



## A Study of Folk Literature of the Mahadev Koli Tribe in Maharashtra: Special Reference to Nashik District

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DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.18884714

### Abstract:

*Tribal communities in Maharashtra represent an ancient and integral part of Indian culture. Among these communities, the Mahadev Koli tribe occupies a significant place due to its rich cultural heritage and traditional lifestyle. The Mahadev Koli tribe is mainly found in the hilly and forest regions of Nashik, Pune, Ahmednagar, Thane and Raigad districts of Maharashtra. The folk literature of this tribe reflects their social life, beliefs, values, and close relationship with nature.*

**Keywords:** Tribal Migration, Folk literature, Maharashtra, Nashik District, traditional lifestyle.

### Introduction:

Tribal communities constitute an integral part of India's socio-cultural and economic structure. In Maharashtra, tribal populations are predominantly concentrated in hilly, forest, and rural regions, where traditional livelihoods, customs, and social institutions continue to shape everyday life. Among these communities, the Mahadev Koli tribe represents one of the major Scheduled Tribes, known for its distinct cultural identity, close association with nature, and rich oral traditions.

Despite their cultural significance, tribal communities have historically remained marginalized in terms of education, income, healthcare, and access to development opportunities. Migration, changes in land use, modernization, and declining dependence on forest-based livelihoods have significantly affected the socio-economic conditions of the Mahadev Koli tribe. These changes have also led to transformations in their traditional way of life and social relations.

The present study focuses on selected tahsils of Maharashtra where the Mahadev Koli population is significantly concentrated. Using a multistage sampling method, villages and households were selected to examine the socio-economic characteristics of the community and to understand the emerging challenges faced by Mahadev Koli households. The study attempts to generate empirical evidence based on primary and secondary data to highlight issues related to livelihood patterns, migration, access to welfare schemes, and overall living conditions.

Understanding the socio-economic realities of the Mahadev Koli tribe is essential for framing inclusive development policies and strengthening tribal welfare programmes. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to academic research on tribal studies and provide policy-relevant insights for planners, administrators, and development agencies working in tribal areas

**Concept of Folk Literature:**

Folk literature refers to orally transmitted literary expressions such as folk songs, folk tales, myths, legends, riddles, proverbs, rituals, and ballads. These forms are passed down from generation to generation and preserve the collective wisdom, emotions, and experiences of the community. In tribal societies like the Mahadev Koli, folk literature serves as an important medium of cultural continuity.

**Objectives of the Study:**

The specific objectives of the present study are:

1. To study the various forms of folk literature of the Mahadev Koli tribe in Maharashtra.
2. To understand the reflection of social, cultural, and religious life in the folk literature of the Mahadev Koli tribe.
3. To analyse the themes and values in folk songs, folk tales, proverbs, riddles, and ritual songs.
4. To examine the changes in Mahadev Koli folk literature due to the impact of modernization.
5. To emphasize the need for preservation and conservation of the Mahadev Koli tribe's folk literature.

**Scope of the Study:**

Present study has been conducted in Maharashtra where a small segment of tribal live. India has a tribal population of 104.287 million and Maharashtra has the second largest number of tribal population in the country. (Census 2011).The tribal people constitute the most deprived and neglected section of the population in the state. And now the government of Maharashtra has also realized that the land which they cultivate or possess, have been dispossessed by the non-tribal.

Present study has been conducted in Maharashtra with reference of Nashik district, because according to census of 2011 the highest tribal population is at Nashik District that is 6,107,187

With the above references this research has been conducted for Nashik inaccessible tribal area these are Surgana, Satana, Trambakeshwar, Igatpuri and kalwan tahsil.

**Need of study:**

Article 341 and 342 of the constitution of India recognized the special status of the tribal people and provides safeguard to protect their and culture. Despite their large numbers of the population they are remained geographically, socio-economically and politically marginal. The study of folk literature of the Mahadev Koli tribe in Maharashtra is necessary to document and preserve endangered oral traditions that are rapidly disappearing due to modernization and cultural change. It helps to understand the socio-cultural life, beliefs, values, and historical experiences of the Mahadev Koli community as reflected through their songs, stories, and rituals.

