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## **Assessment of Local Tribal Markets in Sunderpahari Block, Godda District, Jharkhand**

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### **Abstract:**

*Tribal market is a process of both economic and cultural institution. The study presents nature of economic, social, cultural and development studies to understand interdisciplinary nature of tribal market interaction as an economic as well as cultural institution. In these tribal regions market system is a spatial node where traditional barter system as well as modern cash economies exist simultaneously. The role of gender in tribal economy can be understood by the gendered dimension of market participation, where women play not just passive role but are the active economic agents in the participation, exchange and processing of forest and agricultural products.*

**Keywords:** tribal market, market exchange, pahariya tribes, PVTGs.

### **Introduction:**

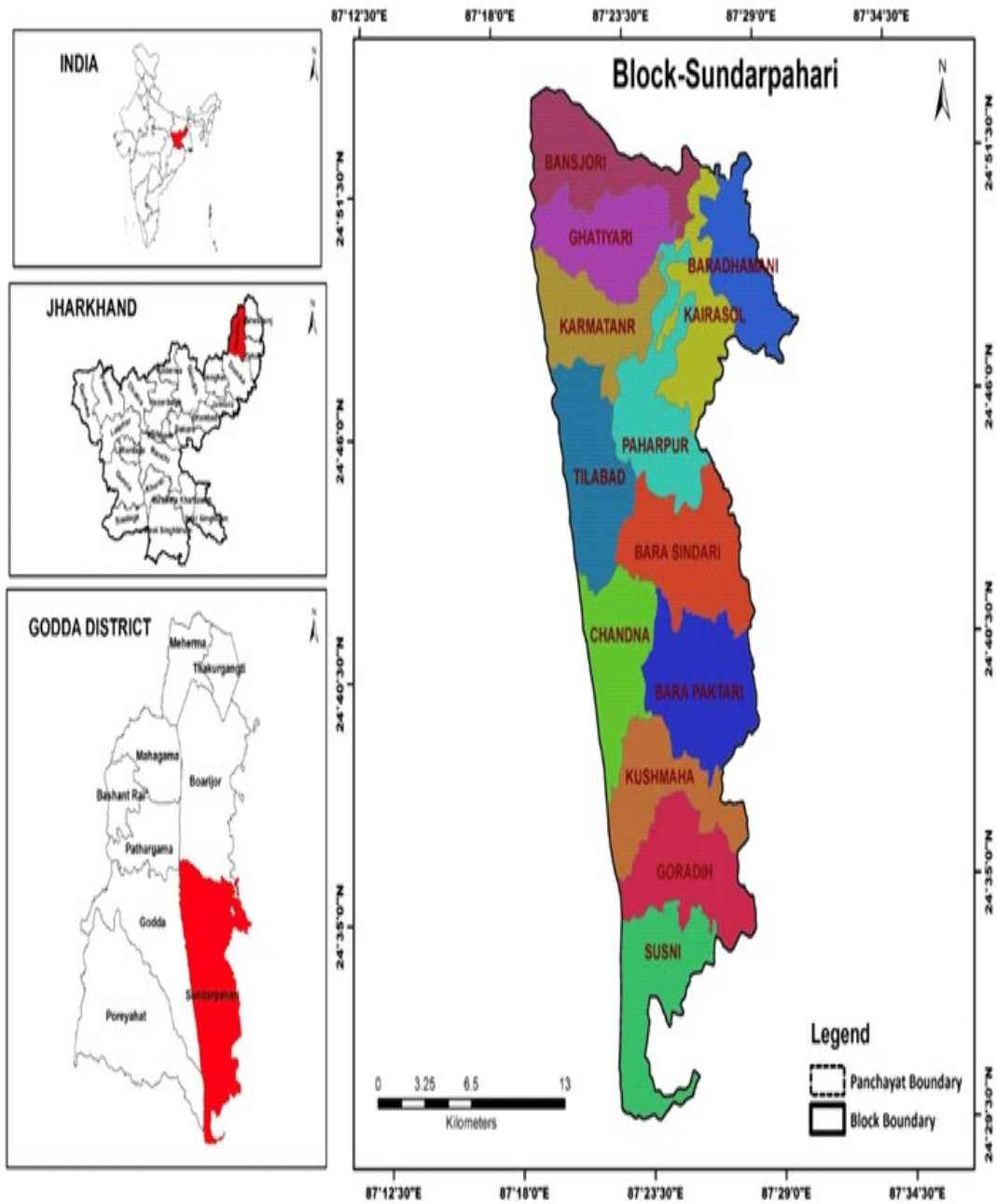
Weekly tribal haat of Pahariya community are organized on regular basis. These periodic haat are held every week on a fixed days, some haats are minor and some haats are major, in which traders, tribal community members regularly setup their shops (Singh, 2014). The socio-economic transformation of tribal communities takes place due to presence of these weekly haats in the ecologically sensitive regions. Among the tribal groups of Jharkhand, the Sauriya Pahariya and Mal Pahariya both are categorised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) (Sahani & Nandy, 2013) which occupy a distinctive position due to their continued dependence on traditional livelihoods based on weekly haat and forest based economies (S.N. Tiwari, 2021). These weekly haats are the places of continuity and change as integration of tradition and transition happens simultaneously, where indigenous trade practices, tribal culture as well as market dynamics converge (Datta, 2002). In the Sunderpahari block of Rajmahal hills of Godda district, there are major haat like Chandana and Damru, which are served by several minor haats and are distributed across the block. This chapter will deal with participation of tribal and interaction of the community in weekly market, and focuses on their trade practices, gender roles, mobility and socio-economic linkages.

