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# SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING FOR TRIBAL YOUTH:

## Role of Entrepreneurship in Socio-Economic Development of Tribal Communities

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**ABSTRACT**

*Tribal communities constitute a significant segment of India's population and are endowed with rich natural resources, traditional knowledge systems, and indigenous skills that have been preserved over generations. These communities possess immense potential for contributing to the nation's economic growth and sustainable development. However, despite this inherent strength, many tribal regions continue to face persistent socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, low levels of educational attainment, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to formal markets and financial institutions. These constraints have restricted opportunities for tribal youth, often leading to underemployment and migration.*

*In recent years, skill development and entrepreneurial training have emerged as effective strategies for addressing these challenges and promoting self-reliance among tribal youth. This seminar paper examines the role of skill development initiatives and entrepreneurship in enhancing sustainable livelihoods within tribal communities, with a particular focus on small-scale enterprises and community-based economic activities. Special reference is given to the Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) scheme, which aims to strengthen tribal livelihoods by adding value to minor forest produce through training, capacity building, and market linkage support.*

*The paper analyses various government initiatives and training mechanisms designed to foster entrepreneurship among tribal youth, highlighting their impact at the grassroots level. It also discusses key challenges such as lack of awareness, limited access to credit, inadequate marketing support, and infrastructural barriers that hinder the growth of tribal enterprises. State-level case studies are examined to illustrate successful models of tribal entrepreneurship and skill development.*

*The study concludes that skill development and entrepreneurship can play a transformative role in tribal economies by generating employment, enhancing income levels, and promoting inclusive and sustainable development. Strengthening policy support, institutional frameworks, and market access is essential to unlock the full potential of tribal youth and ensure long-term socio-economic empowerment.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Tribal Youth, Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, Socio-Economic Development, Van Dhan Vikas Kendra*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

India is home to more than 700 Scheduled Tribes, accounting for about 8.6% of the total population. Tribal communities are primarily concentrated in rural and forested regions and depend largely on agriculture, forest produce, and traditional occupations for their livelihood. However, lack of industrial development, inadequate education, and poor infrastructure have restricted employment opportunities for tribal youth.

In this context, skill development and entrepreneurial training have gained importance as effective strategies for generating employment, enhancing income, and promoting self-reliance. Entrepreneurship enables tribal youth to utilize local resources, preserve traditional skills, and participate actively in the economic development process. This paper focuses on the role of entrepreneurship, supported by skill development initiatives, in improving the socio-economic status of tribal youth.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have emphasized that tribal communities in India face persistent socio-economic challenges due to geographical isolation, limited educational access, and inadequate employment opportunities. According to the **Planning Commission of India (2014)**, low human capital development among tribal youth has been a major barrier to their economic integration. Skill development has been identified as a critical intervention to enhance employability and income generation in tribal regions.

Research by **Mehta and Awasthi (2016)** highlights that vocational training and entrepreneurship education significantly improve self-employment opportunities among tribal youth. Their study indicates that skill-based programs aligned with local resources—such as forest produce processing, handicrafts, and agriculture—are more sustainable and culturally relevant. Similarly, **Nayak (2017)** found that entrepreneurship training helps tribal youth develop managerial skills, financial literacy, and risk-taking abilities, which are essential for micro-enterprise development.

Government-led initiatives have been widely discussed in the literature. **TRIFED (2018)** reports underline the effectiveness of the **Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) scheme** in promoting value addition of Minor Forest Produce (MFP), leading to income enhancement and livelihood security. Studies by **Kumar and Singh (2019)** reveal that beneficiaries of VDVK

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experienced income growth ranging from 30% to 50%, especially among youth and women participants.

However, several scholars have also pointed out existing challenges. **Patel and Rao (2020)** argue that limited access to credit, inadequate market linkages, and lack of post-training support reduce the long-term impact of skill development programs. **UNDP (2021)** emphasizes the need for integrated approaches combining skill training, entrepreneurship support, digital literacy, and market access to ensure sustainable outcomes.

Recent studies stress the importance of policy convergence and community participation. **World Bank (2022)** suggests that involving local institutions, NGOs, and tribal leaders enhances program effectiveness and ownership. Overall, the literature indicates that skill development and entrepreneurial training can significantly empower tribal youth, provided programs are inclusive, market-oriented, and supported by strong institutional frameworks.