**Methodology:**

Present study is empirical in, Maharashtra and based on mainly primary and secondary data. Primary data would be collect through field survey with the help of structure.

**1. Sampling Plan:** Multi-stage stratified random sampling technique would be use in the present study. There are four stages in which sampling process is carried out. The first stage is selection of district, second stage consists of Tashil, the third stage encompasses selection of village and the fourth stage is selection of tribal farmers.

**2. Selection of Districts:** The study is conducted to Nashik in the state of Maharashtra out of 36 district. Nashik is at most Mahadev koli tribal

populate district in Maharashtra. According to census of 2011 the highest tribal population is at Nashik District that is 6,107,187.

**3.Selection of Tehsil:** The Tehsil was selected due to the significant presence of the Mahadev

Koli community, which is central to the study. It represents a typical tribal area, reflecting both cultural and socio-economic aspects. Its accessibility for fieldwork ensures effective collection of oral narratives and folk literature

**Table No 1.1 Selection of Tehsil**

Sr. No.	Name of Tahsil	Number of Villages	Selected Villages (6% of total villages)	Selected Households
1	Kalwan	190	06	60
2	Surgana	169	06	60
3	Dindori	119	04	40
4	Trambakeshwar	125	04	40
5	Igatpuri	152	05	50
<b>Total</b>			<b>25</b>	<b>250</b>

Source- [www.zpnashik.maharashtra.gov.in](http://www.zpnashik.maharashtra.gov.in)

The table No 1.1 show the selection of villages and households for the study was based on systematic sampling from each Tahsil. A 6% sample of the total villages in each Tahsil was chosen to ensure representativeness while keeping the survey manageable. Accordingly, Kalwan (190 villages) and Surgana (169 villages) Selected 6 villages each, Dindori (119 villages) and Trambakeshwar (125 villages) Selected 4 villages each, and Igatpuri (152 villages) Selected 5 villages. From each selected village, 10 households were surveyed, resulting in a total of 250 households across 25 villages. This approach ensures that the data collected reflects diverse socio-economic and cultural conditions across the Tahsils included in the study.

#### **Data Analysis:**

Data analysis is the process of organizing, examining, and interpreting collected data to draw meaningful conclusions. In research, it helps to identify patterns, trends, relationships, or differences within the data so that the researcher can answer the research questions or test hypotheses.

**1.Gender Distribution of Respondent:** The sample provides a representative gender-wise distribution of households for socio-economic and cultural analysis, while noting some variations across tahsils.

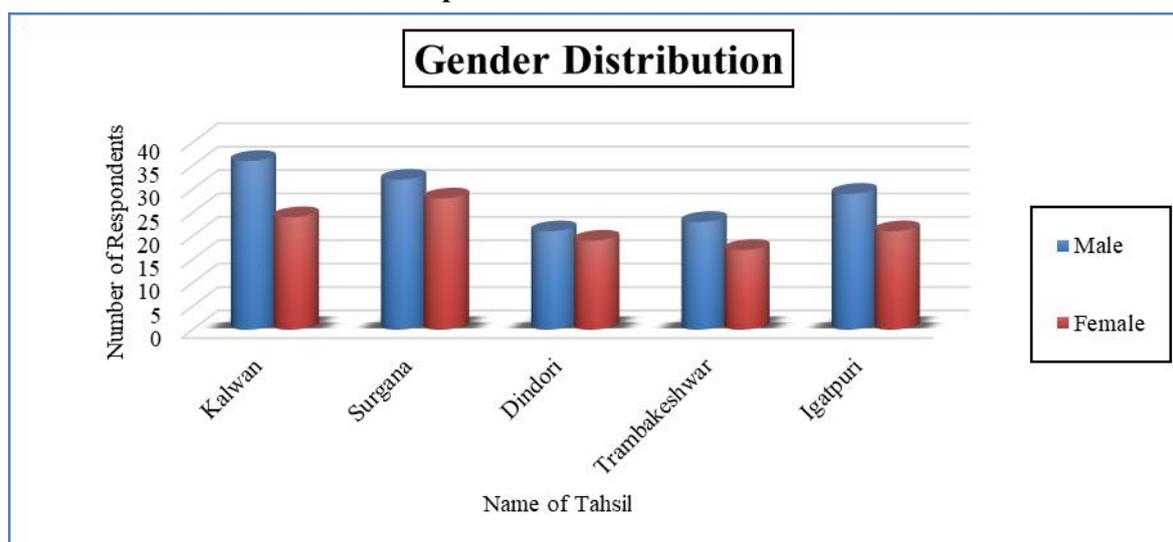
**Table No 1.2 Gender Distribution of Respondents**

