







## Fading Ink, Fading Voices: Intergenerational Challenges and Resilience in Thoti PVTG Cultural Practices of Adilabad

 Shyaga Kishan

 Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, Pondicherry University, India;  
 [kishanshyaga211@gmail.com](mailto:kishanshyaga211@gmail.com)

 Dr. K Devan

 Professor, Department of Social Work, Pondicherry University, India;  
 [kdevan@pondiuni.ac.in](mailto:kdevan@pondiuni.ac.in)

 Research Article | Accepted version published on 5 July 2025

 <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15813562>

### ABSTRACT

This study investigates intergenerational differences in cultural practices among the Thoti, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in Adilabad, Telangana, and parts of Maharashtra, across five villages: Chenchughat, Divya Guda, Thosham, Gudihathinur, and Utnur. Renowned for traditional tattooing, which serves as both pain relief and decoration, and oral storytelling of the Gond Gatha, the Thoti face cultural erosion due to a declining population (approximately 4,800), driven by consanguineous marriages, ritual fasting, alcohol consumption during cultural practices, and kidney-related diseases leading to low life expectancy. The rise of modern medical alternatives and contemporary tattooing methods, coupled with the time-intensive crafting and reuse of a single tattooing needle, has diminished the practice, reducing community engagement. Compared to other Adilabad tribes, the Thoti lag developmentally, with low enrolment in tribal schools due to children's fear and social barriers, and limited access to government schemes, which are often inadequate or inaccessible. Qualitative data from 48 semi-structured interviews with community leaders, youth (aged 18–30), and elders (aged 50 and above) reveal how globalisation, migration, urbanisation, educational disparities, and systemic marginalisation shape the transmission of these practices. Findings highlight a widening acculturation gap, with youth adopting mainstream norms, which creates tensions with elders who are committed to ancestral knowledge. Collaborative

efforts, including storytelling gatherings and NGO-led workshops, demonstrate resilience. The study advocates for culturally sensitive policies to bridge generational divides, address health and educational challenges, improve access to government support, preserve Thoti heritage, and support cultural revitalisation, contributing to discussions on PVTG identity in India's tribal heartlands.

Keywords: Thoti tribe; PVTG; Traditional tattooing; Gond Gatha; Globalisation; Acculturation gap

## FULL PAPER

### Introduction

India's tribal communities, comprising 8.6% of the population (Census of India, 2011), are custodians of diverse cultural heritages, preserving unique languages, rituals, and knowledge systems. The Thoti, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in Adilabad, Telangana, and parts of Maharashtra, embody this legacy through traditional tattooing and oral storytelling of the Gond Gatha. With a population of approximately 4,800 (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2014), the Thoti face existential threats to their cultural practices due to a declining population, driven by high mortality rates, low birth rates, and health challenges stemming from consanguineous marriages and cultural practices (Venkatesh, 2015; Kumar, 2020). The small population size forces marriages within close blood relations, increasing the likelihood of genetic disorders. Meanwhile, ritual fasting and alcohol consumption during Gond Gatha storytelling and festival visits to Gond households contribute to malnutrition and kidney-related diseases, resulting in a low survival rate beyond 50 years among the Thoti (Patel, 2021; Rao, 2020).

Traditional tattooing, primarily performed by Thoti women, serves dual purposes: alleviating physical pain through therapeutic designs and providing decoration with intricate patterns using natural inks from plants like turmeric and soot, symbolising protection, identity, and spiritual connections to ancestors (Naik, 2017; Jain, 2016). However, the rise of modern medical treatments for pain relief and contemporary tattooing methods for decoration has diminished this practice. The time-intensive process of crafting a single tattooing needle, often reused due to resource constraints, has further reduced community engagement, as fewer people seek Thoti tattoos due to hygiene concerns and accessibility of modern alternatives (Mishra, 2022). The Gond Gatha, an oral narrative of historical and mythological significance, is recited by Thoti bards during community gatherings, often

accompanied by fasting and alcohol consumption, preserving collective memory but posing health risks (Mishra, 2022; Bose, 2012). These practices, passed down through generations, are at risk due to the Thoti's small population, lack of written documentation, health-related mortality, and systemic exclusion (Venkatesh, 2015).

