

Socio-Economic Development of Adivasi Tribals in Telangana: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

The socio-economic development of Adivasi tribals in Telangana remains a crucial aspect of inclusive growth and sustainable development in India. Adivasis, constituting a significant proportion of Telangana's population, face persistent socio-economic challenges despite various governmental and non-governmental interventions. This study examines the current socio-economic status of Adivasi communities in Telangana, highlighting their access to education, healthcare, employment, land rights, and social welfare schemes. The research identifies key factors affecting tribal development, including historical marginalization, inadequate infrastructure, and limited political representation. Many Adivasi communities still rely on traditional occupations such as agriculture, forest produce collection, and handicrafts, with limited exposure to modern economic opportunities. Educational backwardness, poor healthcare access, and displacement due to developmental projects further hinder their progress. The study also explores government initiatives, such as the Telangana Tribal Welfare Department's schemes, the Forest Rights Act (2006), and livelihood programs aimed at empowering tribal populations. While these policies have led to some improvements, challenges such as improper implementation, corruption, and lack of awareness among tribals continue to impede development. The study underscores the importance of integrating traditional knowledge systems with modern development strategies to achieve long-term socio-economic empowerment of Telangana's Adivasi tribes.

Keywords: Adivasi, Socio-Economic Development, Tribal Welfare, Government Policies, Livelihoods, Education, Healthcare.

Introduction

The socio-economic development of Adivasi tribal communities remains a critical area of inquiry within the broader discourse on sustainable and inclusive development. Adivasis, the indigenous peoples of India, constitute a significant portion of the population, yet they continue to experience disparities in economic, social, and political domains. Telangana, a state rich in cultural and tribal diversity, is home to several Adivasi tribes, including the Gonds, Koyas, and Lambadas. Despite the constitutional safeguards and targeted development programs, the socio-economic status of these tribes lags behind national averages due to systemic marginalization, limited access to education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2022). The term *Adivasi* (Adi = original, Vasi = inhabitant) refers to the indigenous peoples of India. The International Labour Organization (ILO) classifies these communities as "indigenous" (ILO, 1989). According to ILO conventions, tribes are defined as "indigenous or semi-tribal groups within independent nations, distinguished by their unique social, economic, cultural traditions, laws, and practices" (ILO Convention No. 169). In India, the tribal population, referred to as *Adivasis*, is included under the list of Scheduled Tribes

(Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2019). Tribes are often relatively isolated, self-contained groups, but those who are economically disadvantaged frequently face exploitation by non-tribal populations.

This research holds significant relevance for policymakers, NGOs, and other stakeholders aiming to uplift *Adivasi* tribes. By examining the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in Telangana, the study provides valuable data to inform inclusive policies and development programs (Planning Commission, 2008). It also contributes to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the intersection between traditional lifestyles and the modern challenges faced by these communities (Elwin, 1964). Tribal women often bear the brunt of socio-economic disadvantages, experiencing limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. This study examines the interplay between traditional tribal practices and contemporary gender dynamics, offering insights into how these factors affect women's empowerment within *Adivasi* communities.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the overall situation of *Adivasi* tribes in India and specifically in Telangana State.
2. To study the socio-economic problems faced by the *Adivasi* tribes in the selected districts of Telangana.
3. To ascertain the present living conditions of *Adivasi* people in the study area.
4. To describe the changes in the economic development of the sample respondents in the study area.

Socio-Economic and cultural Challenges: Review of Literature:

The socio-economic and cultural challenges faced by *Adivasi* tribes have been the focus of extensive international research, shedding light on issues related to education, health, livelihoods, and governance. Scholars have examined the intersections of globalization, policy frameworks, and Indigenous rights.

Roy (2010) provides an in-depth critique of displacement caused by mining and industrial projects in tribal areas. She discusses how *Adivasi* lands are systematically exploited under the guise of development.

Scott (2009) explores the resistance of Indigenous communities, including tribes similar to *Adivasis*, to state control. His work highlights how their socio-economic marginalization often stems from deliberate state policies aimed at assimilation.

Mosse (2005) discusses how development policies often fail to address the unique needs of tribal populations. His ethnographic research in India illustrates the disconnect between policy intent and grassroots impact, particularly on *Adivasi* communities.

Rankin (2003) explores how neoliberal policies disproportionately affect tribal communities, highlighting the commodification of their land and resources.

Stiglitz (2002) argues that globalization has exacerbated inequalities for marginalized communities, including *Adivasis*. He critiques international policies and institutions for neglecting the socio-economic needs of Indigenous populations.

Verma (2002) focused on gender disparities within *Adivasi* communities, emphasizing the socio-economic challenges faced by women, including limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

Morrison (2018) analyzed the unique challenges faced by Adivasi women, who bear a double burden of economic marginalization and gender inequality. Patriarchal norms and lack of access to education have restricted their participation in decision-making and economic activities.

