

**UNDERSTANDING THE TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD VULNERABILITIES IN  
TERMS OF HOUSEHOLD ASSETS IN INDIA: *NATIONAL FAMILY  
HEALTH SURVEY IV***

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**ABSTRACT**

Tribal population in India is lagging behind in every facet of progress. Many reasons are attached to their backwardness. However, remoteness, geography, political determination, and their social status are being principal reasons. These reasons have been constantly obstructed and did not allow them to be part of the general population. The present article aims to understand the household assets among the tribal population; it also aims to determine the extent of household assets. And to understand the variation in the household assets on the basis of education, residential area of tribes. A secondary data used to analyze the household assets by using data collected of 18,6,47 households in the NFHS IV survey.

Data analysis reveals that the tribes are still backward since they are unable to own the household assets such as TV, Radio, Mobile, Bicycle, Motor, Car, Truck and Refrigerator. Further, the areas of residence and education levels highly impact the household assets. In comparison, of their wealth index to other social groups, one could understand that there is a necessity to develop this population to bring them into the main course of the development.

**Keywords:** Tribes, Tribal vulnerabilities, Wealth index, Household assets

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Tribal population is lagging at the back on every piece of development. Many reasons are attached to their backwardness. On the other hand, remoteness, geography, and their social status are being prevailing reasons. These reasons constantly blocked them from being the part of the general population. Therefore, one could identify their vulnerabilities in terms of education, health, and employment. According to the census 2011, the tribal population contributes 8.6 % of total India's Population. There are about 705 tribal communities residing all over India.

While talking about their venerability and marginality, it's very imperative to give equivalent importance to their economic status, and problems arose because of their low economic status. It is well known that there are exclusive provisions for the tribal people in the Indian constitution to uplift and bring them into the mainstreams. This course of action is continuous and booming in less or large proportion. However, the existing distinction between the economic status of tribal people and the general population shows that the this population is so backward. Moreover, the affirmative impact of constitutional safeguard is not same all over India. All these conditions display that there is more to make progress.

Household assets are considered a very essential aspect of the wealth index of the population. When one tries to determine the distribution of household assets, then it's important to underline the variation across the social groups of the population. Wealth quintile could be calculated based on the household assets. Eventually, it will display the socio-economic development of the population. To measure the household assets NFHS has been considered indicators such as owning a bicycle or car, television, radio, refrigerator, electricity, etc. When we aim to understand the existing development status of the tribal population then we need to consider their status in the household assets. Present article aims to understand the household assets among the tribal population, it further aims to determine the prevalence of household assets and to understand the variation in the household assets on the basis of education, residential area, sanitation and facilities.

## **2. REVIEWING THE TRIBAL LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

In the past, the tribal economy was based on subsistence agriculture, hunting and gathering forest products. Even now one can mark out the existence of subsistence agriculture in some highly marginalized and undeveloped tribal parts of the world. Conversely, a few decades' back tribes lost their land due to the exploitation of forest resources by the general population. Therefore, they ended with no land or less land. It has resulted that they are being the poorest of the poor and the marginalized cluster of the society. Their poor livelihood appearance has a direct impact on poverty. As per the recent survey by the Ministry of Rural Development, has been estimated that more than half of the rural tribal population is found to be below the poverty line. *Shirsath, T., (2014)*. According to the tribal committee report 2014 only 40.6% of them are having good houses. Further, only 22.6% having latrine facility within the premises. Moreover, 74.7% of them are doing open defecation. Only 44.98% households availing bank services and 37.3% households of the tribes are not having the utilities like telephone, TV, computer scooter, mobile, bicycle, two-wheeler, four wheelers, etc. As per the criteria of the Tendulkar committee near about 47.3% of them are below the poverty line. (i.e. 32 per day for per person). The percent of the BPL population is, even more, i.e. more than 60 % in the states like Bihar, Chhattisgarh,

Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh among the tribal people. Therefore, from the above statistics, it's important to note that the indicators of the development are not satisfactory in the tribal context.

