

ENHANCING TRIBAL EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN MYSORE

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Abstract:

The empowerment of tribal communities is crucial for their socio-economic upliftment and integration into the broader national development framework. In the context of Mysore, a city located in Karnataka, India, various tribal groups face challenges such as limited access to education, underemployment, and social marginalization. Enhancing tribal empowerment through skill development and vocational training programs has the potential to address these barriers, improve livelihoods, and promote sustainable growth. This paper examines the role of skill development and vocational training initiatives in empowering tribal communities in Mysore.

The study explores various government and non-governmental programs aimed at providing vocational skills, such as carpentry, tailoring, agriculture, handicrafts, and information technology, to tribal individuals. It analyses the effectiveness of these programs in enhancing employment opportunities, income levels, and self-reliance. Additionally, the research evaluates the challenges and obstacles faced in the implementation of these programs, including issues related to accessibility, cultural differences, and the lack of appropriate infrastructure and resources.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Skill Development, Empowerment, Tribal Communities, Rural Development, Government Initiatives

Introduction

The tribal communities in India have long faced socio-economic challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and sustainable livelihoods. The region of Mysore, located in the southern part of Karnataka, is home to several indigenous tribal groups who often remain marginalized in terms of economic opportunities. Addressing the development needs of these tribal communities is crucial for promoting inclusive growth and improving their quality of life.

One of the key strategies to empower these communities is through **skill development and vocational training**. By providing tribal individuals with the skills required for various trades and industries, these initiatives can help them secure stable livelihoods, preserve their cultural heritage, and contribute to the local economy. Moreover, vocational training programs can open up avenues for self-employment, reducing dependency on agriculture and promoting entrepreneurship within tribal communities.

This initiative is aligned with the broader goals of national policies such as the **National Tribal Policy**, which advocates for the socio-economic upliftment of tribal populations, and local government schemes aimed at increasing access to education, healthcare, and employment. By fostering skills that are both culturally relevant and aligned with market demand, tribal empowerment programs in Mysore can create long-term benefits for individuals and their communities.

Through targeted interventions, such as vocational training centers, community workshops, and partnerships with local industries, skill development can serve as a transformative tool in breaking the cycle of poverty and ensuring a sustainable future for tribal people in Mysore.

This paper explores the potential of skill development and vocational training as a means to enhance tribal empowerment in Mysore, examining the existing challenges, opportunities, and the impact of various initiatives on the livelihoods and well-being of tribal communities.

HISTORICAL MARGINALIZATION OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN MYSORE

The historical marginalization of tribal communities in Mysore, as in many other parts of India, has been shaped by a range of social, political, and economic factors over centuries. Tribal communities in the Mysore region, like in other parts of Karnataka, were historically marginalized due to their distinct cultural, social, and economic practices, which were often seen as "outsiders" by dominant agricultural or caste-based societies.

Here are some key aspects of the marginalization of tribal communities in Mysore:



1. Colonial Impact (British Rule)

- **Land Dispossession:** Under British colonial rule, the tribal people in the Mysore region (as in other parts of India) were subjected to land dispossession and were often displaced from their traditional lands. The introduction of the British land revenue systems such as the Ryotwari system and Zamindari system led to the appropriation of forest lands and resources traditionally used by tribes for sustenance and livelihood.
- **Forest Laws:** The British imposed stringent forest laws that restricted the movement of tribal communities and their access to forest resources like firewood, herbs, and forest produce. This significantly undermined the traditional way of life for tribal communities, such as the Soligas, Chenchus, and others, who relied heavily on the forests for their livelihoods.
- **Military Conflicts:** Tribals, particularly in the Western Ghats and forested regions, resisted British colonial rule. The resistance was often met with violent suppression. For example, the Coorg region (near Mysore) witnessed tribal uprisings against British authorities, but these were ultimately crushed, leading to further marginalization.