### **Study Area:**

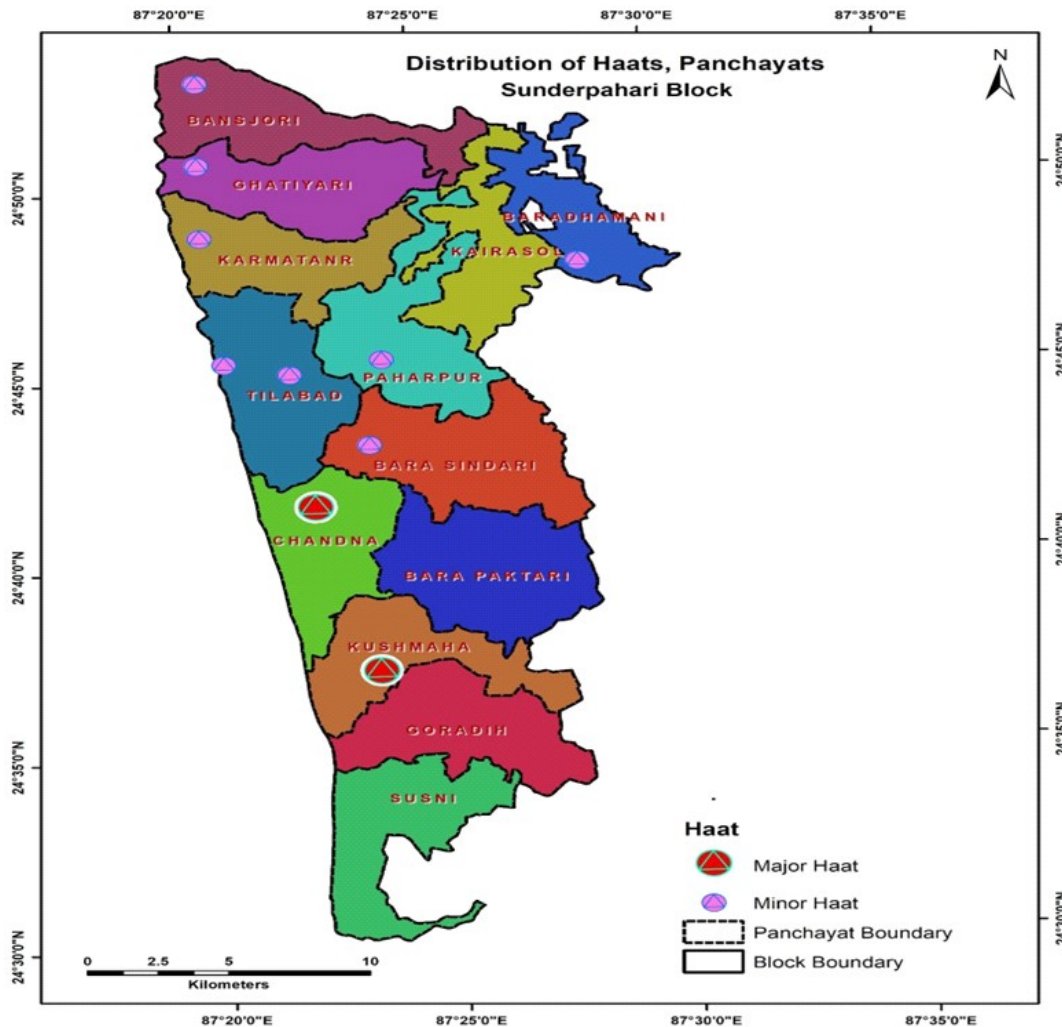
Damru Haat (local market) is located near Godadih Village in Sunderpahari block (Figure 1) of Godda district in Jharkhand. It is located approximately 20 kms south from Sundarpahari block of Godda district with latitudinal extent of 24° 6' N, 87° 3' E. A hard surfaced road connects it with the nearby areas. Damru Haat is held on Saturday (Map 2), it is one of the biggest haat of this entire region. It belongs to two major hill tribes Saurya Pahariya and Mal Pahariya who are particularly vulnerable tribal groups.

