



## ANALYTICAL STUDY ON TRIBES IN MAHARASHTRA

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### INTRODUCTION:

India is home to a vibrant and diverse range of tribal communities, with the **Scheduled Tribe (ST)** population recorded at **10.45 crore, or 8.6% of the total population**, according to the **2011 Census**. These communities, comprising over **705 distinct groups**, are spread across the country, often living in remote and inaccessible areas.

Tribes in Maharashtra can be defined as a group of people who have a common language, common culture and history, and prefer to stay outside the city or town in Maharashtra. There are 36 Districts in the State of Maharashtra, with the majority of the tribal population concentrated in the eastern forest Districts of Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Bhandara, Gondia, Nagpur, Amravati, and Yavatmal, as well as the western hilly Districts of Dhule, Nandurbar, Jalgaon, Nashik, Palghar, and Thane. The State is home to 29 Integrated Tribal Development Project Offices for the tribes in Maharashtra. Of which 11 Integrated Tribal

Development Project Offices, have been designated as the most sensitive. Nashik, Kalwan, Taloda, Jawhar, Dahanu, Dhaarani, Kinwat, Pandharkavda, Gadchiroli, Aheri, and Bhamragad are the I.T.D.P. offices that are the most sensitive.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- 1) To study of culture and lifestyle of Tribes.
- 2) To Study of population and Household characteristics of tribes in Maharashtra.
- 3) To Study of Socio-Economic problems of tribes in Maharashtra.
- 4) To Study of programs and schemes for tribes.
- 5) Findings and Suggestions.

### TRIBES OF MAHARASHTRA: CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE:

The people in Maharashtra are ethnically heterogeneous. There are as many as 47 tribes or tribal groups in Maharashtra. The Western Ghats and the Satpura Range are home to the Bhil,

Warli, Gond, Korku, Govari, and numerous more tribal people that are all formally recognised as Scheduled Tribes in the notification issued by the Government of Maharashtra for tribes in Maharashtra. The Bhils and the Gonds are the two ethnic groups that fall under the tribes in Maharashtra category residing in the state. However, they also have many within them.

1. The majority of Maharashtra's existing population is made up of Marathas and Kunbis, who are descended from settlers who came from the north at the beginning of the first century CE. The religious diversity of Maharashtra is representative of India as a whole.
2. Nomadic tribes make up roughly 73.18 lakh people in Maharashtra, according to the 1991 census. They are distributed widely, mostly on hilltops.
3. The main tribes in Maharashtra are Bhil, Gond-Madia, Katkari, Koli, Oraon, and Warli. The majority of the tribes in Maharashtra still adhere to primitive values. People live in communities and travel in caravans from one place to

another in search of work and livelihood.

4. Their clothes, accent, folklore rituals and behaviours indicate that they have a rich cultural legacy that is significantly different from other social groups. Old traditions like worship of nature in different forms, animal sacrifices during religious ceremonies, adorning heads with horns, etc. are still in practice.
5. As they keep on wandering from one place to another, these tribes of Maharashtra lack education, which makes their survival difficult.
6. They have to continue this pattern of relocating in search of work, which makes it difficult for them to integrate into society. These tribes of Maharashtra consist of thousands of families that move around and live in temporary shelters.

#### **IMPORTANT FACTS AND FIGURES:**

The tribes of Maharashtra equate to around 16.5 per cent of the State's overall geographic area. The following table compares the State's population and the Tribal population according to the last five censuses.

**Tribal Population in Maharashtra:**

Census year	State's population	Tribal population (in Lakh)	Percentage
1971	504.12	38.41	7.62 %
1981	627.84	57.72	9.19 %
1991	789.37	73.18	9.27 %
2001	968.79	85.77	8.85 %
2011	1123.74	105.10	9.35 %

Source- National Census Report -2011

**Major Tribes in Maharashtra:**

There are some major tribes in Maharashtra as following.

