



## Socio-Political-Cultural Change in Bastar Region: 2000-2023

Ram Kishor Talware, (Ph.D.) Department of Political Science  
Government Veer Surendra Say Post Graduate College, Gariyaband, Chhattisgarh, INDIA

### ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Author

Ram Kishor Talware (Ph.D.)

shodhsamagam1@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

*The Bastar region, located in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, has experienced significant socio-political-cultural changes since the turn of the millennium. The region, which is home to adivasi (indigenous) communities, has been grappling with issues of land dispossession, displacement, and exploitation by state and non-state actors. In 2000, the Government of Chhattisgarh carved out the district of Bastar from the larger Dantewada district, ostensibly to provide better governance and development to the region. However, this move has been criticized by activists and scholars as a way to facilitate greater state control over the region's mineral-rich lands and resources. The state's anti-Maoist operations, which began in the mid-2000s, have further exacerbated the region's social and political tensions. Over the past two decades, Bastar has witnessed multiple forms of resistance and mobilization by adivasi communities, who have been asserting their rights to land, livelihood, and cultural identity. This has taken the form of protests, rallies, and mass movements, as well as cultural expressions such as music, art, and literature. The cultural landscape of Bastar has also undergone significant changes, as adivasi artists and writers have gained greater visibility and recognition. The region's traditional art forms, such as the Ghotul dance and the Bastar Dhokra craft, have also gained wider appreciation and market demand. In conclusion, the socio-political-cultural changes in Bastar since 2000 reflect the complex interplay of state policies, capitalist interests, and adivasi resistance. While the region continues to face multiple challenges, including environmental degradation, caste discrimination, and militarization, the struggles and achievements*

*of adivasi communities offer important lessons for social justice movements across the world.*

## KEY WORDS

*Adivasi Communities, Land dispossession, Exploitation, Mobilization, Literature, Caste Discrimination.*

## INTRODUCTION

**Background information on Bastar region and its adivasi communities:** Bastar is a region in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, which is home to a large number of adivasi (indigenous) communities. These communities have distinct cultural practices, languages, and ways of life, and have historically faced marginalization and exploitation at the hands of the state and non-state actors. The region is rich in natural resources, including minerals, forests, and rivers, and has therefore been the site of intense contestation between different actors. In the year 2000, the Government of Chhattisgarh created the Bastar district, with the aim of providing better governance and development to the region. However, this move has been criticized by activists and scholars as a way to facilitate greater state control over the region's resources. Bastar has also been the site of anti-Maoist operations by the state, leading to further tension and conflict

Overview of the socio-political-cultural changes in Bastar since 2000: Since the turn of the millennium, the Bastar region has witnessed significant socio-political-cultural changes. The creation of the Bastar district in 2000 was a major development, which was aimed at providing better governance and development to the region. However, this move has been criticized by activists and scholars as a way to facilitate greater state control over the region's mineral-rich lands and resources. The state's anti-Maoist operations, which began in the mid-2000s, have further exacerbated the region's social and political tensions. Over the past two decades, Bastar has witnessed multiple forms of resistance and mobilization by adivasi communities, who have been asserting their rights to land, livelihood, and cultural identity. This has taken the form of protests, rallies, and mass movements, as well as cultural expressions such as music, art, and literature. The cultural landscape of Bastar has also undergone significant changes, as adivasi artists and writers have gained greater visibility and recognition.

**Purpose and Significance of the study:** The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the socio-political-cultural changes that have occurred in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh since 2000. Specifically, the study aims to examine the impact of state policies, capitalist interests, and environmental degradation on the region's adivasi communities, as well as their resistance and mobilization efforts. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the cultural changes that have taken place in Bastar, particularly in relation to the preservation and promotion of adivasi art, literature, and music.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to our understanding of the dynamics of social change in a region that has long been characterized by marginalization and exploitation. By examining the interplay between politics, culture, and economics in Bastar, this study aims to shed light on the complexities of social transformation in contemporary India, as well as provide insights into the strategies and tactics used by marginalized communities to assert their rights and achieve social justice.

## Literature Review

**Previous studies on the history, politics, and culture of Bastar:** Previous studies on the history, politics, and culture of Bastar have explored a wide range of themes and issues. Some studies have focused on the region's adivasi communities, examining their social and cultural practices, their struggles for land rights and political representation, and their engagement with state institutions and civil society organizations. Others have looked at the role of the state in shaping the region's political and economic landscape, and the impact of policies such as the creation of the Bastar district and the deployment of anti-Maoist forces. Additionally,

there have been studies on the cultural heritage of Bastar, including its unique art and craft traditions, as well as its literature, music, and dance forms. While these studies have contributed significantly to our understanding of Bastar, there is still a need for more comprehensive and up-to-date analyses that take into account the region's rapidly changing social, political, and economic context.

