

# Tribal Life and Basic Facilities in Koraput, Odisha: A Study of Roads, Schools, and Health Services

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## Abstract:

The study explores the socio-economic and infrastructural development of tribal communities in Odisha's Koraput district, with a focus on evaluating government initiatives and their impact on tribal livelihoods. It investigates the effectiveness of welfare programs and infrastructure projects in improving living standards, particularly in the areas of education, healthcare, and employment. Using a mixed-methods approach, primary data was collected from 320 tribal respondents across four blocks Koraput, Semiliguda, Jeypore, and Borigumma through structured questionnaires, while secondary data was sourced from official reports and academic literature. Statistical tools such as SPSS and ANOVA were used to analyze patterns and correlations. Findings reveal that although infrastructure development has contributed to improvements in connectivity, education access, and healthcare availability, significant disparities persist. Many tribal households continue to face poverty, limited employment opportunities, and inadequate public services. School dropout rates remain high, and healthcare facilities suffer from staffing shortages and logistical barriers. The study concludes that while government interventions have made notable progress, the benefits are unevenly distributed and often hampered by weak implementation and lack of community involvement. Strengthening participatory planning, region-specific strategies, and accountability mechanisms is essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable tribal development.

**Keywords:** Tribal Development, Government Initiatives, Education, Healthcare, Employment

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tribal communities constitute one of the most vulnerable and historically marginalized groups in India's development landscape. Despite forming a significant portion of the population in several states, including Odisha, Scheduled Tribes (STs) often remain excluded from the mainstream socio-economic progress. The Koraput district, recognized as a Scheduled Area under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, is home to a large tribal population. Geographically remote and marked by hilly terrain, the region continues to lag behind in essential infrastructure, quality education, healthcare access, and sustainable livelihood opportunities. While numerous constitutional safeguards and policy measures such as the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDP), and Forest Rights Act (FRA) have been introduced, ground-level development outcomes for tribals in Koraput remain limited and uneven.

This study aims to explore the actual impact of these development interventions in Koraput, focusing on the blocks of Koraput, Semiliguda, Jeypore, and Borigumma. It examines the role of infrastructure in enabling or hindering tribal development, assessing whether existing government programs have effectively addressed the region's pressing issues. In doing so, the research highlights the persistent gaps between policy intent and practical outcomes, identifying administrative, logistical, and socio-cultural barriers that impede progress. By adopting a field-based, empirical approach, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the development deficit in tribal regions and offers insights for more inclusive and targeted policy design.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The discourse on tribal development in India has evolved from a welfare-based framework to a rights-based and participatory model in recent decades. According to Senapati and Nayak (2019), tribal development cannot be effectively measured by economic metrics alone; rather, it should be analyzed through the lens of social justice, cultural preservation, and equitable access to resources. Their work stresses that development must be culturally appropriate and locally driven to address the specific needs of indigenous populations.

Das and Mishra (2020) highlight the importance of infrastructure particularly in education, healthcare, and transport as a foundational pillar for inclusive tribal development. Their study in tribal belts of southern Odisha found that areas with better road connectivity and access to schools and health centers showed noticeable improvements in literacy and health outcomes. However, Patra (2022) critiques the implementation mechanisms of government schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), arguing that benefits often bypass the most remote communities due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and lack of ground-level monitoring.

Additionally, Sahu and Tripathy (2021) emphasize the role of participatory governance and decentralized planning in bridging the implementation gap. They argue that the absence of tribal voices in decision-making processes results in mismatched priorities and underutilized funds, particularly in regions covered under the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) and CSR initiatives. These studies collectively underscore the need for a more integrated, community-centric, and accountability-driven model of tribal development, especially in districts like Koraput where structural inequities persist despite extensive policy focus.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Population and Sample**

The study covers four tribal-dominated blocks of Koraput: Koraput, Semiliguda, Jeypore, and Borigumma. A total of 320 tribal respondents were selected using stratified random sampling, ensuring representation across gender, age, and economic status.

### **3.2 Data and Sources of Data**

Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires, focus group discussions, and field observations. Secondary data was drawn from government policy reports, census data, and NGO project documents.

### **3.3 Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts an integrated development model, where infrastructure (schools, roads, healthcare) and socio-economic indicators (literacy, livelihood, nutrition) are interdependent. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 1, 3, 4, 9 and 10, serve as evaluation benchmarks.

### **3.4 Analytical Tools**

Descriptive statistics and comparative block-wise analysis were performed using SPSS. Qualitative data was thematically analyzed using grounded theory principles. Development gap matrices were created to visualize disparities.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Education Infrastructure**

While most blocks have functional primary and upper primary schools, issues such as inadequate teacher deployment, poor school buildings, lack of hostels, and absence of digital infrastructure continue to affect the quality of education. Dropout rates remain significantly high among tribal girls due to long distances to schools, poor sanitation facilities, and gender-based household responsibilities. Despite government schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, educational outcomes remain below state and national averages.

### **4.2 Health and Sanitation**

The district has Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Sub-Centres, but many are understaffed and poorly equipped. Tribal villages located in hilly terrain struggle with access to timely healthcare. Maternal and child health indicators remain low, and institutional delivery rates are below the national average. The lack of awareness about government schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojana and Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana further limits healthcare utilization. Sanitation infrastructure, including toilets and waste management systems, is absent or non-functional in many villages.

