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# Background and Rationale: Link SDGs to Tribal Contexts with Special Reference to Maharashtra

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**ABSTRACT**

**"With just five years to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to shift into overdrive".**

António Guterres
*Secretary-General, United Nations*

In 2015 the United Nations adopted Sustainable Development Goals for achieving a better and sustainable future for all countries, including developed, developing, and underdeveloped countries. These goals require prominent adaptation, particularly for marginalized tribal communities . Tribal communities often face socio-economic challenges. Tribal communities are characterized by a lack of education, health facilities, and equal economic opportunities . All this hampers their ability to meet SDGs. To tribal context lie addressing these disparities and inclusive development for linking the SDGs. The integration of SDGs ensures the principles of equity, cultural preservation, and sustainable resource management while promoting health (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), economic growth (SDG 8), and equality (SDG 10) without compromising. Under SDGs, recognition of tribal communities in Maharashtra state is crucial for empowerment of tribals, preservation of their traditional knowledge.Tribal active participation is enabled in national development, contributing to the overarching goal of leaving no one behind.

**KEYWORDS:** Sustainable development goals, equality, quality education, sanitation, economic growth and development, indigenous people.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the 2011 census, there are 705 tribal groupings in India. There are more than 1700 subdivisions of tribes. They make up 8.6 percent of India's overall population, which is about 104 million people. Only 10 million of the 104 million indigenous people live in cities; the remainder live in villages, which are largely in forests and hills. Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Gujarat have 14.7%, 10.10%, 9.20%, 8.90%, and 8.60% of their populations who are tribal. It constitutes 51.5 percent of the total tribal population of India. Apart from these five states Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, AndhraPradesh etc are the tribal majority states.

In 2015 the United Nations adopted Global Goals also known as the Sustainable development Goals with the vision of achieving a better and sustainable future for all by 2030.The official document outlining this vision and objectives is titled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

### Global Vision

The agenda of SDGs aims to end poverty, ensure peace and protect the planet with the core principle of

"leaving No One behind" with prosperity for all areas of humanity and the planet.

**Core objectives of 5 Ps**

The 5 Ps known as their 169 targets are structured around 17 integrated goals.

- **People**: Ending poverty and hunger and ensuring dignity and equality.
- **Planet**: Protecting the planet, ensuring sustainable consumption and production, and addressing climate change.
- **Prosperity**: Ensuring fulfilling lives and progress in harmony with nature.
- **Peace:** Fostering peaceful, just, and inclusive societies with access to justice and effective institutions.
- **Partnership**: Mobilizing resources and revitalizing global partnerships.

**Total 17 Sustainable Development Goals**

The 17 SDGs goals cover various interconnected social, economic, and environmental objectives.

The goals are:

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals aims to achieve a better world for all by 2030. These goals are significant for tribal peoples because they address severe issues of poverty, inequality, health and education. They also have persistent issues of cultural preservation, environmental protection and governance. Tribal and indigenous communities are both positively and negatively affected by global development policies. The SDGs main objective is to include them in the process of sustainable development with respecting their rights, traditions and natural resources.

**Direct Impact of SDGs on Tribal Communities are as Follows:**

1. **SDG 1 - No Poverty -** The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals promote poverty reduction programs that reach remote tribal regions. They are supporting access to social protection. These goals also encourage different suitable government schemes targeting the generation of decent livelihoods for the tribal communities for better income generation.
2. **SDG 2—Zero Hunger—These** goals support traditional farming and local food systems to promote food security by improving access to land, water, and forest resources. Through these efforts the United

Nations tries to reduce malnutrition in tribal areas. At the same time, they tried to support tribal food systems and indigenous seed protection.