The greater part of the tribal people work in the primary sector. They are profoundly dependent on agriculture either as cultivators or as agricultural laborers. At the same time, a number of scheduled tribes no longer pursue their traditional occupation which is hunting and foraging. However, some primitive communities are still engaged in it. Few communities are involved in other activities. For instance, the communities like Birjia, Asur, Jarawa Korwa, and Raji and other work as laborers in the plantations or in mines or factories. Sometimes Building Dam projects leading the displacement and enforced migration which causes an increase in the number schedule tribes working as contract laborers in the construction industry and as domestic workers in major cities. However, Over 80% of Scheduled Tribes work in the primary sector like agriculture.

As mentioned already, and even the data of various reports also illustrate that people become landless first and then they become laborers. Near about 53% of the general population, primarily are the cultivators. On the other hand, the number of STs who were cultivators, declined from over 68% to 45% in 2001 whereas the number of tribal agricultural laborers increased from about 20% to 37%. It demonstrates the picture of increasing landlessness among tribes. This tendency has been intensified, as it can be seen in data from the 2011 census. It has been already estimated that, in the last decade, about 3.5 million tribal people are going to leave the agriculture, agriculture-related activities and entering into the informal labor market *Tribal health committee report, (2014)*. By considering their livelihood conditions one can understand how massive is the challenge is for the policy makers, administrators, and social workers to develop the tribes from every aspect of life. Even after five decades of planned development, due to the inaccessibility of the tribal areas, hilly areas and remote areas along with remarkable variations" in the climatic conditions, there are many hurdles in tribal the development.

The livelihood conditions of the tribal people are characterized based upon the availability of resources which are forest-based livelihoods, pre-agriculture level of technology, stagnant or declining population, extremely low literacy and, subsistence level of the economy. *Tribal health committee report, (2014)*. It is also important to emphasize that like economic status, even tribal education is also at the stake. According to the census 2011, the overall literacy rate of tribal population is about 59%, which is very low as compared to the national literacy rate which is 75 % Census India, (2011). Nevertheless, the status of literacy was in the past has increased in the present. For instance, the literacy rate in 1881 for them was 16.35 % *Tribal health committee report, (2014)*. Even if the government of India made policy to provide free education to all tribal children between the ages 6-14 years, but the percentage of dropouts from school is high

both in boys and girls. If 100 tribal children enter in class I then only 29 children complete education up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard *Nerkar, s., (2014)*. And this situation is highly liable to remain continuous if there will be no comprehensive policy reframing to uplift them.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This article is based on the secondary data analysis of NFHS IV. To analyze the socio-economic vulnerabilities of tribes, data extracted only for the tribal population from total households 249949 in NFHS IV. From all data 18647 households extracted to analyze the tribal household assets. In the whole data set, there are many variables related to human development and health. From all those variables only a few have been selected for this analysis. To understand the economic vulnerabilities, the household asset has been considered as a major factor. Further, the variables those are working as a supportive evidence to prove their vulnerabilities are also included in the analysis. Altogether the variables such as education, educational levels, household possessions, electricity, wealth status, and sanitation etc. are considered for this analysis. Data have been analyzed by using SPSS software. Distribution frequencies have been run to understand the extent of economic vulnerabilities on the basis of household assets. Further, the chi-square test used to find the association between the areas of residence, education with the possession of household assets.

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Place of residence**

After analyzing the data about the place of residence, it has been found that in India (Refer figure A) only 11.5% of the total tribal population lives in the urban area and the rest of the population is in the rural area. Even by looking at the residence of tribal or any population one can understand how far the people are from the development. Because, the quality of life in rural area is not equal to the quality of life in the urban area.