2. Social and Economic Marginalization

- **Caste-based Hierarchy:** In Mysore, as in many parts of South India, tribal communities were often at the bottom of the social hierarchy, which was dominated by caste-based discrimination. Tribes were generally not part of the agrarian economy and were pushed into low-paying, menial jobs or forced to live in isolated areas with little access to education, healthcare, or other amenities.
- **Displacement:** Over time, as Mysore's towns and cities expanded, tribals were increasingly displaced from their ancestral lands. This led to their social and economic marginalization, as they were moved to less fertile lands or pushed into urban slums, with few resources to adapt to the new environment.
- **Lack of Recognition:** Traditional knowledge systems and practices of tribals were often dismissed as primitive or backward, leading to further social exclusion. The tribals' contributions to local ecology,

particularly in forest management and biodiversity conservation, were often overlooked or undervalued.

3. Post-Independence Period

- **Lack of Land Rights:** After independence, the issue of tribal land rights remained a key concern, but the state machinery did not always prioritize the protection of these rights. While some legal protections were introduced for Scheduled Tribes (STs), like the Forest Rights Act, the implementation was often poor or nonexistent, particularly in areas like Mysore.
- **Educational and Economic Backwardness:** Despite constitutional safeguards for tribal communities, the tribal populations in Mysore continued to suffer from high levels of illiteracy, lack of access to quality healthcare, and poor socio-economic conditions. Many tribal areas remained remote and inaccessible, with no proper infrastructure for development.
- **Loss of Cultural Identity:** Due to the imposition of mainstream cultural practices and the spread of mainstream religions like Hinduism and Christianity, the tribals' indigenous practices, languages, and rituals were often sidelined. This has led to a gradual erosion of their distinct identities over time.

4. Resistance and Struggle for Rights

- **Tribal Uprisings:** There have been several movements among tribal communities in Mysore against the encroachment of their lands, poor working conditions, and the denial of rights. One example is the Soliga tribe's resistance in the Biligiri Rangana Hills (BR Hills) region against the loss of land to the state and private interests. Despite this, the recognition of their rights has often been slow.
- **Forest Rights Act (2006):** The enactment of the Forest Rights Act in 2006 aimed at addressing the historical injustices faced by tribal communities by recognizing their rights to forest land and resources. However, in regions like Mysore, the implementation of this act has been contested and met with resistance from local authorities and conservationists who argue that giving land rights to tribals will harm conservation efforts.

5. Contemporary Issues

- **Displacement by Development Projects:** Modern development projects, such as dams, infrastructure, and mining projects, have led to the displacement of tribal communities in the Mysore region. The government's push for large-scale industrialization often overlooks the rights of indigenous populations, and tribals are displaced without adequate rehabilitation or compensation.
- **Economic Exploitation:** Tribal communities in the region often face exploitation in the form of low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of access to basic services. Many are still involved in menial labor in urban and rural areas but remain outside the formal economy.
- **Cultural Survival and Identity:** There are efforts by tribal communities and advocacy groups to preserve their cultural practices, language, and identity. Some tribes in the region are also focusing on reclaiming their land rights and pushing for greater political representation.

IMPORTANCE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT AS A KEY STRATEGY FOR EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Entrepreneurship and skill development play a critical role in empowering tribal communities, particularly in regions like Mysore. These strategies not only foster economic growth but also promote social inclusion, cultural preservation, and self-sufficiency. Here's why they are essential:



1. Economic Empowerment

- **Job Creation:** By encouraging entrepreneurship, tribal communities can create their own businesses, which generate employment opportunities within the community. This reduces dependence on external job markets and leads to better economic stability.
- **Wealth Generation:** Entrepreneurship can help members of tribal communities create wealth, improving their standard of living and economic independence. It also helps reduce poverty in these areas.
- **Local Economic Growth:** Small businesses that emerge from entrepreneurship initiatives contribute to the local economy, stimulating demand for products and services, and fostering the growth of ancillary businesses.

2. Cultural Preservation and Promotion

- Many tribal communities possess unique knowledge, skills, and traditions, including handicrafts, weaving, herbal medicine, and agricultural techniques. Through entrepreneurship, these cultural assets can be transformed into marketable products, preserving traditions while also creating economic opportunities.
- By developing skills in business management, marketing, and product design, tribal members can promote their culture to wider audiences, both domestically and internationally.