‘Chandana Haat’, which is another big haat of this region is held on Thursday. Apart from Damru and Chandana haat there are several small local haat organized in the region which includes Bansjori on Tuesday and Friday, Ghatiyari on Tuesday, Bhaluka on Wednesday, Tesuba Than on Sunday and Thursday, Rampur on Tuesday, Sunderpahari on Wednesday, Bara Sindri on Friday, Bara Dhamni on Tuesday and Saturday (Map 2).

Figure 1: The Location of Sunderpahari block, Godda District, Jharkhand



**Figure 2: Location of Chandana, Damru and other Minor Haats in Sunderpahari Block**



Source: Compiled by researcher

### Objectives:

- to analyze interaction of Sauriya Pahariya and Mal Pahariya tribes with local market in the study area.
- to analyze the spatial organization, trade and socio-cultural dynamics of the local haats with respect to Sauriya Pahariya and Mal Pahariya.

### Data base and Methodology:

For the interaction of Sauriya Pahariya and Mal Pahariya tribes with the weekly local market in the Sunderpahari block, a mixed method was adopted which combined both the qualitative as well as quantitative methods. The methodology was adopted to capture multi-dimensional nature of these tribal weekly haat including social, cultural as well as economic dimensions.

The primary data collection was done through in-depth interviews of government officials and structured and semi structured interviews were conducted with key block development officials like Block Development Officer, Block Program Officer, Block Welfare Officer, Revenue sub-inspector and the Circle Inspector. Key Informant Interviews (KII) (Gilchrist, 1992) were done with tribal representatives of Pahariya community from Chandana Panchayat and Godadih Panchayat.

Household surveys was conducted to find out how tribal communities interact with local markets in the study area. Extensive field survey and participant observation was done at the major haats of Sunderpahari block that is Chandana and Damru and selected minor haats. Observation was recorded in the field note on types of vendors in the market, layout of the market, commodity flow socio-cultural institutions in the market, behavioral aspects of sellers and buyers in the market which were supplemented by photographic documentation. At last data triangulation (Thurmond, 2001) and analysis were also done so that information collected from various sources were cross verified and examined to ensure validity and reliability of data.

