

## **Socio-Economic Profile and the Impact of Government Policies on the upliftment of the Pangwala Tribe of Himachal Pradesh**

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### **Abstract**

The tribal population of Himachal Pradesh inhabits some of the most geographically isolated and ecologically fragile regions of the state. Among them, the Pangwala tribe residing in Pangi Sub-Division of Chamba district represents a distinct socio-cultural and economic group shaped by harsh climatic conditions, difficult terrain, and limited infrastructural access. This paper examines the socio-economic profile of the Pangwala tribe and critically analyzes government interventions, particularly the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), aimed at their development. Using secondary data from Census reports, Economic Surveys, and Tribal Sub-Plan documents, the study evaluates sector-wise investment patterns, administrative mechanisms, and policy outcomes. The findings reveal significant progress in infrastructure, education, and welfare services, although challenges related to accessibility, livelihood diversification, and sustainable development persist. The study concludes that while government policies have positively impacted the Pangwala tribe, region-specific planning and participatory governance remain essential for inclusive tribal development.

**Keywords:** *Pangwala Tribe, Tribal Sub-Plan, Scheduled Areas, Socio-Economic Development, Himachal Pradesh*

### **1. Introduction**

Himachal Pradesh is home to several tribal communities inhabiting high-altitude and remote regions characterized by rugged terrain, extreme climatic conditions, and sparse population density. The Scheduled Tribal Areas of the state include the districts of Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti, as well as parts of the Chamba district, such as Pangi, Bharmour, and Holi. These areas are located in the northern and north-eastern belt of the state, with an average altitude of about 3,281 meters above mean sea level.

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**Pangi valley (location and boundaries):** has a unique geography that strongly influences its climate and, in turn, its geographical diversity, culture, flora, and fauna. Pangi is the remotest, rugged, snow-bound, inaccessible, landlocked, but picturesque and pristine narrow river valley in Himachal Pradesh. It is a small administrative subdivision of the Chamba district situated in the northern extreme of the state, where time and space acquired a new dimension. Sandwiched between two mighty mountain ranges, the Zaskar in the North and the Pir Panjal in the south, it is an isolated valley.

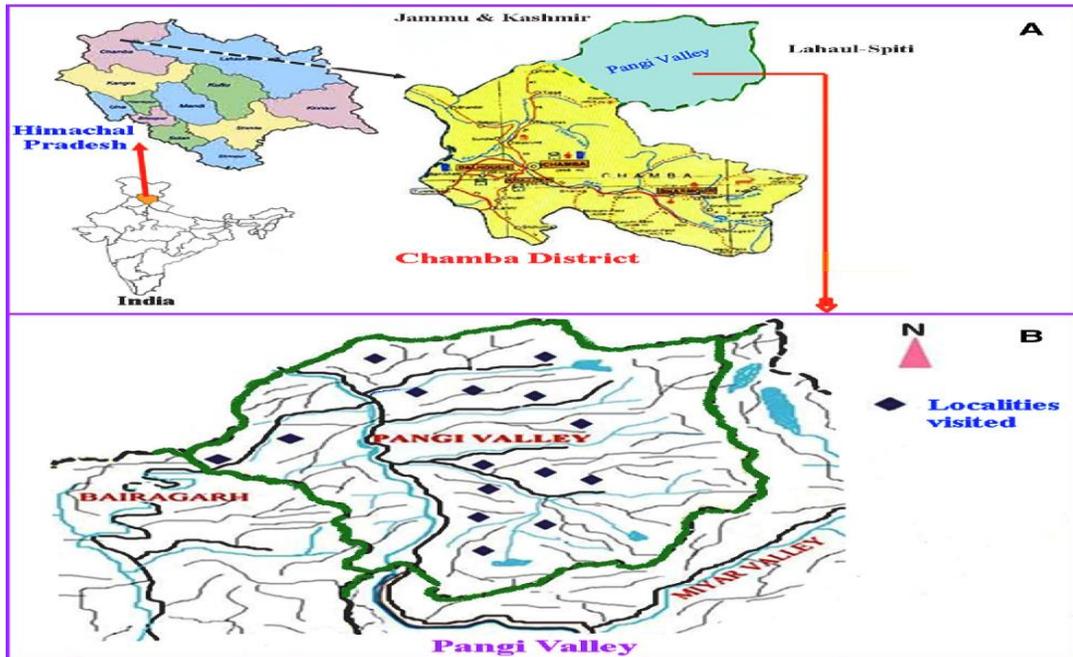
Pangi valley extends between latitude 32° 46' 36" north and 33° 10' 46" north of the equator and between longitudes 76° 23' 33" east and 76° 54' 59" east of the Greenwich mean time with an elevation range from 2000 to 6500 meters (AMSL). It is contiguous with the Kishtwar and Zaskar region of Jammu and Kashmir in the north and spreads over an area of 1600sq. km. Out of the total geographical area, approximate 2% area is under agriculture, which supports the livelihood of 18,868 people. The sparsely populated valley has a population density of 11.78 per sq. km. Pangi is a highly tribal populated (above 90%) valley, mainly composed of Pangwals and Bhots tribes, which are not exposed to outside cultural changes, due to geographical isolation and remoteness. Pangi valley is irregularly triangular in shape, each side of which is about 56 kms in distance. It is bounded by the Zaskar hills that lie in the northern part of the valley and Pir Panjal in the west. In southern side, it shares boundaries with Lahaul and Spiti, and on the eastern side with Jammu and Kashmir. It is chiefly formed by the river Chandrabhaga (Chinab), which cuts across the terrain in a deep, narrow gorge before entering (sansri nala) the Padar area of Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir. With its deep river gorges and barren mountain peaks, it offers a wide range of scenery and vegetation. Till recently, this valley was the remotest tribal area of Himachal Pradesh, where road access to the rest of the valley was made only in mid 1990s.