Name of tribes	Population Million	Population Percentage
Bhil	2.58	25.04
Gond	1.61	15.65
Koli Mahadev	1.45	14.12
Warali	0.79	7.70
Konkana	0.68	6.65
Thakur	0.56	5.49
Andha	0.47	4.59
other tribes	2.14	20.75
Total	10.33	100

Source- National Census Report -2011

There are 45 Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra. Only 15 tribes have a population of more than one lakh. According to the 2011 census Andh (4,74,110), Bhil (25,88,659), Gond (16,18,090), Halba Halbi (2,61,011), Kathodi, Katkari (2,85,334) , Konkana

(6,87,431), Kollam (1,94,671), Koli Dhor (2,20,074), Koli Mahadev (14,59,565), Koli-Malhar (2,82,868); Korku (2,64,492), Pardhan (1,45,131), Pardhi (2,23,527) Thakur Thakar (5,67,968); and Warli (7,96,245). Their populations are high in Masharashtra

**Agricultural Land Holding Area (Percentage) among Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra:**

	Marginal land holding	Small land holding	Semi-Medium land holding	Medium land holding	Large land holding
<b>Maharashtra</b>	37.55	33.41	20.41	7.85	0.77

Source: Agriculture Census, 2015-16

According to the above table the share of marginal agricultural

landholding area in Scheduled Tribes of Maharashtra is 37.55%, small land

holding area 33.41%, Semi- medium land holding area 20.41%, medium land holding area 7.85% and large land holding area. It is 0.77%. This shows that the proportion of marginal

agricultural land holding area in Scheduled Tribes is high and the proportion of medium to high land holding area is very low.

**Household Characteristics of Total and ST, Maharashtra, 2001 &2011 and India 2011:**

Percentage of households:	Maharashtra				India	
	2001		2011		2011	
	Total	ST	Total	ST	Total	ST
Living in 'Good' Houses	52.6	36.7	64.1	48.0	53.2	40.6
Having a house with Concrete Roof	21.1	8.5	30.2	12.2	29.0	10.1
Having only one Dwelling Room	52.3	64.9	46.3	60.0	41.0	48.7
Using Tap Water	64.0	45.2	67.9	48.4	43.5	24.4
Access to Improved sources of Drinking Water (Tap, hand pump and closed well)	79.8	69.4	85.6	75.1	87.1	73.4
Having toilet facility within premises	35.1	20.2	53.1	30.1	46.9	22.6
Using electricity as Main Source of Lighting	77.5	52.2	83.9	59.8	67.2	51.7
Using LPG for Cooking	29.7	12.1	43.4	18.9	28.5	9.3
Availing Banking Services	48.1	26.2	68.9	47.9	58.7	45.0
Having Television	44.1	22.6	56.8	30.2	47.2	21.9
Having Telephone/Mobile Phone	14.1	4.5	69.1	39.7	63.2	34.8
Having 2/4 wheeler	16.6	6.3	30.8	12.1	25.7	10.6
With no Assets	36.8	56.6	19.0	43.0	17.8	37.3

Source- <https://secc.gov.in/>

Poor incomes translate into poorer quality of household assets and characteristics. Only 48 percent in the ST population were perceived to be living in 'good' houses. In 2011 about 67 percent of all households and only 48.4 percent of ST households were using tap water. However, nearly 86 percent of 'All' households and 75 percent of ST

households were having access to improved drinking water (tap water or hand-pump). Improvements in the drinking water supply during 2001-11 were minimal, just 3-5 percentage points for both All and ST households. The percentage of 'All' households having toilet facilities within the premises increased from 35 percent in

2001 to 53 percent in 2011. It was 20 percent to 30 percent for ST households during the same period. The situation was similar with respect to household electrification. Electrification of ST was 52 percent in 2001, which increased marginally to 60 percent in 2011. ST households having LPG connection in 2011 was less than 20 percent while it was 43 percent among all households.

In 2011, nearly a half of the ST households (48 percent) were seeking banking services (having a bank account of any type in any bank). 30 percent of ST households were having television, 40 percent were having telephone/mobile phones, but barely 12 percent were having 2-wheeler or 4-wheeler motor vehicles.

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN MAHARASHTRA:**

#### **Sanitation and Malnutrition:**

Sanitation and malnutrition issues in tribes are serious level. Toilet availability remains low in these regions, with only 21 per cent of households having access to proper sanitation, compared to 93.5 per cent in urban areas, in Maharashtra. In Maharashtra's Nandurbar district, over 48 per cent of children under five were reported as stunted and 40 per cent as underweight, as of 2020. Severe acute malnutrition remains a concern, with many children suffering from wasting and related health issues. Malnutrition

trends over the past five years show little improvement. Both stunting and wasting remain prevalent, exacerbated by poor access to nutritious food, inadequate maternal healthcare and insufficient infant feeding practices. Under nutrition is particularly common in the younger age groups (especially age 15-19), in rural areas for women, and among scheduled tribes. Infant mortality rates are also higher for Muslims than for Hindus and are highest for scheduled tribes.