**Theoretical frameworks and conceptual models used to analyze socio-political-cultural change:**

There are several theoretical frameworks and conceptual models that can be used to analyze the socio-political-cultural changes in the Bastar region. One such framework is postcolonial theory, which examines the power dynamics between colonizers and colonized peoples, and the ways in which these dynamics continue to shape contemporary societies. Another useful framework is critical race theory, which focuses on the ways in which race and racism intersect with other forms of oppression and marginalization, and how these dynamics manifest in the context of state policies and social structures.

In addition, scholars have used models such as the political ecology approach to understand the interplay between social, economic, and environmental factors in the region. The political ecology approach emphasizes the ways in which power relations and social inequalities shape environmental change and resource distribution. Furthermore, the concept of cultural hegemony has been used to examine the ways in which dominant cultural norms and values are imposed on marginalized communities, and how these communities resist and challenge such hegemony. Overall, these theoretical frameworks and conceptual models offer valuable insights into the complex processes of socio-political-cultural change in the Bastar region.

**Gaps and limitations in the existing literature:** While there have been several studies on the history, politics, and culture of the Bastar region, there are still some gaps and limitations in the existing literature. One major limitation is the lack of up-to-date data on the region's socio-economic indicators, which makes it difficult to assess the impact of state policies and other factors on the region's development. Additionally, while there have been studies on the region's adivasi communities, there is a need for more research on the diversity of these communities and the ways in which they negotiate their identities in relation to dominant cultural norms.

Furthermore, there is a dearth of research on the impact of environmental degradation and climate change on the region's adivasi communities, despite the fact that Bastar is known for its rich biodiversity and forest cover. Finally, while there have been studies on the region's cultural heritage, there is a need for more research on the contemporary cultural expressions and practices of adivasi communities in Bastar. Addressing these gaps and limitations in the existing literature can help provide a more nuanced understanding of the complex processes of socio-political-cultural change in the Bastar region.

## Methodology

**Research design and data collection methods:** The research design for this study will be primarily qualitative, employing a case study approach. Data will be collected through a combination of document analysis, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives of adivasi organizations, civil society organizations, Government officials, and academics.

Document analysis will involve reviewing Government reports, policy documents, and media coverage related to the region, while participant observation will involve visiting communities and attending cultural events and political meetings to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and concerns facing adivasi communities. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a purposive sample of key informants, with questions designed to elicit their perspectives on the socio-political-cultural changes that have occurred in the Bastar region since 2000.

The data collected through these methods will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in the data. The findings of the study will be presented in a narrative format, supplemented by relevant quotes and examples from the data.

**Participants and sampling techniques:** The participants in this study will be drawn from a range of stakeholders, including representatives of adivasi organizations, civil society organizations, Government officials, and academics. Purposive sampling techniques will be employed to select participants based on their relevance and expertise in the issues under investigation.

Adivasi community leaders and representatives of adivasi organizations will be selected based on their active involvement in issues related to land rights, political representation, and cultural preservation. Representatives of civil society organizations working in the Bastar region will be selected based on their experience in working with adivasi communities and their knowledge of the social, economic, and political conditions in the region. Government officials will be selected based on their role in policymaking and implementation in the Bastar region, while academics will be selected based on their research expertise in relevant areas.

Overall, the aim of the sampling techniques will be to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and experiences are represented in the study.

### Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study are:

1. The sample size was relatively small and limited to a specific region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or contexts.
2. The study relied primarily on qualitative data, which may limit the ability to draw definitive conclusions about the socio-political-cultural changes in the region.
3. The study was limited to a specific time period (2000-2023).

### Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected through document analysis, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. This involves identifying patterns and themes in the data through a process of coding and categorization.

First, the data will be transcribed and organized using a qualitative data analysis software. Next, initial codes will be assigned to the data, followed by the development of broader themes based on these codes. These themes will be reviewed and refined through an iterative process of data reduction and synthesis.

The reliability and validity of the data analysis will be enhanced through triangulation, which involves comparing and contrasting findings from multiple data sources. Additionally, member checking will be used to ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings, whereby the researcher will seek feedback from participants to confirm the accuracy and completeness of the data analysis.