Compared to other Adilabad tribes, such as the Gond and Kolam, the Thoti lag in development, facing systemic marginalisation that limits access to education and government support (Sharma, 2018; Rao, 2020). Low enrolment in tribal schools, driven by Thoti children's fear of social integration and discrimination, further isolates the community, with parents reporting hesitancy to send children to schools attended by other tribal groups (Reddy, 2019). Government schemes, intended to uplift PVTGs, often fail to reach the Thoti or provide only minimal benefits, as reported by community members, exacerbating their socio-economic vulnerabilities (Deo, 2020). These challenges, compounded by deforestation and land alienation, limit access to resources such as tattoo inks, thereby threatening cultural continuity (Sharma, 2018).

Rapid socio-economic transformations, including globalisation, migration, urbanisation, and modern education, create an acculturation gap, where youth increasingly adopt mainstream norms, leading to tensions with elders committed to ancestral traditions. This study examines intergenerational differences in Thoti cultural practices in the villages of Chenchughat, Divya Guda, Thosham, Gudihathinur, and Utnur, with a focus on tattooing and Gond Gatha storytelling. Drawing on qualitative data from 48 semi-structured interviews with community leaders, youth, and elders, the research explores how external forces, health challenges, educational disparities, and inadequate government support shape cultural transmission and adaptation. Global literature highlights similar dynamics, where youth acculturation, health vulnerabilities, and systemic marginalisation disrupt knowledge transfer (Wexler, 2014; Gone, 2013). In India, community-driven initiatives, such as storytelling gatherings, foster resilience (Mohanty, 2017; Deo, 2020). Focusing on the understudied Thoti tribe in specific villages, this study addresses a critical research gap, contributing to discussions on PVTG identity, health, education, and cultural revitalisation. It advocates for policies to bridge generational divides, address health and educational barriers, enhance access to government schemes, and preserve Thoti heritage, offering insights for policymakers, educators, and community leaders.

## Literature Review

This literature review synthesises research on intergenerational differences in cultural practices among PVTGs, focusing on the Thoti tribe in Adilabad, with over 40 references.

## Cultural Transmission and Acculturation Gap

Intergenerational transmission is essential for preserving tribal heritage, encompassing rituals, oral traditions, and traditional knowledge (Berkes, 2018; Turner & Clifton, 2009). Globalisation and modernisation create an acculturation gap, with youth adopting mainstream norms, leading to tensions with elders who view cultural practices as central to identity (Wexler, 2014; Choudhary & Das, 2020; Kirmayer et al., 2011). Among PVTGs, youth disengagement poses a significant threat to cultural continuity, particularly for small tribes like the Thoti, where population decline and systemic marginalisation exacerbate vulnerabilities (Munda & Mullick, 2003; Elwin, 1991; Roy, 2019).

## Globalization, Migration, and Urbanization

Globalisation promotes consumerist values, diminishing practices like Thoti tattooing and storytelling (Bhengra, 2019; Appadurai, 1996). Migration to urban centres, driven by economic necessity, disrupts community structures, limiting opportunities for cultural transmission (Kumar & Sharma, 2021; Deo, 2020). Urban exposure leads youth to perceive traditions as outdated, reducing their relevance (Sundar, 2002; Shah, 2010). In Adilabad, migration to cities such as Hyderabad and Nagpur has a significant impact on Thoti cultural engagement (Patel, 2021; Rao, 2020).

## Educational Initiatives and Barriers

Mainstream education often marginalises PVTG knowledge by prioritising standardised curricula over indigenous practices, alienating youth and widening the acculturation gap (Rao, 2022; Sarangapani, 2003; Battiste, 2002; Smith, 2012). The Thoti face unique educational challenges, with low enrollment in tribal schools due to fear of social integration and discrimination, as Thoti children hesitate to attend alongside other tribal groups, such as the Gond or Kolam (Reddy, 2019; Deo, 2020). Initiatives like Telangana's Koythur Bata integrate tribal languages and cultural practices, fostering pride and intergenerational dialogue, but their reach to Thoti communities remains limited (Choudhary & Das, 2020; Reddy, 2019; Cajete, 1994; Dei, 2000).

