



ROLL OF DIGITAL PLATFORM IN PRESERVING TRIBAL CULTURE AND PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MAHARASHTRA

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INTRODUCTION:

Culturally diverse, the state of Maharashtra is home to many communities such as the Gond Bhil, Gond, Warli, Koli, and Mahadev Koli. These communities have their own customs, arts and knowledge systems that are deeply rooted in their environment. However, globalization, urbanization and environmental destruction are serious threats to their heritage and sustainability. The introduction of digital platforms is a good way to fill this gap while preserving social values and promoting sustainable development.

The state of Maharashtra, in western India, is home to several ethnic communities, each with its own culture, language, art and lifestyle. Tribal communities, referred to as Scheduled Tribes (STs). Tribal culture is an important part of India's heritage, but it faces increasing challenges in modern times due to urbanization, industrialization, and cultural

integration. Digital platforms have emerged as powerful tools to bridge the gap between preserving indigenous cultures and promoting sustainable development. These platforms can reflect public culture, create economic opportunities, and address the development challenges faced by tribal communities.

This article explores the transformative potential of digital platforms to preserve the ethnic culture of Maharashtra while promoting sustainable development.



Image 1: [Mumbai Maharashtra map - Map of Maharashtra Mumbai \(Maharashtra - India\)](#)

In Maharashtra most Prominent Tribal Areas in every district shown below-

District	Taluka
1. Palghar District	Jawhar, Mokhada, Dahanu, and Vikramgad.
2. Nandurbar District	Taloda, Akrani, and Shahada.
3. Gadchiroli District	Etapalli, Bhamragad, and Kurkheda.
4. Thane District	Shahapur, Murbad, and Ambernath.
5. Nashik District	Peth, Surgana, and Igatpuri.
6. Chandrapur District	Mul, Rajura, and Chimur.
7. Dhule District	Sakri and Shirpur.
8. Amravati District	Chikhaldara and Dharni.
9. Yavatmal District	Pandharkawda and Kelapur.
10. Nagpur District	Umred and Ramtek.

The tribes and their generative business in Maharashtra include:

- **Warli:** Known for their traditional art and connection to the forests.
- **Bhil:** Found in northern Maharashtra; engaged in agriculture and labor.
- **Gond:** Residing in Vidarbha's forested regions, with a rich cultural heritage.
- **Katkari:** One of the most vulnerable tribal groups, known for their nomadic lifestyle.
- **Kokana:** A settled agricultural tribe in Nashik and Palghar regions.
- **Kolam:** A primitive tribal group found in Yavatmal and Chandrapur.

As per census of India 2011 the tribal population in Maharashtra district wise given below

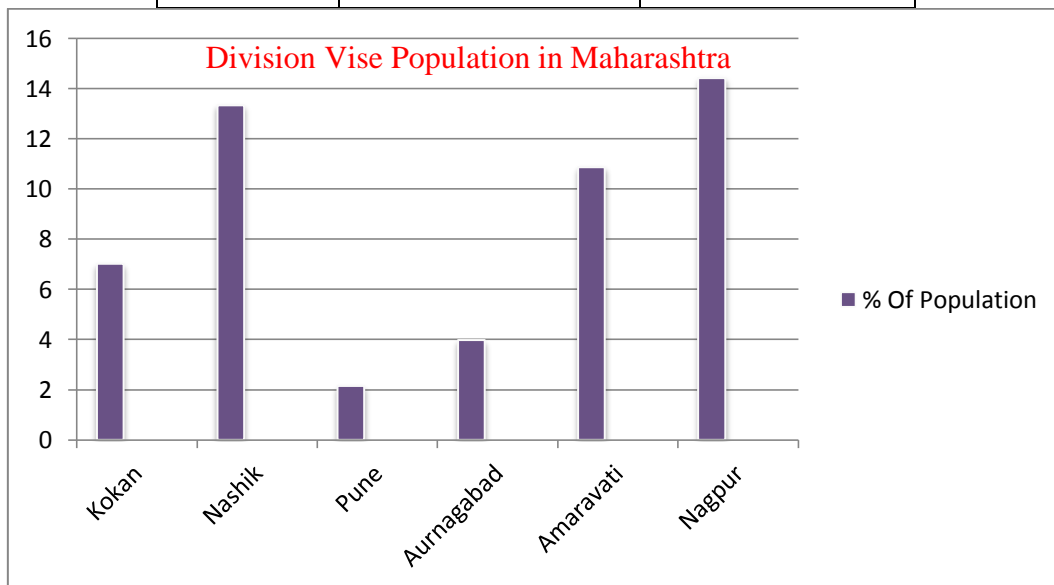
Sr. No	State/Union Territory	Population		Percentage of Tribal Population
		Total	Tribal	
	INDIA	112374	10510	9.35
1	Mumbai Suburban	9357	105	1.12
2	Mumbai City	3085	25	0.81
3	Thane	8070	425	5.27
4	Palghar	2990	1118	37.39
5	Raigad	2634	305	11.58
6	Ratnagiri	1615	20	1.24
7	Sindhudurg	850	7	0.82
	Total - Konkan Division	28601	2005	7.01
8	Nashik	6107	1564	25.61
9	Dhule	2051	647	31.55
10	Nandurbar	1648	1142	69.3
11	Jalgaon	4230	604	14.28
12	Ahmednagar	4543	378	8.32
	Total - Nashik Division	18579	4335	23.33
13	Pune	9429	349	3.7
14	Satara	3004	30	1
15	Sangli	2822	18	0.64
16	Solapur	4318	78	1.81
17	Kolhapur	3876	30	0.77
	Total - Pune Division	23449	505	2.15
18	Aurangabad	3701	143	3.86
19	Jalna	1960	42	2.14
20	Parbhani	1836	41	2.23
21	Hingoli	1177	112	9.52
22	Beed	2585	33	1.28
23	Nanded	3361	282	8.39
24	Osmanabad	1658	36	2.17
25	Latur	2454	57	2.32
	Total - Aurangabad Division	18732	746	3.98