#### **Healthcare Access:**

Access to healthcare in the tribal areas of Maharashtra remains woefully inadequate. Primary healthcare centres (PHCs) in these regions are often underfunded, understaffed and located far from the villages. Anaemia is another serious health issue among Adivasi women and children. In Maharashtra's tribal districts, such as Nandurbar, over 60 per cent of women aged 15-49 suffer from anaemia, contributing to poor maternal health and perpetuating malnutrition in children.

#### **Education and Literacy:**

While national literacy rates are improving, tribal communities in these border areas lag behind. Data from NFHS-5 reveals that women from Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are significantly less likely to complete 10 years of schooling compared to the general population. In Nandurbar, only 25 per cent of women have completed 10 or more years of

schooling. With literacy levels notably lower among tribal women compared to men. The lack of infrastructure, such as schools and qualified teachers, contributes to the disparity in educational attainment. Many Adivasi children drop out of school to help their families with agricultural labour, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

### **Livelihoods and Economic Conditions:**

Agriculture remains the primary livelihood source for Adivasis in these regions. Tribes like Kolam, Korku, Warli, Mahadeo Koli, Katkari, Thakar and Dhangars have formed working groups to monitor their economic gains from farming and minor forest produce (MFP) collection. However, attempts to form cooperatives have struggled due to complications with the forest department.

Small landholdings, unpredictable rainfall and a lack of access to modern farming techniques contribute to poor agricultural productivity. The 2021-2022 agricultural census shows that most tribal farmers in these areas are small-scale cultivators, struggling with low yields and poor soil conditions. Inadequate market access means many Adivasi families find it difficult to sustain themselves through farming alone. Poverty and deprivation amongst the Katkaris, a Scheduled Tribe, in hamlets in Jahwar and Mokhada talukas of Palghar district, Maharashtra. It

analyses how Katkaris are trapped in a vicious cycle of social, educational, and economic backwardness.

Non-agricultural employment opportunities are sparse and many Adivasis migrate seasonally to cities or industrial towns in search of work, leading to socio-economic instability.

### **Policy Implementation Issues:**

Both Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh have policies aimed at improving the socio-economic status of Adivasis, including the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) and targeted welfare schemes. However, their efficacy remains questionable. Health and education initiatives often fail to reach the most marginalised. For instance, while Nandurbar district in Maharashtra has been a focus area for development schemes, a lack of coordination between government departments often limits their impact.

### **Resource Exploitation and Forced Displacement:**

The exploitation of natural resources poses a significant challenge for tribal communities in India, for whom their natural surroundings are not only a place of habitation but a source of livelihood. Government policies for economic growth conflict with traditional tribal views on resource utilisation.

**Poverty and Indebtedness:**

According to reports from the 1960s and 1970s, poverty is the most pressing issue facing tribal communities. Over the years, a significant portion of the tribal population has remained impoverished, with a majority engaged in basic occupations like hunting, gathering, and agriculture, using rudimentary technology.

This lack of advanced technology results in minimal profits or surplus, leading to low per capita income, well below the national average. Many tribes live in extreme poverty, earning insufficient wages, and often fall into debt with local moneylenders and landlords, who charge high interest rates. To repay debts, tribes frequently mortgage or sell their land.

**Loss of Culture and Tradition:**

Indigenous tribes in India have experienced gradual changes in their structure and function, driven rather by external circumstances than by acceptance from the non-tribal population. Traditionally simple and rigid, tribal societies are now encountering external influences from the outside world, pushing them towards more complex and civilised forms of living. Migration to urban areas, causing loss of land and social isolation from their rural counterparts,

**CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND PROGRAMS FOR TRIBAL EMPOWERMENT:**

- 1) Scheduled Tribe Component (STC) and the Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST). These plans ensured that various ministries targeted tribal welfare through a coordinated approach.
- 2) Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship Schemes.
- 3) National Overseas Scholarship for ST Students.
- 4) Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS).
- 5) Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN).
- 6) National Overseas Scholarship for ST Students.
- 7) Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) Development Program.
- 8) National Fellowship for ST Students.
- 9) National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC).
- 10) Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED).