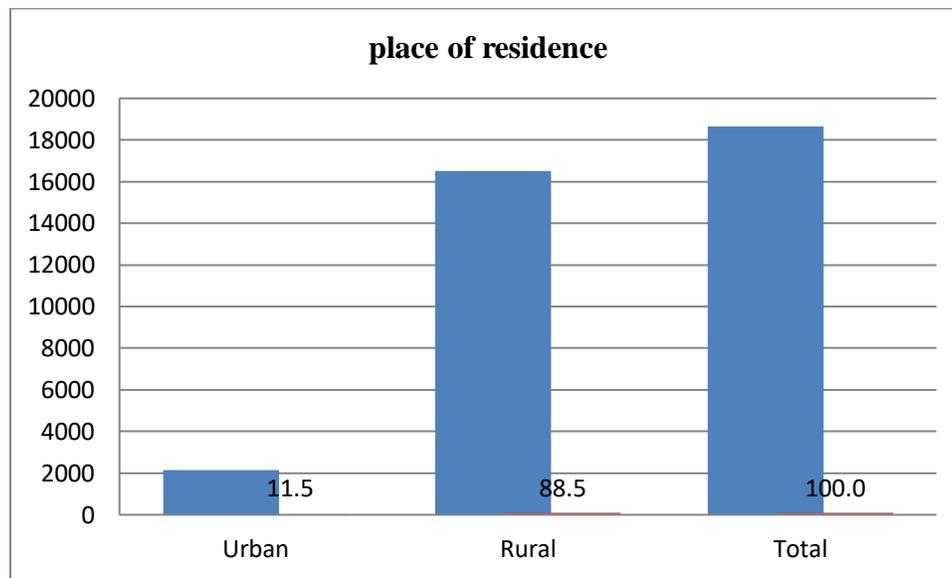


Figure A: Place of residence

#### 4.2 Levels of education among the tribal women

Table no-1 displays the picture of the education levels among the tribal women. We see that near about 42.7% of tribal women are with no education. Further, 8.8% have incomplete even a primary education. Only 7.6 % of the women completed primary education. Moreover, only 4.7% of the tribal women perceived education up to secondary level. And only 4.1% of the women are at higher levels of education. When one determines the human development of a particular country, then education is a very important indicator. Still, we find pathetic conditions of tribal women in terms of their education levels.

Table 1: Levels of education among the tribal women

Sr. No	Levels of education among the tribal women		
	Education levels	Frequency	Percentage
1	No education	7963	42.7
2	Incomplete primary	1644	8.8
3	Complete primary	1426	7.6
4	Incomplete secondary	5958	32.0
5	Complete secondary	883	4.7
	Higher	772	4.1
	Total	18647	100.0

### 4.3 Levels of literacy among the tribal women

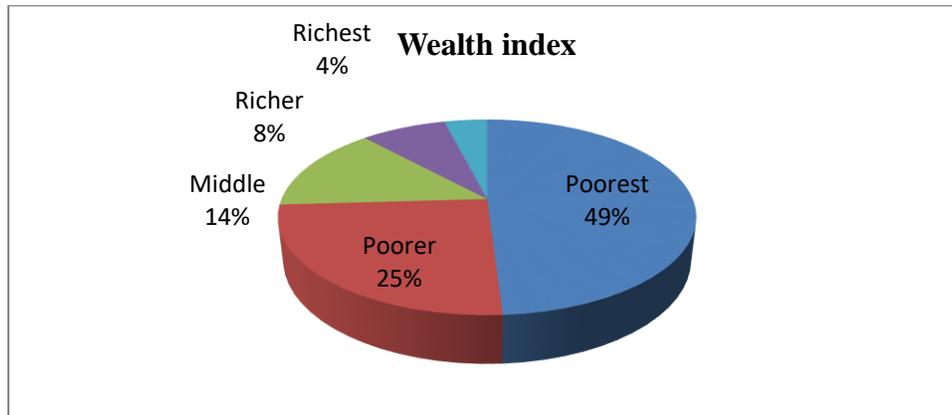
In the table no- 1 we understood the scenario of the levels of education among the tribal women. In the same way table, 2 depicts the literacy levels among the tribal women in India. In that, it has been disclosed that 47.2% of the tribal women cannot read at all. That means, the large portion of the women's population is illiterate in tribal areas of India. And only 44.4 % of the tribal women are able to read the whole sentence. In terms of educational development, women are lagging behind even in the general population. However, there is even a huge gap between educational status women from the general population and tribal women in India.