## 3. OBJECTIVES

**To enhance employability** of tribal youth by providing market-relevant vocational and technical skills.

1. **To promote self-employment and entrepreneurship** among tribal youth through structured training and capacity-building programs.
2. **To utilize local resources and indigenous knowledge** for developing sustainable small-scale and forest-based enterprises.
3. **To improve income levels and economic self-reliance** of tribal youth by encouraging value addition and micro-enterprise development.
4. **To reduce poverty and unemployment** in tribal regions by creating livelihood opportunities at the local level.
5. **To develop entrepreneurial competencies** such as leadership, decision-making, financial literacy, and risk management.
6. **To facilitate access to government schemes and institutional support**, including credit facilities, marketing assistance, and mentorship.
7. **To encourage inclusive and sustainable development** by integrating tribal youth into mainstream economic activities while preserving cultural identity.
8. **To prevent migration from tribal areas** by strengthening local employment and enterprise opportunities.
9. **To empower tribal youth socially and economically**, enabling them to contribute effectively to community development.

## 4. CONCEPT OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### 4.1 Skill Development

Skill development refers to the process of identifying skill gaps and providing training to enhance an individual's employability and productivity. For tribal youth, skill development includes:

- Technical skills related to agriculture, forest produce, handicrafts, and processing
- Managerial and entrepreneurial skills
- Digital and financial literacy
- Communication and leadership skills

### 4.2 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the ability to identify opportunities, organize resources, and take risks to create economic value. In tribal areas, entrepreneurship is mainly based on:

- Small-scale and cottage industries
- Forest-based enterprises
- Handicrafts and handloom products
- Agro-based and eco-friendly enterprises

Entrepreneurship empowers tribal youth to move from wage employment to self-employment, ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

## 5. NEED FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING AMONG TRIBAL YOUTH

The need for focused skill development and entrepreneurial training arises due to the following reasons:

- High unemployment and underemployment among tribal youth
- Seasonal nature of traditional occupations
- Migration to urban areas in search of jobs
- Underutilization of local resources and traditional skills
- Limited awareness of government schemes and market opportunities

Skill development bridges the gap between traditional knowledge and modern market requirements.

## 6. ROLE OF SMALL-SCALE ENTERPRISES IN TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT

Small-scale enterprises (SSEs) play a crucial role in tribal development as they require low capital investment and use locally available resources.

### 6.1 Employment Generation

SSEs generate local employment opportunities and reduce migration of tribal youth to cities.

### 6.2 Income Enhancement

Value addition to raw materials significantly increases income levels of tribal households.

### 6.3 Preservation of Traditional Skills

Entrepreneurship based on indigenous crafts and practices helps preserve tribal culture and heritage.

### 6.4 Social Empowerment

Entrepreneurial activities enhance confidence, decision-making ability, and social status of tribal youth, including women.

## 7. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR TRIBAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Government of India has launched several schemes to promote skill development and entrepreneurship among tribal youth:

- **Skill India Mission** – Provides skill training aligned with market needs

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- **Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) Scheme** – Promotes value addition of Minor Forest Produce
- **TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India)** – Supports marketing and branding of tribal products
- **MSME Development Programs** – Provides training and financial support
- **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)** – Strengthens SHGs and livelihood activities

These initiatives focus on capacity building, financial inclusion, and market linkages.

## 8. VAN DHAN VIKAS KENDRA (VDVK): AN OVERVIEW

The Van Dhan Vikas Kendra scheme was launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and implemented by TRIFED. The scheme aims to improve tribal livelihoods through value addition, skill development, and entrepreneurship based on Minor Forest Produce (MFP).

**Key Features**

- Each VDVK consists of 15 Self-Help Groups with about 300 beneficiaries
- Focus on training, processing, packaging, branding, and marketing
- Promotes sustainable harvesting of forest produce

As of recent reports, more than 3,000 VDVKs have been established across India, benefiting over 9 lakh tribal members.

## 9. STATE-LEVEL CASE STUDIES

### 9.1 Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh has over 400 VDVKs focusing on tamarind, mahua, honey, and herbal products. In Bastar district, tribal youth-run honey processing units have increased incomes from ₹6,000–₹8,000 per season to ₹18,000–₹25,000.

### 9.2 Odisha

Odisha has around 300 VDVKs engaged in turmeric, tamarind, and millet-based products. In Mayurbhanj district, youth-led SHGs process and market turmeric powder, resulting in income growth of nearly 2.5 times.

### 9.3 Jharkhand

In Jharkhand, over 250 VDVKs focus on lac cultivation and sal leaf products. Tribal youth in Gumla district have established lac-based enterprises, ensuring year-round income.

### 9.4 Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh hosts more than 500 VDVKs. In Dindori district, youth-managed amla processing units have increased annual family income from ₹10,000 to ₹30,000.

### 9.5 Telangana

VDVKs in Telangana promote bamboo crafts and leaf plate manufacturing. In Adilabad district, youth enterprises supply eco-friendly products to local markets.

