind other Scheduled Tribes in literacy and school retention (Meshram et al., 2014; Radhika et al., 2020).

### Occupational and Economic Conditions

Occupational patterns further illustrate this structural gap. The Jenu Kuruba remain dependent on unskilled agricultural labor and daily wage work, while HakkiPikki have diversified into self-employment, trading, and allied services. This transition among HakkiPikki mirrors trends described in other semi-urbanized tribes of southern India, where mobility and market linkages have facilitated occupational shifts (Prashanth Kumar &Shiddamallayya, 2015).

Income patterns followed a similar trajectory. While both groups fall within low-income brackets, the proportion of households earning above ₹7,000 per month was higher among HakkiPikki. Landholding data revealed that two-thirds of Jenu Kuruba households were landless, compared to less than half among HakkiPikki. This landlessness perpetuates economic vulnerability and food insecurity, as also observed among other PVTGs in India (Venkaiah et al., 2002; Meshram et al., 2014).

### Household Infrastructure and Amenities

The disparity in living standards was evident in access to drinking water. Reliance on open water sources and firewood among the Jenu Kuruba indicates infrastructural deprivation and continued environmental dependency.

Access to electricity and improved drainage were substantially higher among HakkiPikki, consistent with their semi-urban settlement pattern. The findings align with NFHS-5 data, which indicate that only 65–70% of rural

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tribal households in Karnataka report electricity access, compared to over 90% among urban and peri-urban groups (NFHS-5, 2021).

**Livelihood and Subsistence Practices**

Agriculture remains the principal occupation for 62% of Jenu Kuruba, whereas only 38% of HakkiPikki are engaged in farming. This shift among HakkiPikki away from agriculture toward small trade and service reflects an ongoing livelihood transition. Livestock ownership, a key livelihood asset, was also higher among the HakkiPikki (42%) than among the Jenu Kuruba (27%), highlighting differential access to resources. These findings are consistent with anthropological observations that tribal adaptation varies in response to exposure to market systems and mobility (Heggade& Bhat, 2019; Kshatriya & Acharya, 2016).

**Anthropological Interpretation**

From an anthropological perspective, the Jenu Kuruba represent a relatively isolated, forest-dependent tribal group undergoing slow socio-economic change, while the HakkiPikki illustrate a transitional community integrating into market and urban economies. The dual pattern of persistence and transition reflects what Rao et al. (2006) termed "asymmetrical modernization" among Indian tribes, where exposure to external systems leads to uneven development across communities.

The socio-demographic gap observed here also reflects the broader processes of marginalization within marginalization, where PVTGs like the Jenu Kuruba remain excluded even within tribal development frameworks (Popkin et al., 2020). The persistence of low education, high landlessness, and poor sanitation among Jenu Kuruba underscores the need for targeted interventions that go beyond universal tribal welfare schemes and focus on contextual, culturally sensitive development models.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study provides a comprehensive socio-demographic overview of two tribal communities in Karnataka—Jenu Kuruba, categorized as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), and HakkiPikki, a Scheduled Tribe (ST). The comparison reveals distinct patterns of social and economic differentiation shaped by ecological setting, livelihood practices, and exposure to modernization.

The Jenu Kuruba community continues to experience multiple layers of deprivation—high illiteracy, landlessness, dependence on daily wage labor, and limited access to sanitation and safe drinking water. Their socio-economic profile mirrors the characteristic vulnerabilities of PVTGs documented nationally (Kshatriya & Acharya, 2016; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2019). In contrast, the HakkiPikki have demonstrated greater social mobility and adaptation to semi-urban conditions, characterized by higher literacy rates, diversified occupations, and improved housing and infrastructural facilities. These differences demonstrate the heterogeneity within tribal populations and the inadequacy of one-size-fits-all development models.

From an anthropological standpoint, these findings illustrate the asymmetric modernization of tribal communities, where particular groups transition rapidly toward integration, while others remain trapped in structural isolation (Rao et al., 2006). The results emphasize that tribal development cannot be achieved solely through uniform policy interventions but requires context-specific strategies that consider the unique ecological, economic, and cultural contexts of each community.

**Policy Implications**

1. Education: Tailored literacy programs for PVTGs, such as Jenu Kuruba, should prioritize community-based schooling, mobile education units, and incentives for school retention, especially among girls.

2. Livelihood Development: Sustainable livelihood initiatives focusing on non-timber forest products, honey collection, and small-scale agriculture should be strengthened for Jenu Kuruba. For HakkiPikki, microenterprise and skill development programs can enhance their ongoing economic transition.

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3. Infrastructure and Sanitation: Enhanced access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and clean energy should be integrated with tribal housing schemes to improve living standards, particularly in forest-fringe settlements.

4. Targeted Tribal Policy: Development programs should recognize intra-tribal variation. While HakkiPikki benefits from schemes promoting entrepreneurship, Jenu Kuruba requires focused welfare measures addressing food security and primary education.

5. Participatory Planning: Involving tribal communities in local governance and decision-making processes ensures that interventions align with indigenous values, autonomy, and cultural identity.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underscores that even within the same geographic and cultural landscape, tribal communities exhibit divergent trajectories of development. The HakkiPikki represent a semi-integrated tribal group experiencing socio-economic transition, while the Jenu Kuruba remain among the most marginalized, facing persistent barriers to education, livelihood diversification, and sanitation. Recognizing these disparities is crucial for shaping inclusive, evidence-based policies that align with India's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals 1 (No Poverty), 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

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