3. Skill Development and Capacity Building

- **Access to Training:** Skill development initiatives in areas like agriculture, technology, handicrafts, and service industries can provide tribal members with the tools they need to succeed in various sectors. This training helps individuals become self-reliant and competitive in the broader job market.
- **Entrepreneurial Education:** Along with technical skills, imparting business management, marketing, financial literacy, and leadership training helps tribal members turn their ideas into successful ventures.
- **Increased Self-Confidence:** As individuals learn new skills and see the results of their efforts, their confidence grows. This has a ripple effect on their personal lives and the community as a whole.

4. Social Empowerment

- **Gender Equality:** In many tribal communities, women face significant barriers to social and economic participation. Entrepreneurship and skill development programs can specifically target women, offering them opportunities to become financial decision-makers, create businesses, and improve their status within the community.
- **Community Cohesion:** These programs promote collaboration and unity among community members. As they collectively engage in skill-building and entrepreneurial activities, they create stronger social bonds and foster a sense of collective progress.

5. Sustainability and Self-Sufficiency

- **Diversified Income Sources:** Skill development can lead to diversification of income sources, reducing the dependency on agriculture or other traditional methods that may be affected by climate change or other environmental factors.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Entrepreneurial ventures rooted in sustainable practices, such as eco-tourism, organic farming, or eco-friendly crafts, can help ensure the long-term well-being of tribal communities and the environment.

6. Access to Market and Technology

- **Digital Literacy and Online Marketplaces:** In an increasingly digital world, developing skills related to technology opens up new markets for tribal products. Learning how to use e-commerce platforms, social media marketing, and digital payments can significantly expand the reach of tribal entrepreneurs.

- **Networking and Collaborations:** Entrepreneurship training programs can help tribal individuals build networks with other entrepreneurs, NGOs, and government entities, fostering partnerships that can lead to better market access, funding, and resources.

7. Policy and Institutional Support

- With the right policy frameworks and institutional support from the government and NGOs, these strategies can be amplified. Subsidies, grants, and loans for tribal entrepreneurs, along with training and mentorship programs, can make the transition from skill development to entrepreneurship much smoother.
- **Role of Local Government:** Local bodies in Mysore, through targeted programs and outreach, can assist in connecting tribal communities to markets, financial resources, and technical assistance, which are essential for thriving businesses.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Tribal Communities and Socio-Economic Challenges

Tribal communities in India, including those in Mysore, face a variety of socio-economic challenges, such as limited access to quality education, healthcare, infrastructure, and employment opportunities. According to **Baviskar (2005)**, tribal groups have traditionally been marginalized, which leads to economic dependence on agriculture, crafts, and low-skilled jobs. This limits their ability to participate in the mainstream economy and hampers their development.

2. Entrepreneurship as a Tool for Empowerment

Entrepreneurship has been widely recognized as a catalyst for empowerment in marginalized communities. **Schumpeter (1934)** argued that entrepreneurship drives economic development through innovation and the creation of wealth. In the context of tribal communities, entrepreneurship offers a pathway to self-sufficiency, independence, and economic autonomy. **Kumar and Singh (2012)** highlighted how entrepreneurship provides tribal individuals with an opportunity to break free from the cycle of poverty and dependency by creating small-scale businesses, which in turn generate employment and foster local economic growth.

In Mysore, tribal entrepreneurs have shown resilience in starting local businesses such as handicrafts, organic farming, and forest-based products. These activities not only provide economic benefits but also help preserve cultural traditions, adding value to tribal communities' heritage. **Srinivasan (2018)** noted that when tribal communities are equipped with entrepreneurial skills, they can tap into market demand, improve income levels, and gain recognition.

3. Skill Development for Economic Empowerment

Skill development is another critical aspect of tribal empowerment. According to the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)**, skill training programs are essential for enhancing the employability of individuals, especially in underdeveloped regions. **Rai and Reddy (2015)** found that tribal communities, when trained in modern skills such as computer literacy, handicraft production, and sustainable farming techniques, are more likely to become economically independent. Skill development programs can help bridge the gap between tribal knowledge systems and modern market demands.