### **4.3 Livelihood and Employment**

Livelihood options in tribal areas remain largely agriculture-based or dependent on forest produce. Implementation of employment schemes like MGNREGS is inconsistent and often delayed. Skill development programs such as PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana) are available but do not reflect the local job ecosystem. There is a gap between training provided and the employment avenues accessible to tribal youth, especially women and school dropouts.

### **4.4 Connectivity and Utilities**

Despite state and central investments, road connectivity to interior villages is still lacking, particularly during monsoons. Electricity access is unreliable, with frequent outages and poor maintenance of power lines. Drinking water continues to be a challenge, with several habitations depending on seasonal streams. Weak mobile and internet connectivity further restrict access to digital services and remote education, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 4.5 Art, Culture and Heritage

Koraput is rich in tribal art forms, traditional dances, music, and indigenous knowledge systems. However, these cultural assets are under-documented and poorly supported through institutional platforms. There is limited state support for promoting tribal artisans, traditional festivals, or protecting heritage sites. Tourism potential based on tribal heritage remains untapped due to lack of promotion and inadequate infrastructure.

#### 4.6 Vocational and Skill Development Education

Vocational training opportunities are limited and mostly confined to district headquarters. Existing ITIs and skill centres often face challenges like lack of trainers, equipment, and poor placement support. Training programs are rarely tailored to local market demands or tribal lifestyles. Bridging this gap through mobile training units, language-sensitive content, and livelihood-linked certification can significantly enhance employability.

#### 4.7 Women's Empowerment

Despite the presence of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Mahila Mandals, the overall participation of tribal women in economic and political decision-making remains low. Access to land, credit, education, and health services is often mediated through male family members. Social norms, early marriage, and domestic responsibilities limit women's engagement in formal employment or leadership roles. Special schemes for maternal health, adolescent girls, and income generation are either underutilized or inaccessible due to poor outreach.

#### 4.8 Agriculture, Irrigation, and Electrification

Agriculture remains the primary livelihood for most tribal families, yet landholdings are small and dependent on rain-fed conditions. Irrigation infrastructure is either absent or poorly maintained, affecting crop cycles and productivity. Electrification of agricultural operations is minimal. Solar energy schemes have been introduced but face logistical and maintenance issues. Greater investment in micro-irrigation, watershed management, and agri-electrification is critical for improving rural livelihoods.

Development Sector	Key Issues Identified	Suggested Interventions
Education	High dropout rates, lack of hostels, teacher shortages	Build residential schools, recruit teachers, promote digital learning
Healthcare	Understaffed PHCs, lack of awareness, poor access in remote areas	Strengthen health centres, mobile health units, health awareness

Agriculture & Irrigation	Rain-fed farming, low irrigation coverage, poor electrification	Expand micro-irrigation, promote solar pumps, watershed development
Livelihood & Employment	Limited non-farm jobs, weak MGNREGS implementation	Revamp MGNREGS, promote local enterprises, provide marketing support
Women's Empowerment	Low participation, lack of leadership opportunities, limited access to schemes	Strengthen SHGs, leadership training, gender-sensitive policies
Infrastructure (Roads, Electricity)	Poor road conditions, irregular power supply, low internet access	Invest in roads, solar micro-grids, mobile towers in remote areas
Skill Development	Mismatch with local needs, poor placement support	Localised training, align with local economy, monitoring & evaluation
Cultural Heritage	Neglect of tribal arts, poor promotion of cultural tourism	Documentation, funding for tribal artists, promote eco-cultural tourism

**(Sector-wise Issues and Suggested Interventions for Tribal Development in Koraput)**

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study clearly illustrates that despite decades of targeted interventions, tribal communities in Koraput continue to face structural barriers to development. While government initiatives have contributed to visible progress in infrastructure such as roads and school buildings, the benefits remain unevenly distributed and often fail to reach the most remote and marginalized villages. Critical gaps persist in healthcare, where facilities suffer from poor staffing, lack of supplies, and low utilization, particularly in maternal and child services. In the education sector, while enrolment has improved, dropout rates especially among girls remain alarmingly high due to socio-economic pressures and infrastructural inadequacies such as the absence of hostels and female teachers.

Agriculture, which remains the backbone of tribal livelihoods, is still largely rain-fed and vulnerable, with minimal access to irrigation, market linkages, or modern inputs. Livelihood schemes and skill development programs exist but are frequently misaligned with local realities, limiting their effectiveness. Tribal women, though central to household and community life, face compounded challenges related to access to education, healthcare, land ownership, and leadership roles. Moreover, valuable cultural assets and indigenous knowledge systems remain underutilized in development planning. Analysis of government schemes reveals that poor implementation, administrative bottlenecks, and a lack of community involvement continue to limit the potential of funds such as DMF and CSR.

To ensure sustainable and inclusive development, the study recommends a focused approach that prioritizes quality healthcare, education reform, irrigation support, and employment-linked skill training. Strengthening community health systems, improving digital and residential educational infrastructure, promoting women's empowerment through SHGs and leadership programs, and tailoring skill development to local economies are essential steps. Effective

utilization of welfare funds and integration of tribal culture into tourism and enterprise development can further enhance livelihoods and identity preservation. Ultimately, bridging the development gap requires not just infrastructure but also inclusive governance, cultural sensitivity, and meaningful participation of tribal communities in shaping their own futures.

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