According to Fernandez et al. (2022), health disparities are prevalent among Adivasi groups, with malnutrition and lack of access to primary healthcare services being critical issues. Conversely, McGregor (2020) underscores the importance of culturally inclusive education policies in addressing educational gaps for Indigenous children.

Devi (2021) investigates the dual marginalization faced by Adivasi women due to their gender and tribal identity. The study identifies key issues such as lack of education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities, which further deepen gender inequality in tribal societies.

Situation of Adivasi Tribes:

The literature provides valuable insights into the situation of Adivasi communities, particularly in terms of economic development, education, and the impact of government interventions. However, there is a gap in understanding the current socio-political situation of Adivasi tribes across different regions. Most studies focus on specific regions, such as Madhya Pradesh or Odisha, without offering a pan-Indian comparative perspective. Additionally, there is a lack of up-to-date data on the evolving situation of Adivasi tribes in the context of globalization and state development programs. Research could explore how Adivasi communities are adapting to modern political, social, and economic changes, focusing on both urban and rural Adivasi populations.

Healthcare:

Tribal people are often subjected poor healthcare and more infant mortality rates. It is been observed predominance of chronic diseases. Geographic seclusion also yet another reason for low quality of services and immediate action over health issues. While various studies (Bhattacharya, 2008; Nayak, 2016) identify significant problems faced by Adivasi communities, such as economic displacement due to industrialization and marginalization within development schemes, there is a knowledge gap in understanding the intersectionality of these issues. Few studies comprehensively examine how problems like gender inequality, cultural erosion, and land rights collectively impact the Adivasi people's economic conditions. Furthermore, micro-level studies on the economic consequences of migration or the long-term impacts of government schemes are limited, especially in the context of youth and future generations.

Tribal Scenario in India:

India is the largest concentration of indigenous people in the world after Africa. India's tribal areas are often sheltered and distant, and as a result they are known to be very little about their conditions and problems. These tribal peoples are generally not comparable to the general population, compared to the planned caste; other reactionary social group is constitutional protection.

According to the Census of 2011, the total tribal population of Telangana was 31, 77,940 and Andhra Pradesh was 49,575,771. The numerically dominant tribal groups of Telangana are Lambada/ Banjara, Koya, Gonds, Yerukala/Kurru and Pradhan; whereas Lambada, Yerukula and Yanadi are numerically dominant tribal groups of Andhra Pradesh. This chapter focus on the development conditions of the tribes of Telangana and the welfare schemes put forth for them by the government.

Table No. 1
Scheduled Tribe Population

Characteristics	Population (in lakhs)
Total State Population	350.05
Total ST Population (32 Tribal Communities incl 4 PvTGs)	31.78 (9.08 %)
ST Population in ITDA Districts	16.83 (52.96%)
ST Population in Other Districts	14.95 (47.04 %)
State Literacy	66.46%
ST Literacy	49.80%
State Male Literacy	74.95%
ST Male Literacy	61.02%
State Female Literacy	57.92%
ST Female Literacy	40.64%

Source: www.telangana.gov.in

According to the 2011 census, this is ST Population, 9.08(350.05) per cent of the total population in Telangana. The ITDA population 52.96 percent of total ST Population which covers 32 communities includes with 4 PvTGs communities. The Literacy rate of the ST population around 50 percent which consists with male 61.02 percent and female literacy 40.64 percent which is less than the state literacy rate(Male: 74.95, Female: 57.92).

Table No. 2
Scheduled Tribes in Telangana

Sl. No.	Name of theTribe	Total	% to Total ST Population	Predominantly inhabiting Districts
1	Lambadis	2044039	64.32	Across the State
2	Koya	381354	12.00	Bhadradi-Kothagudem, Khammam, Mulugu, Bhupalapally, Mahabubabad.
3	Gond / Naikpodu	297846	9.37	Adilabad, Komrambheem-Asifabad, Mancherial.
4	Yerukula	144128	4.54	Across the State
5	Kolam	44805	1.41	Adilabad, Komrambheem-Asifabad, Mancherial.
6	Pardhan	24776	0.78	Adilabad, Komrambheem-Asifabad, Mancherial.
7	Chenchu	16912	0.53	Nagarkurnool, Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda.
8	Andh	12882	0.41	Adilabad, Komrambheem-Asifabad,

9	Thoti	4811	0.15	Adilabad, Komrambheem-Asifabad, Karimnagar
10	Kondareddi	2000	0.06	Bhadradi Kothagudem, Khammam

Source: www.telangana.gov.in

State of Telangana which consist of 9 Scheduled Areas districts which are namely Adilabad, Komarambheem-Asifabad, Mancheri, Mulugu, Warangal Rural, Mahaboobabad, Bhadradi Kothagudem, Khammam & Nagarkurnool. Scheduled Area Mandals covered with 30 fully and 55 partly and 1174 villages covered under the Scheduled Area Villages. Table 2 shows the tribal communities and predominantly inhabiting districts. Majority of ST community in the state of Telangana the community Lambadis inhabiting in all the districts of state with 64.32 percent of the ST population of the state, followed by Koya community with 12 percent, Gond / Naikpodu- 9.37 percent, Yerukula- 4.54 percent, Kolam-1.4, Pardhan-0.78 percent, Chenchu-0.53 percent, Andh-0.41 percent, Thoti- 0.15 percent, and Kondareddi-0.06 percent.

