CHAPTER- IX
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Summary

The study of Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Population in Maharashtra: A Geographical Analysis attempts to bring out the variations in the level of socioeconomic status and patterns of livelihood conditions among the tribal population from spatio-temporal perspective in the remote areas of Maharashtra. By virtue of employing both the primary data of the selected sample villages from the field (2006-2010) and secondary data from Census of India (1961-2001), this study portrays the spatio-temporal variations in the patterns of population change, educational attainment, occupational structure, household assets and housing conditions, status of landholding, intersection of poverty, nutrition and health status, and overall socioeconomic development status among tribal population across districts and selected sample villages (taken as case studies) in Maharashtra. Given the dearth of studies in the area of geography of tribal population and intersection of various associated socioeconomic, nutritional and health status characterisics, this study stands out to supplement the available limited macro information from Census data with the primary data collected from the selected sample village to extend the scientific knowledge and understanding of the history of population structure, growth, spatial variations and factors influencing the socioeconomic, nutritional and health status among tribal population in Maharashtra.

The present study exploited the Census of India data from 1961-2001 to present the changes in growth of tribal population at the state level in Maharashtra and furthermore, district level changes in growth of tribal population in Maharastra is presented from 1991-2001. Moreover, data on literacy and educational attainment from Census of
India 1999 and 2001 have been used to examine the district level variations in tribal and non-tribal literacy rates. We also computed gender disparity index to examine the male-female disparities in educational attainment among tribal and non-tribals during 1991-2001. We have used primary data from the sample villages to examine the enrollment ratio and dropout rates among tribal population for various grades of schooling. This chapter helps to understand the spatio-temporal variations and changes in the educational attainment among tribal population vis-à-vis non-tribal population. It further shed important light on the state of enrollement ratio and dropout rates among tribal population.

The study also investigated the occupational structure among tribal population across districts in Maharashtra using Census of India data 1991 and 2001. These results were further cross-examined using primary data from the sample villages, where we highlighted important occupational categories in which tribal population was actively engaged. We also focus on gender differentials in occupation patterns among tribal population across districts during 1991-2001 Census data. This was again tested with the primary data with number of occupational categories among male and female separately. This analysis throws important light towards the economic organization of life among tribal community in the state in general and the tribal population of sample villages in particular.

Another important dimension of life among tribal population relates to their habitat and surrounding physical/built environment. Focusing on this important facet of tribal community, the present study conducted a detail investigation of the housing and living condition among tribal population based on the primary data of sample villages. The study firstly looks into the types of houses mainly used by the tribal community in the sample villages, that is, zopari, kuccha house, semi pucca and pucca/RCC house. Secondly, we look at the access to
crucial housing amenities enjoyed by the tribal communities in the sample villages. Here, we focus on the access to source of drinking water (government tap, own tap, well, hand, pump, river, stream, hand pump and river, handpump and well), sanitation (bathroom and latrine) cooking fuel (Chulla, shegdi, stove, gobar gas, LPG) and source of lighting (electricity). Thirdly, we examine the access to various housing assets used by the tribal communities in the sample villages. The major household amenities examined includes radio/ transistor/tape, television, electric fan, bicycle, two-wheeler, and four-wheeler.

An important dimension of tribal community relates to their economic organization. Since, they are often engaged in primary occupational pursuits, hence access to landholding could be a very crucial indicator to capture the economic organization among tribal population. Based on this idea, we used Agriculture Census data of Maharashtra related to the ownership of landholding in order to capture the economic organization of tribal population across districts of Maharashtra during 1990-91. We classified the ownership of landholding among tribal population in five major groups (marginal land holding (below 1.00 ha); small land holding (1.00 - 2.00 ha); medium land holding (4.00 - 10.00 ha); large land holding (above 10.00 ha) to assess their economic standing. We also used the primary data from the sample villages to examine the recent scenario of landownership among tribal communities in Maharashtra.

An important dimension related to the wellbeing of tribal community related to their economic circumstances, nutritional status and health condition. In order to capture this important dimension of tribal community, we analysed the per capita income, incidence of poverty and below poverty line households among sample tribal villages. Furthermore, we used information on per capita calorie intake and body mass index to identify the magnitude of food deficient tribal
households, malnutrition among children and undernourishment (BMI 18.5 & BMI 25.0) among adult tribal population in the sample villages.