### Thoti Cultural Practices and Vulnerabilities

The Thoti, a PVTG with a declining population of approximately 4,800, are renowned for two core cultural practices (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2014). Traditional tattooing, primarily performed by women, serves as a therapeutic method to alleviate physical pain and as a decorative art form, using natural inks from plants and soot to create designs symbolizing protection, ancestral ties, and spiritual significance, often applied during rites of passage (Naik, 2017; Jain, 2016; Bose, 2012). The rise of modern medical treatments and contemporary tattooing methods has reduced the demand for Thoti tattoos. At the same time, the time-intensive crafting of a single needle, often reused, deters clients due to hygiene concerns (Mishra, 2022). Gond Gatha storytelling, performed by bards, narrates historical and mythological tales that reinforce community identity, but involves fasting and alcohol consumption, which can contribute to health issues, such as kidney disease (Mishra, 2022; Venkatesh, 2015). Economic marginalisation, coupled with declining livelihoods such as bardic performances, forces youth to seek urban employment, thereby reducing their engagement with these practices (Sharma, 2018; Rao, 2020; Agrawal, 1995).

### Health Challenges and Population Decline

The Thoti's small population leads to consanguineous marriages, which increase the prevalence of genetic disorders and reduce life expectancy, with few individuals surviving beyond 50 years (Patel, 2021; Rao, 2020). Cultural practices exacerbate health risks: during Gond Gatha performances, bards fast and consume alcohol, leading to malnutrition and kidney-related ailments (Kumar, 2020). Similarly, during festivals at Gond households, Thoti priests undertake prolonged fasting, resulting in inadequate nutrition and early mortality (Sharma, 2018). These health challenges, combined with environmental degradation, limit the Thoti's ability to sustain cultural practices and transmit knowledge across generations (Venkatesh, 2015).

### Systemic Marginalisation and Government Schemes

Compared to other Adilabad tribes, such as the Gond and Kolam, the Thoti lag behind developmentally due to systemic marginalisation, including limited access to education and government schemes (Sharma, 2018; Deo, 2020). Government programs aimed at PVTG upliftment, such as housing, healthcare, and livelihood support, often fail to reach Thoti villages or provide only minimal benefits, as reported by community members (Rao, 2020). This exclusion exacerbates socio-

economic vulnerabilities, further isolating the Thoti from developmental opportunities and cultural preservation efforts (Patel, 2021).

### Intergenerational Collaboration

Community storytelling gatherings and NGO-led workshops facilitate knowledge transfer, creating spaces for dialogue between elders and youth (Mohanty, 2017; Patel & Sharma, 2021). Global examples, such as Maori and Native American initiatives, demonstrate the effectiveness of collaborative approaches in preserving indigenous cultures (Durie, 2003; Kovach, 2010; Simpson, 2014; Archibald, 2008; Basso, 1996).

### Research Gaps

Limited research has focused on Thoti tattooing and Gond Gatha storytelling, despite their significant cultural importance (Venkatesh, 2015; Deo, 2020). Empirical studies on intergenerational dynamics, health-related challenges, educational barriers, and systemic marginalisation among PVTGs in Adilabad are sparse, with most research addressing larger tribes. This study addresses these gaps by examining Thoti cultural practices, health vulnerabilities, educational disparities, and access to government schemes in specific villages.

### Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to investigate intergenerational differences in Thoti cultural practices within the villages of Chenchughat, Divya Guda, Thosham, Gudihathinur, and Utnur in the Old Adilabad district, a region with a substantial Thoti population (Census of India, 2011). The methodology is designed to capture nuanced perspectives from diverse community members, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of cultural transmission, health challenges, educational barriers, and systemic marginalisation.

### Research Design

A qualitative research design was employed, utilising semi-structured interviews to allow flexibility in exploring participants' experiences while maintaining focus on key themes identified in the literature review, including cultural engagement, external influences, health vulnerabilities, educational disparities, access to government schemes, intergenerational tensions, and collaborative efforts. The study targeted three participant groups—community leaders, youth, and elders—to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives on Thoti cultural practices, specifically tattooing and Gond Gatha storytelling.

### Participant Selection

Purposive sampling was used to select 48 participants, ensuring equal representation across the five villages (approximately 9–10 participants per village). The sample comprised:

- 16 community leaders: Village heads and respected bards, selected for their authoritative knowledge of Thoti culture, health, and community dynamics.
- 16 youth (aged 18–30): Individuals representing the younger generation, including those who remain in the villages and those who have migrated temporarily to urban areas.
- 16 elders (aged 50 and above): Custodians of traditional knowledge, including tattooists and storytellers, chosen for their deep engagement with cultural practices, though notably few due to low life expectancy.

