

# The Changes Taking Place in the Social Life of the Tribal Communities in Ahmednagar District

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**Abstract:** In recent years, there have been positive changes in the social life of the tribal communities in Ahmednagar district. The level of education has increased and boys and girls are attending schools and colleges. There have also been improvements in economic life, with income sources expanding due to employment guarantee schemes, small-scale industries and agricultural technology. Healthcare services have improved, with health centres, vaccination programs and anti-malnutrition initiatives proving effective. Socially, the status of women has strengthened and there has been some shift away from blind belief and old customs and traditions. Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra is a habitat of several tribal communities, including the Mahadev-Koli, Bhill, Pardhi, Thakar, Gond, and Katkari. Over the last two decades, and especially in recent years, significant changes have taken place in the social, economic and cultural life of these tribal groups. These changes are the result of government initiatives, increased access to education, improved infrastructure, and the influence of mainstream society. While preserving their traditional culture, the community is also embracing a modern lifestyle. Political participation has increased, leading to the development of leadership. Overall, the social life of the tribal community is rapidly progressing in the direction of development.

**Keywords:** social, economic, educational, living culture, transport and communication, housing, food changes, agriculture, animal husbandry, marriage patterns, employment, business, clothing, jewelry, tourism, wealth accumulation, financial transactions, tribal communities, Ahmednagar district

## 1. Introduction

According to the 2011 census, the population of India is 121.15 crore, of which the Scheduled Tribe population is 8.87 percent. The total population of the state of Maharashtra is 8.68 crore, of which the tribal population is 85.77 lakh. The population ratio is 8.87 percent. There is a total of 47 Scheduled Tribes in the state. If we compare the total population of the state of Maharashtra and the population of Adivasi tribes, it is found in thirty-six districts of the state. Out of them, Mahadev Koli, Thakar, Bhill, Pardhi, Katkari and some migrated Gond tribals are found in Ahmednagar district.

According to the 2011 census, the percentage of tribal population in Ahmednagar district taluka-wise is as follows.

Sr. No	Tahsil	Population		Percentage of tribal population
		Total Population	Tribal population	
1	Ahmednagar	68404	14396	2.10
2	Rahuri	322823	34036	10.59
3	Srirampur	287500	19556	6.88
4	Newsa	352829	18894	5.28
5	Shevgaon	245764	4681	1.91
6	Pathardi	258109	4118	1.60
7	Jamkhed	158380	2272	1.43
8	Karjat	235792	3464	1.47
9	Shrigonda	315975	13870	4.39
10	Parner	274167	17054	6.22
11	Akole	291950	139730	47.86
12	Sangamner	487939	51652	10.59
13	Kopargaon	302452	34377	11.37
14	Rahata	320485	20130	6.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4543159</b>	<b>378230</b>	<b>8.33 %</b>

## Who should be called the 'Tribals'? :-

People who have lived in valleys or forests since ancient times are called tribals. That is why people living in forests or mountainous areas are called tribals'. Veriyar Elvin and Thakkar Bappa have called the tribals Aboriginal. Aboriginal means original inhabitant. Tribals are those who live in the forest or they are also called tribals or Girijans because they live in mountainous areas. In the Constitution of India, tribals are called Scheduled Tribes. According to Article 342 (1) of the Constitution of India, they are included in the list of Scheduled Tribes, generally hill tribes. In the Constitution of India, tribals are called Scheduled Tribes. Generally, it includes people who live in mountainous regions and forests and who are isolated from modern culture and lifestyle. Therefore, the equation of tribals with Scheduled Tribes has become common.

Along with the Government of India, the Government of Maharashtra is striving for the social, economic, political, educational, cultural and living development of the tribal community. For the purpose, the Maharashtra government has started Integrated Tribal Development Offices. Due to it, the tribal community in Ahmednagar district is undergoing all-round development and their social life is changing.