We finally examined the comprehensive scenario of overall development status of tribal population across districts in Maharashtra during 1991 ad 2001, based on six important indictors, namely, percentage tribal literacy rate, percentage tribal female literacy rate, percentage of urban tribal population, percentage of tribal non-agricultural worker, percentage of tribal main worker and sex ratio among tribal population. This exercise was undertaken to assess the spatio-temporal varitons in the overall level of development among tribal population across districts in Maharashtra during 1991-2001. Moreover, we also devised a measure of overall socioeconomic development of tribal population in the sample villages based on 20 indicators of socioeconomic development to highlight the comprehensive view of well-being among tribal population across villages under investiagtion.

Conclusions

The major findings of the study, that emerged from the study needs to be highlighted. It is inferred that the proportion of tribal population to the total population in the case study area, i.e. in north-western districts of Maharashtra (25.08%) as well as in the state of Maharashtra (9.27%) has declined (22.90% and 8.85%) despite their absolute increase during 1991-01. But the proportion of tribal population in the north-western part of Maharashtra, the area undertaken for study, has augmented from 39.88 per cent to 43.09 per cent and the growth rates have declined in the study area (from 29.03% to 26.65%) as well as in the state (from 26.79% to 17.20%).

High growth rate of non-tribal population has depressed the proportion of tribal population. The decline in the tribal population’s share and growth rate are attributed to their deaths due to
malnutrition, undernutrition, dercognition of tribals to SBC and migration to the neighbouring state of Gujarat for earning their livelihood. Nearly 85 per cent females, 65 per cent males and 74 per cent tribals were illiterate in 1991. All this shows mass illiteracy and basis of exploitation.

Their literacy has increased by 20.66 percentage points from 26.29 to 46.45 per cent, between 1991 and 2001. The tribal literacy in the case study villages (48.25%) was less than the literacy for the same segment at state (55.20%) and the country (47.10%) levels. Male-female tribal disparity in literacy was much higher than the non-tribal as the literacy for the later was (82.82%) much higher than the former (46.95%).

The regional variation in tribal literacy has come down. The extremely southern and central-eastern parts were identified with low literacy in 1991 and in 2001, the southern and central parts with high and in the remaining area having low literacy.

Tribal literacy (48.25%) in the case villages in 2006-10 was extremely low. Females’ literacy (42.67%) was much less than the males (55.47%)

As we move from the primary to higher levels of education the dropout rate increases and proportion of educated persons decreases. Hardly 8 per cent tribals were with primary and 05.79 per cent with graduation. To bring tribal development without generating and developing human resource, it seems just impossible.

The scheduled tribes are predominately dependent on agricultural but the proportion has declined by 4.39 per cent from 84.77 per cent in 1991 to 80.38 per cent in 2001 in the state.

Higher the concentration of tribals lesser is the modernization and proportion of agricultural labourers. Tribal women work in agriculture sector as agricultural labourers. In secondary sector (3.08%)
tribals are insignificant because of their illiteracy and backwardness. But in tertiary sector, their proportion (3.31%- 1991) was slightly higher than the secondary sector.

The proportion of tribal cultivators has declined by 8.64% (from 49.08 to 40.44%) during 1991-01. Sample study has also proved that about 93 per cent tribals are in agricultural and quite a substantial proportion working as hired wage labourers.

Higher the proportion of cultivators lower is the proportion of agricultural labourers and vice versa. High proportion of wage labourers mostly confined to eastern part of the study area where commercialization of agriculture has been taken up.

A very insignificant proportion of tribals have got the opportunity to work in the Asharamshalas as teachers, clerks and peons.

Nearly two-thirds of the tribals (69.83%) live either in Zoparies or kucha houses, and Hardly 0.06 per cent tribals having RCC or pucca houses. The villages like Sulyachapada in Thane district are extremely poor and therefore, 40 per cent or more live in house made of grass or leaves, which are insecure in all seasons.

A very predominant proportion of tribal population live in kucha houses in villages of in Nandurbar district, Borvan (65.38%) in Nashik district, Nyahale (60.00%) in Thane district, Kankala (60.53%) in Nandurbar district.

