



Educational and Economic Backwardness of Scheduled Tribe Women in Marathwada: Causes

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Abstract:

This paper examines the educational and economic challenges faced by Scheduled Tribe (ST) women in Marathwada, a region in Maharashtra, India. Drawing from Primary and secondary sources, it identifies key factors such as geographical isolation, poverty, cultural norms, and inadequate infrastructure contributing to their backwardness. Despite government initiatives, persistent gender disparities in literacy and employment limit empowerment, with female literacy rates often below 65% and economic reliance on subsistence agriculture. Child marriage is very common in Scheduled areas in marathwada. Transportation facilities are very less connected to urban areas. Majority of ST people are unemployed and depends on hunting and fishing.

Introduction:

Marathwada is one of the major regions of Maharashtra, consisting of Ch. Sambhajinagar, Nanded, Latur, Parbhani, Beed, Jalna, Dharashiv, and Hingoli districts. This region has a significant population of Scheduled Tribes (ST), including Bhil, Gond, Koli, Andh, Thakar, and others. According to the 2011 Census, the tribal population of Maharashtra is around 10.5%, with a large concentration in Nanded district where tribes such as Andh, Koli, and Thakar are found in considerable numbers.

The educational and economic status of women in these communities is extremely weak. Literacy rates are very low, and the female literacy rate is often half that of men. Economically, most women are engaged in traditional agriculture, forest produce collection, and domestic work, which prevents them from gaining financial independence. This weak situation hampers their social

empowerment and traps them in a cycle of poverty, health problems, and exploitation.

This paper analyzes the major causes of this backwardness, focusing on social, cultural, economic, geographical, and administrative factors. The study is based on available research and data, offering a deeper understanding of the issue.

Objective:

1. The primary objective is to analyze the root causes of educational and economic backwardness among ST women in Marathwada.
2. highlighting gender-specific barriers.
3. proposing the need for targeted interventions to promote equity and development.
4. Research for development of ST women.

Research Methodology:

This study depends on a primary and secondary research approach through literature review. Data were gathered from interviews, survey, place visit, academic papers, census reports, and studies on ST communities in India, with a focus on Maharashtra and Marathwada. Sources include Census 2011 data and scholarly articles accessed via web searches. Qualitative analysis synthesizes reasons for backwardness, emphasizing empirical findings from tribal-specific research.

Hypothesis:

1. Scheduled tribe women are economically very backward.
2. Scheduled tribe women are educationally backward.
3. Scheduled tribe women did not get benefits government schemes.

Major Causes:**1. Economic Backwardness and Poverty:**

The primary cause of the weak condition of Scheduled Tribe women in Marathwada is economic deprivation. Most tribal families live below the poverty line, with over 90% dependent on traditional agriculture and forest-based livelihoods. In Nanded district, tribal women face economic problems mainly due to poverty, unemployment, and debt. They also face exploitation regarding land and forest resources, which prevents financial stability.

Because of poverty, girls are often unable to attend school, as they are required to help with household chores, take care of siblings, and assist in farm work. Studies show that economic hardship contributes heavily to school dropouts among girls, especially after primary education. For instance, in Maharashtra's tribal regions, the female

literacy rate is limited to only 40–50%, mainly due to economic obstacles. This creates a vicious cycle, where lack of education reduces employment opportunities, further reinforcing poverty.

2. Social and Cultural Barriers:

Social and cultural factors are another key reason. Tribal societies in Marathwada are predominantly patriarchal, where women are given a secondary status. Early marriage and household responsibilities are prioritized over education for girls. Cultural traditions often discourage education, leading to disinterest among families in sending their daughters to school.

Examples include child marriage, superstitions, and rigid traditions, which hinder women's education and economic development. Tribal women in Maharashtra also face social discrimination, with fewer educational opportunities and limited decision-making power compared to men. In districts like Nanded and Parbhani, dropout rates among tribal girls are particularly high due to the combined pressure of poverty and social expectations. Studies suggest that many tribal families do not value girls' education, viewing their primary role as being confined to household and agricultural duties. Consequently, women remain economically dependent and vulnerable to exploitation by moneylenders or outsiders.

3. Geographical Isolation and Lack of Infrastructure:

Many tribal areas in Marathwada are hilly, forested, and remote, making access to schools and economic opportunities difficult. Lack of adequate schools, teacher absenteeism, and insufficient facilities (such as toilets and drinking water) further discourage girls from attending school. In districts like Hingoli and Beed, many tribal villages are

located far from main roads, making travel to schools unsafe for girls.

Economically, this geographical isolation limits access to markets and job opportunities, forcing women to rely on traditional, low-income activities. Studies show that such isolation contributes to literacy levels among tribal women being lower than the national average, while also restricting access to essential facilities like banking and markets. This reinforces economic weakness and prevents women from acquiring new skills.

4. Weaknesses in Government Policies and Implementation:

The Indian Constitution (Article 46) provides for the educational and economic development of Scheduled Tribes. Government schemes such as post-matric scholarships, tribal women empowerment programs, and special financial assistance are available. However, in Marathwada, the implementation of these schemes is weak.

Lack of awareness, corruption, and administrative hurdles often prevent benefits from reaching the intended population. For example, in Maharashtra, only about 20–30% of tribal women are able to access the schemes meant for them. As a result, neither educational nor economic development is achieved. Studies confirm that despite government initiatives, the facilities provided in tribal areas remain inadequate, leaving women in a vulnerable state.

5. Political backwardness of Scheduled Tribe (ST) Women:

Scheduled tribe women in the Marathwada region could refer to their limited representation, participation, and influence in political processes. This can manifest in various ways:

- Low representation in local governance, state legislature, or other political bodies
- Limited access to political networks and resources
- Barriers to voicing their concerns and needs in political spaces
- Challenges in getting their issues addressed by policymakers

Factors contributing to this backwardness might include socio-economic constraints, lack of education, and entrenched caste dynamics affecting their ability to engage in politics.

Conclusion:

Educationally, economically, politically and socially backwardness of scheduled tribe women. Not developed agriculture, not proper developed hospital system and not aware for government facilities. Lot of womens depends on agriculture. Lot of child marriage happen in ST families and high rate of domestic violence.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

1. The educational and economic backwardness of Scheduled Tribe women in Marathwada is a multidimensional problem arising from poverty, social discrimination, geographical isolation, and weak implementation of government schemes.
2. To change this situation, the government must strengthen policy implementation by:
Establishing schools and hostels in remote areas
3. Launching skill development programs for women

4. Conducting awareness campaigns for families and communities
5. Government should launch agriculture development programme in scheduled tribe areas.
6. Government should take care of sanitation , drinking water , health facilities and lightning in ST areas.
7. Impliment Training programmes.

Additionally, community participation is essential to bring about cultural change. If implemented effectively, these measures can lead to the empowerment of women and the overall development of Marathwada.

This study shows that it is not only the formulation of policies but also their strict implementation that is crucial.

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