



# The Adaptative Biorhythm of Mahadev Kolis, The Indigenous Group of India.

DR. SHARMISTHA AICH

(Anthropologist from Pune University)  
(Postdoc, Ph.D., M.Sc., B.Sc., PGDEA., B.Ed)

Dr. Sharmistha Aich

Senior Research Fellow  
SOCIETY FOR EMPOWERMENT (SFE),  
New Delhi, India

Corresponding Author: Dr. Sharmistha Aich (Ph.D., Postdoc) BioMedical Anthropology,  
Senior Research Fellow, SFE (Society for Empowerment),  
New Delhi, India

Date of Submission: 02-04-2023

Date of Acceptance: 12-04-2023

## Abstract

Indigenous people across the Globe transpired from common ancestry where United Nations proclaimed approximately 476 million Indigenous People in 90 countries accounted for 6.2 percent globally who spoke around 7000 languages. Asia accommodated the majority of the world's indigenous populations, about 70% according to IWGIA (International Work Groups of Indigenous Affairs, 2023). The maximum number of tribals in India is approximately 698, which constituted 8.6 percent of the country's total population. The study aimed to reflect the adaptive biorhythm or living pattern of Mahadeo Kolis and their daily activities. Though various efforts were made by the government, and NGOs, to improve their conditions, nothing much has been observed. Hence the study was conducted to critically evaluate, and examine the various problems associated with them and hence the study gains importance. The study was conducted in Bhimashankar which comprised six villages of Ambegaon Taluka, Pune district, Maharashtra, India. The sample size of the study was 1500 with approximately 250 from each village. The study reflected that Mahadeo Kolis was found inhabiting deep jungles infested with wild animals, cut off from the mainland. They followed a patriarchal system of living pattern where joint, extended families were observed more in number. Majorities of them had the linkage surnames of their villages. They cultivated crops such as jowar, bajra, wheat, rice, lentils, and vegetables like potatoes, onions, beans, garlic, ginger, and brinjals. They were typically agriculturists who could pursue their

profession only during the monsoon season otherwise dependent on the business of Hirda- a plant product who also worked as daily wage laboureres. Since they were unaware and unable to access the various schemes bestowed upon them they were poverty-stricken and were forced to lead a poor life. The study concluded by carrying on further research on the Indigenous Tribes of India to pinpoint their problems for a decent lifestyle with a steady source of income which can only be possible with the combined effort of the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations.

**Keywords:** Mahadeo Kolis, Hilly terrain, Sahyadri Region, Indigenous Group, socio-economic status, ethnic rules, forest products, Hirda cultivation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### *Chronicle of Indigenous People*

Indigenous people across the Globe transpired from common ancestry and are strongly rooted in their motherland from where they are accorded all over the world. They represent their marked distinctive cultures, customs, traditions, languages, ethnicity, and ethnomedicine, along with their contrasting identities which expressed themselves as unique, autonomous entities. United Nations proclaimed approximately 476 million Indigenous People in 90 countries, all over the world, which accounted for 6.2 percent globally and spoke around 7000 languages (WHO, 2022). 9<sup>th</sup> August is considered the 'International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples' which represented the first day of the United Nations Working Group for the Indigenous Populations of Human Rights, in



Geneva, 1982. 2022-2023 is declared as the International Decade of Indigenous People. World Health Organization delineated Indigenous populations as the 'peoples who were the inheritors and practitioners of their unique cultures and ways of relating themselves to their environment'. Indigenous people have retained their social, cultural, economic, and political organizations that were distinct from the dominant societies in which they were a part of it' (UN, Geneva Environment Network, 2023). World Bank chronicled Indigenous people as those who were consistently attached to their motherland from generation to generation". Many of the Indigenous populations had undergone a dramatic decline and at times, even faced extinction or increased profusely in number, while some remained threatened in many parts of the world.

A single terminology is incapable of describing the term 'Indigenous or the Tribals.' According to Convention No. 169, laid down by the USA, a set of objectives were put forth which categorized and coined the term Indigenous and the Tribals, with an intention of Self-Identification, several Rights respecting their position in their Society (Geneva, 2013). The report reflected similarities between the terms 'Indigenous' and 'Tribals', possessing the same set of rights, and privileges, designated as 'Indigenous' at the International Level (Geneva, 2013). In Asia, many of the tribals were Indigenous to a particular land, while some offshoots identified themselves as distinct groups and categorized themselves separately as small groups within the arena of International concern. Such groups were known as 'Tribal people', 'Hill Tribes', 'Scheduled tribes', Adivasis, or Janajatis' (The Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Asia, 2017). In Africa, the Indigenous population was referred to as Nomadic or Pastoral Communities (Origin and Spread of Pastoralism in Southern Africa, 2019).