Living in a pucca or RCC house is the indication of prosperity. The villages of Bhatode was the only with about 0.81 per cent tribals were having pucca houses otherwise there is no single village having RCC house is found in the case study villages. Hardly one-fifth households were having sanitary provision in the house and one-third was having bath rooms. About half of tribals’ houses were electrified and less than 9 per cent households were having telephones. Barring a few households, tribals generally go for defecation in open. Around 99
per cent tribals use Chulla for cooking purpose. Those who use gobar gas/ stove or LPG are a few particularly the chiefs of the village or teachers, otherwise not.

More than two-thirds (67.78%) do not have any provision or source of safe drinking water. About 17 per cent tribal households were having TV, 7 per cent fan, less than 5 per cent two-wheelers.

Hardlly 0.30 per cent of four-wheeler, about 15 per cent radio and 10 per cent were having bicycles. More than 43 per cent tribal households were landless (2006-10).

Six villages- Popsi in Nashik district, Koch, Ghatkarpada, Nyahale and Karamba in Thane district and Kakarpada in Nandurbar district were identified where majority is landless. The landlessness has been increasing.

About 26 per cent were marginal and small landholders owned 24 per cent land.

Medium and large land holders constituted about 4 per cent and were possessing 18.96 per cent land. The wide inequality in land ownership also exists among the tribals.

Among the non-tribals at state level 1.66 per cent were large landholders and were owning more than 11 per cent land (1991).

About one-third of the tribals in the state was marginal landholders and were owning only 8.51 per cent land (1990-91). Tribals are loosing land to non-tribals and this kind of exploitation is still going on.

It is found that on an average 40.55 per cent tribal land in the north-western part of the state, where majority of tribal population is concentrated, has been alienated to non-tribals. The major focus was made to dispossess the irrigated land of tribals. More than 52 per cent land ownership has been lost by tribals to non-tribals in Thane district and about one-third in Dhule and Nashik districts.
Malnutrition among the tribals in the case study villages is a serious problem especially among the children in the age group 0-6. It is found 58.10 per cent tribal population could not get sufficient food.

Three villages i.e. Borvan, Bhatode and Phopsi in Nashik district, are identified as 80-90% malnourished.

In the villages like Bhatode and Borvan in Nashik district tribal children in 0-6 age group suffer from extreme malnutrition that ranged 93-97 per cent.

About 35 per cent tribal population was found with high underweight with BMI below 18.5 and more than 30 per cent light underweight (18.5 to 21), that means two-thirds of the tribal population was with underweight and hardly one-fourth was with normal weight.

Majority of tribal population is stricken with poverty, but Borvan Koch, Ghatkarpada, Karamba, Sulyachapada, Kankala, and Itwai villages were ranged 70 to 93 per cent below poverty line.

One-third of the tribal households in the case study villages were having very low per capita income below Rs 2500 and 25.47 per cent were with Rs 2500- Rs 5000. In all more than 50 per cent (57.38%) tribal population was below poverty line.

Nearly 83 per cent (or 33 of 40 tahsils) in the case study villages were with low and very low level of tribal well-being.

The southern part of the study area particularly Thane and Ulhasnagar in Thane district and its surrounding area are relatively advanced areas in case of tribal population.

The non-tribal population in tribal areas is comparatively much better on the measurement of the same indices. Nashik, Kalyan, Ulhasnagar and Thane are the top ranking and the best in terms of well-being.

The villages identified as the most lagging in terms of tribal well-being are Borvan, and closely followed by Itwai village. The village with better status of well-being was Bhatode and Bhanwad in Nashik
district and followed by Karamba in Thane district. The tribal villages located in marginalized areas are the most lagging ones.

**Suggestions**

The study highlighted numerous issues and challenges faced by the tribal population across the districts in Maharashtra. For instance high illiteracy, low per capita income, undernourishment, poor health, food deficiency, poor housing and living conditions, tribal areas lacking transportation and communication and electricity, etc., are some of the serious challenges for which urgent policy issues needs to be undertaken to mitigate their problems. In this line, based on the findings of the study, we propose few suggestions for policy and programs to strengthen and empower the tribal population in the state.

1) The tribal often reside in geographically inaccessible and remote areas of the state, hence there is a need for improving their physical accessibility that means improving transporational facilities.

