



Conference Paper

Transition of ST Population in Western Ghat Villages of Goa: A Study of Cavorem-Pirla Village Panchayat of QUEPEM Sub-Division

Sachin Chandrakant Gaonkar ^{1*}, Prabir Kumar Rath ²

¹ Research Scholar, CRC, Govt. College, Khandola, Goa University, Goa, India

¹ Assistant Professor of Geography, Ganpat Parsekar College of Education, Harmal, Goa, India

² Professor of Geography, PhD. Guide, CRC, Govt. College, Khandola-Marcela, Goa, India

Corresponding Author: *Sachin Chandrakant Gaonkar

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17978614>

Abstract

The ST population are the original settlers of the land in the Western Ghats of Goa, who are in the phase of remarkable transformation in their socio-economic characteristics. This study investigates the transition of the Scheduled Tribe population in Goa in general and specifically focuses on the Cavorem-Pirla village panchayat in the Quepem Sub-Division of Goa. Historically and agriculturally significant, the study region has witnessed a profound shift from traditional agricultural practices to non-agricultural activities driven by factors and influences of modernisation and changing, less-straining economic opportunities. The younger generations increasingly prefer seeking employment in urban centres; thereby, traditional livelihoods and cultural identities are facing challenges. Utilising a mixed-methods approach, the research incorporates qualitative and quantitative data gathered through field surveys, personal interviews through a structured questionnaire-schedule and focus group discussions with ST households. Findings reveal the intricate pressures of modernisation, highlighting the necessity of promoting economic growth with emphasis on women workforce participation and youth employment. The study also assesses the effectiveness of local governance in the provision of access to basic facilities, addressing the rights and needs of the resident population. There is diversity in the development of the ST population, where some wards of the Cavorem-Pirla panchayat are still isolated from the development initiatives in getting access to the basic amenities and healthcare facilities. The primitive lifestyle and occupations are gradually diminishing, accompanied by the emerging opportunities for them. The study has brought up actionable recommendations for empowering local communities to promote agricultural practices and develop self-employment opportunities for the all-around welfare and development of the ST population in their original and nearby habitat.

Manuscript Information

- **ISSN No:** 2583-7397
- **Received:** 12-12-2024
- **Accepted:** 23-02-2025
- **Published:** 24-03-2025
- **IJCRM:4(SP1); 2025:109-115**
- **©2025, All Rights Reserved**
- **Plagiarism Checked:** Yes
- **Peer Review Process:** Yes

How to Cite this Article

Gaonkar SC, Rath PK. Transition of ST population in Western Ghat villages of Goa: A study of Cavorem-Pirla Village Panchayat of QUEPEM Sub-Division. *Int J Contemp Res Multidiscip.* 2025;4(SP1):109-115.

Access this Article Online



www.multiarticlesjournal.com

KEYWORDS: ST, Transition, Western Ghat, habitat.

INTRODUCTION

Quepem Taluka, nestled within the Western Ghats of Goa, is characterised by its lush green landscapes, rich biodiversity and tribal heritage. The region is home to various communities, including the Velips, Kunbis and Gawdas, who were given Scheduled Tribe Status in 2003, who have been living in harmony with the environment for generations. (India, 2003). The ST population are primarily engaged in agriculture, forest-based activities and related traditional crafts using their intimate knowledge of the local ecosystem. However, these communities now face numerous challenges, including land reclamation, gradual deforestation and limited access to higher education and higher-order healthcare services. Such issues have been exacerbated by rapid urbanisation and developmental pressures that threaten their traditional practices and way of life, which has undergone rapid transition. The study tries to explore this transition in the Cavorem-Pirla Village panchayat, consisting of 7 wards of the revenue village, with a majority having more than 80% concentration of ST population.(Census, 2011).

OBJECTIVES

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To analyse the socio-economic changes and challenges faced by the tribal population in Cavorem-Pirla Village Panchayat.
2. To assess the impact of modernisation on the traditional practices and economic sustenance of the Scheduled tribe communities in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The study has used primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire schedule and personal interviews of 64 households in seven wards of the Cavorem-Pirla Village Panchayat. The secondary data was

obtained from the Census of India 2011 ^[1], state-level news articles, reports published by the Govt. organizations, various reviewed research papers and articles. The collected data were tabulated and analysed using descriptive statistics software and cartographic techniques using IBM SPSS Statistics 20 and QGIS software.