### ***Indigenous People Across the Globe*** ***Africa***

Africa is known as the 'Mother Continent, the Cradle of Humankind,' as Human Beings originated and survived 5 million years ago as per the fossil records. The oldest evidence of civilization dates back three million years ago when Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt, Ancient India, and Ancient China, were considered the World's Old Civilizations. The Indigenous people of Africa settled before the colonists arrived. The history of the Indigenous people expanded thousands of years ago and included a complex variety of cultures, languages, customs, and political systems. Some of

the groups are Amhara, Hausa, Oromo, Somali, and Tigrayan from North Africa; Akan, Fula, Igbo, Kongo, Mande, Moore, Shona, Yoruba, Zulu from West and Central Africa; Dinka, Kanuri, Luo, Maasai, and Nuer from East Africa; Nama, San, Sandawe from Southern Africa (Wikipedia, Indigenous people of Africa, 2022).

### ***America***

Native Americans, known as American Indians, First Americans, and Indigenous Americans, were the terms used for the Indigenous peoples of the mainland United States. There are 574 federally recognized tribes or Indigenous people within the US. American Indians and the Alaska Natives were the Indigenous people of North America. They were the inhabitants of America, before the arrival of the European settlers in the 15th century. Many were traditionally hunter-gatherers especially located in the Amazon basin and practiced agriculture. Other practiced mixed responsibilities of farming, hunting, and gathering, forest products. Some of the recognized tribes of America are Apache India, Arapaho, Blackfeet, Canadian and French, American Indian, Central American Indian, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Chickasaw, Chippewa, Lumbee, Menominee, Iroquois, Houma, Kiowa, Hopi, Crow, Delaware, Seminole, Shoshone, Sioux, Tohono, Oodhan, Ute, Yakama, Yuman, Alaskan, Aleut, Inupiat, Mexican American Indian, Navajo, Osage, Ottavia, Pima (Wikipedia, Tribes of America, 2022).

### ***Asia***

Asia accommodates the majority of the world's indigenous populations, i.e. about 70% according to IWGIA (International Work Groups of Indigenous Affairs, 2023). The Indigenous people in Asia had their origin from two prehistoric settlements namely Southwest Asia and the Mongoloid Plateau from Northern China. Three-quarters of the Indigenous people i.e. approximately 260 million people represented 2000 well-defined ethnic groups and cultures (Asia Development Bank, 2023). The terminologies used in Asia for them are 'Hill Tribes', 'Indigenous Nationalities', 'Tribal people', 'Ethnic Minorities', and 'Natives.' These people are found in mountains, deserts, grasslands, and forests and hence have their means of survival through agriculture, harvesting, forest products gathering, hunting, and fishing which supports them to lead a nomadic life. Some of the common tribes of Asia in Bangladesh are Tribal people, Pahari, Jumma, Adivasis, Ethnic groups, and Minorities; India has Scheduled Tribes and Adivasis; Indonesia has Masyarakat Adat; Malaysia has Natives, Orang Asli, Orang Asal,



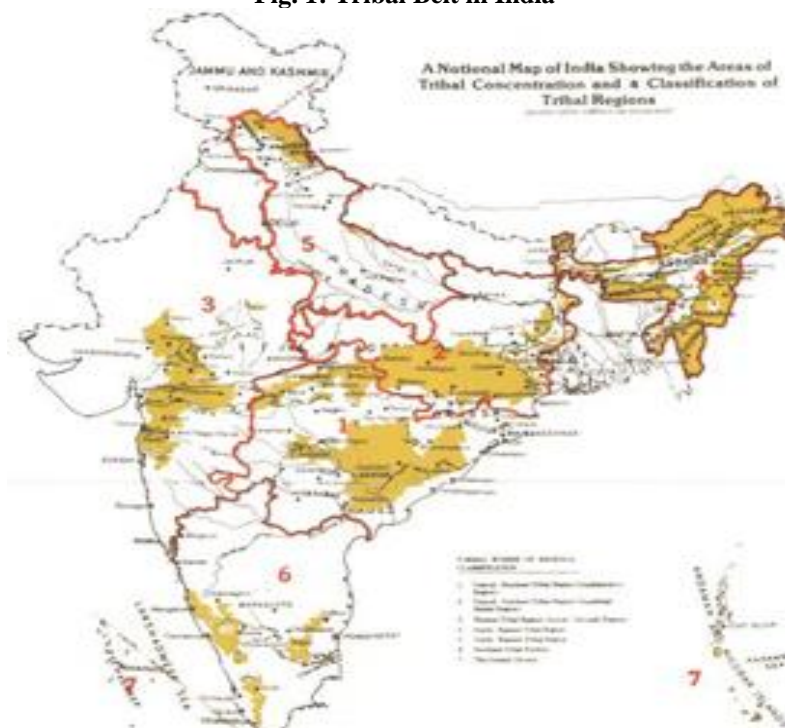
Myanmar has Ethnic Minorities, Nepal has Indigenous Nationalities, Adavasis, Janajatis; the Philippines has Indigenous People, Indigenous Cultural Communities; Thailand has Ethnic Minorities; Hill Tribes, Hill / Mountain People; Vietnam has Ethnic Minorities (International Labour Law, 2017).