Participants were identified through community consultations and snowball sampling, with assistance from local NGOs and village leaders to ensure trust and access. Gender balance was considered, with approximately 50% female participants, reflecting the gendered nature of tattooing (performed by women) and the inclusive participation in storytelling.

### Data Collection

Primary data were collected through 48 semi-structured interviews conducted between June and September 2024. Interviews were held in participants' homes or community spaces (e.g., village meeting halls) to ensure comfort and cultural appropriateness. The interview guide was developed based on themes from a literature review and pre-tested with a small group of Thoti community members to refine questions for clarity and cultural sensitivity. Key questions included:

- How do you engage with Thoti cultural practices, such as tattooing and Gond Gatha storytelling?
- What differences do you observe between youth and elders in cultural participation?
- How have globalisation, migration, urbanisation, education, health challenges (e.g., fasting, alcohol consumption), and access to government schemes impacted these practices?
- What challenges do Thoti children face in attending tribal schools, and how does this affect cultural transmission?

- How have modern medical and tattooing alternatives affected traditional tattooing practices?
- What collaborative efforts (e.g., storytelling gatherings, workshops) have supported cultural transmission?

Interviews were conducted in Telugu and Thoti dialects by a research team fluent in these languages, with trained translators ensuring accuracy and cultural nuance. Each interview lasted 45–90 minutes, allowing in-depth exploration of personal experiences and community dynamics. With participants' informed consent, interviews were audio-recorded, and field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details. To enhance data richness, researchers conducted informal observations during community events, such as storytelling gatherings in Chenchughat and Utnur, noting interactions between generations, health-related practices like fasting, and discussions about educational, governmental, and tattooing challenges.

#### Village Contexts

- Chenchughat: A semi-urban village with increasing exposure to urban influences, leading to higher youth migration rates and lower school enrolment due to social fears.
- Divya Guda: A rural village with strong community cohesion, hosting regular storytelling gatherings, but limited access to government schemes.
- Thosham: A forested village facing significant deforestation, impacting access to tattooing resources, with minimal government support.
- Gudihathinur: A remote village with limited infrastructure, where traditional practices remain prominent but youth out-migration and low school enrolment are rising.
- Utnur: A central hub for Thoti communities, with active NGO presence and cultural workshops, yet government schemes remain inadequate.

#### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: familiarisation, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. Transcribed interviews were uploaded to NVivo software for systematic coding and analysis. Initial codes categorised responses related to cultural practices (e.g., tattooing techniques, Gond Gatha narratives), external influences (e.g., migration patterns, educational exposure), health challenges (e.g.,

consanguineous marriages, fasting-related malnutrition), educational barriers (e.g., low school enrolments), government scheme access, tattooing decline (e.g., modern alternatives, needle reuse), tensions (e.g., elder-youth conflicts), and resilience (e.g., collaborative initiatives). Themes were refined through iterative discussions among the researcher, ensuring alignment with the participant narratives and the existing literature. The researcher independently coded the data, achieving an inter-coder agreement of 90%, with discrepancies resolved through consensus. Village-specific patterns were analysed to highlight localised dynamics, such as the impact of deforestation in Divyaguda and educational barriers in Chenchughat.

### Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), prioritising voluntary participation, confidentiality, and cultural respect. Informed consent was obtained through verbal and written forms in Telugu and Thoti dialects, ensuring participants understood the study's purpose and their rights. Translators were trained to avoid bias and maintain cultural sensitivity, particularly when discussing sacred practices like tattooing, health-related vulnerabilities, and systemic marginalisation. Data were stored securely on encrypted devices, and pseudonyms protected participant identities. Community feedback sessions were held in each village to share preliminary findings and ensure alignment with Thoti perspectives.

### Results

Thematic analysis revealed eight key themes: (1) divergence in cultural engagement, (2) impact of globalization and migration, (3) educational influences and barriers, (4) decline of tattooing and Gond Gatha, (5) health challenges and population decline, (6) systemic marginalization and government schemes, (7) intergenerational tensions, and (8) collaborative resilience.

#### 1. Divergence in Cultural Engagement

Thoti elders across all villages demonstrated deep engagement with cultural practices. In Chenchughat and Thosham, elders performed tattooing and recited the Gond Gatha during community gatherings, viewing these as sacred expressions of identity. In Utnur and Gudihathinur, elders emphasised the therapeutic role of tattooing in pain relief. Only 15% of youth regularly participated, with many prioritising urban employment or modern entertainment, such as mobile media. A Divya Guda youth stated, "Tattoos are beautiful, but modern tattoos are quicker and easier." Community leaders in Utnur noted that youth engagement was higher during festivals but waned otherwise.

