

Baiga Tribes gets Habitat Rights

Why in news?

Recently Baiga Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in Chhattisgarh become the second in the State to get habitat rights after Kamar PVTG.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

- There are 75 PVTGs out of 705 STs, spread over 18 states and 1 Union Territory (A&N Islands).
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- **Dhebar commission-** In 1973, it created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups.
- **PVTGs-** In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- **Features-** They are mostly homogenous, with a small population, relatively physically isolated, social institutes cast in a simple mould, absence of written language, relatively simple technology and a slower rate of change etc.,
- **Statistics-** Highest PVTGs is present in Odisha (13) followed by Andhra Pradesh (12).
- **Chhattisgarh-** It has 7 PVTGs namely Kamar, Baiga, Pahadi Korba, Abujhmadiya, Birhor, Pando and Bhujia.
- **Scheme for Development of PVTGs-** It was established in 2008 to adopt a holistic approach to the socio-economic development of PVTGs.
- **Pradhan Mantri PVTGs Development Mission-** It was introduced in the Union Budget 2023-24 to improve the socio-economic status of PVTGs and bridging gaps in health, education, livelihoods, and basic infrastructure.

What are habitat rights?

According to FRA, habitat includes the area comprising the customary habitat and such other habitats in reserved forests and protected forests of primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities and other forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes.

- **Habitat rights** - They can be defined as a bundle of rights comprising of the connections with the landscape: livelihood, social, and cultural practices embedded in the territory that forms their habitat.
- They are given to PVTGs under Section 3(1) (e) of **The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.**
- The title may not be an ownership title in the nature of a private property owner, but consent and consultation of the gram sabha will be needed for any developmental activity.
- **Status-** Till now, the following PVTGs had been given the habitat rights.

- Baigas & Bharias - Madhya Pradesh
- Kamars & Baigas- Chhattisgarh

Community forest Resource rights can be extended to all types of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs).

Habitat rights is specially meant for the recognition of traditional rights of PVTG/Pre-agricultural Communities.

What is the significance of granting habitat rights?

- The recognition provides the community concerned rights over their
 - customary territory of habitation,
 - socio-cultural practices,
 - economic and livelihood means,
 - intellectual knowledge of biodiversity and ecology,
 - traditional knowledge of use of natural resources,
 - protection and conservation of their natural and cultural heritage
- Habitat rights safeguard and promote traditional livelihood and ecological knowledge passed down through generations.
- Grant of habitat rights provide an additional layer of legal protection.
- They also help converge different government schemes and initiatives from various departments to empower PVTG communities to develop their habitats.
- If any kind of development activity is hampering their habitat rights, the tribal group can take up the matter with the administration under the Forest Rights Act, and if not resolved, the matter can be taken to court.

Habitat rights under FRA, 2006

- Right to perform all customary religious or cultural ceremonies in the landscape related to their clans
- Right to protect and conserve the natural entities and sacred sites recognised under habitat rights.
- Right to protect and conserve places important for religious and spiritual purposes such as sacred groves; the right of passage to abodes of deities in forests, hill tops, origin of rivers and other remote parts of forests
- Right to practice traditional cultivation systems and other livelihood generating activities including seasonal resource use
- Habitat rights exclude any traditional right of hunting or trapping or extracting a part of the body of any species of wild animal

How does the government fix a habitat?

- **Technical assistance**- United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is providing technical assistance to the administration to implement the habitat rights law.
- **Guidelines**- The procedure is based on a detailed guideline given for habitat fixation purpose in 2014 by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA).
- **State level departments**- Forest, Revenue, Tribal and Panchayati Raj are

coordinating with the UNDP team to ascertain habitat.

- **Consultation-** As per MoTA guidelines, the traditional tribal leaders of the tribe are consulted about the extent of their culture, traditions, occupation.
- **Habitat declaration-** The consultation with the traditional tribal leaders is verified by the government and then a habitat is declared.

Quick facts

Baiga Tribes

- The Baiga are an ethnic group found in *Central India* primarily in the state of Madhya Pradesh, and in smaller numbers in Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.
- Baigas are considered as a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG).
- They rely mostly on *shifting cultivation (bewar)*, forest produce and fishing for sustenance.
- A distinguishing feature of the Baiga tribal women is sporting tattoos of various kinds on almost all parts of their body.
- This art of tattooing is called '*Godna*'.

Kamar Tribes

- Kamars are one of the PVTGs found in *Central India* primarily in Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh.
- As per the 2011 census, population of Kamar tribe stands at approximately 26,630 individuals.
- The tribe has been given the status of "*Special Backward Tribe*" by the Government of India.
- The Kamar tribe traces its origins to Devdongar village of Manipur development block.
- The tribe's deity "Vaman Dev" is still enshrined in the "Vaman Dongri" temple of Devdongar.
- The two tribes in the Kamar tribe are
 - **Paharpattiya Kamar** - Mountain dwellers
 - **Bunderjeeva Kamar** - Live in the plains
- The women are tattooed either before or after marriage.

References

1. [Indian Express- Baiga PVTGs gets habitat rights in Chhattisgarh](#)
2. [Vikaspedia- Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups](#)
3. [UNDP- PVTGs habitat recognition in Chhattisgarh](#)



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