## 10. IMPACT OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON TRIBAL YOUTH

- Employment generation at the local level
- Increased household income and improved living standards
- Reduced migration to urban areas
- Enhanced skills and entrepreneurial mindset
- Improved social inclusion and empowerment

## 11. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Despite positive outcomes, several challenges persist:

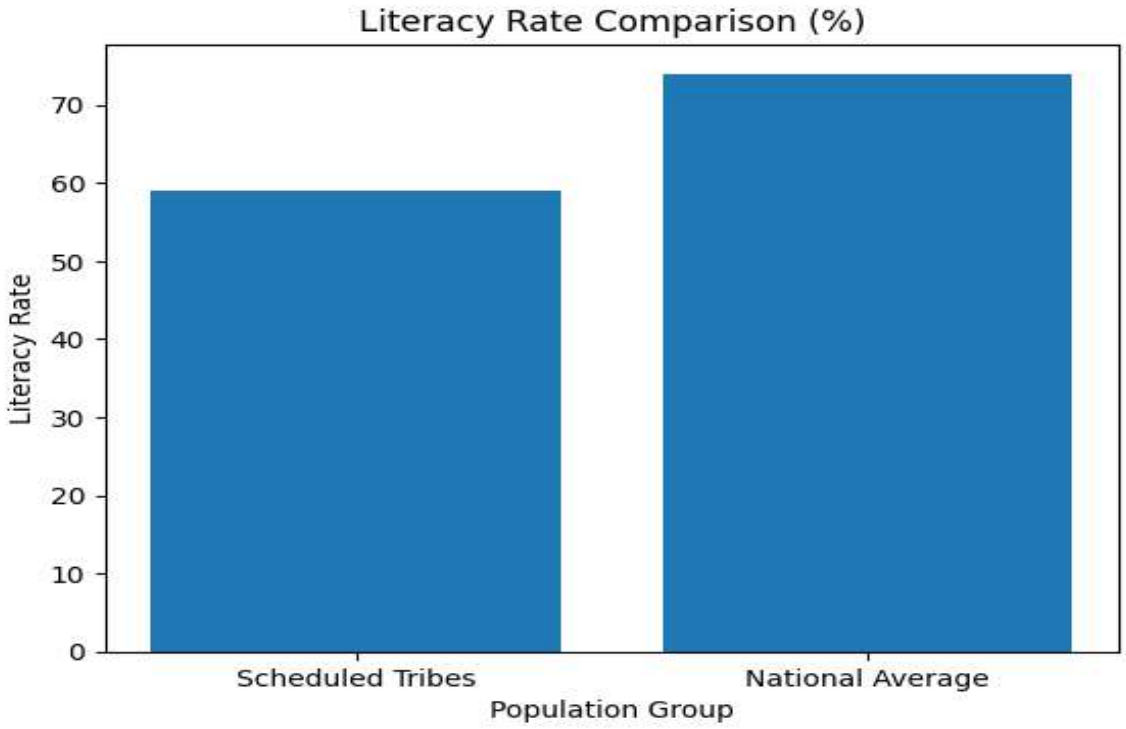
- Limited access to quality training infrastructure
- Lack of advanced technology and tools
- Poor transportation and market connectivity
- Financial constraints and limited credit access
- Need for continuous mentoring and support