## What is social change?

Social change is a broad and complex subject that sheds light on the fundamental changes in society. In this process, the structure and functioning of society are reborn. Under this, many patterns of status, class-strata, and behavior are formed and broken down. Society is dynamic and change is inevitable over time. The tribal community of Ahmednagar district is no exception. In modern times, developments have taken place in every sector and different communities have incorporated these developments in their own way. It has responded to it, which is reflected in social changes. The pace of these changes has sometimes been rapid and

sometimes slow. Sometimes these changes are very significant and sometimes very fundamental. Some social changes are obvious and visible, while others are not, and often these changes are imposed on us against our will. The human mind is initially skeptical about these changes, but gradually it accepts it. Social changes include changes in social structure and changes in culture. The main sources of social change are discovery, invention, diffusion, internal variation, progress, development and contact with external society, education, social movements and revolutions.

#### Changes in houses and household furnishings

The houses of the tribal tribes of Mahadev Koli, Thakar, Bhili, Pardhi, Katkari and Gond in Ahmednagar district are found isolated in the mountains, valleys and forests, far from the advanced society. The settlement is called a 'pal'. Some houses were built from available stones, mud, wood, and whatever was available in the forest. These houses were simple and crude. However, the Mahadev Koli, Thakar, and Katkari communities practiced animal husbandry and agriculture to some extent. Due to the forest laws, and the policies of the forest department, and the Wildlife Protection Act, the hunting period has ended and this society has stabilized. Due to it, these societies have started using materials like bricks, cement, iron, paper and plastic. They have started building solid houses. The houses are designed in a modern way and have separate living rooms, kitchens, bedrooms, and a large verandah in front of the house. There is a separate barn for keeping animals. Instead of using clay pots for storing water, plastic pots have been used. The materials used in the house were clay, stone and wood, but now instead of that, steel, copper and brass are used. Traditional household utensils such as wooden spoons, mortars, pestles, and earthenware utensils have been replaced by spoons, plates, jars, cans, water bottles, refrigerators, fans, electric lights, kerosene for cooking, and Instead of wood chips, they have now started using gas cylinders and grates. The use of mats, blankets, chairs, sofas, and glassware has increased in homes.

#### Changes in food habits

The tribal community in Ahmednagar district subsists on whatever is found in the forest or on the small amount of agricultural income that is grown in the fields. They used to include rice, millet, wheat, jawar and vegetables like chajbar, fandbhaji, pathari, kohlrabi, wild vegetables as well as meat of wild rabbits, harped, fish, deer, wild boar and birds in their diet. They also included mangoes, jackfruit, alma, and wild yams, sago, and sago were also included in their diet. They lived by eating fruits like Karvande, Bora, and Wild Cucumber in the forest, while the Bhills and Phasapardhis lived by hunting and stealing and plundering. These people of the forest due to the withdrawal of rights, the policies of the Forest Department, the Forest Act, and the Wildlife Protection Act, hunting became difficult, so they automatically turned to employment. They changed their eating habits. Also, as these people came into contact with the modern world, they started consuming foods like bhel, vada pav, samosa, laddu, pedhe, gulab-jam, poha, soybean and chili. Vegetables include guava, okra, cabbage, cauliflower, tomato, carrot, green vegetables. The societies have started eating fruits like chilies, spices, apples, dragon-fruits, grapes, etc. from the market, instead of fruits from the

forest. The youths have started paying for the delicious food in hotels or dhabas.

#### Clothing-Rags and changes in clothing and living conditions

The clothing of the tribal community in Ahmednagar district is very simple and the rags they wear are old, dirty, torn and flimsy. The clothing of men and young boys is a loincloth with meager cloth. They put on a turban called 'mundsa' around the head and dhoti, The women used to put on piece of sari called 'dhanuk' and headscarf around head but nowadays they put on a sari, blanket (ghogadi) on the body and a stick in the hand and leather footwear on the foot. The dress of women and girls is polka, simple saree and to cover the body and chest, women use a small embroidered cloth called 'phadki'. The small children of one to three years old are exposed and naked. However, due to contact with the outside world, a number of changes have been seen in the clothes and attire of the tribal community. Men now wear white dhotis, pajamas, bandies, white caps and slippers from the market. Young men have started wearing pants, underpants, vests, shirts, goggles, and slippers or boots, and ties with slippers. Girls are also now wearing Punjabi clothes, jeans, pants, dresses, slippers, and boots.