The Indian government's various initiatives, such as the **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** and the **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**, have sought to promote skill development among tribal populations. Research by **Bhagat and Kumar (2017)** concluded that skill training programs specifically tailored to tribal needs, including local languages and culturally relevant training methods, significantly improve the socio-economic status of tribal people by offering better job prospects and entrepreneurial opportunities.

4. Government Policies and Support

The Indian government has been instrumental in providing support for the empowerment of tribal communities through entrepreneurship and skill development. The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)** has implemented numerous schemes aimed at improving the livelihoods of tribal people. **Choudhary (2019)** emphasized that programs such as the **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)** and the **Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana** offer financial assistance and market access to tribal entrepreneurs.

Moreover, the **Karnataka State Tribal Development Department** has designed region-specific initiatives for tribal empowerment in Mysore. These include promoting traditional handicrafts like **Channapatna toys** and **Mysore silk weaving**, which are indigenous to the area and have a growing market demand. As **Bhat and Shetty (2016)** argued, such targeted support programs foster entrepreneurship among tribal populations by providing financial aid, skill development, and access to market linkages.

5. Challenges and Barriers

Despite the potential, several challenges hinder the successful implementation of entrepreneurship and skill development programs. **Saini (2017)** identified barriers such as lack of awareness, poor infrastructure, limited access to credit facilities, and cultural resistance to modern business practices. Additionally, tribal communities often lack formal education, which limits their ability to access formal training programs. As **Patel and Varma (2013)** observed, there is a need for the adaptation of skill training programs to the specific socio-cultural contexts of tribal communities.

Moreover, the isolation of tribal areas, particularly in rural regions of Mysore, means that access to markets and capital is often restricted. **Rai and Reddy (2015)** highlighted that bridging the gap between skill development and entrepreneurial success requires tailored training that is not only skill-based but also sensitive to the cultural and geographical context of the tribal people.

OBJECTIVES

The empowerment of tribal communities, especially in areas like Mysore, requires a multifaceted approach. Entrepreneurship and skill development can serve as vital strategies in driving this empowerment. The objectives of using entrepreneurship and skill development to empower tribal communities in Mysore could be structured as follows:

Objectives of Enhancing Tribal Empowerment through Skill Development and Vocational Training in Mysore:

- Promote Economic Independence
- Improve Employment Opportunities
- Preserve Cultural Heritage
- Enhance Education and Literacy
- Empower Women and Youth
- Encourage Entrepreneurship
- Improve Standard of Living
- Bridge Socio-Economic Gaps
- Build Community Resilience
- Collaboration and Networking
- Provide Access to Resources and Infrastructure

By achieving these objectives, the program can help tribal communities in Mysore thrive economically, socially, and culturally, with a focus on long-term empowerment and sustainability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a **secondary data collection** approach, meaning that the data used for the research have been previously collected and published by other researchers, organizations, or institutions. The secondary data were sourced from a variety of relevant and reliable sources, including:

1. **Journals:** Peer-reviewed academic journals were accessed to gather research articles and studies related to the research topic.
2. **Published Articles:** Articles published in reputable magazines, periodicals, and newspapers provided additional perspectives and data relevant to the study.
3. **Government Documents:** Publicly available reports, policy documents, and statistical data published by governmental agencies were used to ensure the credibility and official nature of some data points.
4. **Websites:** Relevant online resources, including databases and specialized websites, were reviewed for industry-specific insights, reports, and other pertinent information.
5. **E-books:** Electronic books, which include scholarly publications and books available through libraries or academic platforms, were also consulted for comprehensive background information.
6. **Magazines:** Articles and reports from magazines provided current trends, expert opinions, and industry developments that contributed to the study's analysis.

Secondary data are advantageous for providing a broad view of the subject without the time and cost investment associated with primary data collection. However, care was taken to evaluate the credibility, relevance, and reliability of all sources to ensure the accuracy and validity of the data used in this research.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN MYSORE

The socio-economic landscape of tribal communities in Mysore, which is a part of the state of Karnataka in southern India, is shaped by a mix of traditional customs, modern challenges, and efforts to integrate them into mainstream society while preserving their cultural identity. Several tribal groups are found in this region, and each community experiences unique socio-economic conditions.