Sr. No.	Name of Tahsil	Male	Female	Total
1	Kalwan	36 (60%)	24 (40%)	60 (24%)
2	Surgana	32 (53.3%)	28 (46.7%)	60 (24%)
3	Dindori	21 (52.5%)	9 (47.5%)	40 (16%)
4	Trambakeshwar	23 (57.5%)	17 (42.5%)	40 (16%)
5	Igatpuri	29 (58%)	21 (42%)	50 (20%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>141 (56.4%)</b>	<b>99 (43.6%)</b>	<b>250 (100%)</b>

Table No 1.2 Show that the study covered a total of 250 households across five tahsils in Maharashtra. In terms of gender distribution, the

overall sample comprised 141 males (56.4%) and 109 females (43.6%), indicating a slight male predominance across the selected tahsils.

Graph 1.1 Gender Distribution



Tahsil-wise distribution reveals that Kalwan had the highest male proportion with 36 males (60%) and 24 females (40%), followed by Igatpuri with 29 males (58%) and 21 females (42%). Trambakeshwar also showed moderate male dominance with 23 males (57.5%) and 17 females (42.5%), whereas Surgana and Dindori were more balanced, with male percentages of 53.3% and 52.5%. Respectively. Sample provides

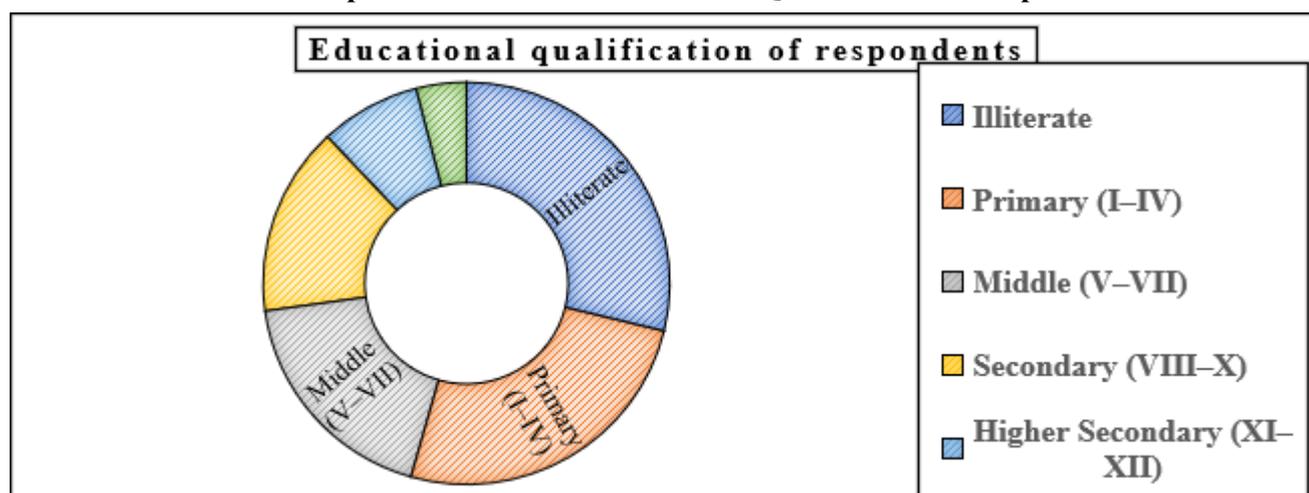
a representative gender distribution suitable for socio-economic and cultural study of the Mahadev Koli tribe.