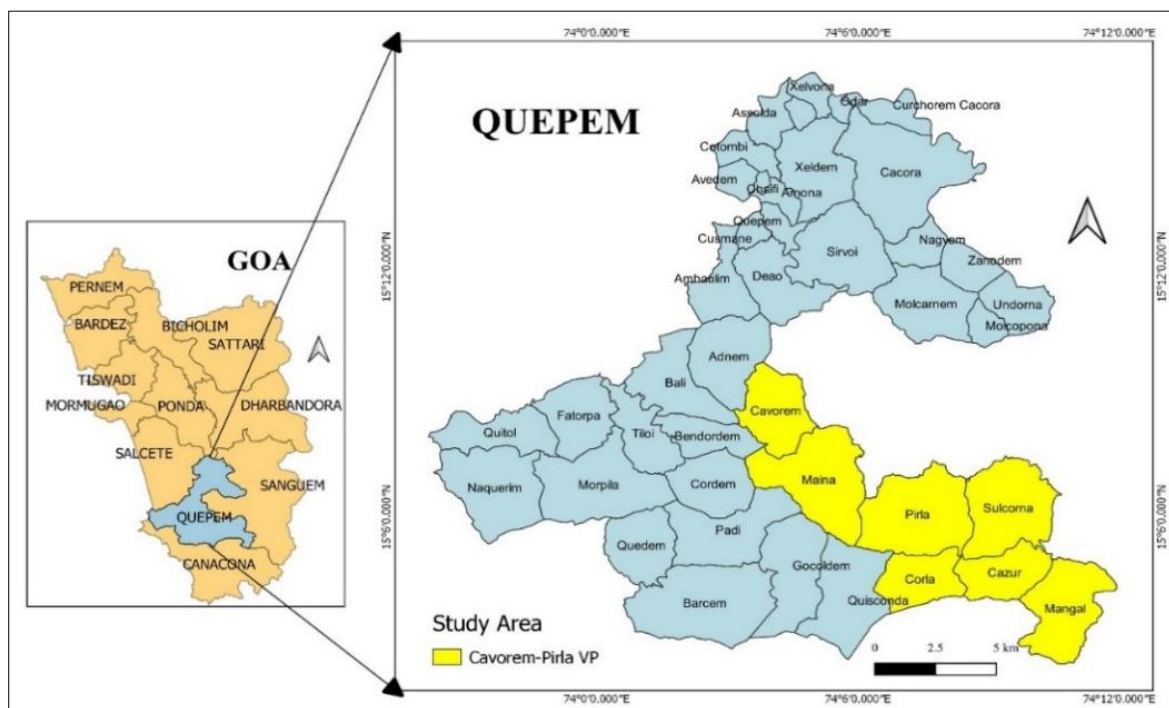
Scheduled Tribes in Goa

The tribal communities in Goa are primarily comprising the Velips, Gawdas and Kunbis. These groups have historically inhabited the hilly and forested regions of the state, maintaining a lifestyle closely tied to nature and sustainable practices. The Velips are known for their distinct customs and vibrant festivals, often practising traditional agriculture and gathering forest produce (Desai, 2019) ^[6]. The Gawda community, primarily residing in the southern parts of Goa, is recognised for their agricultural practices and deep knowledge of local ecosystems (Fernandes, 2021) ^[7]. The Kunbis are deeply involved in agriculture and maintaining traditional rice cultivation practices, contributing to Goa's agrarian economy and cultural richness (Gawas, 2018) ^[3]. Together, these communities reflect the rich cultural diversity and heritage of Goa, navigating the challenges of modernization, have continued to preserve their unique identities and cultural practices.

Study Area

Cavorem-Pirla Village Panchayat is a part of Quepem Sub-Division, having a total population of 3508 with ST population of 1753 (Census of India, 2011) ^[1]. The village panchayat wards of Cazor, Mangal, Corla and Cavorem have a very high concentration of ST population (above 80%) with diverse topographical features of rolling hills, valleys and plateaus typical of the Western Ghats.