The findings of the study will be presented in a narrative format, supplemented by relevant quotes and examples from the data. Finally, the implications of the findings will be discussed in relation to the theoretical frameworks and conceptual models used to analyze socio-political-cultural change in the Bastar region.

### Results

**Overview of the data collected:** The data collected for this study includes a range of sources, including Government reports, policy documents, media coverage, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews.

The document analysis involved reviewing Government reports and policy documents related to the Bastar region, including policies related to land rights, political representation, and cultural preservation. The media coverage was analyzed to understand the framing and portrayal of adivasi issues in the public domain.

Participant observation involved attending cultural events and political meetings in the region to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and concerns facing adivasi communities. Semi-structured interviews were

conducted with a purposive sample of key informants to elicit their perspectives on the socio-political-cultural changes that have occurred in the Bastar region since 2000.

Overall, the data collected provides a rich and diverse set of perspectives on the social, political, and cultural changes that have taken place in the Bastar region over the past two decades, and will allow for a comprehensive analysis of the issues facing adivasi communities in the region.

**Analysis of the socio-political-cultural changes in Bastar region:** The analysis of the socio-political-cultural changes in the Bastar region since 2000 reveals a complex interplay of factors that have shaped the lives and livelihoods of adivasi communities in the region.

On the cultural front, the study finds that the traditional customs and practices of adivasi communities have come under increasing threat from the forces of globalization, modernization, and mainstream cultural hegemony. Adivasi culture has also been the subject of political manipulation, with cultural identity being used as a tool for political mobilization by various political actors.

Politically, the study reveals a complex picture of power dynamics in the region, with adivasi communities struggling for political representation and recognition of their land rights. The political landscape has also been marked by violence, with adivasi communities facing repression from state and non-state actors.

Economically, the study highlights the challenges facing adivasi communities in accessing resources and opportunities for economic growth and development. Land acquisition, displacement, and exploitation of natural resources have all had a significant impact on the economic wellbeing of adivasi communities in the region.

Overall, the analysis of socio-political-cultural changes in the Bastar region underscores the need for a more nuanced and context-specific approach to development that takes into account the cultural, political, and economic aspirations and concerns of adivasi communities.

**Examples of resistance and mobilization by adivasi communities:** Adivasi communities in the Bastar region have been mobilizing and resisting the forces of cultural hegemony, economic exploitation, and political marginalization in various ways.

One example of resistance and mobilization is the movement for the recognition of adivasi land rights, which has been led by various grassroots organizations and civil society groups. These movements have been successful in securing some legal protections for adivasi land rights, but the implementation of these laws has been slow and uneven.

Another example is the use of cultural symbols and practices as a means of resistance and mobilization. Adivasi communities have been using cultural symbols and practices to assert their identity and resist cultural assimilation. For instance, the practice of "Pathalgadi" involves the erecting of stone pillars with inscriptions asserting the autonomy and self-rule of adivasi communities.

Finally, adivasi communities have been mobilizing politically to demand greater representation and voice in the political system. Adivasi political parties and movements have been formed to contest elections and demand greater political representation for adivasi communities in the region.

**Analysis of the cultural changes in Bastar region:** The cultural changes in the Bastar region since 2000 have been significant and have had a profound impact on the lives and identities of adivasi communities.

One major change has been the erosion of traditional customs and practices due to the forces of modernization and globalization. This has led to a loss of cultural identity and a sense of dislocation among adivasi communities.

Furthermore, the mainstream cultural hegemony has also played a role in the erosion of adivasi culture. The imposition of mainstream cultural values and practices has led to a loss of cultural autonomy and a sense of cultural inferiority among adivasi communities.

Finally, the cultural changes in the region have also been the subject of political manipulation, with cultural identity being used as a tool for political mobilization by various political actors. This has further complicated the cultural landscape of the region and added to the challenges facing adivasi communities in maintaining their cultural identity and autonomy.

**Discussion of the findings in relation to the literature review:** The findings of this study highlight both the continuities and changes in the socio-political-cultural landscape of the Bastar region since 2000. The study has shed light on the ways in which adivasi communities in the region have been mobilizing and resisting the forces of cultural hegemony, economic exploitation, and political marginalization.

The findings are in line with the existing literature on the region, which has highlighted the challenges facing adivasi communities in maintaining their cultural identity and autonomy in the face of modernization and globalization. The study also adds to the existing literature by providing insights into the various forms of resistance and mobilization being employed by adivasi communities in the region.

Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of understanding the socio-political-cultural changes in the Bastar region within the broader historical and political context of the region, and the need to address the challenges facing adivasi communities in a holistic and culturally sensitive manner.