**2. Tahsil-wise Educational Qualification of Respondents:** Mahadev Koli tribe and underscore the need for targeted, block-specific educational interventions in tribal regions of Maharashtra.

Table No 1.3 Tahsil-wise Educational Qualification of Respondents

Sr. No.	Name of Tahsil	Illiterate	Primary (I-IV)	Middle (V-VII)	Secondary (VIII-X)	Higher Secondary (XI-XII)	Graduate & Above	Total
1	<b>Kalwan</b>	18 (30.0%)	16 (26.7%)	11 (18.3%)	9 (15.0%)	4 (6.7%)	2 (3.3%)	60 (100%)
2	<b>Surgana</b>	20 (33.3%)	15 (25.0%)	10 (16.7%)	8 (13.3%)	5 (8.3%)	2 (3.3%)	60 (100%)
3	<b>Dindori</b>	12 (30.0%)	11 (27.5%)	7 (17.5%)	6 (15.0%)	3 (7.5%)	1 (2.5%)	40 (100%)
4	<b>Trambakeshwar</b>	11 (27.5%)	10 (25.0%)	8 (20.0%)	7 (17.5%)	3 (7.5%)	1 (2.5%)	40 (100%)
5	<b>Igatpuri</b>	11 (22.0%)	12 (24.0%)	10 (20.0%)	8 (16.0%)	5 (10.0%)	4 (8.0%)	50 (100%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>72 (28.8%)</b>	<b>64 (25.6%)</b>	<b>46 (18.4%)</b>	<b>38 (15.2%)</b>	<b>20 (8.0%)</b>	<b>10 (4.0%)</b>	<b>250 (100%)</b>

Graph 1.2 Tahsil-wise Educational Qualification of Respondents



Mahadev Koli tribe, with most respondents being illiterate or educated only up to the primary and middle levels. Higher secondary and graduate education remains very limited, indicating the need for targeted educational interventions in tribal areas of Maharashtra. The tahsil-wise analysis of educational attainment among the Mahadev Koli tribe reveals a persistently low level of formal education across all blocks. Illiteracy remains substantial, particularly in Surgana (33.3%) and Kalwan (30%), indicating structural barriers to educational access in remote tribal areas. Primary and middle-level education together constitute the largest share of respondents in every tahsil, reflecting early school dropout and limited

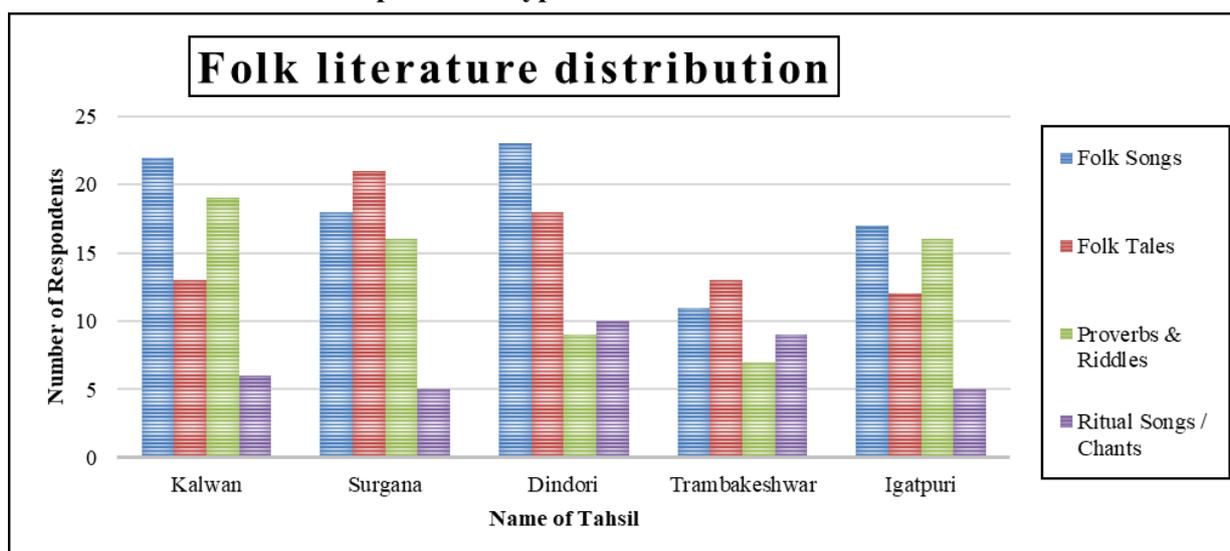
progression to higher levels. Secondary education ranges between 13% and 17.5%, suggesting moderate attainment but weak retention beyond the basic level. Higher secondary and graduate-level education is minimal across all tahsils, though Igatpuri shows relatively better performance.