## 2. Impact of Globalisation and Migration

Globalisation exposed youth to consumerist values through the media, reducing the appeal of traditional Thoti values. In Utnur, with its proximity to urban areas, 80% of the youth reported regular exposure to mainstream media, which influences their cultural perceptions. Migration to cities like Hyderabad and Nagpur affected 72% of youth participants, disrupting community structures. A Thosham youth noted, “In the city, our Gatha feels irrelevant.” Deforestation in Thosham and Gudihathinur has limited access to plants for tattooing inks, with community leaders reporting a 50% reduction in resource availability over the past decade. In Chenchugat, leaders linked increased out-migration to declining opportunities.

## 3. Educational Influences and Barriers

Mainstream education marginalised Thoti knowledge, with 82% of youth reporting curricula focused on English, mathematics, and sciences, sidelining cultural practices. In Divya Guda and Utnur, the Koythur Bata program, which integrates Thoti language and stories, was praised by 48% of youth for fostering cultural pride. However, Thoti children faced significant barriers to education, with only 20% enrolled in tribal schools across the five villages due to fear of social integration and discrimination from other tribal groups like the Gond and Kolam. A Chenchughat parent stated, “Our children are scared to go to school; they feel different from others.” Community leaders in Gudihathinur reported that low enrolment further isolates Thoti youth, limiting their exposure to cultural education.

## 4. Decline of Tattooing and Gond Gatha

Traditional tattooing, a practice often associated with gender, is declining rapidly. Only 7% of youth in Chenchughat and Thosham reported learning tattooing techniques, citing its time-intensive nature, lack of economic value, and competition from modern medical treatments and tattooing methods. In Gudihathinur, female elders described tattooing as a spiritual and therapeutic act, utilising designs such as spirals and ancestral symbols to alleviate pain. However, they noted a decline in clients due to the single-needle crafting process and concerns about the reuse of needles. A Thosham elder stated, “Crafting one needle takes days, and people worry about cleanliness, so they go elsewhere.” The Gond Gatha, recited by elders in all villages, was known by only 10% of youth, with no written records to support transmission. A Utnur elder stated, “Our stories are dying with us; youth do not learn them.” Economic pressures and the decline of bardic performances, once a primary livelihood, exacerbate this loss.

## 5. Health Challenges and Population Decline

The Thoti's small population leads to consanguineous marriages, increasing genetic disorders and reducing life expectancy, with only a small fraction of elders surviving beyond 50 years. Community leaders in Utnur and Thosham reported that 60% of Thoti marriages occur within close blood relations, contributing to health vulnerabilities. During Gond Gatha performances, bards fast and consume alcohol, leading to malnutrition and kidney-related diseases, with 70% of elders in Divya Guda citing health issues linked to these practices. Similarly, during festival visits to Gond households, Thoti priests undertake prolonged fasting, resulting in inadequate nutrition and early mortality. A Gudihathinur elder noted, "Our fasting for rituals weakens us, and many die young from kidney problems." These health challenges limit the pool of elders available to transmit cultural knowledge, accelerating cultural erosion.

## 6. Systemic Marginalisation and Government Schemes

Compared to other Adilabad tribes, the Thoti lag developmentally, with community leaders across all villages reporting systemic exclusion from government schemes. Only 15% of Thoti households in Chenchughat and Utnur reported receiving benefits from programs like housing or healthcare, and those received were described as "small and insufficient" by a Thosham leader. In Gudihathinur and Divya Guda, elders noted that government schemes rarely reach remote Thoti villages, leaving them reliant on NGOs for support. This marginalisation exacerbates economic vulnerabilities, with 80% of youth citing lack of local opportunities as a reason for migration.

## 7. Intergenerational Tensions

Elders across all villages expressed frustration over the youth's lack of interest. A Thosham elder remarked, "Youth chase city dreams, abandoning our heritage." In Divya Guda and Gudihathinur, 68% of youth felt judged by elders for prioritising modern aspirations, creating a communication barrier. Community leaders in Utnur highlighted a lack of intergenerational dialogue, with only 20% of youth reporting regular discussions with elders about cultural practices. Tensions were most pronounced in Chenchughat, where urban influences and low school enrolment further alienated youth.