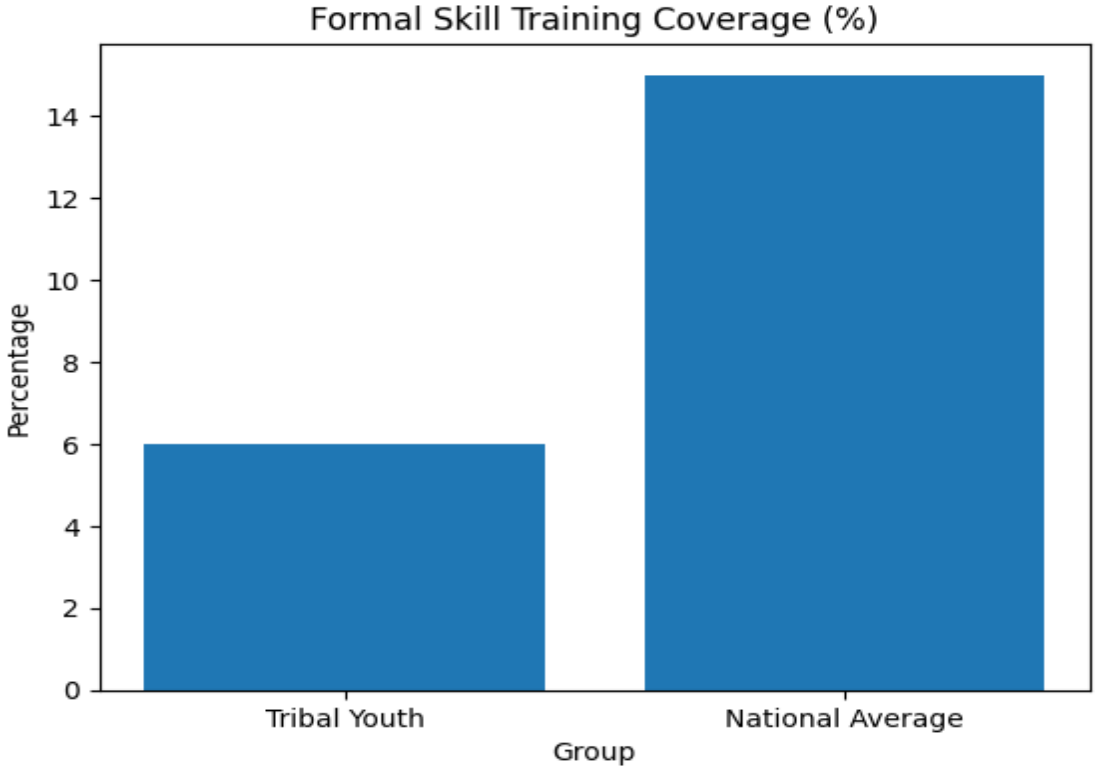
## 12. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Establish skill development centers in remote tribal areas
- Strengthen market-oriented and digital skills training
- Improve access to microfinance and credit facilities
- Encourage public–private partnerships
- Promote e-commerce platforms for tribal products

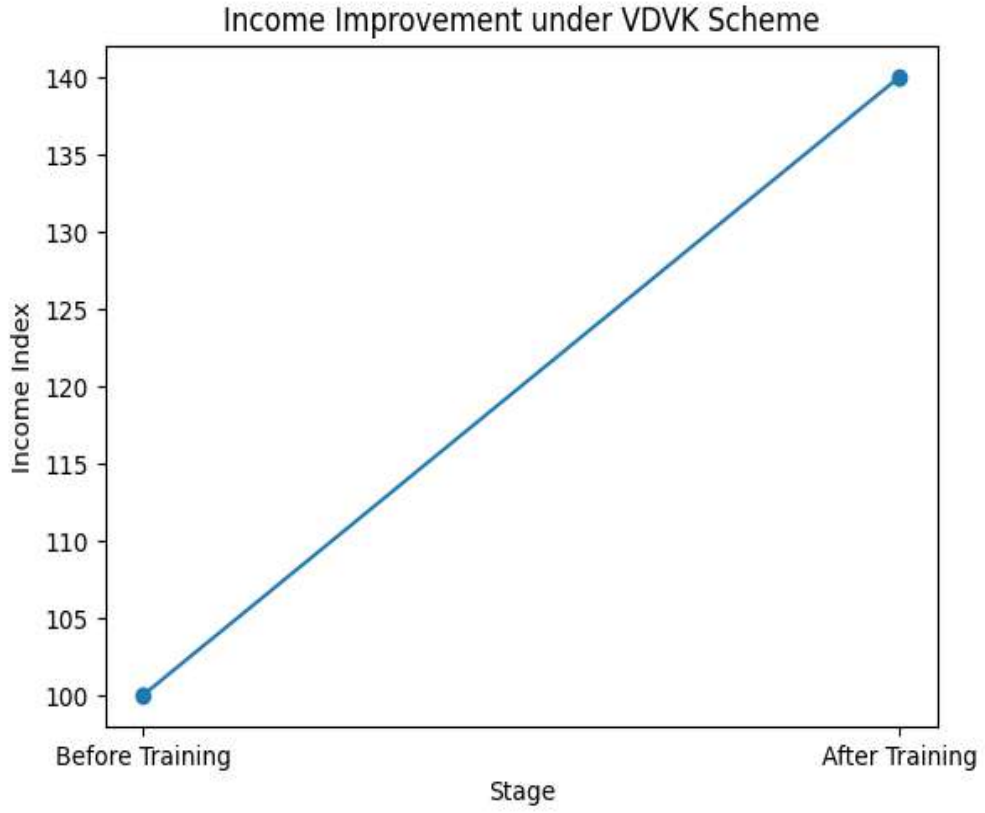
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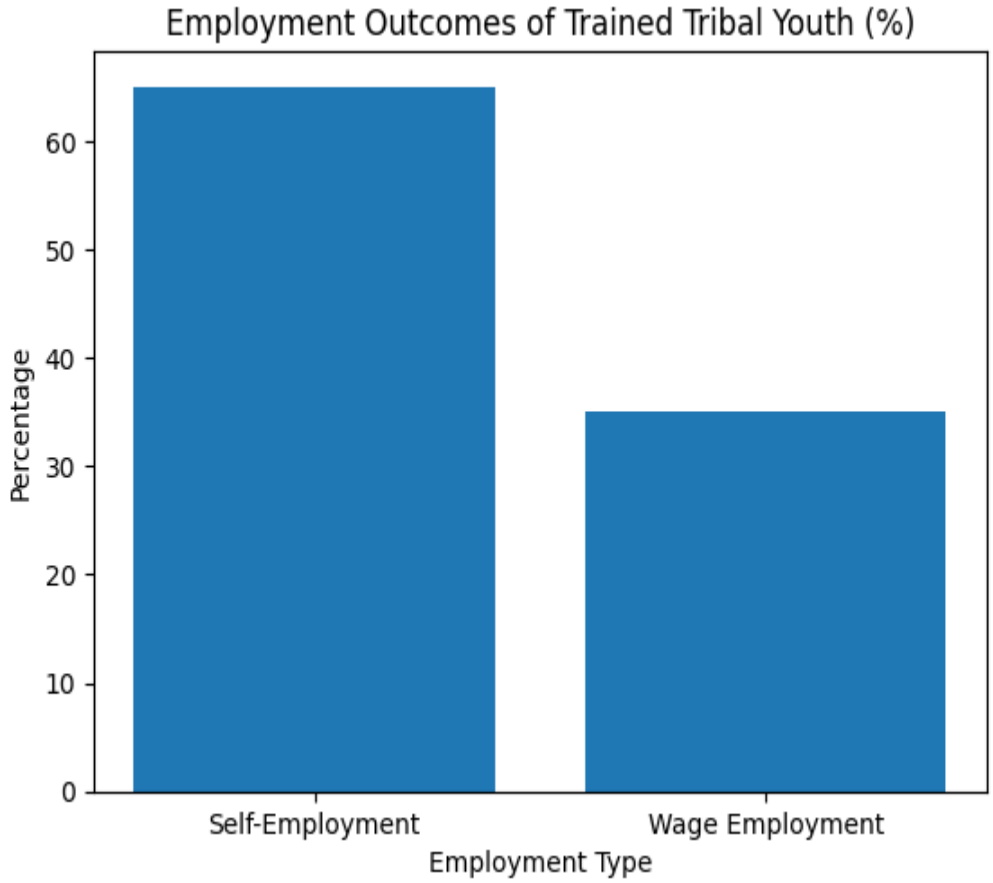
**Employment Outcomes after Skill and Entrepreneurship Training**