**Table 2: Levels of literacy among the tribal women.**

Sr. No	Literacy levels	Frequency	Percent
1	Cannot read at all	8804	47.2
2	Able to read only parts of a sentence	1263	6.8
3	Able to read the whole sentence	8282	44.4
4	No card with required language	75	.4
5	Blind/visually impaired	223	1.2
	Total	18647	100.0

### 4.4 Wealth index

It is a very important indicator which is based on the household cumulative living standards. It is calculated by considering the household assets of the population in terms of bicycle, television, refrigerator, housing structure, and water and sanitation facilities. With the help of wealth index, one can relate the health outcome among the population. In figure B, the wealth index of the tribal people has been given. Pie chart gives an idea that about 49 % of the people comes under the category of the poorest wealth index. 25% are poorer, and only 4% are the rich. Therefore, by looking at the wealth index of this population in India, it could be realized that poverty is more prevalent. More importantly, those people who are staying in the urban area and are educated are in the rich quintile. Therefore, education and residence, also affect the wealth index.



**Figure B: Wealth index**

When one distinguishes the wealth index of tribal people in comparison with other social groups we find that the tribal population is in the poverty in high proportions as per the NFHS IV published report. Wealth index depicts the hierarchy according to the social groups. It involves first general category which is rich, then OBC, SC and at last ST. The same report reveals that the highest proportion of tribal population comes under the lowest wealth quintile. And very less comes under the highest wealth quintile.

#### **4.5 Electricity**

As the presence of electricity in a particular area is a measure of wealth index. Therefore, it is imperative to look at it from the tribal context. From the data analysis, it has been come to witness that near about 19 % of the tribal population is living without the electricity (Refer figure C)

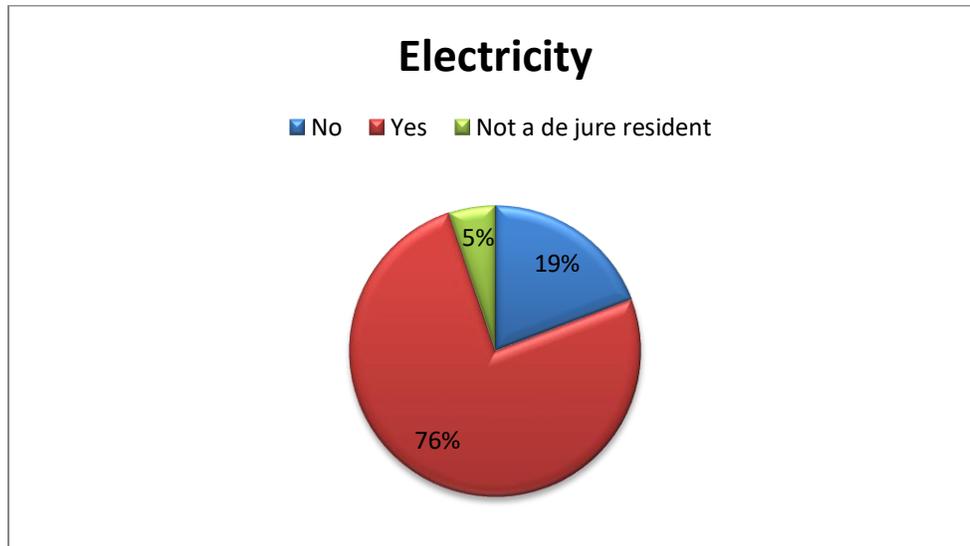


Figure C: Presence of electricity

#### 4.6 Proportions of Motorcycles

Having a motorcycle is considered an important tool in measuring the wealth index. The pie diagram reveals that only 24% of the population had motorcycle. And 71% of them do not possess the motorcycle. This finding again highlights the economic vulnerability of this population. (Refer figure D)