3. **SDG 3- Good Health and Well-Being**- These SGD goals are to make healthcare better in distant tribal areas by combining indigenous therapies with modern ones. These goals are meant to lower the high rate of deaths of mothers and children in tribal communities.
4. **SDG 4—Quality Education—which** is about quality education, wants to make it easier for tribal kids to attend school by promoting multilingual education. The United Nations is working to change the education system to protect tribal languages and traditional knowledge.
5. **SDG 5 - Gender Equality -** These goals aim to empower tribal women through literacy and other means. It also works to stop violence and prejudice based on gender. The United Nations aims to give indigenous women a bigger say in decisions and help the whole community grow.
6. **SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation**- These goals aim to protect traditional water sources, which are largely used by tribal tribes, while also making sure that people have access to clean water and sanitation. These outcomes lead to greater health and fewer waterborne diseases in tribal regions around the world.
7. **SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth -** These goals promote economic independence to help traditional ways of life in the area and keep tribal cultural identity alive. The United Nations helps small businesses get started by giving them microloans and working together.
8. **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities -** The United Nations is trying to help indigenous people get equal opportunities through these goals. Also, push for political and legal inclusion to remove marginalization and cut down on social and economic inequality.
9. **SDG 13 Climate Action** - wants to conserve tribal lands and ecosystems, including programs for indigenous people to adapt to and be strong against climate change. Tribal people might play an important role in the fight against climate change.
10. **SDG 15 Life on Land -** sees tribal tribes as the protectors of forests and biodiversity. They can stop deforestation on precious lands and in places where animals live. These make land rights stronger and help native groups work together to protect the land.
11. **SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institiutions**—peace, justice, and strong institutions—encourages tribal voices to be heard in decision-making. It also encourages people to get involved in local government to defend the land and cultural rights of indigenous people under the law. These things bring fairness to indigenous people.
12. **SDG 17 Partnership for the Goals** - makes it easier to work together to reach the goals. It promotes government, NGOs, and indigenous people to work together. It makes sure that tribes are involved in planning, overseeing, and carrying out development projects.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To present the significance of SDGs in addressing socio-economic challenges faced by tribal communities in Maharashtra.
2. To analyze SDGs that directly impact tribal communities.
3. To examine a rationale for integrating tribal strategies and policies.
4. To provide the role of tribal communities in promoting sustainable development.
5. To suggest policy measures that can help to ensure no one is left behind in tribal communities in Maharashtra state.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is adopting a qualitative research design to understand the relationship between SDGs and the realities of tribal communities with special reference to Maharashtra. The study aims to explain existing practices, policies to provide a background and rationale.A systematic review of academic journals, government reports and other publications related to SDGs will be conducted. Documents and reports will be analyzed for recurring concepts with tribal contexts.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study aims to contribute to state policy formulation and development strategies by elucidating the intersections between SDGs and lived experiences of tribal communities in Maharashtra. In doing so, it further resonates with the objectives of the Viksit Bharat Mission, emphasizing to achieve inclusive and sustainable development for all sections of the society especially for tribal communities in Maharashtra by 2047.

### Tribal communities in Maharashtra

Maharashtra accounts for 10.06 % of the total scheduled tribe population in India. The second largest tribal population in the country is Maharashtra. Total 47 tribes including 3 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG). They are the poorest group of people in the country, and in some ways, scheduled tribes in Maharashtra are even worse off than the all-India average for scheduled tribes. In terms of space, tribal districts and tribal talukas are at the bottom of the list for several human development metrics.

The Tribal Development Department in Maharashtra has a number of strategies and programs that help tribal people with their education, economy, and welfare. Some of the most important things that need to be done are to make sure that people have good schools, to help women and students with money through the Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojna (AMSY) and the Adivasi Shiksha Rinn Yojana (ASRY), and to protect land rights through rules and the PESA Act. Mobile clinics and specialist camps in tribal regions can help people get the health care they need.