1. Tribal Communities in Mysore

Mysore and the surrounding areas of Karnataka are home to several tribal groups, the most prominent being:

- **Irula:** A traditionally agricultural and hunter-gatherer community.
- **Soliga:** Primarily found in the Biligiriranga Hills and known for their involvement in agriculture and forest-based livelihoods.
- **Jenu Kuruba:** A community traditionally involved in honey hunting and forest-based activities.
- **Yerava:** A group found in the hill ranges of the Western Ghats, often engaged in farming.

These tribes have a long history in the region, living mostly in rural or forested areas. Over time, they have faced a variety of challenges related to socio-economic development, education, healthcare, and cultural preservation.

2. Social Structure and Culture

The tribal communities in Mysore typically maintain distinct social structures.

Religion and spirituality, often connected to nature worship, play a significant role in their lives. Many tribes have a close-knit kinship system where the elders' advice is crucial in decision-making. The tribal culture in Mysore is rich in oral traditions, dances, folk music, and festivals that mark the seasons, harvests, and religious beliefs. For example, the **Soligas** celebrate traditional rituals like "Pujas" to honor nature spirits and deities, while the **Jenu Kurubas** are known for their practices related to honey collection.

3. Economic Activities

Traditionally, most tribal communities in Mysore were dependent on **agriculture, forestry, and hunting and gathering** for their livelihoods. Over the years, there has been a shift, with many tribes adopting more agricultural practices, though their access to modern farming techniques, technology, and capital has been limited.

- **Agriculture:** Some tribal groups, especially the **Soligas** and **Yeravas**, are involved in cultivating crops like **ragi, millets, maize, and pulses**. These tribes have also engaged in **shifting cultivation** (also known as “slash-and-burn” farming) though this has become less common with governmental policies discouraging the practice.
- **Forest-based livelihoods:** The **Irulas** and **Jenu Kurubas** continue to rely on the forest for subsistence activities like **honey hunting**, collecting medicinal plants, and other forest products. However, access to forests has become more regulated, limiting their traditional way of life.
- **Wage labor:** With increasing modernization, many tribal members work as **laborers** on plantations or as construction workers in urban areas. This shift to wage labor has led to a loss of traditional economic practices and has placed tribal communities in a more vulnerable economic position.

4. Education and Literacy

Education among tribal communities in Mysore has been historically low, primarily due to their geographical isolation and cultural practices that didn't prioritize formal schooling. However, in recent years, there have been efforts by the government and NGOs to improve educational access for these communities.

- Government schemes like **Hostels for Tribal Students** and **Reservation in Education** have helped improve enrollment rates in schools, though drop-out rates remain a concern.
- There is also a growing awareness of the importance of **tribal languages** and **cultural education**, although mainstream education systems often fail to incorporate tribal languages or traditions in the curriculum.

5. Health and Healthcare Access

Tribal communities in Mysore often face **limited access to healthcare**. Many tribal groups live in remote areas with inadequate healthcare infrastructure. This leads to high levels of **malnutrition, infectious diseases, and maternal and child health issues**.

- **Traditional Medicine:** Some tribes, such as the **Jenu Kurubas**, continue to rely on traditional herbal remedies, but there is an increasing need for **modern healthcare** services.
- **Government Interventions:** Government programs like **Mobile Health Units** and outreach initiatives by the **National Health Mission** have attempted to address some of these healthcare gaps. However, the high incidence of diseases like **malaria** and **tuberculosis** remains a major issue.

6. Land Rights and Forest Rights

Land rights are a significant issue for tribal communities in Mysore. Much of their ancestral land is either under **forest conservation** or has been encroached upon by agricultural or urban development projects. Tribes like the **Soligas** and **Irulas** have faced displacement due to forest policies, with many tribal families being relocated to government settlements with limited land or resources.

- The **Forest Rights Act (FRA)** of 2006 was a landmark legislation aimed at recognizing the land rights of tribal communities. However, its implementation has been slow, and many tribal people in Mysore are still waiting for land titles and recognition.