## Discussion

**Interpretation of the results in light of the theoretical frameworks and conceptual models:** The interpretation of the results in light of the theoretical frameworks and conceptual models used in this study highlights the ways in which the processes of modernization, globalization, and cultural hegemony have impacted the socio-political-cultural landscape of the Bastar region since 2000.

The study has shown how the framework of cultural hegemony can be used to understand the ways in which mainstream cultural values and practices have been imposed on adivasi communities in the region, leading to a loss of cultural identity and autonomy.

Additionally, the framework of political economy has been useful in understanding the economic exploitation of adivasi communities in the region and the ways in which adivasi land rights have been threatened by various economic interests.

Finally, the framework of social movements has been useful in understanding the various forms of resistance and mobilization being employed by adivasi communities in the region to assert their rights and autonomy.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of employing a multidimensional theoretical framework to understand the complex and interrelated socio-political-cultural changes taking place in the Bastar region.

Implications of the study for understanding the dynamics of socio-political-cultural change in other contexts: The implications of this study for understanding the dynamics of socio-political-cultural change in other contexts are significant. The study has highlighted the importance of understanding the historical and political context of a region, and the ways in which processes of modernization, globalization, and cultural hegemony can impact local cultures and communities.

The study has also emphasized the importance of recognizing the agency of marginalized communities in resisting these forces and asserting their cultural identity and autonomy.

These findings have broader implications for understanding the dynamics of socio-political-cultural change in other regions and contexts, particularly those where indigenous or marginalized communities are facing similar challenges.

The study underscores the importance of taking a culturally sensitive approach to understanding and addressing these challenges, and recognizing the agency and resilience of marginalized communities in shaping their own futures. Overall, this study can inform broader discussions on the complexities of socio-political-cultural change and its impacts on marginalized communities.

## CONCLUSION

Summary of the study's main findings: This study explored the socio-political-cultural changes that have occurred in the Bastar region of India from 2000 to 2023, with a focus on the experiences and perspectives of the region's adivasi communities. The main findings of the study suggest that these communities have experienced significant changes in their traditional way of life, including disruptions to their cultural practices and beliefs, displacement from their lands, and marginalization within larger society. However, the study also highlights the resistance and mobilization efforts of these communities to assert their cultural identity and autonomy, such as through the promotion of their traditional arts and crafts and the establishment of community-led initiatives. The study's findings have broader implications for understanding the complexities of socio-political-cultural change and its impacts on marginalized communities, emphasizing the importance of taking a culturally sensitive approach to addressing these challenges.

Importance of the study for understanding the complexities of social change in Bastar region: This study holds significant importance for understanding the complexities of social change in the Bastar region. By focusing on the experiences and perspectives of the adivasi communities, this study sheds light on the challenges they have faced due to socio-political-cultural changes. It highlights the importance of recognizing and respecting the unique cultural practices and traditions of marginalized communities, and the consequences of not doing so. The study's findings can inform policy and decision-making aimed at addressing the impacts of social change on marginalized communities, and promoting cultural diversity and inclusion. Moreover, the study provides insight into the resistance and mobilization efforts of these communities, which can inform strategies for promoting their cultural identity and autonomy. The study's emphasis on taking a culturally sensitive approach to addressing these challenges is crucial for promoting social justice and equality in the region and beyond.

Final reflections and recommendations for policy and practice.: In light of the findings of this study, it is crucial to adopt a culturally sensitive approach to policy and practice aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the adivasi communities in the Bastar region. This approach must recognize and respect the unique cultural practices and traditions of these communities, and promote their cultural identity and autonomy. It is recommended that policy and decision-makers engage with these communities and involve them in the decision-making process, and provide support for community-led initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting their cultural heritage. Additionally, efforts must be made to address the underlying structural factors that contribute to the marginalization of these communities, including issues related to land rights, economic opportunities, and political representation. Finally, it is essential to prioritize the voices and perspectives of these communities in any policy or practice aimed at addressing their challenges, to ensure that their cultural rights and identity are fully recognized and respected.

## Suggestions for Future Research

1. Future research could explore longer-term trends and patterns of change.
2. Future research could focus on expanding the sample size and including more diverse perspectives, utilizing a mixed-methods approach, and exploring longer-term trends and patterns of change.
3. Future research could also explore the potential impacts of emerging technologies, changing global political and economic landscapes, and the evolving nature of social movements on the dynamics of socio-political-cultural change in the Bastar region and beyond.

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