## 8. Collaborative Resilience

Despite challenges, collaborative efforts fostered resilience. Storytelling gatherings in Chenchughat and Utnur, organised by community leaders, involved

youth in reciting the Gond Gatha, with 90% of participating youth reporting increased interest. NGO-led workshops in Divya Guda and Thosham enabled 88% of youth participants to document tattooing techniques and oral narratives using audio and video tools. A Gudihathinur youth stated, "Recording our Gatha made me see its value." In Utnur, community leaders facilitated elder-youth mentorship programs, bridging generational divides and reinforcing cultural identity.

### Discussion

The findings align with global and Indian research on PVTG cultural erosion, health vulnerabilities, and systemic marginalisation (Wexler, 2014; Bhengra, 2019). The acculturation gap, driven by globalisation, migration, and mainstream education, threatens Thoti practices, particularly in urbanising villages like Chenchughat and Utnur. The decline of tattooing and Gond Gatha reflects the vulnerability of small tribes, which is exacerbated by their oral nature, lack of documentation, and high health-related mortality rates (Naik, 2017; Mishra, 2022). The Thoti's developmental lag compared to other Adilabad tribes, low school enrolment due to social fears, and limited access to government schemes further isolate the community, limiting opportunities for cultural and socio-economic advancement (Sharma, 2018; Reddy, 2019).

The Thoti's PVTG status and declining population, worsened by consanguineous marriages and health practices, amplify their cultural vulnerability (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2014). Consanguineous marriages, prevalent due to the small population, increase genetic disorders, while fasting and alcohol consumption during Gond Gatha and festival rituals contribute to kidney diseases, reducing the number of elders available for cultural transmission (Patel, 2021; Sharma, 2018). Tattooing's decline, driven by modern medical alternatives for pain relief and contemporary tattooing methods, is compounded by the time-intensive single-needle crafting and reuse, which deters clients due to hygiene concerns (Mishra, 2022). Low enrolment in tribal schools, with only 20% of Thoti children attending due to fear of discrimination, hinders cultural education and intergenerational dialogue, aligning with literature on PVTG educational exclusion (Reddy, 2019; Deo, 2020). The failure of government schemes to reach Thoti villages or provide meaningful support exacerbates these challenges, echoing broader issues of PVTG marginalisation (Rao, 2020). Tattooing, a traditionally gendered practice, is facing extinction due to low youth engagement, with female elders in Gudihathinur and Thosham expressing particular concern over the loss of therapeutic and decorative skills (Jain, 2016). The Gond Gatha's oral transmission, reliant on bards, is at risk without digital records, compounded by health-related losses (Venkatesh, 2015).

Environmental challenges, such as deforestation in Thosham and Gudihathinur, further limit access to tattooing resources, echoing broader indigenous struggles (Turner & Clifton, 2009; Agrawal, 1995). Collaborative initiatives, supported by community leaders and NGOs, demonstrate resilience, mirroring global efforts among Maori and Native American communities (Durie, 2003; Kovach, 2010).

Village-specific data reveal localised dynamics. Chenchughat's urban proximity accelerates youth acculturation and educational exclusion, while Divya Guda's community cohesion supports storytelling gatherings. Thosham and Gudihathinur face environmental, health, and governmental constraints, with tattooing being particularly affected by resource scarcity and the emergence of modern alternatives. Utnur's NGO presence highlights the potential for external support, though government schemes remain inadequate. These findings emphasise the need for tailored policies that address universal PVTG challenges, village-specific contexts, health vulnerabilities, educational barriers, and systemic marginalisation.

## Conclusion

This study illuminates the complex interplay of divergence, health challenges, educational disparities, systemic marginalisation, and resilience in Thoti cultural practices across Chenchughat, Divya Guda, Thosham, Gudihathinur, and Utnur, offering a nuanced understanding of intergenerational dynamics within a PVTG community. Globalisation, migration, urbanisation, and mainstream education widen the acculturation gap. At the same time, consanguineous marriages, ritual fasting, and alcohol consumption during Gond Gatha and festival practices contribute to kidney-related diseases and early mortality. The Thoti's developmental lag compared to other Adilabad tribes, low enrolment in tribal schools (only 20% of children attend due to fear), and limited access to government schemes (with benefits described as minimal) exacerbate their cultural and socio-economic vulnerabilities. The decline of tattooing, driven by modern medical and tattooing alternatives, the time-intensive single-needle crafting, and reuse concerns, alongside a shrinking population (only 7% of youth engage in tattooing, 10% know the Gond Gatha), environmental degradation, health vulnerabilities, and systemic exclusion, underscores the fragility of Thoti heritage.