**STATE GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND PROGRAMS FOR TRIBES:**

Maharashtra government schemes for scheduled tribes as implemented various program and following:

<b>Subsidized Ashram Schools</b>	<b>Scholarships for Study Abroad</b>
Repair of rural roads	Various schemes for the development of Pardhi society
Government Hostels	Road Development
Shabari Adivasi Gharkul Scheme	Government Ashram School Construction
Education in reputed English medium schools	Government Hostel Construction
Thakkarbappa Tribal Settlement Improvement Scheme	Community temple construction
Central Budget	Equity contribution to Shabari Tribal Finance and Development Corporation
Pandit Dindayal Upadhyay Swayam Yojana	Office building construction
Government Ashram School Building Repair	Construction of English Medium Ashram Schools
Financial assistance to Shabari Tribal Development Corporation	Land acquisition
Primitive Tribes Development Programme	Road Development (Birsa Munda Roads)
State Public Service/ Union Public Service Commission Competitive Exam Training	Government Ashram School Construction
Post Matric Scholarship (State share 25%)	Government Hostel Construction
Tuition fee and examination fee	Community temple construction
Reimbursement of Fees of Medical and Similar Colleges	Golden Jubilee Pre-Secondary Scholarship
Information and publicity of schemes through various media	Thakkar Bappa Tribal Settlement Reforms
Assistance to Tribal Development Corporation	Innovative plan
Skill Development Scheme	Construction of Samaj Mandir
Government Hostel Building Repair	Ashram School Building Repair
Scheduled Tribe candidates for Ph.D. Grant of scholarships for courses	Self Esteem Empowerment Scheme

**FINDINGS:**

There are some findings in the study on tribes in Maharashtra.

- 1) Most of the tribes in Maharashtra are living in remote and inaccessible areas.

- 2) The majority of the tribal population concentrated in the eastern forest Districts of Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Bhandara, Gondia, Nagpur, Amravati, and Yavatmal, as well



as the western hilly Districts of Dhule, Nandurbar, Jalgaon, Nashik, Palghar, and Thane.

- 3) The main tribes in Maharashtra are Bhil, Gond-Madia, Katkari, Koli, Kokana, Thakur and Warli.
- 4) Marginal agricultural landholding area in Scheduled Tribes of Maharashtra is 37.55% and small land holding area 33.41%. and large land holding area is 0.77%.
- 5) Only 48 percent in the ST population were perceived to be living in 'good' houses in Maharashtra.
- 6) Only 48.4 percent of ST households were using tap water.
- 7) Toilet facilities within the premises 30 percent for ST households in 2011 in Maharashtra.
- 8) Household electrification of ST was 60 percent in 2011. ST households having LPG connection in 2011 was less than 20 percent in Maharashtra.
- 9) ST households (48 percent) were seeking banking services.
- 10) 30 percent of ST households were having television, 40 percent were having telephone/mobile phones
- 11) 12 percent ST were having 2-wheeler or 4-wheeler motor vehicles in Maharashtra.

- 12) There are many socio-economic problems of ST in Maharashtra such as Malnutrition, Health issues, living condition, education, illiteracy issues, Poverty and Indebtedness, loss of forest/land rights, Loss of Culture and Tradition, forced labor etc.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

There are some suggestions for welfare and development for ST in Maharashtra.

- 1) Government should implement socio-economic policy for ST in Maharashtra.
- 2) Government should give forest and land ownership rights to ST in Maharashtra.
- 3) To provide proper and good Houses to ST.
- 4) To increased budgetary provision for ST and proper expenditure only for ST development and welfare.
- 5) Provide clean and pure drinking water to ST.
- 6) Provide employment opportunities and skill training to ST person.
- 7) Minimum basic income scheme start to ST for increase income.
- 8) Increase education and literacy level in ST and increased school enrollment.
- 9) To provide entrepreneurship training for ST person.

10) To create good culture, amenities, basic services, education and health services to ST in Maharashtra.

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