### ***Tribals in India***

The maximum number of tribals are found in India, approximately 698, inclusive of 75 primitive tribes that constitute 8.6 percent of the country's total population (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2022). A large portion of the tribals depends on forest produce for their livelihood to procure their necessities like food, fuel, housing material, etc. In India, tribals are found dwelling in dense forests bordered by hills, rivers, and water bodies and in isolation for a quite long period (Hari Ram and Jagdish Jadhav, 2018). The tribals of India, are found in unapproachable physical conditions such as deep valleys, dense forests, hills, and mountains, because of which at times, are unable to recognize and avail the various Government,

Private Schemes, and privileges laid down for them. Often, the tribals are custom-bound with various ethnic beliefs, and practices, which pass on from one generation to another. The tribal belt of India consisted of Eastern, Western, Southern, Central regions included the states of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Assam, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Daman, and Diu, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh (Wikipedia, India Tribal Belt, 2022). Some of the prominent tribes observed in India are Santhal, Oraon, Bhumij from West Bengal; Kol, Kola from Odisha; Khond, Ho from Bihar; Mina from Rajasthan; Naikda from Daman and Diu; Surgalis from Andhra Pradesh; Naga from Nagaland; Munda from Jharkhand; Bodo, Mising, Mizo from Assam; Koli Dhor, Mahadeo Kolis, Koya from Maharashtra; Bhil, Gond, Sharia, Halba from Madhya Pradesh; Khasi Garo from Meghalaya; Varli, Dhodia, Rathwa from Gujarat; Gujjar from Jammu and Kashmir; Korku, Kamar, Bhunjia from Chhattisgarh; Dulbia from Goa and Tripuri from Tripura (Ministry of Tribal health, 2023).

**Fig. 1: Tribal Belt in India**



### **SUBJECTS UNDER STUDY**

#### ***Mahadeo Kolis, Indigenous Group of India***

Mahadeo Kolis is the largest ethnic tribal group found in Maharashtra and some parts of

Gujarat. They are spread over Thane, Kolaba, Khandesh, Nasik, and Ahmednagar and the hilly slopes of the Sahyadri mountain range which runs into the Thane and Kolaba districts. In Maharashtra, Kolis means fisherman. Ancient studies predicted



that Kolis precipitated from Mahadev Hill, located in northwest Berar, Hyderabad. The Mahadeo Kolis are the largest non-dominant ethnic group in Maharashtra. The Kolis have been divided into various categories based on their occupation, and cultural development. The Mahadeo Kolis are a group of settled agriculturalists having a patrilineal origin and worshippers of Lord Shiva. They have no hierarchical position among themselves and share common religious customs and practices, hence the group is endogamous.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Mahadeo Kolis dwells in extremely remote areas of jungles, mountains, and rivers, which are less vulnerable to the common people. Hence they are found in severe poverty, isolated from the outside world, having no well-framed jobs, low levels of income, poor source of education and livelihood, poor technology, endogenous political system, and unaware of the outside world. Often they are infested with various health problems and diseases. In the recent past, though various efforts were made by the government and NGOs, to improve the conditions of the Mahadeo Kolis, nothing much change has been observed. Hence it becomes important for the researcher to reflect on the conditions and the lifestyles of Mahadeo Kolis, to critically evaluate and understand the various problems associated with them and hence the study gains importance. The goals of the research also intends to carry out the study of the daily needs and activities, diet patterns, division of labor among the males and the females, the socio-economic status, educational and occupational status, and the various constraints in the hilly terrain of Sahyadri Range, Bhimashankar, Western India. The study attempted to find out the associated gaps to evaluate the respondents and the situation prevailing among Mahadeo Kolis.