**3.Types of Folk Literature Distribution:** The Mahadev Koli community preserves various types of folk literature, including folk songs, stories, proverbs, folk theatre, and ritual literature. Folk songs and proverbs are widespread in almost all villages, while stories and dramas are more common in villages with elders or during festivals.

Table No 1.4 Types of Folk Literature Distribution:

Sr. No.	Name of Tahsil	Folk Songs	Folk Tales	Proverbs & Riddles	Ritual Songs / Chants	Total
1	<b>Kalwan</b>	22 (36.7%)	13 (21.7%)	19 (31.7%)	6 (10%)	<b>60 (24%)</b>
2	<b>Surgana</b>	18 (30%)	21 (35%)	16 (26.7%)	5 (8.3%)	<b>60 (24%)</b>
3	<b>Dindori</b>	23 (57.5%)	18 (45%)	9 (22.5%)	10 (25%)	<b>40 (16%)</b>
4	<b>Trambakeshwar</b>	11 (27.5%)	13 (32.5%)	7 (17.5%)	9 (22.5%)	<b>40 (16%)</b>
5	<b>Igatpuri</b>	17 (34%)	12 (24%)	16 (32%)	5 (10%)	<b>50 (20%)</b>
Total		<b>91 (36.4%)</b>	<b>77 (30.8%)</b>	<b>67 (26.8%)</b>	<b>35 (14%)</b>	<b>250 (100%)</b>

Graph No 1.3 Types of Folk Literature Distribution:



The analysis shows that **Folk Songs** are the most widely practiced form of folk literature among the Mahadev Koli tribe **91 households (36.4%)**, followed by **Folk Tales 77 households (30.8%)** and **Proverbs & Riddles 67 households (26.8%)**. **Ritual Songs/Chants** are the least practiced **35 households (14%)**. Among tahsils, **Dindori has the highest participation in Folk Songs (57.5%)**, while **Trambakeshwar shows lower engagement across most forms**. This indicates variation in folk literature practices

across regions and highlights the rich diversity of cultural expressions within the Mahadev Koli tribe.

**4. Tahsil-wise Moral and Social Values Conveyed through Folk Tales and Songs:** The table No 6.4 shows that unity and cooperation, honesty, and respect for elders are the most commonly conveyed moral and social values through the folk tales and songs of the Mahadev Koli tribe across all tahsils.

Table No 1.5 Tahsil-wise Moral and Social Values Conveyed through Folk Tales and Songs

Sr. No.	Name of Tahsil	Unity & Cooperation	Honesty	Respect for Elders	Gender Harmony	Hard Work & Courage	Love for Nature	Social Justice	Total
1	Kalwan	14 (23.3%)	12 (20.0%)	10 (16.7%)	8 (13.3%)	9 (15.0%)	5 (8.3%)	2 (3.3%)	60 (100%)
2	Surgana	13 (21.7%)	11 (18.3%)	12 (20.0%)	9 (15.0%)	8 (13.3%)	4 (6.7%)	3 (5.0%)	60 (100%)
3	Dindori	9 (22.5%)	8 (20.0%)	7 (17.5%)	6 (15.0%)	5 (12.5%)	3 (7.5%)	2 (5.0%)	40 (100%)
4	Trimbakeshwar	10 (25.0%)	7 (17.5%)	6 (15.0%)	5 (12.5%)	6 (15.0%)	4 (10.0%)	2 (5.0%)	40 (100%)
5	Igatpuri	11 (22.0%)	9 (18.0%)	8 (16.0%)	7 (14.0%)	6 (12.0%)	6 (12.0%)	3 (6.0%)	50 (100%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>57 (22.8%)</b>	<b>47 (18.8%)</b>	<b>43 (17.2%)</b>	<b>35 (14.0%)</b>	<b>34 (13.6%)</b>	<b>22 (8.8%)</b>	<b>12 (4.8%)</b>	<b>250 (100%)</b>