The PESA Act (The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996) gives the Constitution's Panchayati Raj system more power in the Scheduled Areas of India, which are mostly tribal areas. The law gives Gram Sabhas (village assemblies) the power to keep cultural traditions alive, take care of natural resources like land and forests, and make decisions about matters like who owns tiny forest products, how to settle conflicts, and what activities are banned. It wants to assist the government work better with traditional tribal institutions, cultural identities, and methods of doing things.

### Important parts of the PESA Act

- Self-rule: It gives Gram Sabhas the power to make decisions in tribal regions.
- Resource management: It gives Gram Sabhas the power to manage and control natural resources like land, water, and forests.
- The Act's goal is to protect the traditional rights, practices, and cultural identity of indigenous communities.
- Legal and social control: Gram Sabhas have the power to make decisions about things like banning drugs, taking land away from people, and settling disputes in a traditional way.
- It gives the Gram Sabhas and Panchayats direct power and authority, which is the basis for participatory democracy.

### Important things about tribal areas in Maharashtra.

1. In Maharashtra, most tribals live in the Sahyadri, Satpura, and Gondwana forest regions.

2. The deep and impenetrable jungles made life even harder for the tribes. But harsh times have made the tribes of Maharashtra tough, strong, and able to take care of themselves.
3. Of course, they are at the mercy of nature, with heavy rain in the rainy season, cold winds in the winter, and hot weather in the summer.
4. The redeeming quality of a tribal's hard life is that they are always in touch with nature.

**Table 1- Major Tribes in Maharashtra**

| **Name of the Tribes** | **Population in MN** | **Population %** |
|---|---|---|
| Bhil | 2.58 | 25.04 |
| Gond / rajgond | 1.61 | 15.65 |
| Koli mahadev | 1.45 | 14.12 |
| Warli | 0.79 | 7.70 |
| Kokana | 0.68 | 6.65 |
| Thakur | 0.56 | 5.49 |
| Andh | 0.47 | 4.59 |
| Other Tribes | 2.14 | 20.75 |
| | **10.33 mn** | **100 %** |

**(Source- Census 2011)**

The strategy for tribal development has undergone refinements in successive plans. A total and comprehensive view of tribal problems was first taken on the eve of the Fifth Five-Year Plan, when the strategic concept of Tribal Sub Plan evolved. This strategy lays emphasis not merely on development programmes but also on protective measures. It also lays emphasis upon socio-economic development of individual Schedule Tribes, in addition to the emphasis upon area development. The Tribal Sub Plan area strategy was introduced for the first time in Maharashtra in 1976-77, with the following main objectives:-

1. To narrow the gap between the level of development of Tribal Sub Plan areas and other areas of the State;
2. To improve the standard and quality of the tribal community;
3. To tackle the important problems faced by the tribals; and
4. To eliminate exploitation of the tribals, speed up the process of social and economic development, build up an inner strength among the tribals and improve their organisational capacity.

**Table 2- Tribal Population in Maharashtra**

| **Region** | **Area (sq kms)** | **No of Villages** | **No of Towns** | **Tribal Population (in Lakhs)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thane | 7657 | 1304 | 4 | 15.01 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nashik | 12752 | 2048 | 5 | 31.29 |
| Amravati | 9619 | 869 | 3 | 4.91 |
| Nagpur | 16503 | 1588 | 4 | 3.60 |
| **TOTAL** | **46531** | **5809** | **16** | **54.81** |

**(Source- Maharashtra State publication)**

One big problem with tribal development plans and administration in Maharashtra state is that there hasn't been any micro-level planning that takes the emic perspective into account. People from tribes are still seen through the perspective of a provider-beneficiary approach, viewing individuals as passive beneficiaries of government initiatives. The policy literature on tribal development in Maharashtra indicates that the promise of legislations like PESA and FRA has not yet been fully realized in the state. plans and administration for tribal development have mostly been based on area development instead of people development and collaboration across different sectors in plans and implementation.
The poor need two types of aid: short-term help to meet their urgent needs and long-term help to help them get out of poverty and rely less on short-term help. This may be how we should look at development programs for the poorest indigenous communities.