2) Given large illiteracy among tribal population in general, the provision of schools and other high learning educational institutions in the tribal areas with improved accessibility may help to develop tribal human resource and skilled labor force which might improve their economic condition. There is an urgent need for the provision of free of cost ration to the tribal villages in order to check the menace of food insecurity and deficiency. Particularly, in the malnourished and absolute poverty-stricken villages like Itwai and Kankala in Akkalkuwa tahsil of Nandurbar district, Bhatode and Borvan in Dindori tahsil of Nashik district should be provided food- grains free of cost and the remaining poor tribals in other villages should get the foodgrains through public distribution system at minimum
cost (Rs 3 per kilograms) fixed by the government. Delivery of foodgrains should be made directly to the food deficient tribal families and care should be taken that their *ration* is not diverted to the black market.

3) It was observed by the researcher that often the food distribution system was plagued with corruption and leakages of grains to the black market. Hence, in order to improve the targeted supply of food grains to tribal population, there is a strong need for punitive measures to punish the offenders who indulged into black marketing of rations meant for tribal population.

4) Given the large prevalence of undernutrition among children and adults in the tribal communities as indicated by the primary survey, there is a need for mass information, education and communication in the tribal communities in order to increase their awareness about intake of proper nutrient rich food. We also argue for the improvement of affordable, accessible and quality health care services in the tribal communities with proper follow-up in order to raise the general nutritional and health status of tribal population.

5) There is a vital need for mass education program free of cost in the tribal communities in order to raise their social and economic status. Furthermore, due importance to female education has to be accorded to increase the tribal’s literacy rate and educational attainment at par with their male counterparts, and tribals as a whole to minimize the tribal and the non-tribal disparities in the levels of education.

6) There is also urgent need to take crucial steps to check the high drop-out rates among tribal children at various grades in school education. This may augment their literacy and educational attainment, as well as, help to reduce the educational and socio-economic disparities between the tribals and the non-tribals.
This essentially requires free of cost education along with provision of lodging and boarding to all the tribal population.

7) The study also highlights the need for special government initiatives to improve the accessibility of higher education among tribal population. This may be made possible through provision of scholarship/fellowships, boarding and lodging facilities to the tribal students/researchers. This may help in the social mobility of tribal population and bring them into the mainstream of society and nation.

8) Study highlighted that since the tribal economy is predominantly agricultural, and large chunk of tribal population was dependent on forest produce. Thus in order to improve the economic circumstance of tribal population, the landless (46%) and marginal and small land holders (38%) should be provided sufficient and viable land resource with ownership. Furthermore, the landownership of tribal population should be non-transferable to any non-tribal community or individual.

9) In order to improve the agricultural produce of tribal population, essential steps must be undertaken to improve the provision of good quality of seeds and local organic fertilizers.

10) Given the higher concentration of tribal population in the geographically remote, inaccessible and rough terrains with limited access to drinking water facilities, there is a vital need for schemes like small watershed and percolation tanks in the dry or water scarcity areas like Nandurbar and Nashik districts especially in the northern and western parts of the study area should be constructed to improve the basic necessities of life among tribal population.

11) Study also highlights special need to provide education, skills and training related to farming in order to improve the agriculture produce among the tribal population. This may help
to reduce incidence of poverty and food insecurity issues among tribal population. Steps related to the land reform and redistribution of land to mitigate the substantial disparities among tribal population should be timely undertaken.

12) Since the natural environment (particualry the forest) is the main cradle for the tribal population, hence merciless deforestation by various governmental and private stakeholders must be checked urgently. This may sevre purpose i.e. protecting the tribals and ensuring sustainable development for them.

13) Furthermore, mass afforestation drives should be undertaken along the hilly and steep areas exposed to erosion. This indirectly may help the tribal population as such resourceful areas are crucial for tribals as they can get fodder for their animals and fruits and roots for themselves also.

14) Eventually, there is a vital need for improved housing for the tribal population including source of drinking water and sanitation facilities. Hence, steps must be undertaken to construct quality houses from the material locally available. Simultaneously, the Indira Gandhi Awas Yojana can be extended for tribal population by devicing special provision for the tribals living in sub human conditions.