### II. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to reflect the adaptive biorhythm or living pattern of Mahadeo Kolis, with their socio-economic status, educational attainment, occupational status, and daily activities across the thick green jungles of Bhimashankar Sahyadri range of Pune, Western India.

The objectives of the study were to evaluate the tribals with their cultures, customs, traditions, ethnomedicines, attitudes, behavior, dietary pattern, daily activities, socio-economic status, educational

attainment, occupational status, perception of life, and the amount of hard work put in for various activities along with the level of satisfaction acquired by these tribals; thus reflecting the biorhythm of Mahadeo Kolis and reviewing the various steps needed to be taken for their betterment.

### III. MATERIALS, METHODS, AND TECHNIQUES

#### *Area of the Study and Sample Size*

The study was conducted in Bhimashankar which comprised six villages of Ambegaon Taluka, Pune district, Maharashtra, India. The villages were Terunganwadi, Koketewadi, Dhagewadi, Shindewadi, Gawandewadi, and Kondwul (Fig. 2,3). Mahadeo Kolis lived in thick jungles with their families in small hamlets, surrounded by hills, mountains, and lakes, from all sides. There were no proper roads to reach their destination and often the kutcha roads or man-made roads were observed with water gushing in due to heavy rainfall during monsoon. This area was situated 300-600 meters above sea level and was surrounded by thick deciduous forests. The sample size of the study was 1500 Mahadeo Kolis including both men and women, with approximately 250 from each village. The study also included the Panchayats, Balewadi Schools, and Ashram Schools for systematic and accurate data information.

#### *Tools for Data Collection*

The study was accomplished with the help of qualitative, quantitative, and ethnographic techniques of data collection. These included participant and non-participant observations, interviews, questionnaires, checklists, and socio-demographic census for daily activities. Simple random sampling and stratified random sampling methods were used for the study. The primary data was collected from the field survey through face-to-face conversations. Key informants, such as tribal leaders, tribal research experts, and elderly tribal community members were also interviewed for the study. Focus Group Discussions with women, youth, students, men, and other categories such as unemployed youth were devised. The households were selected at regular intervals (sampling intervals) from a random starting point in every village. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used to gather data that was not possible by other means of conventional methods.



Fig. 2: Mahadeo Kolis residing in the Western Ghats of Sahyadri Mountains

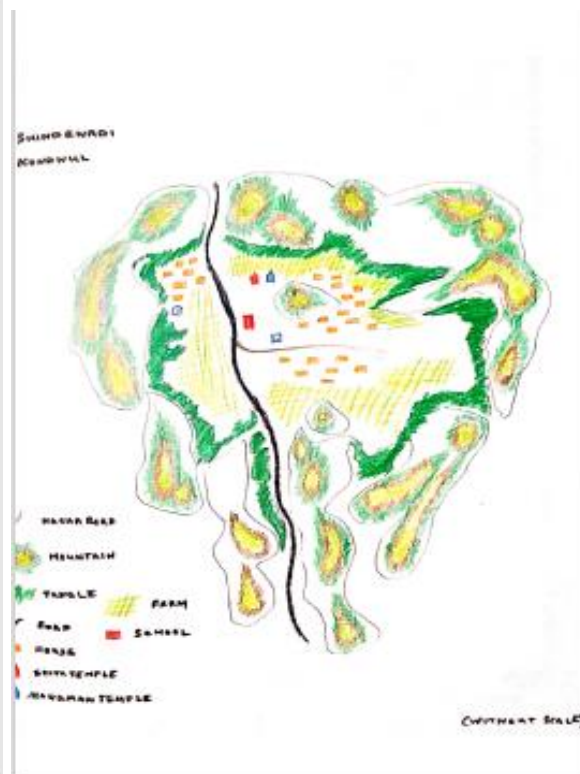


Fig. 3: Diagrammatic representation of the Villages covered –

Maps of:

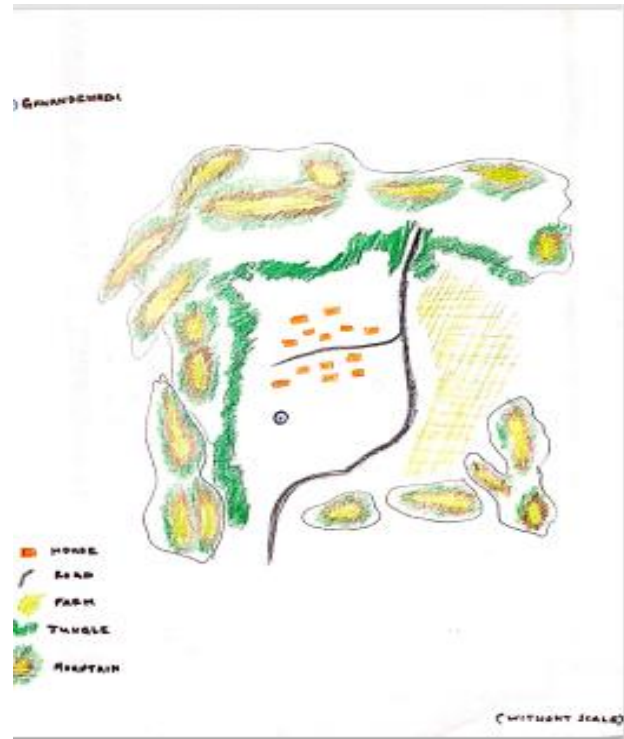
Terunganwadi, Dhagewadi, Kokatewadi

Villages: Shindewadi, Kondwul





**Village: Gawandewadi**



#### IV. RESULTS

**Ethnic Identity:** Mahadeo Kolis populated small homogenous hamlets or kaccha houses that reflected a comprehensive picture and lifestyle of these tribals narrating an integrated entity. The tribals resided in hilly terrain, in the western ghats of Pune, Bhimashankar and the slopes of Sahyadri ranges running through Thane and Raigad districts. Lot many stories float about the origin of the Mahadeo Kolis right from pre-Independence time till date, especially about their bravery and valour. The language spoken by Mahadeo Kolis is Indo-Aryan type which is a descendant of Sanskrit, and they represent Caucasoid features, medium-statured, and lean figures.

**Flora and Fauna:** The sloping roads of the villages roll on the lush green agricultural fields, leading to the mountains which represented a marvelous and picturesque scene with a beautiful environment, between 300-600 meters above sea level. The villages were surrounded by thick deciduous forests where the rainfall was quite heavy during the monsoon, averaging between 100-150 cm annually. The villages lay at the foothills of the Western Ghats and were heavily forested, but due to deforestation, the plantation dimmed down slowly. The predominant trees found there were Hirda, Behda,

Eucalyptus, Mango, Guava, Custard apple, Tamarind, Neem, Fig, Cassia, Occimumas, Banyan, and Peepal; Shrubs like Lantana, Cassia, Tora, Clerodendron and Ipornnea, Cynodon, Stipa were found in ample. The fauna consisted of animals and birds such as cows, bullocks, buffaloes, goats, dogs, hens kites, kingfishers, sparrows, pheasants, crows, tigers, lions, monkeys, leopards, snakes, eagles, jackals, hyenas.

**Dietary Habits and Settlement Pattern:** The Cultivation of crops included jowar, bajra, wheat, rice, and lentils; limited vegetables like potatoes, onions, beans, garlic, ginger, and brinjals, mostly grown on their farms. Rice and jawar were confined to be the staple food among the Mahadeo Kolis. The buffaloes, cows, and goats were provided with milk and the bullocks helped them in agriculture. The villagers were typical agriculturists during the rainy season with an ample supply of water. The dietary pattern of the villagers was very simple and consisted of the bare minimum food available for their survival. The settlement pattern of these tribes was in the form of small hamlets, as their houses were constructed on a plinth of stones or mud with muddy walls and tilted roofs facing east or west. Each house consisted of a cowshed in front with a bathroom attached to the kitchen. The houses were plastered with mud from



the inside and at times with cement. The rooms of the houses were more or less homogenous and were linearly arranged. Since the villages were surrounded by thick jungles from all sides, there were hardly any windows, and the presence of small doors reflected the protection from the wild animals.