Table No. 3

Occupational Category of Total and Scheduled Tribes Population in India, 2011

Occupational category	Total Population (in percent)	STs Population (in percent)
Total Workers	39.01	49.06
Cultivators	31.65	44.71
Agricultural Labour	26.55	36.85
Household Industry	04.22	02.13
Other Workers	37.59	16.31
Non-Workers	60.09	50.94

Source: Statistical profile of ST in India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2011.

Table- 3 shows the employment category of tribes in India. The total number of tribes workers was 49.06 percent compared to 39.1 percent of the population as a Whole, while non-workers of tribes were 50.94 percent compared to 60.9 percent in total population of India. Among all workers, the number of tribes was higher than the total population. Cultivators of tribes accounted for 44.71 percent, against 31.1 percent of the total population. Agricultural labor of tribes was 36.85 percent against 26.55 percent of the total population. Among the tribes, Cultivators were higher than agricultural labour. But in households, the tribes industry was smaller than the total population. Other workers have made up 50.94 percent of the tribes, compared with 60.9 percent of the total population.

Table No. 4

Details of Plan-wise Fund Allocation for Tribal Welfare measures (Rupees in crores)

Plan period	Total Fund Allocation	Allocation for Tribal Development Programs	Percentage
1 st plan (1951-56)	2,069	13.93	0.06
2 nd plan (1956-61)	4,800	49.92	1.08
3 rd plan (1961-66)	7,500	50.53	0.6

Annual plan (1966-67)	2,081.54	32.32	0.48
Annual plan (1967-68)	2,246		
Annual plan (1968-69)	2,359		
4 th plan (1969-74)	15,901.47	79.5	0.5
5 th plan (1974-79)	38,853.24	1,157.67	3
Annual plan (1979-80)	12,176	855.16	NA
6 th plan (1980-85)	97,500	3,640.25	3.7
7 th plan (1985-90)	1,80,000	6,744.85	3.8
Annual plan (1990-91)	65,714.5	NA	NA
Annual plan (1991-92)	73,482.15		
8 th plan (1992-97)	4,34,100	22,409.65	5.2
9 th plan (1997-02)	8,59,200	32,087.26	3.7
10 th plan (2002-07)	16,18,460	1,481	0.09
11 th plan (2007-12)	36,44,718	3,633	0.09
12 th plan (2013-17)	35,68,626	NA	NA

Source: Report of Planning Commission, from 1st plan to 12th plan, Government of India.

The table-4 presents the government commitment to tribal development. After independence, many problems arose for tribes in terms of population. Government programs and allocation of funds are insufficient to solve all problems. The total allocations for financing up to twelve five-year plans increased dramatically from rupees to 2069 crores in 1951–56 to 35,68,626crores in 2013–2017. It was increased in allocations for the ST Programme from Rs. 13.93 crore in 1951-56 to Rs 3,633 crore in 2007-2012. Of the twelve five-year plan, the seventh plan period was 5.2 percent of the fund allocated to programs of ST, which are higher than other plans.

Programmes for Tribal Welfare:

The government of India has developed a number of programs focused on employment and development for the tribes. The main programs are the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), Jawahar Roshgar Yojana (JRY), Prime Ministers Rosgar Yojana (PMRY) and self-employment training for rural youth (TRYSEM). A comprehensive rural development program is absolutely for rural residents who belong to the poverty line, while others are for both rural and urban youth. These schemes are implemented by the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA) with state and cooperative banks. Prime Minister Rosgar Yojana began to deal with the problem of burning unemployment in October 1993. Prime Minister Rozgor Yojana relates to the establishment of self-employment efforts through industries and services. If the age of 18 to 35 years old and his family income is not above Rs 24,000 per year, then any of the unemployed youth who is eligible or qualified or qualified to qualify for those conditions are eligible.

Conclusion:

This study aimed to examine various socio-economic factors and their influence on the livelihoods, food habits, and educational access of individuals across different age groups and genders. The analysis revealed significant findings that contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities within rural and semi-urban populations. The notable demographic patterns, such as the prevalence of male dominance in younger age groups and a growing trend of female participation in higher education and entrepreneurial activities. These shifts reflect the changing roles and access to opportunities for both genders, suggesting that women are increasingly contributing economically and socially in areas

traditionally dominated by men. Promoting the development would possibly lead to promotion of equal lent society with equal opportunities for all. This also reduces the gap between the rich and the poor.

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