### Findings:

**1. Economic dynamics of selected tribal local markets:** The study highlights purchase or exchange of goods and commodities between Pahariya tribal communities and the sellers of Chandana and Damru and other Minor haat. Tribal households sell (their 'Have') and purchase (their 'Have Not') from the local weekly market system. The market exchange pattern is characteristic of subsistence-based forest-fringe communities where dependence on both forest resources and small-scale agriculture is high, while manufactured goods are largely accessed through weekly markets.

The Table 1 shows that the tribal economy is primarily dependent on forest produce, smallholder agriculture, livestock, and traditional beverages, which form the core commodities sold in the market. In return, table 2 shows the households purchase essential grocery items, perishable foods they do not cultivate, clothing, household utilities, and items related to health and personal safety. This pattern highlights how the local haats serves as a crucial link integrating tribal households with the wider market economy, enabling both livelihood generation and consumption needs.

Main agricultural produce that are sold and are common in both these Haats includes cow pea (*locally known as “barbatti<sup>1</sup>”*), maize, finger millets, pearl millets, horse gram (*locally known as “kurthi”*), pigeon pea, apart from crops other forest produce like dry wood, dry leaves of Sal tree (*locally known as “Sakhuwa patta<sup>2</sup>”*), silk etc. are sold by tribal communities in these weekly market but it is observed that one of the most common purchasable items in the market was traditional local beverages (*“this is rice drink locally known as ‘pachoi’/‘hariya’/‘maari’, ‘mahuwa drink<sup>3</sup>, ‘taari<sup>4</sup>’*). They also emphasized that *“this is not alcohol, these drinks are different, anyone can drink this, these are not harmful like alcohol”*, *‘maari’, ‘mahuwa drink<sup>3</sup>, ‘taari<sup>4</sup>’*).

Apart from the local beverages, silver jewelry for which young tribal girls were especially fond of were also sold. Sweets, snacks, different varieties of fishes, daily item groceries like spices, oil, fruits etc. are sold, along with-it items of daily use like clothes, shoes, slippers, locks, umbrellas, mosquito nets are also sold in this local market. There are barbers who are operating their shop in the open with only one chair and handholding mirror.

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<sup>1</sup> Barbatti, also known as cowpea or yardlong bean, is a legume vegetable with long, slender pods eaten when tender. It's protein-rich, soil-enriching, and widely grown across tropical India.

<sup>2</sup> Sakhuwa refers to the Sal tree (*Shorea robusta*), a large deciduous tree found widely in Central and Eastern India, especially in tribal and forest regions. “Patta” means leaf in Hindi and many Indian languages.

<sup>3</sup> The mahuwa drink (also spelled mahua) is a traditional alcoholic beverage made from the flowers of the Mahuwa tree (*Madhuca longifolia*). The mahuwa tree grows widely in Central and Eastern India - in states like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

<sup>4</sup> Taari (or Tadi/Toddy) is a traditional tribal drink made from the naturally fermented sap of palm trees. It is mildly alcoholic, sweet when fresh, and serves as both a social beverage and a source of livelihood in many rural communities.

Damru haat serve as vital hubs for the livelihoods of tribal people, offering diversified economic opportunities and community engagement. It provides a platform where tribal artisans, specialized craftsmen, weavers, potters and blacksmiths showcase and sell their traditional handicrafts, which contribute to their income as well as preserving cultural heritage.