**Material culture:** Material culture referred to the sum of household items, agricultural implements, artifacts aided with technology, ornaments adorned by these tribals, and musical instruments for entertainment. The household utensils of these tribes included handmade pots of clay, aluminum vessels, steel gadas, vessels used for storing water, earthen chillas for hearth, patis for storing grains, and grinding stones for making the paste, which was nearly found in every house. The wooden pieces of furniture were very few and consisted of wooden beds, used both for sitting and sleeping for the adults and the infants had small beds known as palmas. The agricultural implements included wooden ploughs, phaudas for digging, pabars for sowing seeds, kuladhis for removing weeds, kodas to make channels of water penetration into the farms, muskas to tie the mouths of the bullocks and fishing nets for catching fishes. The musical instruments consisted of dhols, shennai, and petis. The ornaments adorned by the Mahadeo Kolis included glass bangles, mangal sutra, nathni or nose rings, and toe rings such as anguthi, rang jodwa on the fourth toe made up of metal adorned by the married women. The Men had tulsī malas around their necks. The children wore waist bangles known as sankalis.

**Living Pattern or Life Cycle:** Mahadeo Kolis followed a patriarchal system of living patterns where the residence was patrilocal and the seniormost man was usually economically productive and considered the head of the family. This tribal gave bride prices for their arranged marriages but marriages by elopement were also not uncommon which permitted cross-cousin marriages but not parallel-cousin marriages. Joint, extended families were observed more than the nuclear families among the Kolis who had the same linkage surnames after their villages. For example in the village, 'Shindewadi' all the surnames were Shindes, Kokatewadi, all were Kokates. The wadis represented villages that were more or less homogenous and had a similar pattern of construction. There was a distinct division of labor observed between the men and women where the women worked at home as well as outside in the fields. The different stages of the life cycle were molded according to their ethnic laws and codes of

conduct that included conception, pregnancy, prenatal taboos, the shift of residency, barrenness, childbirth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, marriage, terms of the settlement, middle age, old age, death, disposal of the body, and life after death.

**Source of Livelihood and Socio-Economic Status:**

Mahadeo Kolis were generally agriculturalists, as the Kolis were dependent on rainwater for agriculture during the first three months of monsoon when they had an ample supply of water. The agriculture operations were of traditional types. All around the year, the Kolis were dependent on the business of Hirda- a plant product and also worked as daily wage labourers where the families were poverty stricken due to severe jobless situations. During winter, wheat, potatoes, and tomatoes were grown on their farms whereas rice, jowar, pulses, and nachni were cultivated in summer. They usually supported their livelihood with their forest products. At times, they were seen working as laborers in the nearby construction sites of dams and roads. The livestock included buffaloes, cows, goats, and chickens. Fishing was a part-time activity for these people. A weekly market was held where the villagers sold their products for their survival. The Ashram schools also employed the local tribal teachers, thus providing them with a source of livelihood. Few tribals availed loans for agricultural activities from the banks which were situated in nearby towns. Mahadeo Kolis reflected Lower Middle Class or Lower Class family which was evaluated and studied accordingly by the researcher depending upon the parameters available according to Kuppeswamy's Scale and Udai Parekh Scale of Classification of Socio-Economic Status among the Rural Tribals (Table.1 and Table.2)

**Educational Attainment:** Education was free of cost for the tribal children where the Government had provided facilities for having one-time meals in the Ashram School, to attract more and more children for studies. The Government Schools were till classes 8<sup>th</sup> Standard in Ashram School. The area had two educational institutions, one Ashram School and the other, Balewadi. Hence for higher studies, they had to go to Cities like Pune. The Ashram school had free lodging and boarding. By 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> standard, there was a heavy drop out of girls from school. The medium of study was Marathi and the teachers were from the tribal areas themselves. The Balwadi school was for small children, three to five years of age who were also provided with one-time meals, toys, and free education. Majorities of the adults were illiterate (56%), few had basic primary education (28%) and



some were illiterate up to middle school (16%) and hence knew how to read and write.

**Diseases Prevalent and Practise of Ethno-medicine:** Mahadeo Kolis was seen suffering from diseases like dysentery, diarrhea, typhoid, malaria, and various other communicable diseases prevalent in the jungle-infested areas of Bhimashanker. However, they also suffered from other non-communicable diseases like hypertension and diabetes. Most prominent among them observed were sickle cell anemia and malnutrition. However, for local medicines, they used to go to Bhagat or traditional healers who used various plant products such as leaves, stems, bark, flowers, and seeds to cure them locally. The older generation believed in

ethnomedicine and also the concept that the various diseases were due to some evil spirit, infested on their bodies and black magic was only the way out. It is also observed that the population believed in taking advice from the Shamins or the Bhagats and offered them various sacrifices but the younger generation preferred to go to the nearby health centers for their treatment. The Mahadeo Kolis used the bark of the trees for healing wounds, the roots and seeds of the cotton tree for curing leprosy, the bark of the papaya tree for congestive heart failure and hypertension, the fig tree for treating skin diseases and acidity, barks, roost leaves and fruits of a banyan tree to cure insomnia, anxiety, etc, and many more which proved the fact that these tribals were well aware of the ethnomedicine and their uses.