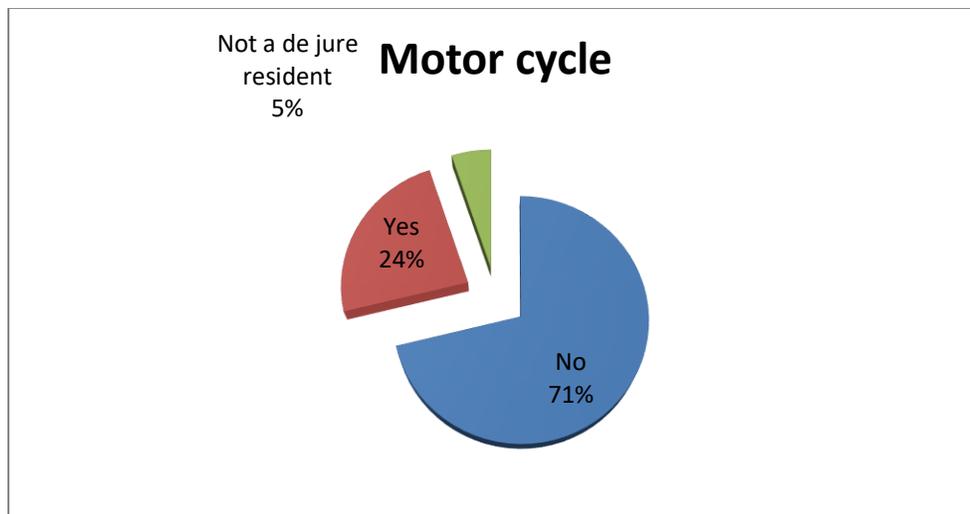


Figure D: proportions of Motorcycles

**4.7 Source of drinking water**

Type of the source or pattern of accessing drinking water is very essential from the public health point of view. Quality of water is highly related with many water born communicable diseases such as cholera, hepatitis, diarrhea, dysentery and so on. The table displays that the sources of drinking water in the tribal area. Majority of the people access drinking water from the tube well or bore well (43.7%). Serious concern over here is near about 13.9% of them are drinking water from unprotected well. 1.9% are drinking water from unprotected springs. 2.3% are drinking from the river, dam, lake, stream, canal and irrigation channels. All these sources are open water sources. Therefore, there is a question on the drinking water security in the tribal area. (please refer table 3)

**Table 3: Source of drinking water**

Sr. No	Source of Drinking water	Frequency	Percent
1	Piped into dwelling	991	5.3
2	Piped to yard/plot	1660	8.9
3	Public tap/standpipe	2368	12.7
4	Tube well or borehole	8144	43.7
5	Protected well	583	3.1
6	Unprotected well	2586	13.9
7	Protected spring	160	.9
8	Unprotected spring	349	1.9
9	River/dam/lake/ponds/stream/canal/irrigation channel	421	2.3
10	Rainwater	36	.2
11	Tanker truck	122	.7
12	Cart with small tank	16	.1
13	Bottled water	149	.8
14	Community RO Plant	53	.3
15	Other	46	.2
16	Not a de jure resident	962	5.2
17	Total	18647	100.0

**4.8 Defecation practices**

Defecation practice among the human being is associated with the sanitary conditions. The table- 4 shows the type of toilet facilities used by the tribal population. In the table, it has been given that near about 64.4% of them are with no toilet facility. That means open defecation is common practice in the tribal area and that can cause the contamination and eventually public health problems. Further, it is important to note that 1.9% are using flushed or piped sewer system. Thereafter, 12.7% are using a flush or septic tank. It's significant to think that gradually conditions are changing. However, overall sanitary facilities in the tribal area are not satisfactory.

**Table 4: defecation practices**

Sr. No	Types of toilet facility		
		Frequency	Percent
1	Flush to piped sewer system	362	1.9
2	Flush to septic tank	2375	12.7
3	Flush to pit latrine	1151	6.2
4	Flush to somewhere else	124	.7
5	Flush, don't know where	28	.1
6	Ventilated Improved Pit latrine (VIP)	109	.6
7	Pit latrine with slab	851	4.6
8	Pit latrine without slab/open pit	489	2.6
9	No facility/bush/field	12002	64.4
10	Composting toilet	53	.3
11	Dry toilet	112	.6
12	Other	30	.2
13	Not a de jure resident	962	5.2
14	Total	18647	100.0