**Table 1: Commodities sold by Tribal Communities in Local Market**

<b>Commodities Sold by Tribal Households</b>			
<b>Forest-Based Products</b>	<b>Agricultural Produce</b>	<b>Livestock and Animal Products</b>	<b>Traditional Beverages</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Timber and Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFPs)</b>- Bamboo, Sal leaves (locally known as ‘Sakhuwa patta’), dry woods, Mushrooms</li> <li>• <b>Wild Edibles and Processing Items:</b> Mahuwa (flowers, seeds, fermented beverage)</li> <li>• <b>Forest- derived Fibres:</b> Tussar silk (cocoon or raw silk)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vegetables and fruits:</b> Sweet potato, Corn, seasonal vegetables and seasonal fruits.</li> <li>• <b>Pulses &amp; Grains:</b> Arhar (pigeonpea), Bazra (pearl millet), other minor cereals</li> <li>• <b>Oilseeds &amp; Pulses:</b> Mustard, kulthi (horse gram), Barbatti (cowpea)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Livestock and Animal Products:</b> Poultry (hen), goats, pigs, meat.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rice Drink locally known as ‘pachoi’/ ‘hariya’/ ‘maari’ , Date palm drink known as <b>Taari and Mahuwa drink.</b></li> </ul>

Source: Compiled by researcher

**Table 2: Commodities purchased by Tribal Communities from Local Market**

Commodities Purchased from the Local Market				
Food & Grocery Items	Household Essentials	Clothing & Footwear	Personal Adornment & Accessories	Health & Safety Items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry groceries: Spices, oil, grains</li> <li>• Processed snacks: Namkeen, packaged foods</li> <li>• Perishables not grown locally: Fruits, sweets, vegetables, some meat items.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic gadgets</li> <li>• Utensils</li> <li>• Basic tools and implements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily-wear clothes, Seasonal garments</li> <li>• Foot-wear for adults and children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jewellery- (silver, glass bangles, ornaments typical of rural markets)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mosquito nets</li> </ul>

*Source: Computed by researcher*

**Figure 3: Cloth Shops at Damru and Chandana Haat**



*Source: Field Survey, 2023-2024.*

**Figure 4: Shopkeeper selling groceries**



*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

**Figure 5: Pahariya women purchasing bangles and aluminum jewelries in the haat**



*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

**Figure 6: Pahariya Man with his livestock to sell in the Chandana Haat**



*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

**Figure 7: Man selling Forest herbs in Chandana Haat**

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

This exchange system displays a resource-based outgoing flow (agricultural produce and forest produce) and an incoming flow of manufactured goods and utilities (Figure 3-7).

**2. Semi-subsistence structure:** The exchange of small quantities of forest produce, agricultural surplus, and home-made items indicates that the Pahariya communities operate within a semi-subsistence sub structure. Production is mainly for self-consumption, with only limited surplus entering the local market. The market trend shows that their integration is mainly to fulfil their daily needs and less cash is needed by them for these transactions. Their exchange depends upon the seasonal availability of forest and agricultural resources, which results in variable participation on weekly haats.

**3. Market dependence:** Although, subsistence production is dominant, but Pahariya dependency on local market is for those goods which they can't produce due to geographical and skill limitations such as utensils, clothing, packaged foods, sweets, mosquito nets, sweets, breads, aluminum jewelries and farm related tools. This shows that there is a gradual shift towards cash-based economy. Dependency of Pahariya community on these weekly haats also reflects exposure to manufactured items and their consumption patterns and highlights how economic lifeline through the exposure of market have become critical in the lives of Sauriya Pahariya and Mal Pahariya communities.

**4. Cultural continuity:** The long-standing cultural practices of Pahariya community like sailing of forest-based produce, traditional beverages and handmade products are preserved through these weekly haats. Initially, Pahariya community was dependent on barter system which was based on subsistence type of economy and they had no interaction with the outer world but gradually their needs could not get fulfilled through barter and through internal exchange, so the demand of weekly local market grew gradually. Their artisanal skills, along with their customary knowledge about sustainable forest harvesting and brewing techniques strengthen their tribal identity. The presence of traditional commodities in the marketplace demonstrates economic change and cultural resilience and helps providing communal bonding and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

**5. Economic resilience:** Diversification of livelihood provides cushion to the Pahariya communities against crop failures, seasonal unpredictability as well as market volatility. Their dependency on multiple resource like households combined with agriculture, livestock rearing and collection of NTFPs expands income pathways and strengthens resilience to economic and ecological shocks and also ensures year-round participation in market exchanges.