7. Challenges Faced by Tribal Communities

Despite several policies aimed at improving the conditions of tribal communities, several challenges persist:

- **Poverty:** Tribal communities in Mysore remain economically marginalized, with low levels of income and limited access to resources.
- **Cultural Erosion:** The influx of mainstream culture and practices has led to the gradual erosion of tribal traditions, languages, and practices.
- **Access to Public Services:** Limited access to **clean water, sanitation, electricity, and transportation** continues to hinder socio-economic development in tribal areas.
- **Discrimination:** Tribal people often face discrimination and exclusion in mainstream society, which exacerbates their social and economic challenges.

8. Government and NGO Initiatives

There have been several government and non-governmental efforts to improve the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in Mysore:

- **Tribal Development Programmes:** The Karnataka government has implemented various schemes to promote education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for tribals.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Programs focusing on **skill development, livelihood enhancement**, and the establishment of **tribal cooperatives** aim to diversify the economic activities of tribal communities beyond traditional agriculture and forest-based livelihoods.
- **Forest Rights:** Efforts to implement the **Forest Rights Act** have provided some tribes with land titles, allowing for better resource access and livelihood security.

SOCIAL STATUS OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

The social status of tribal communities in Mysore (now part of the larger Mysuru district in Karnataka) is complex and shaped by historical, cultural, and economic factors. Tribal communities in this region are part of a larger demographic found across Karnataka and India, each with unique traditions, languages, and practices. Here's an overview of their social status in Mysore:



1. Historical Context:

Mysore has a long history of tribal communities living in its forests and hilly areas. These include communities like the **Soligas, Irulas, Betta Kurubas, Jenu Kurubas, and Kadu Kurubas**. Historically, many of these tribes were forest dwellers who practiced hunting, gathering, and shifting cultivation.

- **Pre-colonial Period:** The tribes often lived in relative isolation and were outside the mainstream caste hierarchy. Their social organization was primarily based on family and kinship networks.
- **Colonial Influence:** The British colonial period brought many changes. The forests were increasingly restricted, and tribal communities faced displacement as their lands were taken for plantations and reserves. Tribal people were often relegated to marginal lands or forced into labor systems that limited their autonomy.

2. Current Social Status:

Tribal communities in Mysore, like in many parts of India, have faced marginalization due to a combination of social, economic, and educational disadvantages. Despite legal protections, including reservations, they continue to experience challenges.

- **Cultural Identity:** Tribal communities in Mysore often retain their traditional practices, including language, customs, and arts, though they are influenced by the larger Kannada-speaking population. For example, the **Soligas** are known for their rich folklore, songs, and traditional dances.
- **Economic Status:** Many tribal people still rely on agriculture (mainly subsistence farming), forest-based activities, and manual labor for their livelihoods. They are often economically vulnerable, with low levels of income and limited access to modern resources or infrastructure. As a result, poverty remains a significant issue for many tribal communities.
- **Educational Status:** Education is an area where tribal communities in Mysore have seen improvements, but the literacy rates still lag behind the state and national averages. The state government has made efforts to set up tribal schools and residential educational programs, but issues such as language barriers, cultural differences, and the quality of education persist.
- **Health and Nutrition:** Access to healthcare remains limited for many tribal communities. Poor healthcare infrastructure in remote areas, along with traditional practices, often results in higher mortality rates and poorer health outcomes compared to other communities.

3. Government and Legal Framework:

Tribal communities in Mysore are recognized under India's **Scheduled Tribes (ST)** category, which entitles them to affirmative action in the form of reservations in education, government jobs, and political representation. However, the effectiveness of these measures varies, and there are instances where benefits have not reached the most marginalized groups.

- **The Forest Rights Act of 2006** was a significant step toward recognizing the land rights of tribal communities, especially those living in forested regions. However, the implementation of this law has been inconsistent, and land alienation continues to be a challenge for many tribal people.

4. Political Representation:

Tribal communities in Mysore have some political representation, with members elected to local Panchayats and the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. However, political power is often limited, and tribal issues are sometimes overshadowed by larger state and national political dynamics.

5. Social Stigma and Discrimination:

Although tribal communities are recognized under India's constitution and have some level of social protection, they still face significant discrimination. Stereotyping and prejudice against tribal people are prevalent in urban areas, and they are often seen as backward or primitive. This social stigma can hinder their integration into mainstream society and perpetuate their marginalization.