Fig 1: Study area map: Cavorem-pirila village panchayat



Source: Prepared by Author using QGIS

Population Distribution

Over the decades, the population has steadily increased, with Cavorem being the most populated, followed by Sulcorna, Cazor, Maina, Pirla, Mangal and Corla. Gender equality is notable in the surveyed ST households, with nearly equal numbers of males and females. About 46.71% of the ST population is under the prime working age group (25 to 54 years), while 5.59% are aged 65 and above, indicating a higher demographic dividend.

Table 1: Decadal change of the population in the study area, 1971 to 2011

Villages	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011 Population		
					Total	ST	*ST%
Cavorem	526	664	743	777	920	774	84.13
Maina	278	294	461	297	505	25	4.95
Pirla	294	379	508	443	474	14	2.95
Sulcorna	190	451	571	638	594	36	6.06
Cazor	222	318	390	462	510	505	99.02
Mangal	171	264	270	313	296	259	87.34
Corla	57	140	157	184	209	170	81.34
Total	1738	2510	3100	3114	3508	1783	

Source: Census of India, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 & 2011 ^[1]

*The Velips, Gawdas, and Kunbis were recognised as a Scheduled Tribe populations in 2003 through Government notification (India, 2003).

Types of family and Family size

Majority of the households (78.15%) had nuclear family setup and only 21.9% of the households have joint families which shows a major shift of ST population from join family culture to nuclear families with a larger share (70.3%) of the families having a size class of 2-5 member, 28% with more than 5 members and 1.6% with a single member.

Registered Economic status

The majority of the households (68.8%) had BPL cards, and 21.9% had APL cards, which highlights the lower economic status as the majority population relies on marginal primary activities. 9.4% had no ration cards, which was mainly due to their higher monthly income.

Educational Attainment of Members

Most of the ST population in Cavorem-Pirila VP have educational attainment up to SCC/HSSC (Table 2), with a few achieving higher or professional education. Males generally have higher educational levels, but females outnumber males in professional education. However, female illiteracy, particularly among the older generation, remains high.

Table 2: Educational Attainment/Qualifications of the Household members

Educational Qualifications	Gender			
	Male	Female	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	19	33	52	17.10
Literate but no formal education	9	6	15	4.93
I to V std	28	34	62	20.39
VI to IX std	36	33	69	22.69
SSC/HSSC	38	28	66	21.71
Under graduate	1	2	3	0.98
Graduation/post-graduation	17	8	25	8.22
Professional (PhD, Engineer, LLB, MBA)	1	8	9	2.96
Technical (Diploma/IT)	3	0	3	0.98
Total	152	152	304	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Occupational Structure

Major occupations include farming, daily wage labour, private and government services and retail, comprising around 40% of the working population. Dependents mainly include students

(34.21%) and homemakers (25.32%), with females primarily focused on household work. Unemployment is at 4.93% and only 1.31% are self-employed. Female workforce participation is lower than that of males in the study area.

Table 3: Occupational Structure of the ST population in Cavorem-Pirla VP

Occupations	Gender			
	Male	Female	Frequency	Percent
Farmer	27	1	28	9.21
Daily wage labour	12	4	16	5.26
Shopkeeper	2	1	3	0.98
Self employed	3	1	4	1.31
Govt. Service	13	3	16	5.26
Private service	31	9	40	13.15
Homemaker	0	77	77	25.32
Student	51	53	104	34.21
Retired	0	1	1	0.32
Unemployed	13	2	15	4.93
			304	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Types of Residential Units and Electricity Connection

About 76.6% of households have semi-pucca houses, mainly in higher elevation villages like Corla and Mangal, while 23.3% have pucca houses in flatter areas. Notably, all households (100%) are electrified due to the government's free electricity scheme.

Drinking Water Facility

Residents in higher elevations often lack a modern water supply. In Cavorem village, 38% rely on stream water while 34% use common government taps in Corla, Kazur and Mangal. Approximately 23% have PWD tap water at home, primarily in Kazur, and 3% use well water.