**6. Role of Women:** The historical evolution of market dynamics of Damru Haat and Chandana Haat reveal a distinguishing and noticeable trend wherein active and substantial participation of women is observed, explicitly in the dealing of indigenous alcoholic beverages and in general selling of diverse commodities (Figure 8-9). This occurrence contrasts distinctly with the prevailing scenario in urban markets, where the sale of alcoholic drinks is predominantly managed by male vendors in India. In the context of local Haat, a unique feature is discerned, as all vendors engaged in the retail of local traditional alcoholic drinks are exclusively women, comprising a remarkable departure from conventional gender roles that are assigned and observed in larger urban marketplaces. Beyond the domain of alcoholic beverage sale, the noteworthy involvement of tribal women in several other commercial domains within Damru Haat is perceptible. Tribal women actively participate in the sale of diverse commodities, which includes grocery items, vegetables, fruits and snacks. Particularly, the demographic composition of the market annotates a striking predominance of tribal women, outnumbered the representation of their male counterparts. The prevailing gender composition in

Damru Haat serves as a representation of the dominance and empowerment of tribal women (M. Tiwari & Joshi, 2023) within the local market space. The convergence of tribal women’s predominant presence in the sale of traditional alcoholic beverages, coupled with their active participation in other commercial activities, highlights a notable departure from stereotypes and gender based social norms. The market composition not only opposes traditional gender roles but also deliberates the empowerment of tribal women in Damru Haat and Chandana Haat, unveiling their bold participation and decisive influence within the local tribal economic space.

**Figure 8: Pahariya women selling local drink at Damru Haat**



*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

**Figure 9: Pahariya women in traditional attire**



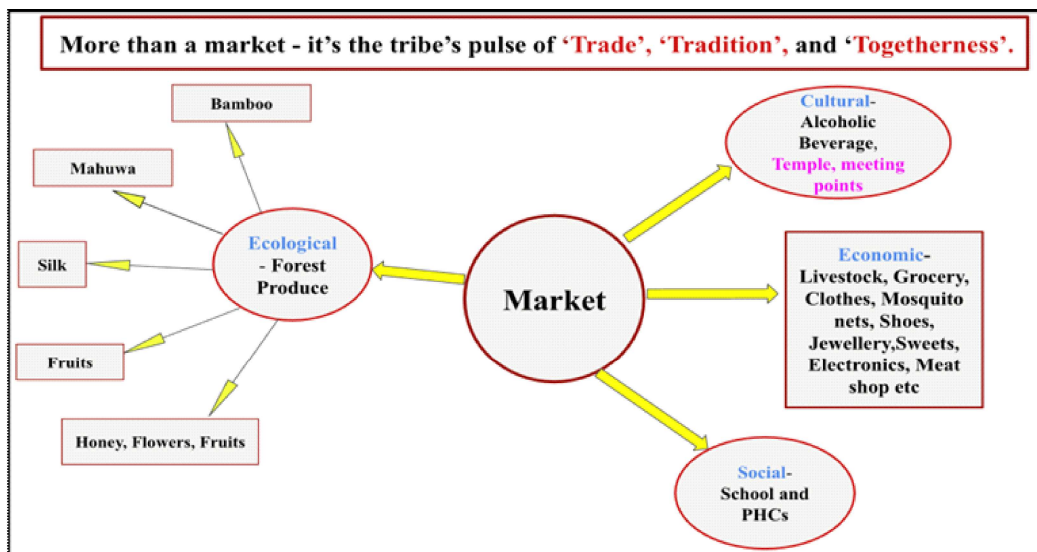
*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

**7. Ecology:** The ecology which is represented through produce of forest like bamboo, silk, mahua, honey, flowers, and seasonal fruits, which forms the outward flow from households to the market. These resources highlight the community’s dependence on forest ecosystems for survival, where income is derived from collection of Non-Timber Forest Produce, foraging and small-scale agriculture.