#### Jewelry and ornaments

The tribal community of Ahmednagar district is poor and has been reduced to poverty. They could not wear gold and silver jewelry and ornaments. Their jewelry and ornaments were forest flowers, shells, and coins, while the rich people used silver jewelries. But now this society has stabilized and started practicing agriculture and animal husbandry on a large scale. It started selling the surplus produce in the nearby market, employment increased, the new educated generation started working and doing different professions, came into contact with the outside world and its ornaments and jewelry also changed. In recent times, women, girls and men of the tribal community have been wearing expensive jewelry. It includes metals like gold, silver and copper. This community has now started wearing gold earrings, necklaces, nose rings, and neck rings. After watching advertisements on Doordarshan, people have started to use Lux, LifeBuoy, Santoor, Dove, Hamam as well as various shampoos. Schoolgirls and college girls are seen putting on lipstick. This society is changing with the changing times and circumstances. Staying clean and tidy is now becoming a permanent habit.

#### Education

The tribal community has been deprived of educational facilities since the beginning. What is the importance of education in a place where food is a problem? Due to the establishment of residential Ashram schools by the tribal department, many boys and girls have started pursuing primary, secondary and higher secondary education. With the opening of many colleges offering higher education in the fields of Arts, Science and Commerce in tribal-dominated areas, the first generation from tribal areas has become highly educated. The Maharashtra Government and the Tribal Development Department have started technical schools in tribal areas, and the trend of students towards pursuing technical education is gradually increasing. Due to separate residential hostels for boys and girls, Government

of India scholarships and reservations, there has been a significant increase in the number of tribal students in primary, secondary, higher secondary and college. Apart from traditional education, technical and medical education is also taken by students. Overall, the tribal community has understood the importance of modern education.

### **Agriculture/Farming**

The Hindu Mahadev Koli and Thakar communities practiced subsistence farming, but the Katkari, Bhil and Phasepardhis used to hunt wild animals and earn their living from it. But as human needs increased and contact with the outside world increased, he gradually turned to large-scale and modern agriculture. Modern seeds and chemical fertilizers have been used in agriculture. The tribal communities have now started practicing modern and mechanized farming. They have started using bullocks for small farms and tractors for large farms. In agriculture, along with rice, sorghum, and yam, commercial crops like wheat, millet, maize, tur, soybean, groundnut, fenugreek, spinach, coriander, chili, and guava have started being grown in large quantities. Hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizers have started being used in agriculture. As a result, traditional crops are being destroyed.

### **Language change**

Hindu Mahadev Koli, Thakar, and other tribal communities speak with a mixture of Hindi. The language of Bhils and Phasepardhis is mixed with Hindi. But the newly educated generation has started using English and Hindi words in their daily conversation along with the traditional language. Due to contact with the outside world and introduction to urban life, the educated generation is feeling ashamed to speak the traditional language.

### **Transport and communication**

There was a huge problem of transportation and communication in the tribal areas of Ahmednagar district, but after the Maharashtra government established a separate tribal department, these problems have been reduced to a great extent. In tribal areas, dirt roads have been converted into paved roads. Asphalt and cement roads have been built to connect Padas, Wadis and small villages. In villages, the corporation had provided ST buses to connect to big towns or markets during the day. This was the main means of transportation. But now in every village and town, many people have jeeps, tractors and tempos. Motorcycles have reached every household. Many people who are employed and doing business are seen driving air-conditioned four-wheeled vehicles. Due to this, communication has become dynamic. The number of mobile phones has been increasing rapidly in the last ten years. Earlier, there was only a rudimentary postal system. Therefore, communication was slow.

### **Financial transactions**

The economic transactions of the tribal society were very limited and sufficient to meet basic needs. The barter system existed. To meet the great need for money, this society took the help of private moneylenders. Due to lack of education, the tribal people did not understand financial transactions. Private moneylenders used to exploit and defraud the tribal community financially by charging exorbitant interest rates.

