

Development of Tribal Farmers in Ahilyanagar District

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Abstract

The Constitution of India contains specific provisions aimed at the upliftment and welfare of tribal communities across the country. However, the level of socio-economic development among tribal populations differs significantly when compared with the non-tribal population. The present study examines the impact of various government policies and development schemes on the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in Ahilyanagar District. A separate Ministry of Tribal Development was constituted in 1984 to address tribal issues in a focused manner. In Ahilyanagar District, tribal communities constitute nearly four per cent of the total population. The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data to assess the actual benefits received by tribal farmers.

Key Words: Tribal Development, Tribal Welfare, Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP)

Introduction:

Both the Central Government and the Government of Maharashtra have undertaken continuous efforts to promote the development and welfare of tribal farmers. Despite these efforts, several challenges persist, particularly due to limited awareness and lower educational levels among tribal communities, which affect their access to government schemes. Since Independence, ensuring social justice for Scheduled Tribes has been a key objective of Indian development policy, with special emphasis on improving their socio-economic conditions. The Constitution of India provides several safeguards and special provisions for the protection and welfare of tribal populations throughout the country. Tribal welfare has remained a priority since the First Five-Year Plan, and numerous initiatives have been introduced to improve the living conditions of tribal farmers. Although India has completed several Five-Year Plans, the desired level of socio-economic transformation among tribal communities has not been fully achieved.

Maharashtra is home to 48 Scheduled Tribe communities, and as per the 2001 Census, tribals constituted 8.85 per cent of the state's population. To ensure effective implementation of welfare schemes, the Government of Maharashtra established a separate Tribal Development Department. The Tribal Development Directorate was set up in 1972, followed by the establishment of the Tribal Development Commissionerate in 1976 and an independent Ministry of Tribal Development in 1984. For effective planning and execution, 24 Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) offices operate across the state. In Ahilyanagar District, the ITDP office at Rajur (Taluka Akole) is responsible for implementing tribal development schemes. This office plays a crucial role in planning, execution, and monitoring various welfare programmes aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of tribal farmers in the district.

Objectives:

The primary objective of this study is to review the tribal development programmes implemented in Maharashtra and to evaluate their execution in Ahilyanagar District. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine tribal development initiatives undertaken by the Government of Maharashtra.
2. To analyze the implementation of tribal development schemes in Ahilyanagar District.
3. To assess the actual benefits received by the tribal community in the study area.

Review of Literature:

The framers of the Indian Constitution recognized the unique challenges faced by tribal communities and therefore incorporated special provisions for their protection and development. These safeguards focus on promoting educational and

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economic interests while protecting tribals from social injustice and exploitation. The Constitution also enables states to provide reservations for Scheduled Tribes in public employment.

Article 342 of the Constitution identifies Scheduled Tribes and ensures their protection, while special financial assistance is provided by the Central Government to states for tribal development programmes. India has 642 tribal communities, of which 428 are officially notified; Maharashtra accounts for 47 of these communities. Most tribal groups continue to experience economic backwardness and social marginalization when compared to the mainstream population. Maharashtra has the second-largest tribal population in India after Madhya Pradesh.

To address these issues, the Government of Maharashtra has implemented numerous welfare and development schemes through the Tribal Development Department. The Directorate was established to ensure effective implementation, later strengthened through the creation of the Commissionerate and Ministry. During the Fifth Five-Year Plan, the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) was introduced as a targeted development strategy focusing on both infrastructure development and family-oriented programmes. The D. M. Sukhtankar Committee (1992) recommended that funds allocated under the TSP should be proportionate to the tribal population, approximately nine per cent of total plan outlay. Over time, the focus of government initiatives has gradually shifted from welfare-oriented approaches to development-oriented strategies.

Research Methodology:

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. The tribal population of Ahilyanagar District was selected as the study area, though the findings may be applicable to other tribal regions as well. The research focuses on evaluating the benefits derived from Individual Beneficiary Schemes implemented in the district.

Primary data were collected from two tehsils—Akole and Sangamner. Ten villages from Akole tehsil and five villages from Sangamner tehsil were selected. Data were gathered from 375 tribal families using a purposive sampling technique through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were collected from official publications such as Tribal Statistics, reports of the Tribal Development Commissionerate, the Tribal Development Department of the Government of Maharashtra, and the Annual Tribal Sub-Plan Report (2023–24). The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools.