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**1. Literacy Rate Comparison (%)**
**Chart type:** Bar chart
**Shows:**

- Literacy rate of **Scheduled Tribes (59%)**
- **National average (74%)**

**Use this to explain:**
The educational gap between tribal communities and the national population, highlighting the need for focused skill development programs.

**Suggested Caption**
*Figure 1: Literacy Rate Comparison between Scheduled Tribes and National Average*

**2. Formal Skill Training Coverage (%)**
**Chart type:** Bar chart
**Shows:**

- Tribal youth with formal skill training (**6%**)
- National average (**15%**)

**Use this to explain**
The severe skill-training gap faced by tribal youth and the importance of expanding programs like PMKVY and TRIFED initiatives.

**Suggested Caption**
*Figure 2: Formal Skill Training Coverage among Tribal Youth*

**3. Income Improvement under VDVK Scheme**
**Chart type:** Line graph
**Shows:**

- Income level **before training**
- Income level **after training** (about **40% increase**, shown as an index)

**Use this to Explain**
The positive economic impact of the **Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK)** scheme through value addition and entrepreneurship.

**Suggested Caption**
*Figure 3: Income Improvement of Tribal Beneficiaries under VDVK Scheme*

**4. Employment Outcomes of Trained Tribal Youth (%)**
**Chart type:** Bar chart
**Shows:**

- **65% self-employment**
- **35% wage employment**

**Use this to Explain**
How skill development and entrepreneurship training promote self-reliance and micro-enterprise creation among tribal youth.

## 11. CONCLUSION

Skill development and entrepreneurial training play a vital role in the socio-economic development of tribal youth. Initiatives such as Van Dhan Vikas Kendras demonstrate that when traditional knowledge is combined with modern skills and market access, tribal youth can become successful entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship not only improves income and employment but also ensures sustainable development and social empowerment of tribal communities.

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