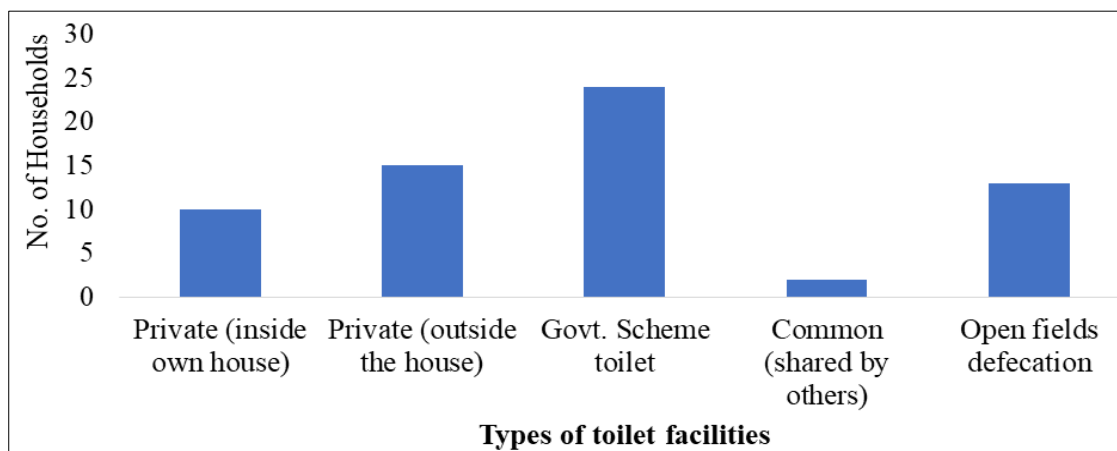
Use of Cooking Fuel

A significant shift in cooking fuel has occurred, with 67.2% using LPG, though firewood from cashew plantations is still used for boiling water and traditional dishes. Firewood setups are now separate from the main kitchens to reduce smoke. Only 1.6% rely solely on LPG, while 29.7% continue using only firewood.

Access to Toilet Facilities

Approximately 79.7% of ST households have toilet facilities: 15.6% have private toilets inside 23.4% have outdoor toilets, and 37.5% use government-provided toilets. However, 20.3% lack facilities and resort to open defecation.

Fig 2: Toilet Facilities of ST households at Cavorem-Pirla VP



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Access to Educational Institutions and other services

Access to education varies by village, with elementary education being relatively accessible. However, high school education poses challenges as many students travel over 5 km. In Corla-Kazugotav, children trek 3-4 km through dense forests to reach public transport. Other villages have transport, but distance remains a barrier. The ST population often travels over 5 km for basic services due to topographical issues, poor roads and limited connectivity hindering development.

Level of awareness about the Govt. sponsored Schemes

Using a Likert scale, the study revealed that 46.9% of households have poor awareness of Government schemes under the Tribal Welfare Department, while 40.6% have average awareness. Only 6.3% are completely unaware, and the same percentage have high knowledge of the schemes. Educational levels and access to services significantly impact awareness.

Health Care Facilities

A majority (90.6%) have obtained Health Cards from the Government, indicating health awareness. About 62.5% hold health insurance policies, but 37.5% do not often due to low income and prioritisation of immediate family needs over health investments.

Traditional or Hereditary family occupation

Tribal population is mostly engaged in traditional activities where 60.9% of the households are involved in agricultural activities like paddy cultivation, arecanut, coconut and cashew plantation, which is a major source of family income. 20.3% households are engaged in traditional local handicrafts, and 18.8% households have discontinued traditional practices due to a lack of skills or low economic gains. All households reported sufficient food attributed to the Public Distribution Scheme.

Local Empowerment Initiatives: Self-Help Group

Self-help groups (SHGs) foster cooperative living and empower women, with 60.9% of households participating. However, 39.1% are not involved in any SHG.

Monthly family income

Approximately 60.9% of households earn below ₹15,000 primarily from primary activities or daily labour. Only 7.9% earn more than ₹30,000 from regular jobs.

Assets/accessories owned by the ST households

All households have basic assets (e.g., ceiling fans, refrigerators). Around 92.18% own two-wheelers, and 21.87% own cars, though asset ownership is influenced by income.