As a result, agriculture and households fell into the hands of moneylenders and the tribal community was on the verge of extinction. However, since the year 2000, due to education, social awareness, and government restrictions on private moneylenders, the economic practices of the tribal community have been changing. Due to various credit institutions, nationalized banks and cooperative societies, financial fraud in this community has been reduced to a great extent. Money from many government schemes is now being deposited directly in banks and post offices. Due to this, many people from the tribal community have started understanding the transactions of banks. Bank pass book, ATMs, promissory notes, and checkbooks have been newly introduced. Tribal communities are now widely seen transacting through banks

### **Economy and trade**

The economy of the tribal community in Ahmednagar district was based on forest and nature-based food gathering, hunting, fishing, and animal husbandry. But as the tribal society has become settled, its nomadic state has ended and it has started farming. It has started to rear cattle, buffaloes, goats, chickens and bulls on a large scale. Twenty-five years ago, the tribal community used to rear livestock on a small scale to meet domestic needs. But now they have started rearing livestock on a large scale. He is selling the milk of cows, buffaloes in the main market. They are selling milk and ghee. He is rearing poultry and goats on a large scale and is using the money he earns to meet his financial needs. Tribal people are now starting to understand financial transactions. The agriculture on the hillsides has been converted into modern agriculture with government assistance. Commercial crops like onion, potato, brinjal, tomato, guava, yam, sugarcane, okra, carrot have started being grown in the agriculture.

### **Marriage**

Marriage has immense importance in tribal society. Earlier, marriage was decided by the family elders. The practice of child marriage existed. Now, a lot has changed. Due to the spread of education, boys and girls are now getting married for love. Due to education and awareness of the disadvantages of child marriage, boys and girls are not getting married until they reach the marriageable age. In tribal society, marriages used to be very simple, but in recent times, these marriages have become very expensive. The attire of the bride and groom has become modern. Traditional instruments like Tadam-Tasha, Dhol, and Sanai have now been replaced by modern instruments like DJ. This is a good and important change in the tribal society. But these love marriages are starting to happen with the consent of the family. The rate of decline in tribal society was high, but its rate seems to have decreased significantly in recent times.

### **Health**

In terms of health, a significant transformation is being observed in the tribal community. There is noticeable change in habits such as regular bathing, timely haircuts, and shaving. The use of various soaps and cosmetic products has increased. When ill, people now turn less often to local healers or shamans and are instead making use of public health services.

Due to increased awareness that diseases like dysentery, diarrhea, and stomach aches during the monsoon are caused by contaminated water, these communities are now becoming more conscious about using clean water. Skin diseases such as scabies, ringworm, and fungal infections have decreased. Malnutrition, child mortality, and snakebite incidents have also reduced. Many tribal families now approach government hospitals and primary health centers for treatment. There is also increased awareness about the importance of clean drinking water, especially during the monsoon, to prevent diseases such as diarrhea and cholera. As a result, common skin diseases and infections have declined, and child malnutrition and mortality rates have improved. All these positive changes are occurring due to the impact of education.

### Political and Social participation

For years, the tribal communities which have been plagued by illiteracy, ignorance, and poverty, showed immense indifference and lack of awareness about politics and social issues. However, it is due to education that we now see an increase in political participation among members of the tribal communities.

Their -both men and women-growing participation in elections to many Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis, and other local self-governing bodies is a notable sign, and they are also providing good leadership.

Many highly educated youths, who have settled in cities like Mumbai, Pune, Nashik, etc. for jobs or business, are now driven by a strong desire to do something for the overall development and progress of their tribal brethren. As a result, many social organizations have emerged.

One important such organization is the **Maharashtra State Tribal Development Organization, Pune**. This organization consistently provides guidance to tribal students for competitive exam preparation, supports educational and quality improvement, felicitates meritorious students, provides financial assistance, and helps with basic facilities, educational resources, food, and accommodation in tribal schools.

Because of these efforts, the employment rate among tribal students has definitely increased.

## 2. Conclusion

In the past twenty years, significant changes have taken place in the social, economic, and public life of the Mahadev Koli, Bhil, Pardhi, Thakar, Gond, and Katkari tribal communities in Ahmednagar district. These changes are clearly visible due to improvements in education, transportation, and communication, as well as increased interaction between tribal communities and the outside, more developed world.

However, this transformation has not been rapid—it is happening gradually. Though delayed, even communities living in extremely remote areas are beginning to feel the effects of globalization, liberalization, and privatization. That said, the pace of change is not uniform across all

regions and communities. In very remote tribal areas, this transformation is progressing at a snail's pace. Yet, one thing is certain—change is indeed happening within the tribal society.

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