Despite these challenges, collaborative initiatives led by community leaders, such as storytelling gatherings and NGO-led workshops, demonstrate remarkable resilience. These efforts, particularly strong in Divya Guda and Utnur, foster intergenerational dialogue and empower youth to document their heritage, with

88% of workshop participants expressing renewed cultural pride. The success of programs like Koythur Bata in integrating Thoti culture into education highlights a viable path for balancing modernisation with tradition. However, its reach must expand to address low enrolment. Localised challenges—deforestation and health issues in Thosham and Gudihathinur, urban influences and educational exclusion in Chenchughat, and inadequate government support across all villages—require targeted interventions to address resource scarcity, acculturation pressures, health risks, tattooing decline, and systemic marginalisation.

The Thoti's PVTG status amplifies the stakes of this cultural, health, and socio-economic crisis, positioning them at the forefront of India's indigenous preservation efforts. This study contributes to broader discussions on PVTG identity by documenting the Thoti's unique tattooing and storytelling practices, health challenges, educational barriers, and systemic exclusion. It underscores the need for culturally sensitive policies that empower communities, leverage technology for documentation, integrate indigenous knowledge into education, address health risks through medical interventions, improve access to government schemes, and revitalise tattooing through training and hygiene improvements. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of these interventions, expand documentation efforts to other Thoti villages, and investigate health-focused, educational, and tattooing-focused strategies to improve life expectancy, school enrolment, and cultural continuity, ensuring their heritage endures. By amplifying the voices of Thoti communities from Chenchughat, Divya Guda, Thosham, Gudihathinur, and Utnur, this study calls for a collective commitment to safeguarding one of India's most vulnerable tribal legacies.

### Recommendations

1. Educational Integration and Access: Expand Koythur Bata to include Thoti tattooing and Gond Gatha storytelling in curricula across all five villages, ensuring culturally relevant content. Implement community-based sensitisation programs to address Thoti children's fear of attending tribal schools and increase enrolment rates.
2. Community Platforms: Strengthen storytelling gatherings and NGO-led workshops in Chenchughat, Divya Guda, Thosham, Gudihathinur, and Utnur, involving community leaders to facilitate collaboration between elders and youth.

3. Digital Documentation: Support youth-led initiatives to record tattooing techniques and Gond Gatha using audio, video, and digital archives, ensuring accessibility and preservation.
4. Health Interventions: Implement medical awareness campaigns and screenings for kidney-related diseases in all five villages, addressing risks from consanguineous marriages, fasting, and alcohol consumption, with support from a local health NGO.
5. Policy Support and Government Outreach: Establish Thoti cultural centres in each village and fund training programs for tattooing, including hygiene improvements to address concerns about needle reuse, and initiatives to address resource scarcity in Thosham and Gudihathinur. Enhance the outreach of government schemes through dedicated PVTG task forces to ensure Thoti communities receive adequate housing, healthcare, and livelihood support.

Research Expansion: Conduct longitudinal studies on Thoti cultural practices, health challenges, educational barriers, the decline of tattooing, and access to government schemes in these villages and beyond to document their heritage, evaluate the impacts of interventions, and improve life expectancy, school enrollment, and cultural continuity.

#### Works cited

- Agrawal, A. (1995). Dismantling the divide between indigenous and scientific knowledge. *Development and Change*, 26(3), 413–439.
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*. UBC Press.
- Basso, K. H. (1996). *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*—University of New Mexico Press.
- Battiste, M. (2002). *Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education*. Apamuwek Institute.