Opinion about the Quality of Services provided by the Financial Institutions

The Likert scale was used to understand the opinion of the respondents on the quality of services provided by the financial institutions in the study area. Household satisfaction with nationalised and cooperative banks is high, while private banks receive slightly less favourable opinions.

Household Loan Status

Almost 3/4th (75%) of households avoids loans due to high interest preferring to seek financial support from friends or relatives.

Unity among the Tribal Community

Most households (95.3%) feel there is good unity in the tribal community despite occasional property disputes. The Sigm festival, marked by traditional dances, sees participation from 95.3% of households.

Types of Wedding Marriage Pattern among the ST

Many Scheduled Tribe communities exhibit resistance to inter-caste marriages due to cultural preservation and social norms

(Mohan, 2019) [9]. Resistance to inter-caste marriages is prevalent, with 62.5% marrying within the tribe. Failure to marry within the community can lead to isolation for families. People often choose partners from other villages or those associated with local deities. Factors influencing partner selection include the concept of Prasad, which involves seeking divine guidance through a temple priest. Factors influencing partner selection include religious customs and local beliefs. Inter-caste marriages are accepted by 37.5% of households.

Rituals after the Delivery

Rituals differ among villages; 39.1% practice Nahan, 42.2% Satti and 18.8% both Nahan and Barso. Barso is gaining popularity while Satti and Nahan are declining.

Rituals Practised During the Death

There is a difference in the last rites performed among the ST households in the study area. The majority (93.8%) practice burial, while 6.3% prefer cremation, specific to certain village wards, i.e. Maina and Sulcorna.

Change of residence

Almost 98.4% of the households stated that there is no migration from the original place of accommodation, and only 1.6% have migrated.

Usual Food Habits

Households primarily consume fish, curry, rice and locally grown vegetables. On special occasions, they mix Western foods and meat. In the study area 87.5% of the ST population occasionally consumes wild meat, though its consumption has decreased due to stricter forest regulations. In Kazur village, cooking chicken at home is prohibited, while in other villages, only 9.4% of households consume chicken, and 3.1% eat only fish.

Night Vigilance

Night vigilance was found essential for the protection of the village and crops as a means of protection from the wild animals. This practice is still prevalent, as it was observed that 62.5% support night vigilance for crop protection against wildlife, while 37.5% see no need due to proximity to their fields.

Issue of Alcohol

Around 59.4% of the respondents have agreed to having a member in the family who tends to consume alcohol.

Prevailing Superstitions

Superstitious beliefs significantly influence the tribal community. (Vincent, 2021) [11] with 98.4% of respondents adhering to practices such as animal sacrifice and consulting a figure known as Ghadi for resolving disputes. Only 1.6% of

households do not believe in superstitions, highlighting their prevalence in the community.

Animal Sacrifice

Belief in superstitions often leads to animal sacrifice, either as an offering or for protection from evil spirits. About 39.1% of households practice animal sacrifice as part of village rituals, while 1.6% do so for family rituals. However, 59.4% do not engage in any form of animal sacrifice.

Livelihood Dependence on Forest

The ST population in the study area is surrounded by forest cover; hence majority (95.3%) of the households depend on the forest for firewood, agricultural and medicinal purposes.

Domestication of the Animals

Animal domestication among the ST population is declining, with only 9.4% of households keeping cattle, mainly due to labour and economic constraints. About 46.9% do not domesticate any animals due to fears of wild animal attacks, while 42.2% keep only pets like cats or dogs.

Agriculture and marketing of agricultural goods

The native ST population practices various agricultural methods based on land suitability and water availability. About 87.5% of households sell agricultural products at local markets like Quepem or Savordem, with cashew sales primarily through cooperatives such as Aadharsh. Only 10.9% grow crops for self-consumption.

Present Patterns of Tilling the Land

The agricultural practices have evolved from traditional methods to machine-based, where it is observed that 59.4% of the households use machine and human labour for tilling of land, and 4.7% have fully machine-based practices. However, 31.3% of the households still use traditional methods for tilling of land, especially to cultivate horticulture crops.