Pangi Sub-Division of Chamba district, the homeland of the Pangwala tribe, experiences heavy snowfall, glaciated landscapes, fast-flowing rivers, and limited working seasons. Due to low population density and high infrastructure costs, development activities in these regions remain economically challenging. Recognizing their strategic importance and socio-economic backwardness, these areas were declared Scheduled Areas under the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution through the Scheduled Areas (Himachal Pradesh) Order, 1975.

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LOCATION MAP OF PANGRI TRIBAL TEHSIL (not on scale)

To address regional imbalances and promote inclusive growth, the Government of India introduced the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) during the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974–75). Since then, tribal development in Himachal Pradesh has undergone significant institutional and financial transformation, with special emphasis on decentralized planning, single-line administration, and targeted sectoral investments

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The present study is aimed at realizing the following objective:

- To analyze the socio-economic profile of the Pangwala tribe.

## 3. Data and Methodology

The present paper is based entirely on secondary data, which have been obtained from the Census of India report for the census year of 2011, Economic Survey of Himachal Pradesh (Tribal Sub-Plan Reports 2017–18, 2018–19), Tribal Affairs Department publications, Five-Year Plan and Annual Plan documents, and Government notifications and policy documents.

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The methodology adopted is descriptive and analytical. Quantitative data related to population, fund allocation, and sector-wise expenditure have been analyzed using tables and percentage analysis, while qualitative interpretation has been used to understand policy frameworks and administrative mechanisms.

#### **4. Statement of the Problem**

Despite substantial financial investment and policy support through the Tribal Sub-Plan, tribal areas such as Pangi continue to face developmental challenges. Difficult terrain, climatic constraints, mono-cropping agriculture, limited employment opportunities, and inadequate market connectivity restrict socio-economic mobility. There exists a need to critically evaluate whether existing government policies sufficiently address the unique livelihood and infrastructural needs of the Pangwala tribe or merely provide welfare-oriented solutions without ensuring long-term sustainability.

#### **5. Socio-Economic Profile of the Pangwala Tribe**

The Pangwala tribe predominantly practices agro-pastoralism, with agriculture being the principal occupation. Due to climatic limitations, most areas are mono-cropped, and only about 50% of cultivated land in Pangi is irrigated. The average landholding size of Scheduled Tribes in the region is approximately 0.90 hectares, lower than the state average.

Literacy rates among the Pangwala tribe have shown gradual improvement but remain comparatively lower than in non-tribal areas. Access to healthcare, education, and transportation is constrained by geographical isolation and limited working seasons. Nevertheless, agro-climatic conditions are conducive for high-value cash crops such as seed potato, vegetables, vegetable seeds, and medicinal herbs.

#### **6. Government Policies and Tribal Sub-Plan Framework**

The Tribal Sub-Plan serves as the primary policy instrument for tribal development in Himachal Pradesh. Initiated during the Fifth Five-Year Plan, the TSP aims to ensure proportional allocation of state plan funds to tribal areas. Over the years, the share of TSP in the State Plan increased from 3.65% (1974–75) to nearly 9% in subsequent plans.

The introduction of Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs), Modified Area Development Approach (MADA), and Single-Line Administration significantly improved planning and implementation efficiency. Pangi ITDP receives approximately 17% of the total TSP allocation based on population, area, and economic backwardness.

#### **7. Interpretation and Analysis**

Sector-wise expenditure data reveal that the maximum allocation under TSP is directed towards economic services, followed by social services and general services. Agriculture, horticulture, rural development, and welfare schemes dominate the expenditure pattern, indicating a livelihood-centric approach.

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The administrative structure, including Project Advisory Committees and the Tribal Advisory Council, ensures political participation and local-level planning. Monitoring mechanisms such as quarterly reviews, mid-year assessments, and revised working-season norms help improve fund utilization in climatically constrained regions.

### **8. Findings of the Study**

The Tribal Sub-Plan has significantly enhanced infrastructure, education, health services, and livelihood opportunities in Pangi.

Decentralized planning and single-line administration have reduced bureaucratic delays.

Sector-wise allocation reflects a strong focus on economic upliftment and social welfare.

Agricultural productivity remains limited due to monocropping and low irrigation coverage.

Despite increased financial investment, accessibility and market linkage challenges persist.

### **9. Conclusion**

The study concludes that government policies, particularly the Tribal Sub-Plan, have played a vital role in improving the socio-economic conditions of the Pangwala tribe. Incremental progress in literacy, infrastructure, and income-generating activities is evident. However, sustainable development in Pangi requires region-specific livelihood diversification, climate-resilient agriculture, improved connectivity, and stronger community participation. Future policy interventions must move beyond welfare-oriented approaches and focus on long-term economic sustainability and ecological balance.

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