- Berkes, F. (2018). *Sacred Ecology* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Bhengra, R. (2019). Globalisation and Its Impact on Tribal Communities in India. *Journal of Tribal Studies*, 12(3), 45–60.
- Bose, A. (2012). Marginalised tribes in India: Challenges and prospects. *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 73(4), 321–335.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*. Kivaki Press.
- Census of India. (2011). *Scheduled Tribes in India: A Statistical Profile*. Government of India.
- Choudhary, S., & Das, R. (2020). Intergenerational Cultural Transmission in Indian Tribal Societies. *Indian Journal of Anthropology*, 8(2), 112–125.
- Dei, G. J. S. (2000). *Rethinking the Role of Indigenous Knowledges in the Academy*. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4(2), 111–132.
- Deo, A. (2020). Cultural erosion and resilience in India's tribal communities. *Journal of Indigenous Studies*, 7(1), 23–38.
- Durie, M. (2003). *Ngā Kāhui Pou: Launching Māori Futures*. Huia Publishers.
- Elwin, V. (1991). *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin: An Autobiography*. Oxford University Press.
- Gone, J. P. (2013). Redressing First Nations' historical trauma: Theorising mechanisms for indigenous culture as mental health treatment. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 50(5), 683–706.
- Jain, P. (2016). Traditional knowledge systems of India's smaller tribes. *Anthropological Review*, 14(2), 88–102.
- Kirmayer, L. J., Dandeneau, S., Marshall, E., Phillips, M. K., & Williamson, K. J. (2011). Rethinking resilience from indigenous perspectives. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 56(2), 84–91.

- Kovach, M. (2010). *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. University of Toronto Press.
- Kumar, A., & Sharma, P. (2021). Migration and cultural erosion in India's Adivasi communities. *Journal of Rural Development*, 40(4), 89–104.
- Kumar, S. (2020). Deforestation and its impact on PVTGs in Telangana. *Environmental Studies Journal*, 15(3), 67–82.
- Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2014). *Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in India: A Status Report*. Government of India.
- Mishra, S. (2022). The Thoti tribe: Cultural heritage at risk. *Indian Journal of Tribal Studies*, 15(1), 67–80.
- Mohanty, P. (2017). Cultural resilience among India's indigenous communities. *South Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 15(4), 78–92.
- Munda, R. D., & Mullick, S. B. (2003). *The Jharkhand Movement: Indigenous Peoples and Their Struggle for Autonomy*. Copenhagen: IWGIA.
- Naik, R. (2017). Thoti Bards: Preserving Oral Traditions in Telangana. *Folklore Studies Journal*, 10(3), 55–70.
- Patel, S., & Sharma, N. (2021). Elder-youth collaboration in tribal cultural preservation. *Journal of Community Development*, 12(2), 34–49.
- Patel, V. (2021). Land Alienation and Its Impact on PVTGs in India. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 9(4), 101–115.
- Rao, S. (2020). Smaller tribes of Telangana: Cultural and socio-economic challenges. *Indian Anthropologist*, 50(1), 22–36.
- Rao, S. (2022). Indigenous education and cultural revitalisation: The case of Koythur Bata in Telangana. *Education and Society*, 10(1), 34–48.
- Reddy, P. (2019). Integrating tribal knowledge in education: Lessons from Telangana. *Journal of Educational Development*, 8(2), 45–60.
- Roy, S. (2019). Tribal identity and cultural preservation in India. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 12(3), 89–104.

- Sarangapani, P. M. (2003). Indigenising curriculum: Questions posed by Baiga vidya. *Comparative Education*, 39(2), 199–209.
- Shah, A. (2010). *In the Shadows of the State: Indigenous Politics, Environmentalism, and Insurgency in Jharkhand, India*. Duke University Press.
- Sharma, R. (2018). Economic marginalisation of PVTGs in India. *Journal of Tribal Economics*, 7(2), 45–60.
- Simpson, L. B. (2014). Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation. *Decolonisation: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 3(3), 1–25.
- Smith, G. H. (2012). *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.
- Smith, J., Brown, L., & Johnson, T. (2019). Elder-youth mentorship in indigenous cultural transmission: Lessons from the Cowichan Tribes. *Indigenous Studies Review*, 6(2), 55–70.
- Sundar, N. (2002). *Beyond the Developmental Gaze: Adivasi Politics and the State in India*. Oxford University Press.
- Turner, N. J., & Clifton, H. (2009). “It is so different today”: Climate change and indigenous lifeways in British Columbia, Canada. *Global Environmental Change*, 19(2), 180–190.
- Venkatesh, S. (2015). The Thoti of Adilabad: A study of cultural marginalisation. *Journal of Tribal Heritage*, 8(1), 12–25.
- Wexler, L. (2014). Intergenerational Dialogue and Cultural Continuity in Indigenous Communities. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 45(5), 717–733.

---

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of Magnus Publishing and/or the editor(s). Magnus Publishing and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.

---