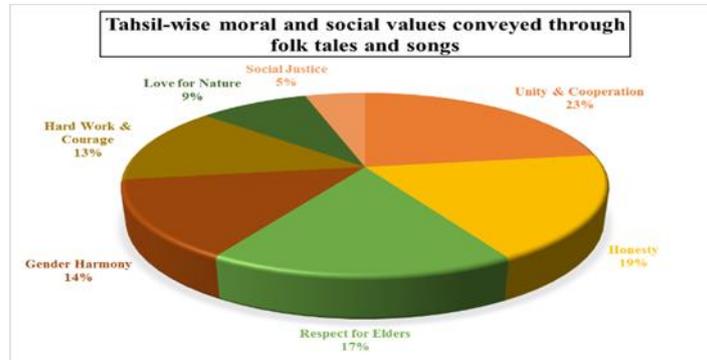
The data shows that unity and cooperation is the most dominant moral and social value in Mahadev Koli folk literature, with 57 households (22.8%) reflecting it across all tahsils. This is followed by honesty (47 households, 18.8%) and

respect for elders (43 households, 17.2%), indicating the strong emphasis on ethical behavior and traditional social norms. Gender harmony (35 households, 14.0%) and hard work and courage (34 households, 13.6%) are also significant,

highlighting the importance of balanced gender roles and labor in daily life. Love for nature (22 households, 8.8%) underscores the tribe’s connection with forests and natural surroundings. Social justice (12 households, 4.8%) appears less

frequently, suggesting that it is conveyed more subtly in folk tales and songs. The Mahadev Koli folk literature strongly promotes community values, moral conduct, and social cohesion within the tribe.

**Graph No 1.4 Tahsil-wise Moral and Social Values Conveyed through Folk Tales and Songs**



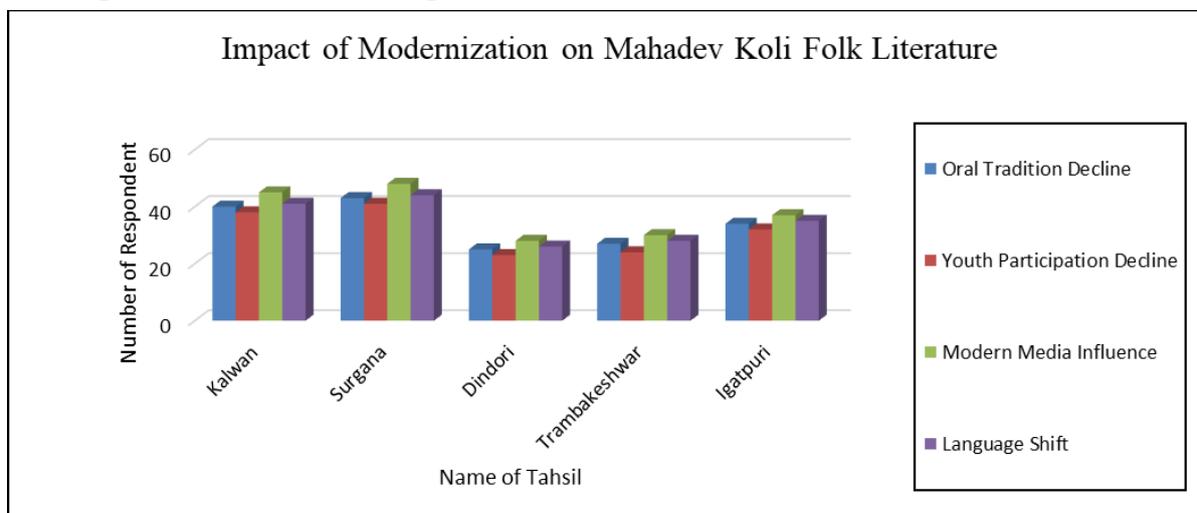
**5. Tahsil-wise Impact of Modernization on Mahadev Koli Folk Literature:** Modernization has weakened the oral transmission of Mahadev Koli folk literature. Traditional themes and