**The role of tribal communities in promoting sustainable development**
In many parts of the world, tribal societies were some of the first people to live there. Their way of life, knowledge system, and cultural values are all strongly linked to nature. Sustainable development is when you meet the requirements of the present without making it harder for future generations to meet their own needs. fits very well with how these groups have lived for hundreds of years.

1. **Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) -** Tribes have a lot of knowledge and understanding of ecosystems. Tribal people have a lot of information about the plants, animals, soil, and water systems in their area. This knowledge is generally passed down verbally from one generation to the next. We can use all of this information to make things more sustainable now. Scientists and politicians are starting to see TEK as a useful tool for managing resources, adapting to climate change, and protecting biodiversity. For instance, many tribal cultures used combined wet rice and fish farming to keep the environment in balance. Tribal forest management keeps the soil fertile and the diversity of plants and animals at the same time.
2. **Sustainable resource use** - Tribal groups have always merely taken what they need, which helps natural resources grow back. Their whole life is built on living in the forest. Collecting non-timber forest products (NTFPs) like honey, bamboo, and fruits helps people make a living without cutting down trees. Many tribes guard certain areas of the forest as sacred, which helps to keep the forest's biodiversity.
3. **Community-based management:** Tribal governments often get together to decide how to use land and water. They utilize common property resource management to make sure that everyone can use the resources equitably and to stop others from consuming them too much. For example, many towns work together to take care of the forest and hills ecosystem, making sure that people can utilize it and protect it at the same time.

5. **Mitigating and adapting to climate change:** Tribal tribes mostly use traditional farming methods like mixed cropping, collecting rainwater, and making compost from organic materials to make themselves more resilient to changes in the weather. Tribes that dwell in forests also contribute with carbon sequestration by protecting the forests. Indigenous forecasting techniques, including the observation of animal and bird behavior, contribute to local disaster preparedness.
6. **Cultural and moral aspects:** Tribals believe they should live in harmony with nature, respect all living things, and be thankful for the planet. These beliefs support environmental ethics, which are very important to the idea of sustainable development right now.
7. **Problems that tribal communities face:** Tribal groups often face many problems, such as being forced to move because of mining, industrialization, and deforestation; losing their ancestral lands and traditional ways of life; being left out of planning and decision-making for development; and losing their cultural and ecological knowledge.
8. **To move forward, tribal rights must be recognized.** The implementation of laws such as the Forest Rights Act 2006 in India and comparable international frameworks like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Tribal groups were involved in designing and carrying out sustainable development initiatives as part of an inclusive policy-making process. Documentation and education are important ways to help native people go forward. Through education and study, keep traditional knowledge alive and share it with others. Tourism and fair trade help tribal economies a lot, but they also hurt the environment.

In conclusion, indigenous communities are not just benefactors of sustainable development; they are also its advocates. Their cultural values, traditions, and knowledge reveal how people can live in peace with the world around them. The SDGs indicate that actual sustainability can only be attained by recognizing and implementing their knowledge of modern development methods..

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

I have read a few major books and articles on tribal and sustainable development. In his 2024 article, Deshmukh, R. R. N. B. B. talks about crucial SDGs that have to do with tribal populations. He talked about SDG-1, SDG-4, SDG-5, SDG-13, and SDG-15, how to reach these targets, and what problems this community is having. De, D. (2014). A critique of Nehru's notion of sustainable development for India's indigenous people. South Asia Research, 34(1), 1-18. The author of this essay has concentrated on the perspective of India's inaugural Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru, on indigenous populations.Nehru ji once asserted that dams are the temples of modern India and that massive dams would solve India's hunger and poverty. But these kinds of development projects also caused a lot of grief and suffering for the people who lost their land for the greater good, especially the tribal people of Maharashtra. I noticed that this post has critically looked at how development policies have affected Maharashtra's tribal people in the past and now. It contends that Nehru’s ostensibly commendable development concept of Panchsheel, the ‘Five Pillars of Tribal Development,’ was ineffective for the tribals and significantly undermined their attempts to achieve sustainable development.

