

Sagarraj Rohidas Chavan (2019). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Women in Maharashtra: A Social Work Perspective. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, Vol.2019, n°1, pp. 8-14.



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & REVIEWS

journal homepage: www.ijmrr.online/index.php/home

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN MAHARASHTRA: A SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Sagarraj Rohidas Chavan

P. J. N. College of social work Amalner.

How to Cite the Article: Sagarraj Rohidas Chavan (2019). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Women in Maharashtra: A Social Work Perspective. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, Vol.2019, n°1, pp. 8-14.

Keywords	Abstract
<i>Tribal Women, Maharashtra, Socio-Economic Status, Social Work, Scheduled Tribes, Poverty, Education, Health, Livelihood, Tribal Development.</i>	Tribal women constitute one of the most socio-economically disadvantaged sections of Indian society despite constitutional safeguards and numerous welfare programmes. Maharashtra has one of the largest Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations in India, with major tribal communities residing in districts such as Nandurbar, Gadchiroli, Palghar, Dhule, Nashik, Chandrapur and Amravati. Although tribal women play a significant role in agriculture, forest-based livelihoods, household management and the preservation of indigenous knowledge, they continue to experience poverty, illiteracy, poor health, limited access to productive resources and inadequate participation in formal employment. This paper examines the socio-economic status of tribal women in Maharashtra using secondary data available up to 2018. The study relies on Census of India (2011), National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4, 2015–16), National Sample Survey (2017–18), Ministry of Tribal Affairs reports, Government of Maharashtra publications and published research between 2013 and 2018. The analysis indicates that tribal women have lower literacy levels, higher dependence on agriculture and forest resources, limited access to quality healthcare, high levels of poverty and inadequate utilization of institutional credit and social security programmes. Nevertheless, government initiatives such as the Tribal Sub-Plan, Integrated Tribal Development Programme, Forest Rights Act and women-centred livelihood programmes have contributed to gradual improvements in



**The work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution
Non Commercial 4.0 International License**

Sagarraj Rohidas Chavan (2019). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Women in Maharashtra: A Social Work Perspective. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, Vol.2019, n°1, pp. 8-14.

	education, maternal health and economic participation. From a social work perspective, strengthening community participation, gender-sensitive interventions, livelihood promotion, educational empowerment and effective implementation of welfare schemes are essential for improving the quality of life of tribal women. The study concludes that sustainable tribal development requires an integrated approach combining social justice, inclusive governance and participatory development.
--	--

1. Introduction

Scheduled Tribes constitute one of India's most historically marginalized populations. Their socio-economic development has been a major concern of planners, policy-makers and social work professionals since Independence. According to the Census of India (2011), Scheduled Tribes account for approximately 8.6% of India's total population, while Maharashtra possesses one of the country's largest tribal populations. Major tribes include the Bhil, Gond, Warli, Katkari, Madia, Kolam, Kokna, Thakur and Pawra, most of whom inhabit geographically isolated forest and hilly regions. These communities contribute significantly to biodiversity conservation, traditional agriculture and indigenous cultural heritage. Despite these contributions, tribal populations continue to face multiple socio-economic disadvantages arising from historical exclusion, geographical isolation, limited infrastructure and unequal access to public services.

Within tribal communities, women occupy a particularly vulnerable position. They perform multiple productive and reproductive roles including agricultural labour, collection of minor forest produce, livestock management, childcare and household responsibilities. Their labour contributes substantially to household income and food security; however, their economic contributions often remain unrecognized. Low educational attainment, inadequate healthcare, poor nutritional status, gender inequality and restricted ownership of productive assets further constrain their development.

The Government of India has introduced several constitutional provisions and welfare programmes aimed at improving tribal welfare. These include the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs), Forest Rights Act (2006), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and scholarships for Scheduled Tribe students. Maharashtra has additionally implemented state-specific initiatives through the Tribal Development Department and the Tribal Research and Training Institute (TRTI) to promote education, livelihoods and social welfare among tribal communities.

Economically, tribal women depend primarily on rain-fed agriculture, wage labour, collection of forest produce and seasonal migration. Agricultural productivity remains low due to small landholdings, poor irrigation facilities and limited access to modern farming technologies. Seasonal



Sagarraj Rohidas Chavan (2019). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Women in Maharashtra: A Social Work Perspective. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, Vol.2019, n^o1, pp. 8-14.

unemployment and indebtedness often increase household vulnerability, particularly during drought years.

The present paper therefore analyses the socio-economic status of tribal women in Maharashtra using secondary data available up to 2018. It also examines the implications of these findings for professional social work practice and policy formulation.

2. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive, analytical and documentary research design and is based entirely on secondary data published up to 2018. The required information was collected from authentic sources, including the Census of India (2011), National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4, 2015–16), National Sample Survey Office (NSSO, 2017–18), Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Tribal Research and Training Institute (TRTI), Government of Maharashtra publications, Planning Commission reports, and relevant books, peer-reviewed journals and research articles published between 2013 and 2018. The collected data were analysed using descriptive analysis, comparative analysis, percentage analysis and interpretation of government statistics, along with a systematic review of published literature. The scope of the study is confined to the socio-economic status of Scheduled Tribe women in Maharashtra based on secondary data available up to 2018. Since no primary survey was conducted, the findings depend on the reliability of published sources, and district-wise variations could not be examined in detail due to limitations in the available secondary data.

3. Socio-economic Profile of Tribal Women in Maharashtra

According to the Census of India (2011), Maharashtra has a large Scheduled Tribe population, with major tribes such as the Bhil, Gond, Warli, Katkari, Pawra and Kokna. Most tribal women live in remote and forested areas where access to education, healthcare, transportation and employment is limited. They contribute significantly to household income through agriculture, wage labour, livestock rearing and the collection of minor forest produce, while also managing household responsibilities.

The literacy rate among tribal women is lower than the state average due to poverty, early marriage, seasonal migration and inadequate educational facilities. Government initiatives such as Ashram Schools, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, scholarships and hostel facilities have improved enrolment, but dropout rates and participation in higher education remain high concerns.

Most tribal women are engaged in agriculture, agricultural labour, animal husbandry and the collection of minor forest produce, with employment largely being informal and seasonal. Although schemes such as MGNREGA, NRLM and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have created employment opportunities, sustainable livelihoods and regular income remain limited for many tribal women.



Sagarraj Rohidas Chavan (2019). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Women in Maharashtra: A Social Work Perspective. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, Vol.2019, n°1, pp. 8-14.

Table 1. Major Occupations of Tribal Women in Maharashtra (Secondary Evidence up to 2018)

Occupation	Nature of Employment
Agriculture	Primary occupation
Agricultural labour	Seasonal
Forest produce collection	Seasonal
Animal husbandry	Supplementary
MGNREGA works	Wage employment
Self-Help Groups	Income generation
Small-scale handicrafts	Limited
Government service	Very low participation

Most tribal women in Maharashtra live in low-income households that depend on rain-fed agriculture, wage labour and forest resources. Small landholdings, seasonal unemployment, low literacy and limited access to institutional credit contribute to persistent poverty. Although Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and government poverty alleviation programmes have improved income opportunities, economic insecurity remains a major challenge.

According to NFHS-4 (2015–16), tribal women face health problems such as anaemia, malnutrition, poor maternal health and limited access to healthcare services. Government programmes including ICDS, NHM, Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and the ASHA Programme have improved health awareness and institutional deliveries, but healthcare access in remote tribal areas remains inadequate.

Several government programmes, including the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP), Forest Rights Act (2006), MGNREGS, NRLM, ICDS, NHM, Ashram Schools, Eklavya Model Residential Schools and Post-Matric Scholarships, have supported tribal development. However, limited awareness, geographical isolation and implementation gaps continue to restrict their effective utilization among tribal women.

Table 2. Major Welfare Programmes Benefiting Tribal Women (up to 2018)

Programme	Major Objective
Tribal Sub-Plan	Integrated tribal development
ICDS	Maternal and child nutrition
NHM	Primary healthcare
MGNREGS	Rural employment



Sagarraj Rohidas Chavan (2019). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Women in Maharashtra: A Social Work Perspective. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, Vol.2019, n°1, pp. 8-14.

NRLM	Women's livelihood promotion
Forest Rights Act	Forest land rights
Ashram Schools	Tribal education
Scholarships	Educational support
Skill Development	Employment generation
Self-Help Groups	Women's empowerment

4. Results and Discussion

The study shows that tribal women play a vital role in agriculture, livestock rearing and household management, but continue to face challenges such as low literacy, poverty, seasonal employment, poor health and limited access to development opportunities. Although government programmes and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have improved education, healthcare and financial inclusion, implementation gaps remain in remote tribal areas. These findings highlight the need for integrated interventions to promote education, sustainable livelihoods, healthcare and women's empowerment.

The findings suggest that professional social workers can play an important role in empowering tribal women through community organization, awareness programmes, livelihood promotion, access to welfare schemes, leadership development and advocacy. A rights-based and community-centred approach is essential for achieving the sustainable socio-economic development of tribal women in Maharashtra.