dialects are changing under the influence of education and media. At the same time, documentation and research help preserve this folk tradition.

**Table No 1.6 Tahsil-wise Impact of Modernization on Mahadev Koli Folk Literature**

Sr. No.	Tahsil	Oral Tradition Decline	Youth Participation Decline	Modern Media Influence	Language Shift
1	Kalwan	40 (66.67%)	38 (63.33%)	45 (75.00%)	41 (68.33%)
2	Surgana	43 (71.67%)	41 (68.33%)	48 (80.00%)	44 (73.33%)
3	Dindori	25 (62.50%)	23 (57.50%)	28 (70.00%)	26 (65.00%)
4	Trambakeshwar	27 (67.50%)	24 (60.00%)	30 (75.00%)	28 (70.00%)
5	Igatpuri	34 (68.00%)	32 (64.00%)	37 (74.00%)	35 (70.00%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>169 (67.60%)</b>	<b>158 (63.20%)</b>	<b>188 (75.20%)</b>	<b>174 (69.60%)</b>

**Graph No 1.5 Tahsil-wise Impact of Modernization on Mahadev Koli Folk Literature**



The tahsil-wise analysis reveals that modernization has significantly influenced Mahadev Koli folk literature across the entire study area. Out of a total sample of 250 respondents, 176 respondents (70.40%) reported a noticeable impact of modernization on traditional folk literature practices.

Among the selected tahsils, Surgana Tahsil records the highest level of impact, with 75 per cent respondents acknowledging changes in folk literary traditions. This indicates a strong penetration of modern influences such as mass media, formal education, and increased socio-economic mobility in the region. Kalwan, Trambakeshwar, and Igatpuri Tahsils also show a uniformly high level of impact (70%), suggesting that modernization is not limited to a single geographical area but is widespread across the district.

In comparison, Dindori Tahsil exhibits a relatively lower impact (65%), though the percentage still indicates a substantial influence. This comparatively lower figure may be

attributed to the continued practice of traditional customs, relatively stronger community cohesion, or limited exposure to urban influences.

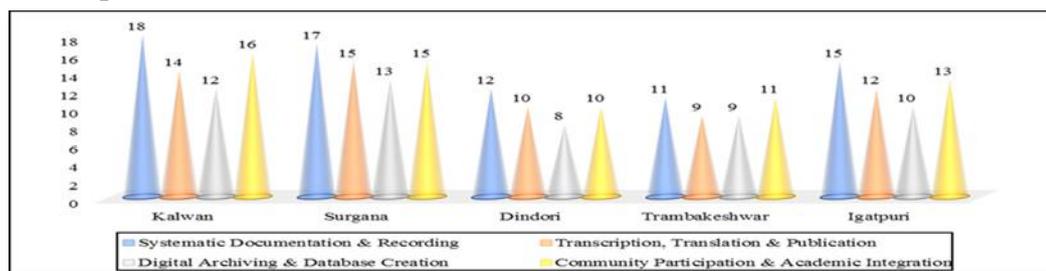
Indicator-wise analysis further strengthens these observations. The influence of modern media emerges as the most dominant factor, affecting 75.20 per cent of respondents, followed by language shift (69.60%) and decline in oral traditions (67.60%). A noticeable decline in youth participation (63.20%) reflects the reduced interest of younger generations in traditional folk forms, preferring modern and digital modes of cultural expression.