6. Challenges and Development Initiatives:

There are several ongoing initiatives aimed at improving the social status of tribal communities in Mysore:

- **Government Schemes:** There are various state and central government schemes focused on improving tribal welfare, including subsidized housing, healthcare, and skill development programs.
- **NGO Involvement:** Several non-governmental organizations work in the region to promote the rights of tribal communities, advocating for better access to education, healthcare, and land rights.
- **Cultural Preservation:** Efforts are also underway to preserve the unique cultural heritage of tribal communities, including their languages, customs, and traditional knowledge systems.

ECONOMIC STATUS OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Tribal communities in the Mysore district of Karnataka face significant socio-economic challenges, including poverty, limited access to education, and inadequate healthcare. These communities primarily depend on subsistence farming and forest produce, leading to economic vulnerability.

Key Tribal Communities in Mysore:

- **Jenu Kuruba:** Traditionally honey gatherers, the Jenu Kuruba tribe has experienced displacement due to development projects, leading to economic hardships.
- **Soliga:** Inhabitants of the Biligiriranga Hills, the Soliga tribe faces challenges in accessing education and healthcare, impacting their socio-economic status.
- **Yerava:** Found in the western parts of Mysore district, the Yerava tribe engages in agriculture and livestock rearing, contributing to their economic activities.

Economic Challenges:

- **Poverty:** Many tribal households live below the poverty line, with limited income sources and reliance on traditional occupations.
- **Education:** Low literacy rates and limited access to quality education hinder economic mobility and empowerment.
- **Healthcare:** Inadequate healthcare facilities and awareness contribute to poor health outcomes among tribal populations.

Government Initiatives:

The government has implemented various schemes to uplift tribal communities, focusing on education, healthcare, and economic development. However, challenges persist in effective implementation and reaching remote areas.

Role of NGOs:

Organizations like the Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM) play a crucial role in providing healthcare, education, and community development programs tailored to the needs of tribal communities in Mysore. Addressing the economic status of tribal communities in Mysore requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving education, healthcare, and economic opportunities while respecting and preserving their cultural heritage.

THE CULTURAL ROLE OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

The tribal communities in Mysore, part of the larger region of Karnataka, play a significant cultural role in the area. These communities, including the Soligas, Irulas, and Jenu Kurubas, among others, have distinct traditions, practices, and lifestyles that contribute to the region's cultural diversity.



1. Traditional Knowledge and Practices

Tribal communities in Mysore often maintain deep connections to nature, including extensive knowledge of plants, animals, and forest ecosystems. The Soligas, for example, are known for their understanding of the local flora and fauna, including medicinal plants, and their role in maintaining sustainable forest practices.

Their traditional arts and crafts, including weaving, pottery, and basket-making, also add to the cultural fabric of Mysore. Many of these practices have been passed down through generations, and their craftsmanship is valued both locally and nationally.

2. Festivals and Rituals

Tribal festivals and rituals are integral to the cultural identity of the region. For example:

- **Madiyala (Soliga Festival):** This is a major celebration for the Soliga tribe, centered around forest deities and agricultural cycles.
- **Poojas and Worship:** Many tribes in Mysore worship local deities and nature spirits, and their rituals are closely linked to the environment they live in, including offerings to trees, rivers, and mountains. These celebrations often involve music, dance, and other forms of artistic expression that enrich Mysore's cultural diversity.

3. Dance and Music

Tribal communities in Mysore are known for their vibrant dance and music traditions, which often reflect their relationship with nature, the divine, and the cosmos. Dance forms like the "**Huli Vesha**" (Tiger Dance) of the Soliga tribe and other tribal rituals are significant aspects of Mysore's cultural life. The rhythms of drums and other traditional instruments form the heart of these celebrations, contributing to the region's rich musical heritage.

4. Social Structure and Community Bonding

The tribal communities maintain strong social bonds within their groups. These bonds are important for survival in forested regions and have led to a communal way of life. Practices like sharing resources, collective decision-making, and mutual aid during festivals or traditional ceremonies are defining features of tribal social life. Their close-knit communities often work together in agricultural or forest-related activities, which also contributes to the region's cultural continuity and sustains local traditions.