**Table: 1 Socioeconomic Status of Mahadeo Kolis**

Sr.No.	Total Population (including six villages)	Parameters	Percentage	Score
1.	1500	<b>Caste</b> Scheduled Caste/Tribe	100%	1
2.	1500	<b>Occupation</b> Laboures Farming /Cultivation	% 87% 13%	1 5
3.	1500	<b>Social Participation</b> None Member of one Organization	% 62% 38%	0 1
4.	1500	<b>House</b> Kutch house	% 100%	2
5.	1500	<b>Farm Power</b> No draft animals 1-2 draft animals	% 0 100%	1 2
6.	1500	<b>Educational Attainment</b> None/Illeterate Primary Middle	% 56% 28% 16%	0 3 4
7.	1500	<b>Land</b> < 1 acre	% 100%	1
8.	1500	<b>Material Possession</b> Bullock Cart Cycle	% 87% 13%	0 1
9.	1500	<b>Family members</b> > 5	77%	1

(Ref: According to Revised Udai Parekh Socioeconomic Status Scale for Rural, 2021, 2022)



**Table. 2: Socioeconomic Status of the Mahadeo Kolis**

<i>Socioeconomic Status Scale</i>	<i>Total Score</i>
<i>Lower Middle Class(13-23)</i>	23

(Ref: Suranjan Majumdar, 2021: Udai Parekh Socioeconomic Status Scale for Rural, 2021, 2022, 2023)

## V. DISCUSSION

Mahadeo Kolis is inhabited in small homogenous hamlets made up of kutchra or pucca houses in the hilly terrain of Bhimashankar and the foothills of the Western Ghats of the Sahyadri Mountains, India. These tribals were medium-statured, lean-figured, and Indo-Aryan in Origin. They inhabited the deep jungles on either side of the mountains. The jungles were rich in varieties of trees such as Hirda, Behda, Eucalyptus, Mango, Guava, Cassia, Tora, Ipornnea, Stipa, and much more as the main source of forest products for the tribals. Apart from that, hunting, and fishing were also the sources of livelihood. The jungles were full of wild animals such as Tigers, Lions, leopards, snakes, Monkeys, Jackals, Hyenas, and birds such as Kites, kingfishers, Sparrows, Pheasants, crows, etc. At times, the forest surrounding the tribals was often declared a biosphere reserve, national park, sanctuary, etc., and hence gathering forest products for the tribals became almost impossible (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2014).

The tribals were typical agriculturists who took pleasure in cultivating their small pieces of land during the monsoon season when they had an ample supply of rainfall. Rice constituted their staple food and they tried to preserve it for the whole year. They also that crops such as jawar, wheat, and bajra, with some lentils for their survival. Scanty vegetables were seen grown basically in their farms or the kitchen gardens surrounding their houses. The tribals had limited sources of livelihood as found in the remote areas and therefore cut off from various aids and supplements provided by the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations. Many studies revealed that the non-tribals from outside exploited these tribals, leaving them with minimal land and resources (Dungdung and Pattnaik 2020). Hence the majority of the tribals from different parts of the country were forced to survive as agricultural laborers for daily wages. As the natural resources had an impact on sustainability and the livelihoods of these tribals, (Whittingham et al. 2003; Fisher and Maginnis 2005) an important turning point was observed for them that reinforced a rule in favour of them. It stated that 'long struggle in 2006, Forest Rights Act (FRA) to be implemented for the tribals where the Act not only granted forest rights but also

gave the tribals, a significant say, in how the forests were to be managed and maintained. (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2014). Yet there were many restraints on using forest products by the tribals.