**6. Tahsil-wise Measures for Preservation of Mahadev Koli Folk Literature:** Preservation of Mahadev Koli folk literature is essential to protect its rich oral traditions from disappearing under the impact of modernization. It helps maintain the cultural identity, language, and indigenous knowledge of the Mahadev Koli community, which are deeply rooted in their history, rituals, and way of life.

**Table No 1.7 Measures for Preservation of Mahadev Koli Folk Literature**

Sr. No.	Name of Tahsil	Total	Systematic Documentation & Recording	Transcription, Translation & Publication	Digital Archiving & Database Creation	Community Participation & Academic Integration
1	Kalwan	60 (100%)	18 (30.00%)	14 (23.33%)	12 (20.00%)	16 (26.67%)
2	Surgana	60 (100%)	17 (28.33%)	15 (25.00%)	13 (21.67%)	15 (25.00%)
3	Dindori	40 (100%)	12 (30.00%)	10 (25.00%)	8 (20.00%)	10 (25.00%)
4	Trambakeshwar	40 (100%)	11 (27.50%)	9 (22.50%)	9 (22.50%)	11 (27.50%)
5	Igatpuri	50 (100%)	15 (30.00%)	12 (24.00%)	10 (20.00%)	13 (26.00%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>250 (100%)</b>	<b>73 (29.20%)</b>	<b>60 (24.00%)</b>	<b>52 (20.80%)</b>	<b>65 (26.00%)</b>

**Graph No 1.6 Measures for Preservation of Mahadev Koli Folk Literature**



The table 1.7 presents Tahsil-wise preferences for measures to preserve and conserve the Mahadev Koli tribe's folk literature. Out of 250 respondents: Systematic Documentation and Recording was selected by 73 (29.20%) respondents, indicating that proper recording of oral traditions is seen as the most crucial step for preservation. Community Participation and Academic Integration was chosen by 65 (26.00%), highlighting the importance of engaging the local community and educational institutions for intergenerational transmission. Transcription, Translation, and Publication was preferred by 60 (24.00%), showing moderate emphasis on making the folk literature accessible to researchers and the public. Digital Archiving and Database Creation was selected by 52 (20.80%), indicating relatively lower awareness or access to digital preservation tools in these regions. Kalwan, Surgana, Dindori, Trambakeshwar, and Igatpur show similar patterns, with respondents prioritizing documentation and community involvement. Data reflects a balanced approach is needed, combining recording, community participation, academic support, and digital archiving for effective conservation of Mahadev Koli folk literature.

#### Findings:

1. Respondents emphasized the need for active involvement of the Mahadev Koli community and educational institutions, suggesting that intergenerational transmission is crucial for sustaining folk literature.
2. Among the 250 respondents, 73 (29.20%) preferred systematic documentation and recording as the most important measure for preserving folk literature, highlighting the

community's awareness of the fragility of oral traditions.

3. Oral folk songs, tales, myths, and ritual chants should be recorded in audio and video form from elderly storytellers and folk artists to preserve authentic traditions.
4. Out of a total sample of 250 respondents, 176 respondents (70.40%) reported a noticeable impact of modernization on traditional folk literature practices.
5. Secondary-level education constitutes the largest proportion of respondents (29.91%), followed by primary education (21.18%), while higher education and vocational qualifications together account for a relatively smaller share
6. The most dominant moral and social value in Mahadev Koli folk literature, with 57 households (22.8%) reflecting it across all tahsils.

#### Conclusion:

The study highlights that the folk literature of the Mahadev Koli tribe is a vital repository of social, cultural, and religious life, reflecting their values, traditions, and collective memory. However, modernization, declining oral transmission, and limited access to digital tools pose significant threats to its survival.

Survey findings show that the community and respondents prioritize systematic documentation 73 (29.20%) and community participation with academic integration 65 (26.00%) as the most effective measures for preservation. Transcription, translation, and publication 60 (24.00%) and digital archiving 52 (20.80%) also play important supporting roles. Tahsil-wise analysis indicates a uniform recognition of these priorities across Kalwan, Surgana, Dindori, Trambakeshwar, and Igatpuri.

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