26	Buldana	2586	125	4.83
27	Akola	1814	100	5.51
28	Washim	1197	81	6.77
29	Amravati	2889	404	13.98
30	Yavatmal	2772	514	18.54
Total - Amravati Division		11258	1224	10.87
31	Wardha	1301	150	11.53
32	Nagpur	4654	438	9.41
33	Bhandara	1200	89	7.42
34	Gondia	1323	214	16.18
35	Chandrapur	2204	389	17.65
36	Gadchiroli	1073	415	38.68
Total - Nagpur Division		11755	1695	14.42

Ref:[Divisionwise Total & Tribal Population | Government Of Maharashtra, India](#)

Table 1: Percentage of Tribal populations in Maharashtra

Sr. no	Division	% Of Population
1	Kokan	7.01
2	Nashik	23.33
3	Pune	2.15
4	Aurangabad	3.98
6	Amaravati	10.87
6	Nagapur	14.42



GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES:

- **Western Ghats and Satpura Ranges:** These mountain ranges host a significant number of tribal settlements.

- **Forested Regions:** Tribal communities depend heavily on forest resources for their livelihoods.

- **River Valleys:** Rivers like Godavari and Narmada provide fertile plains for agriculture.

CHALLENGES IN TRIBAL AREAS:

1. **Limited Infrastructure:** Poor access to roads, schools, and healthcare facilities.
2. **Economic Dependency:** Heavy reliance on agriculture and forest produce, with limited market access.
3. **Social Exclusion:** Marginalization and lack of representation in mainstream society.
4. **Digital Divide:** Minimal access to digital tools and internet connectivity.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

1. To assess the role of digital platforms in recording and preserving traditional arts, languages and customs of tribal communities in Maharashtra.
2. Analyze how digital platforms can promote the economic empowerment of people in various countries.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of digital tools in promoting education, health care and environmental protection in tribal areas.

4. Identify the challenges of implementing digital solutions in tribal areas.
5. Make recommendations on the preparation of digital platforms to protect national cultures and promote sustainable development.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS:

1. **Limited Access to Data:** Access to reliable data on digital penetration and its impact on tribal communities is limited.
2. **Tribal Cultural Diversity:** The diversity of tribal communities in Maharashtra makes it difficult to generalize the results of this study.
3. **Technological limitations:** Many tribal areas lack infrastructure such as electricity and internet access, which limits the scope of research.
4. **Social and cultural sensitivity:** Tribal communities may have reservations about sharing their traditions digitally, which impacts deep bonds.
5. **Limited time and resources:** Conducting field studies in remote tribal areas is challenging due to lack of equipment and time.

METHODOLOGY:

This study uses mixed methods that combine qualitative and quantitative methods:

1. Secondary Data Analysis:

Review of academic journals, government reports, and publications related to digital issues, social media, and sustainable development.