**8. Social-cultural dynamics:** Local market is also periodic socio-institutional hub where schools, primary health centers (PHCs), and essential services are available. Tribal villages are geographically dispersed in Sunderpahari block, local weekly market provides opportunities for social meeting, information sharing, accessing of health services, discussions on community matter, arranging of labor. Hence these interactions strengthen connectivity as well as collective identity.

Weekly haats are culture sphere where traditional alcoholic beverages are prepared and exchanged, community rituals are performed, and temple gathering as well as meetings are activated. The figure 10 captures the multiple roles played by these weekly haat and acts as a dynamic institution at the intersection of economy, ecology, society, and culture. In the lives of Pahariya community.

**Figure 10: Role of local Market in the lives of Sauriya Pahadiya and Mal Pahadiya Tribes**

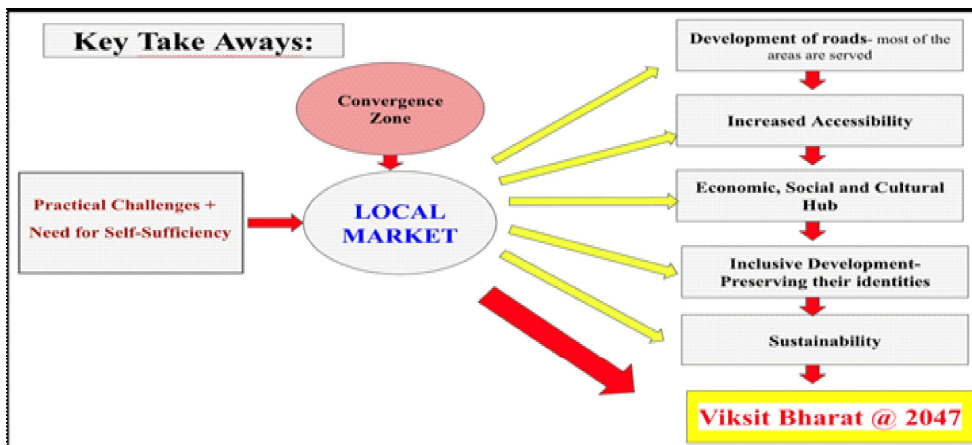


Source: Computed by researcher

**Suggestions and Recommendations:**

The figure 11 emphasizes the local weekly market’s (Datta, 2002) main function as a meeting place where the livelihood need and community self-sufficiency meet. The haat is a crucial meeting point, that works as a uniting hub for cultural manifestations, community interactions and bonding, and economic activity. As rural road networks grow and connectivity improves, the accessibility of this market has greatly expanded, which allows more seamless movement of people, products and services. The weekly market performs as a social cultural and economic center which further gets strengthened by enhanced access, highlighting the significance as location for the exchange of livelihoods as well as for upholding customs, promoting social bonding and assisting in community decision-making. The figure also reflects the need to achieve inclusive development (SCSTRTI, 2022) to protect unique culture of Pahariya tribes while promoting economic growth. Therefore, promoting local market is a fundamental tool to make sure that development must integrate unique culture heritage of tribal groups which will make larger growth possible rather than eroding it. The local weekly market can provide that platform which will promote sustainable ecosystem, long term tribal prosperity with the help of targeted interventions like empowering women, strengthening value chains, providing institutional support and fostering climate resilience.

**Figure 11: Local Markets' Strategic Importance for Inclusive Tribal Development**



Source: Computed by researcher

In the end, revitalizing the grassroots economic systems is crucial for equitable, inclusive and sustainable development throughout India, which aligns with the national vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047 (Mahida, 2024). The figure 11 represents that role of local market in determining India's development trajectory, by recognizing and strengthening them as engines of community resilience, Pahariya communities' growth, cultural continuity and economic opportunity.

These markets are also transforming with the changing world, therefore studying tribal communities or their uniqueness in isolation is not sufficient, it is equally important to explore and study tribal weekly markets as it is a vital component of their cultural, social and economic sustainability.

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