Social workers have an important role in improving the socio-economic status of tribal women through a community-centred and empowerment-based approach. They can organize tribal women into Self-Help Groups (SHGs), cooperatives and village organizations to promote financial inclusion, leadership and participation. Educational promotion through awareness programmes, scholarships, Ashram Schools, adult literacy and dropout prevention initiatives can improve girls' education. Livelihood development through skill training, entrepreneurship, sustainable agriculture, livestock activities, handicrafts and forest-based enterprises can enhance income security. Social workers can also promote maternal health, child nutrition, immunization, sanitation and preventive healthcare through coordination with ASHA workers, Anganwadi Centres and Primary Health Centres. Awareness and support for welfare schemes such as TSP, FRA, MGNREGA, ICDS, scholarships and livelihood programmes can improve access to government benefits. Advocacy for gender-sensitive policies, land rights, education, healthcare and livelihood security is essential for inclusive tribal development. Continuous research and documentation on tribal women's education, employment, health, migration and social inclusion can support evidence-based social work practices and policy formulation.

5. Conclusion

Tribal women constitute an indispensable component of Maharashtra's social, economic and cultural life. They contribute significantly to agriculture, forest conservation, household management and



Sagarraj Rohidas Chavan (2019). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Women in Maharashtra: A Social Work Perspective. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, Vol.2019, n°1, pp. 8-14.

community development. Nevertheless, secondary data available up to 2018 indicate that tribal women continue to experience substantial socio-economic disadvantages in comparison with the general population.

The study reveals that although literacy has improved over the years, educational attainment among tribal women remains relatively low because of poverty, geographical isolation, inadequate educational infrastructure, early marriage and seasonal migration. Employment opportunities are largely confined to agriculture, wage labour and forest-based occupations characterized by low income, seasonal employment and limited social security. Poverty continues to influence nutritional status, healthcare accessibility and overall quality of life.

Government programmes implemented through the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Tribal Development Department, National Rural Livelihood Mission, National Health Mission, Integrated Child Development Services and other agencies have contributed positively toward improving education, maternal healthcare and livelihood opportunities. However, disparities remain because of uneven implementation, infrastructural limitations and insufficient awareness among beneficiaries.

From a social work perspective, sustainable tribal development requires integrated interventions combining education, livelihood promotion, healthcare, women's empowerment, financial inclusion and community participation. Rights-based, participatory and culturally sensitive approaches are essential for strengthening the socio-economic position of tribal women.

The study concludes that effective implementation of tribal development policies, active participation of local communities and professional social work interventions can significantly improve the quality of life and promote inclusive development among tribal women in Maharashtra.

AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

All authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright and ethical matters will take care by all authors. Journal and editors are not liable for aforesaid matters.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

The authors received no financial aid to support for the research.



Sagarraaj Rohidas Chavan (2019). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Women in Maharashtra: A Social Work Perspective. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, Vol.2019, n°1, pp. 8-14.

REFERENCES

- Bhasin, V. (2013). Status of tribal women in India. Studies on Home and Community Science, 7(1), 1–16.
- Census of India. (2011). Primary Census Abstract for Scheduled Tribes. Government of India.
- Desai, A., & Patel, R. (2014). Socio-economic development among tribal communities in Western India. Indian Journal of Social Research, 55(2), 145–162.
- Government of Maharashtra. (2018). Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2017–18. Directorate of Economics and Statistics.
- Government of Maharashtra. (2018). Statistical Abstract of Maharashtra 2017–18. Directorate of Economics and Statistics.
- International Labour Organization. (2017). World Employment and Social Outlook 2017. ILO.
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. (2017). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015–16: Maharashtra Fact Sheet. Government of India.
- Ministry of Rural Development. (2018). Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Annual Report 2017–18. Government of India.
- Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. (2018). Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017–18. Government of India.
- Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2018). Annual Report 2017–18. Government of India.
- National Sample Survey Office. (2018). Key Indicators of Employment and Unemployment in India, 2017–18. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- Planning Commission. (2014). Report of the High-Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India. Government of India.
- Registrar General of India. (2011). Census of India 2011: Scheduled Tribes Profile. Government of India.
- Tribal Research and Training Institute. (2018). Evaluation Studies on Tribal Development Programmes in Maharashtra. Government of Maharashtra.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2016). Human Development Report 2016. UNDP.
- UNICEF India. (2016). The State of India's Children. UNICEF.
- Xaxa, V. (2014). Report of the High-Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India. Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