Protection of crops from insects, pests and animals

With advancements in agricultural technology, pest control methods have evolved. However, 78.1% of households still rely on traditional methods like ash and organic manure, often on smaller fields. About 60.9% use wooden compounds to protect crops from animals, constructed from readily available local wood and rebuilt annually. Others forgo crop protection due to proximity to their fields.

Types of Agricultural Tools

With technological advancements, traditional tools like wooden ploughs are being replaced by tractors and weed cutters. Most households now use tractors for tilling and harvesters for harvesting. While the agriculture department offers subsidised machinery, many households still maintain basic tools like spades, sickles and hoes.

Medical Treatment

In medical emergencies, the tribal population traditionally relies on forest remedies, but dependence is decreasing due to improved medical facilities. About 85.9% of households use both traditional methods for mild illnesses and visit clinics for serious issues, while 14.1% rely solely on modern methods, often due to unawareness of traditional options.

Types of Influential Persons

Thirty-nine per cent seek guidance from Velip and Bhudvant, while 21.9% consult elected officials. A majority (67.2%) find these influential figures helpful.

Immediate Problems

The tribal communities face challenges due to their geographic location and limited access to basic resources. About 20% of households have unemployed youth, and those employed often earn low incomes and face hardships. In areas like Corla-Kazugotav, poor roads and network connectivity have delayed medical treatment in recent months, leading to fatalities. Open defecation is common due to a lack of toilet facilities. Most households are tenants without proper land rights, leading to conflicts over agriculture and construction. As settlements grow each year, land issues contribute to ongoing disputes.

Suggestions

The following are important for the sustainable development of ST community to make a model for rural development.

1. The government and authorities must quickly provide basic facilities to isolated villages and address developmental disparities.
2. Authorities, in collaboration with villagers should work to provide individual land rights to resolve disputes and boost agricultural development.
3. Create ongoing awareness of development schemes for the ST community by networking with influential locals and youth.
4. Motivate village youth to pursue higher education and take competitive exams for government sector opportunities.
5. Promote self-employment for youth and homemakers through policies that provide seed money for small-scale businesses with minimal formalities.

REFERENCES

1. Census of India. Census of India 2011. Government of India; 2011.
2. Gawas VM. Law and social justice to scheduled tribes vis-à-vis Constitution of India and social inclusion in Goa. *Scholarly Research Journal for Humanities Science and English Language*. 2015;2880–2893.
3. Gawas VM. Tribal communities of Goa: Culture, economy, and identity. Goa University Press; 2018.
4. Government of Goa. Statistical Hand Book of Goa 2014–15. Directorate of Planning, Statistics and Evaluation; 2015.
5. Government of Goa. District Handbook 2011. Directorate of Census Operations Goa; 2011.
6. Desai A. Art and identity among Goan Tribals. Goa University Press; 2019.
7. Fernandes M. Agricultural practices of the Kunbi tribe in Goa. *Journal of Tribal Studies*. 2021.
8. Government of India. The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 2002. 2003. Available from: <https://socialjustice.gov.in/public/ckeditor/upload/22661673325348.pdf>
9. Mohan P. Caste, marriage, and family: Perspectives from the scheduled tribes. *Journal of Family Issues*. 2019;40(2):218–234.
10. Sharma R. Challenges and resilience of tribal communities in Goa. *Tribal Research Journal*. 2020.
11. Vincent AM. Effect of education in the superstitious beliefs of tribals and non-tribals. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*. 2021.

Creative Commons (CC) License

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. This license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS

- Desert Research Association (DRA), Headquarters – Jodhpur
 - Nehru Study Centre, Jai Narain Vyas University, Jodhpur
 - Government Girls College, Jhalamand (Jodhpur)
 - Department of Geography, Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Government College, Sri Ganganagar
- In Collaboration with Kalinga University, Raipur (Chhattisgarh)

Disclaimer: The views, opinions, statements, and conclusions expressed in the papers, abstracts, presentations, and other scholarly contributions included in this conference are solely those of the respective authors. The organisers and publisher shall not be held responsible for any loss, harm, damage, or consequences — direct or indirect — arising from the use, application, or interpretation of any information, data, or findings published or presented in this conference. All responsibility for the originality, authenticity, ethical compliance, and correctness of the content lies entirely with the respective authors.