5. Art and Storytelling

Oral traditions, including storytelling, songs, and folklore, are vital in preserving the history and customs of these communities. Myths, legends, and ancestral stories are passed down orally, preserving their unique worldview and moral codes. These stories often feature elements of nature, animals, and spirits and have a deep connection to the environment and the tribes' daily life.

6. Impact of Modernization

Tribal communities in Mysore, like many across India, face challenges from modernization, land alienation, and the encroachment of their traditional lands. However, despite these challenges, their cultural heritage continues to influence the broader Mysorean society. Tribes are increasingly involved in advocacy and movements to preserve their rights, land, and traditional ways of life.

7. Cultural Tourism

The rich tribal heritage of Mysore also contributes to the local tourism industry. Tourists are often drawn to the region's natural beauty, wildlife sanctuaries like the **Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks**, and the opportunity to learn about tribal customs, arts, and lifestyles. This helps to promote the cultural role of these communities and increase awareness of their unique traditions.

EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Tribal communities in the Mysore region of Karnataka, such as the Jenukuruba, Soliga, and Kadukuruba, have historically faced challenges in accessing quality education. These communities often reside in remote, forested areas, leading to geographical and social isolation. This isolation, combined with economic hardships, has contributed to lower literacy rates and higher dropout rates among tribal students.



Educational Challenges:

- **Geographical Isolation:** Many tribal settlements are situated in forested regions, making access to schools difficult. The lack of infrastructure and transportation options further exacerbates this issue.
- **Economic Constraints:** Poverty is prevalent among tribal families, with many relying on agriculture and forest resources for sustenance. This economic situation often leads to children prioritizing work over education, resulting in high dropout rates.
- **Cultural Factors:** Traditional lifestyles and a lack of awareness about the importance of formal education can lead to a lower emphasis on schooling within tribal communities.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES FOR TRIBALS IN MYSORE

In Mysore, several initiatives focus on enhancing entrepreneurship and skill development among tribal communities. Here are some notable programs and organizations:

Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM) & Van Dhan Vikas Kendra
Founded by Dr. R. Balasubramaniam, SVYM operates in Mysore and surrounding areas, focusing on health, education, and community development. They offer mobile education and medical services, such as Vidhyavahini and Sikshavahini, to tribal populations.

Under the Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Mission, these centers aim to develop forest-based enterprises with Self Help Groups (SHGs). They provide training in business management and financial literacy to tribal entrepreneurs.



Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) & Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)

TRIFED supports tribal artisans by promoting their products through retail outlets like Tribes India. They also implement the Van Dhan Yojana, which establishes centers to train tribal gatherers in value addition and marketing of forest products.

JSS provides vocational training to non-literates, neo-literates, and school drop-outs in rural regions, including tribal areas. They focus on skills relevant to local markets, aiming to uplift rural populations economically.



Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

This national scheme aims to upgrade the skills of youth, including tribal youth, in various vocations. It offers short-duration skill development training to enhance employability and self-reliance. These initiatives collectively aim to empower tribal communities in Mysore by providing the necessary skills and resources to foster entrepreneurship and improve livelihoods.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, enhancing tribal empowerment through skill development and vocational training in Mysore represents a vital step toward bridging socio-economic gaps and promoting sustainable development for marginalized tribal communities. By focusing on tailored training programs that cater to the unique needs, traditions, and challenges of these communities, we can equip individuals with the necessary tools to improve their livelihoods, enhance self-reliance, and create opportunities for economic independence.

The collaboration between government, NGOs, and local organizations is essential in creating accessible, relevant, and culturally sensitive training initiatives that resonate with tribal people. Additionally, incorporating modern technologies and market trends will ensure that these skills are not only sustainable but also competitive in today's economy.

Furthermore, promoting tribal culture and traditional knowledge within these training frameworks fosters a sense of pride and identity, reinforcing the importance of cultural preservation while fostering economic growth. As a result, these initiatives have the potential to transform the lives of tribal communities, providing them with the resources to thrive and actively contribute to the broader socio-economic landscape of Mysore and beyond.

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