Material culture contemplated few household utensils, agricultural and fishing implements, bare minimum wooden furniture, very less musical instruments hardly any ornaments put on by the women, men, and children. Mahadeo Kolis followed a patriarchal pattern of society. Among the various cultures, traditions, and rituals they strictly followed their ethnic codes and laws related to conception, pregnancy, prenatal taboos, the shift of residency, barrenness, childbirth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, marriage, terms of the settlement, middle age, old age, death, disposal of the body, and life after death. Often they were observed paying bride prices for arranged marriages where cross-cousin marriages were encouraged and entertained among the tribals. Tribals of different areas were confronted with multiple issues related to health, housing, finances, cultural isolation, and education (Lakshmi and Paul 2019). The issues needed to be dealt with sensitively as they were grounded in various ethno-culture practices in the various phases of life. There did exist a division of labor where women were seen working vigorously both at home at on the farms. Even among the tribals, women experienced a biased division of labour due to caste and gender prevalence. Hence, education and income generation among the tribals were important for the inclusive development of tribal women (Malyadri 2020).

Economically, the seniormost member was found to be economically productive. Hirda- a plant product was their source of income and were generally landless except for the few months of agriculture when they have an ample supply of water. To maintain their source of livelihood, they were found as daily wage workers in some construction sites set up by the government or private sectors or paid workers in some farms of the rich farmers in distant areas. The domestic livestock for their livelihood included cows, buffaloes, goats, and chickens who were reared in their houses to provide the bare minimum food supplements. The tribals usually went to distant markets once a week to



complement their daily needs and sell the plants or animal products they possessed. Therefore these people being cut off from the mainland because of harsh geographical areas were forced to live a poverty-stricken and impoverished life added to their low educational status. It is observed that tribal education was a luxury for the tribal because of the desperate need for their survival (Pradhan and Pattanaik, 2011). The survey conducted among the tribals revealed that the tribals seemed to face issues including poverty, starvation, a lack of basic infrastructure, low literacy rates, poor healthcare facilities, and a lack of natural resources. There were also deficiencies in the areas of food, clothing, electricity, roads, clean drinking water, education, health, and sanitation. (Dungdung and Pattnaik 2020).

As Mahadeo Kolis was found to populate in insufficiency or meagerness in the jungle-infested areas, they were observed suffering from numerous communicable and non-communicable diseases. Presently, Malnutrition was highly prevalent among the tribals along with sickle-cell anemia prevalent largely among them. Since they were high followers of ethnomedicine, they had a strong feeling that the concept of various diseases was due to some evil spirit that infested their bodies, and practices of black magic, rituals, and various customs were the only means of treatment. It was also observed that they believed in taking advice from the Shamins or the Bhagats in their villages and offered them various sacrifices but the younger generation preferred to go to the nearby health centers for their treatment. Numerous medicinal plants were used by the Mahadeo Kolis including the bark of the tree for healing wounds, the roots and seeds of the cotton tree for curing leprosy, the bark of the papaya tree for congestive heart failure and hypertension, the fig tree for treating skin diseases and acidity, barks, roost leaves and fruits of a banyan tree to cure insomnia, anxiety, etc, and many more which proved the fact that these tribals were well aware of the ethnomedicine and their uses. (ref). The survey conducted by WHO for the children and women in tribal areas, experienced anemia, malnutrition, and underweight conditions. Lack of safe water supplies, poor sanitation, poor hygiene, increased the likelihood of illness and death, raised health care costs, reduced labour productivity, lowered the enrolment and retention rates of girls in school, and, denied the tribals them to live in dignity

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that Mahadeo Kolis inhabited the hilly terrains of the Sahyadri Range in Western India. They usually inhabited the deep jungles infested with wild animals and cut off from the mainland. They were found typically agriculturists and could pursue their profession only during the monsoon season. Other times they were observed jobless and worked as waged workers, and labourers in some distant farms or some Governmental or Private Construction sites. Since they were unaware of the outside world, were unable to access the various schemes bestowed upon them by the Government or the Private sectors to uplift their lives and their source of income. Due to this, they were found poverty-stricken and were forced to lead poor life despite various benefits. The study, therefore, needs to reinvestigate and carry on researches to pinpoint their problems and enhance their status to navigate and educate them for a decent lifestyle with a steady source of income which can only be possible with the combined cooperation of the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations.

## LIMITATIONS

The present study had certain limitations where the research was inadequate to cover large areas of the study because of time limitations. Also, it was difficult to reach more villages as they were located in a deep jungle and high up in the mountains. All the villages were surrounded by thick forests. So, problems like the risk of meeting wild animals, the lack of proper connectivity to reach the villages, and poor transport facilities did create problems in reaching out to remote areas.

## DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest for the research paper. I am solely responsible for my research article.

## AUTHORISATION AND DECLARATION

The article has not been published or sent for publication elsewhere.

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