**4.9 Household possessions**

As mentioned above that household asset is a very vital tool in measuring the wealth index of the population. The table number- 5 gives the data on the household possessions with tribal people in terms of radio, TV, bicycle, refrigerator, car or truck. Analysis revealed that only 5.4% of them had Radio. Near about 56.5% are not having television. Radio and television are important tools for the dissemination of essential information among the people. However, the majority of them are away from the information which is spread by through these communication technologies. Further, only 8.7% had refrigerator at their home. This is also one of the measures to calculate the wealth index.

**Table 5: Household possessions**

<b>Household Possessions</b>			
<b>Sr No</b>	<b>Radio</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	No	16671	89.4
2	Yes	1014	5.4
3	Not a de jure resident	962	5.2
<b>Sr No</b>	<b>Television</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	No	10549	56.6
2	Yes	7136	38.3
3	Not a de jure resident	962	5.2
<b>Sr No</b>	<b>Refrigerator</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	No	16061	86.1
2	Yes	1624	8.7
3	Not a de jure resident	962	5.2
<b>Sr No</b>	<b>Bicycle</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	No	9489	50.9
2	Yes	8197	44.0
3	Not a de jure resident	962	5.2
<b>Sr No</b>	<b>Car/ truck</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	No	17231	92.4
2	Yes	455	2.4

3	Not a de jure resident	962	5.2
4	Total	18647	100.0

Findings are also the evidence of the fact that reveals tribal people are not prevalently using the refrigerator. Additionally, 50.9% of them are not having even a bicycle. And only 2.4 % of them are having a car or truck with them. Moreover, all the household assets are associated with the area of residence, educational status.

#### 4.10 Types of fuel used for the cooking

Table no- 6 exhibits information about the fuel used for the cooking by the women. Only 0.4% of the tribal people are using electricity for cooking. Further, about 11.8 percent of them are using LPG for cooking. And in a majority that is 74.5 % are using wood for the cooking, which is not good for the health of the people especially to the women. Even more, they are using animal dung, kerosene, biogas, coal, straw/ shrubs or grass, and charcoal for the cooking purpose. Overall scenario of the fuel used for cooking in the tribal area highlights their economic vulnerability and lower wealth status since they are unable to access cooking gas at large.

**Table 6: Types of fuel used for cooking**

Sr. No	Types of fuel		
		Frequency	Percent
1	Electricity	68	.4
2	LPG, natural gas	2193	11.8
3	Biogas	41	.2
4	Kerosene	128	.7
5	Coal, lignite	177	.9
6	Charcoal	140	.8
7	Wood	13893	74.5
8	Straw/shrubs/grass	386	2.1
9	Agricultural crop	375	2.0
10	Animal dung	265	1.4
11	No food cooked in house	4	.0
12	Other	14	.1
13	Not a de jure resident	962	5.2
14	Total	18647	100.0

## 5. CONCLUSION

This secondary analysis revealed that the tribal population is still rearward in terms of education and education levels. This situation is very extensive among the tribal women. The most important fact is that a larger chunk of this population comes under the poorest or the lowest wealth quintile. Therefore, there is a need to put more efforts to improve the economic conditions of this population to bring them into the mainstream.

Tribal population is still backward since they are unable to own the household assets. Such as TV, Radio, Mobile, Bicycle, Motor, Car, Truck and Refrigerator. When we compare their wealth index to other social groups, then one could understand that there is a need to develop this population to bring into the main flow of the development. There is not a linear cause to effect relationship responsible for the existing tribal situation, but it has multi-factorial causation and there is a linkage between one to another factor. Even if the government showed genuine willpower to bring tribal people into the mainstream nevertheless, still there are some challenges from both the sides. Those challenges need to be pointed out to tackle the tribal situation and move forward in the journey of development by considering every part of the population.

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**Abbreviations**

**NFHS- National Family Health Survey**

**OBC- Other Backward Class**

**SC- Scheduled Caste**

**ST – Scheduled Tribes**