Data Collection and Interpretation:

Present research area (**Ahilyanagar District**) is covered under Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP), Rajur, Tal.-Akole, Dist. Ahilyanagar. This area is covered covers 105 villages. Tribal Population constitute around 4 per cent of the total population of the district. Almost all the tribal population in this district is from Mahadeo Koli tribal community. The study showed that about 90 per cent of tribal population in Ahilyanagar district depends upon agriculture and allied activities.

Number of Beneficiary Families of Various Schemes

Sr. No.	Name of Schemes	Benefited Families	Percentage
1	Solar Pumps	38	9.86
2	P.V.C. Pipes	42	11.2
3	Sewing Machine	18	4.8
4	Milk Cattals	07	1.86
5	Necular budget schemes	39	10.4
6	Shabri Finance	02	0.53
7	Hostels	26	6.93
8	Ashram Schools	32	8.53
9	Other Schemes	14	3.73
10	Total	217	57.86

Source: Data collected from the sample survey (2023-24)

Note: The no. of total benefited families is less than total no. of benefited families from schemes 01 to 09 because many families have been taken benefits of more than one scheme.

Study shows that out of 375 sample families, 290 families were aware of the government tribal development schemes. It means 77.33 per cent families were aware of the government schemes. 57.86 per cent families have actually benefited from these schemes. If we consider other than educational schemes like hostel schemes, ashram school schemes then it was found that only 58 families were benefited from individual tribal development schemes. It constitutes only 15.46 per cent of the total sample families. It was also found that the many families have taken benefits of more than one scheme. We also tried to find out the improvement in the economic condition of the tribal population due to implemented tribal development schemes. In this regard, 24 out of 217 families said that their economic condition had improved due to tribal development schemes. But majority of the families had denied improvement in economic condition due to tribal development schemes. Many families were aware of the government tribal development schemes, but the main reason for fewer beneficiaries was the complicated procedure of the sanctioning of the schemes.

Data Analysis:

Ahilyanagar District falls under the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP), Rajur, Akole Taluka, which covers 105 villages. Tribal communities constitute approximately four per cent of the district's population, with the majority belonging to the Mahadeo Koli tribe. The study reveals that nearly 90 per cent of the tribal population depends on agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood.(Table content retained as original, as numerical data should not be altered to avoid distortion.)The survey findings indicate that out of 375 sampled families, 290 families (77.33 per cent) were aware of government tribal development schemes. However, only 57.86 per cent of families had actually benefited from any scheme. Excluding educational

schemes such as hostels and ashram schools, only 58 families (15.46 per cent) benefited from individual beneficiary schemes. It was also observed that some families received benefits from more than one scheme.

Regarding economic impact, only 24 out of 217 beneficiary families reported an improvement in their economic condition due to these schemes. The majority of respondents did not experience significant economic progress. Although awareness levels were relatively high, complicated procedures and lengthy approval processes were identified as major barriers to accessing scheme benefits.

Findings and Conclusion:

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. A significant proportion (77.33 per cent) of tribal families were aware of government schemes.
2. Only 15.46 per cent of families benefited from individual beneficiary schemes.
3. Economic improvement was reported by merely 11.06 per cent of beneficiary families.
4. Procedural complexities and administrative hurdles prevented many eligible families from availing scheme benefits.

Overall, the study concludes that despite substantial government investment, tribal development schemes have not resulted in substantial socio-economic transformation for the majority of tribal farmers in Ahilyanagar District.

Suggestions:

The Government of Maharashtra has introduced several programmes under the Tribal Sub-Plan to improve the economic conditions of tribal farmers. Although adequate funds have been allocated in proportion to the tribal population, the impact of these schemes remains limited. The study suggests that development initiatives are largely project-oriented and lack a focus on long-term capacity building of tribal farmers.

To enhance effectiveness, tribal communities should be provided easier access to development schemes, and ITDP offices should be made more accessible. Simplification of procedures and documentation is essential. Greater emphasis should be placed on individual beneficiary schemes, and strict measures should be taken to control corruption at various levels of implementation.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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