



Opportunities and Challenges of Tribal Entrepreneurship: A Study in Kokkal & Sholur, Nilgiris

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Abstract- Tribal entrepreneurship plays an important role in improving income, livelihood, and social development of tribal communities. This study focuses on the opportunities and challenges faced by tribal entrepreneurs in Kokkal and Sholur villages of the Nilgiris district. Primary data was collected from 120 tribal entrepreneurs through structured questionnaires. Percentage analysis, ranking method, and chi-square test were used. The study finds that majority of entrepreneurs are young and educated but financially weak. Agriculture, tourism, and handicrafts are the major business activities. Major problems include lack of finance, poor loan accessibility, infrastructure issues, and weak market linkages. Awareness about government schemes is moderate, but implementation and accessibility remain limited. The study suggests financial inclusion, better infrastructure, skill development, and strong policy support to promote sustainable tribal entrepreneurship.

Keywords- Tribal Entrepreneurship, Opportunities, Challenges, Financial Inclusion, Government Schemes, Nilgiris Tribes.

I. Introduction

Tribal communities in India possess rich traditional knowledge, natural resources, and cultural heritage. Entrepreneurship among tribes not only improves income but also supports cultural preservation and sustainable development.

Kokkal and Sholur villages in Nilgiris district have many tribal communities involved in agriculture, tourism, handicrafts, and small business activities. However, they face challenges like financial problems, poor infrastructure, lack of education, and limited market exposure. This study attempts to identify these strengths and barriers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the opportunities available for tribal entrepreneurs.
2. To analyze the challenges faced by tribal entrepreneurs.
3. To examine the awareness and benefits of government schemes.
4. To provide suitable suggestions for improving tribal entrepreneurship.

II. Research Methodology

- Research Design: Descriptive Research
- Area of Study: Kokkal & Sholur, Nilgiris District
- Sample Size: 120 tribal entrepreneurs
- Sampling Technique: Purposive Sampling



- Data Collection: Structured Questionnaire
- Tools Used: Percentage analysis, Ranking analysis, Chi-square test

ANALYTICAL RESULTS (COMBINED SINGLE ANALYTICAL TABLE)

Variable / Factor	Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Key Interpretation
Age	20–30	69	58%	Majority young
	30–40	27	22%	
	40–50	16	13%	
	Above 50	8	7%	
Gender	Male	70	58%	Male dominance
	Female	50	42%	
Income	₹10,000–₹20,000	66	55%	Low income majority
	₹20,000–₹30,000	35	29%	
	₹30,000–₹40,000	12	10%	
	Above ₹40,000	7	6%	
Education	No formal education	17	14%	Majority educated
	Primary	22	18%	
	Secondary	17	14%	
	Higher Education	64	54%	
Family Type	Nuclear	80	67%	Modern trend
	Joint	40	33%	
Familiarity with Entrepreneurship	Yes	46	38%	Medium awareness
	Somewhat	53	44%	
	No	21	18%	
Major Business Type	Agriculture	66	55%	Dominant
	Tourism	20	17%	
	Handicrafts	18	15%	
	Tech/E-commerce	16	13%	
Business Growth Factors	Traditional Skills	63	53%	Most influential
	Financial Support	34	28%	
	Govt Schemes	11	9%	
	Natural Resources	12	10%	
	Local Events	61	51%	Community based



Variable / Factor	Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Key Interpretation
Promotion Method	Word of Mouth	30	25%	
	Social Media	27	22%	
Community Support	Supportive	56	47%	Positive
Major Financial Problems	High Cost	52	43%	Severe
	Lack of Loans	47	39%	
	Cash Flow	20	17%	
Market Issues	Lack of Market Awareness	76	63%	Big barrier
Education Impact on Business	Sometimes	59	49%	Moderate
Awareness of Schemes	Yes	76	63%	Medium
Loan Accessibility	Somewhat Accessible	72	60%	Still difficult
Government Support Effectiveness	Somewhat Effective	58	48%	Needs improvement
Chi-Square Result	Calculated Value = 4.23 < Table Value = 7.815			No significant relationship between education & govt scheme benefit

III. Major Findings

- Majority entrepreneurs belong to 20–30 age group → youth initiative is strong.
- Males dominate, though female participation is improving.
- Majority fall under low-income group, indicating financial weakness.
- Most respondents have higher education, which is a positive factor.
- Agriculture is the main entrepreneurial activity followed by tourism & handicrafts.
- Traditional skills and culture strongly support business.
- **Major problems include:**
- Lack of finance & loan accessibility
- High cost of business
- Poor market awareness
- Infrastructure problems
- Awareness of schemes exists but benefit utilization is low.
- Government support is moderately effective.



- Chi-square shows no relationship between education and scheme benefit, meaning education does not ensure access to schemes.

IV. Discussion

Tribal entrepreneurs show strong interest and potential. Their traditional knowledge, handicrafts, agriculture, and tourism have high market value. However, limited finance, weak infrastructure, and poor digital exposure restrict growth. Though government introduces many schemes, real-time benefit and accessibility remain limited.

V. Suggestions

1. Financial Support

- Simplify loan procedures
- Provide low-interest tribal business loans
- Promote SHGs and microfinance

2. Market & Infrastructure

- Improve road & transport connectivity
- Strengthen internet access
- Develop tribal market centers and online platforms

3. Skill Development

- Training in business management & digital marketing
- Entrepreneurship education
- Technology usage workshops

4. Government Role

- Ensure practical implementation of schemes
- Awareness programs in tribal areas
- Monitor benefits effectively

5. Women Empowerment

- Encourage women entrepreneurs
- Provide special incentives

VI. Conclusion

The study concludes that tribal entrepreneurship has great potential to improve livelihood, income, and social development. Even though young and educated tribals are interested in business, they face serious challenges related to finance, infrastructure, and market access. Strong government intervention, financial inclusion, skill training, and better market linkages are essential to promote sustainable tribal entrepreneurship. If properly supported, tribal entrepreneurship can become a powerful tool for economic empowerment and cultural preservation.

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