Das, B. C., & Majhi, C. (2019).Education for the sustainable development of Indian tribes. International Refereed, Peer Reviewed Journal of Education, 5(4), 1-16, after reading this paper, I learned that they don't know about economic development because they don't have an education and don't know their potential. Additionally, it elucidated that the development and education of marginalized groups, including tribes, have been incorporated into Education for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Education has

a favorable effect on tribes in terms of their social life, political involvement, demographic changes, and economic growth. This research concentrated on developmental strategies with varying educational levels within tribes. The study examines the nature of tribal engagement with formal education and the level of growth manifested through SDGs including formal education.

In the article "Tribal Poverty and Governance Issues in Maharashtra" written by Rohit Mutatkar ,Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai explained the focus of tribal development policies and administration has been on an area development approach, rather than a human development approach and an inter-sectoral coordination in policies and implementation.

**Challenges in Achieving SDGs for Tribal Communities in Maharashtra**

1. **Lack of Disaggregated Data:** National data systems generally fail to represent the specific conditions of tribal groups, making focused measures problematic.
2. **Inadequate Representation:** Tribal viewpoints are frequently excluded from decision-making platforms at local, national, and international levels.
3. **Top-Down Policies:** Development attempts frequently neglect local realities, leading to poor outcomes and cultural conflict.
4. **Resource Conflicts:** Competing interests over land and forests have led to conflict,eviction, and loss of livelihoods for many tribes.
5. **Erosion of Culture**: Globalization and current advancement often lead to the marginalization of tribal languages, knowledge, and customs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Policymakers should actively include tribal leaders in the formulation of policies and programmes.
2. To focus on access to basic services in tribal areas are needed to improve healthcare, education, clean water, sanitation.
3. To create customized SDGs monitoring systems to develop tribal specific indicators that reflect the socio-cultural realities of Indian tribal communities.
4. Address social inequalities and social discrimination aimed at protecting tribal rights and promoting social equality.
5. Allocation of proper financial and technical support for tribal development projects in Maharashtra state.
6. To increase awareness of the SDGs to implement educational campaigns and training programmes within tribal communities in Maharashtra .

Regional disparities, poor infrastructure, and a lack of knowledge about government programs are some of the main reasons why tribal communities in Maharashtra struggle to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the sustainable development of tribal groups in Maharashtra depends on the integration of their traditional wisdom with modern tactics. By cultivating their cultural integrity, ensuring equal progress, and safeguarding the environment, a holistic approach can be realized. This demand: -

- Inclusive policies, there is a need to establish development policies which must include tribal groups as one of the most important stakeholders.

- Participatory planning, without participation and exchange of knowledge with tribal groups we cannot reach a sustainable development aim, because tribes are symbols of sustainable development in itself.

In the end, listening to the wisdom of tribal people not only helps them, but it also makes the conversation about sustainable development in the country richer. To do this, the conventional knowledge system must be integrated into daily life to the greatest extent possible. It would also be necessary for the local people to be involved in incorporating their knowledge into government programs. There is a time to create a chain of understanding with the experts to share the local knowledge and turn local information into scientific language. At present, traditional knowledge is not only valuable for those local people whose daily life depends on it but also for other people.It is also beneficial for making health, medical, cosmetics, and other items. People are talking about traditional wisdom more these days in the guise of science and knowledge. The scientific method for managing the environment is based on people. This method scientifically stresses the need of improving forests so that the resources they provide are more useful to people. Therefore, there is a need to build up a good rapport between traditional and scientific knowledge so that both can go ahead simultaneously. For this, local people, policymakers,and social scientists, especially economists, anthropologists, will have to work together.

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