Case studies of successful digital interventions in tribal areas of Maharashtra and other states in India.

2. Content Analysis:

Review of public discourse on digital platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and channels dedicated to folk art, crafts, and music.

Analyze e-commerce websites promoting tribal products, such as the TRIFED portal "Indian Tribes".

3. Benchmarking Framework:

Compare Maharashtra's digital metrics with similar metrics in other countries to identify best practices.

FINDING:

1. Protection of National Culture:

- Digital platforms such as YouTube and Instagram have facilitated the recording and sharing of tribal art forms, including Warli painting, folk dance and traditional music.
- Initiatives such as online language tutors have been launched to protect endangered

ethnic languages such as Bhil and Gondi.

2. Economic Strength:

- E-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Indian tribes have improved livelihoods by providing tribal artists with a global marketplace to sell their art.
- Digital payment systems and financial literacy programs enable tribal entrepreneurs to participate in the formal economy.

3. Development of Education:

- Online education platform helps international children receive modern education while retaining their cultural roots.
- Initiatives such as e-learning modules in ethnic languages bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and modern education systems.

4. Health Promotion:

- Mobile health applications and telemedicine improve access to health care in remote areas of the world.
- Digital awareness campaigns educate tribal communities on health, nutrition and preventive health practices.

5. Environmental Protection:

- Digital mapping tools and applications have been used to protect tribal lands and forests,

which are critical to their livelihoods.

- Online campaigns focus on issues such as deforestation and illegal mining in tribal areas.

6. Digital Preservation of National Culture:

- **Digitization of Warli Art:** Platforms such as social media and dedicated e-commerce websites enable Warli artists to showcase their work globally. This increases awareness and creates new revenue.
- **Oral traditions:** Apps and platforms like YouTube make it easy to record tribal legends, songs and languages, ensuring they survive for future generations.
- **Visual exhibitions:** Museums and NGOs organize visual exhibitions to bring tribal art and culture to a wider audience.

7. Promote Sustainable Living:

- **Eco-tourism measures:** Digital platforms such as Earbob promote eco-tourism in tribal areas, providing income opportunities while emphasizing environmental protection.
- **Skill development:** Online courses and webinars conducted by NGOs impart skills in permaculture, organic farming and crafts to tribal members.

- **E-commerce integration:** Artisans and farmers use platforms like Amazon and Flipkart to sell their products, bypassing exploitative middlemen.

8. Expand Digital Access:

- **Government initiatives:** Initiatives such as Digital India have increased internet penetration in tribal areas. The introduction of rural Wi-Fi has brought online previously unconnected areas.
- **Partnerships:** Partnerships between NGOs and private companies provide digital literacy training and allow community members to use smartphones and access online resources.

IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS:

- **Digital divide:** Limited internet access and lack of digital literacy remain major barriers in many tribal areas.
- **Support for digital initiatives:** Many programs lack long-term funding and public engagement, leading to reduced effectiveness over time.
- **Cultural resistance:** Some tribal communities fear the loss of traditional knowledge systems as they rely on digital systems. Concerns have been

raised about cultural import and misuse of ethnic knowledge on digital platforms.

- **Economic challenges:**

The high cost of smartphones and data plans limits access for economically disadvantaged tribes.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

- **Local content creation:**

Developing apps and platforms in tribal languages can promote inclusion.

- **Policy support:**

Government support for digital devices and internet services can promote digital inclusion.

- **Artificial intelligence for traditional documentaries:**

Artificial intelligence tools can help in the rapid digitization of national artifacts and oral histories.

CONCLUSION:

Digital platforms have great potential to preserve the ethnic culture of Maharashtra and promote sustainable development. Digital platforms have great potential to bridge the gap between tribal heritage and new technologies, promoting sustainable development while preserving the cultural heritage of the tribal communities of Maharashtra. By documenting and sharing folk art, music

and traditions, these platforms not only celebrate cultural diversity but also provide economic opportunities for small communities. In addition, the incorporation of digital tools in education, health and environmental protection will significantly improve the lives of tribal populations.

However, the successful implementation of these initiatives requires overcoming challenges such as the digital divide and ensuring community participation. Policymakers, NGOs and stakeholders must work together to create inclusive and sustainable digital solutions that meet the aspirations and needs of tribal communities in Maharashtra.

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