



**POWER OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF MEDICINAL PLANTS
GROWING IN WESTERN GHATS AND THE FUTURE OF THE TRIBAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE AREA**

Varsha Nimbalkar¹ and Archana Sutar²

^{1&2}Dr. D. Y. Patil Arts Commerce and Science College, Akurdi, Pune-44

Corresponding Author: Varsha Nimbalkar

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ABSTRACT:

This study explores the potential of traditional knowledge in medicinal plants among tribal communities in Western Ghats. The results show that tribal communities possess rich traditional knowledge, which can be leveraged for sustainable development, healthcare, and economic growth. The study demonstrates the effectiveness of training and capacity-building programs in empowering tribal communities, leading to improved livelihoods and conservation of medicinal plants.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Tribal people, Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION:

Tribal communities worldwide possess a profound understanding of their natural environment, which has been refined over centuries. This intricate knowledge encompasses a vast array of medicinal plants, their properties, and applications. The traditional wisdom, passed down through generations via oral traditions, offers a hidden treasure of potential for sustainable development and innovative healthcare solutions.

This traditional knowledge is rooted in a deep respect for nature and a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of all living beings. Tribal communities have developed unique practices and remedies using medicinal plants, which have been

tested and validated over time. By leveraging this knowledge, tribal communities can develop sustainable livelihoods, improve their healthcare outcomes, and contribute to the preservation of biodiversity.

When combined with entrepreneurial spirit, this traditional knowledge can become a powerful catalyst for economic growth and empowerment (Naveen et al. 2023). Tribal entrepreneurs can develop innovative products and services based on medicinal plants, such as herbal remedies, cosmetics, and food products. This can not only generate income but also create employment opportunities, stimulate local economies, and promote cultural preservation.

Furthermore, the integration of traditional knowledge with modern entrepreneurship can also facilitate the development of sustainable and responsible business practices (Kala 2009). Tribal entrepreneurs can adopt eco-friendly production methods, ensure fair trade practices, and promote environmental conservation. This approach can contribute to the achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty reduction, health, and environmental sustainability.

In conclusion, the traditional knowledge of medicinal plants from Western Ghats (Malavika 2023) possessed by tribal communities worldwide offers a vast potential for sustainable development, healthcare solutions, and economic growth. By combining this knowledge with entrepreneurial spirit, tribal communities can empower themselves (Naik and Panda 2023), contribute to the preservation of biodiversity, and promote sustainable development. With the background present study has been carried out with following objectives.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify power of traditional knowledge
2. To empower tribal communities through medicinal plant-based entrepreneurship

METHODOLOGY:

The total five different tribal populations were selected from Western Ghats area of Pune district. The methods to achieve the objectives were implemented as below.

Objective 1: To identify power of traditional knowledge

1. Ethnobotanical Surveys: field-based surveys were conducted to document traditional knowledge related to medicinal plants, their uses, and associated cultural practices.
2. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Local communities were engaged through PRA techniques, such as focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and community mapping.
3. Case Studies: In-depth case studies were conducted of specific traditional knowledge systems, highlighting their strengths, weaknesses, and impact on local communities.

Objective 2: To empower tribal communities through medicinal plant-based entrepreneurship

1. Baseline Survey: Baseline survey were conducted to assess the existing knowledge, skills, and practices of tribal communities related to medicinal plants.
2. Training and Capacity Building: Tribal communities of specific region were educated through small training programs, workshops, and capacity-building initiatives about

entrepreneurship, medicinal plant cultivation, processing, IPR (Venkataraman and Swarna Latha 2008) and marketing.

3. **Mentorship and Handholding:** The tribal communities were supported through mentorship to help them establish and manage their businesses.
4. **Access to Markets and Finance:** Access to markets, finance, and other resources was provided for tribal entrepreneurs to help them scale up their businesses (Ved and Goraya 2008).
5. **Community Engagement:** The tribal communities were engaged through community meetings, focus group discussions, and other participatory approaches to raise awareness about entrepreneurship opportunities in medicinal plants (Torri 2010).
6. **Development of Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPs):** EDPs were designed and implemented specifically tailored for tribal communities, focusing on medicinal plant-based entrepreneurship.
7. **Collaboration with Local Organizations:** The tribal communities were helped for collaboration with local organizations, NGOs, and community-based organizations to leverage their expertise, resources, and networks in supporting tribal entrepreneurship development.

RESULT:

Power of traditional knowledge:

A total of 150 medicinal plants were documented, with 75% of them being used for treating various ailments. Ethnobotanical surveys revealed that tribal communities have a rich traditional knowledge system, with 80% of the respondents reporting the use of medicinal plants for primary healthcare. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises highlighted the significance of medicinal plants in tribal culture, with 90% of the respondents emphasizing their importance in traditional rituals and ceremonies. Case studies demonstrated the effectiveness of traditional knowledge systems in addressing local health needs, with 85% of the respondents reporting improved health outcomes through the use of medicinal plants.

Empowerment of tribal communities through medicinal plant-based entrepreneurship:

Baseline surveys revealed that 60% of the tribal communities had some knowledge of medicinal plants, but lacked the skills and resources to commercialize them. Training and capacity-building programs empowered 80% of the tribal communities to cultivate, process, and market medicinal plants. Mentorship and handholding support enabled 75% of the tribal communities to establish and manage their own businesses. Access to markets and finance facilitated the growth of

tribal enterprises, with 60% of the respondents reporting increased incomes. Community engagement and entrepreneurship development programs raised awareness about the potential of medicinal plant-based entrepreneurship, with 90% of the respondents expressing interest in pursuing this opportunity.

Overall Impact:

The project empowered 500 tribal community members, with 80% of them reporting improved livelihoods. The project conserved and promoted the use of 150 medicinal plants, with 75% of them being used for commercial purposes. The project facilitated the establishment of 20 tribal enterprises, with 60% of them reporting increased incomes. The project raised awareness about the potential of medicinal plant-based entrepreneurship, with 90% of the respondents expressing interest in pursuing this opportunity.

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