



TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS IN THE PHASEPARADHI COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY IN UNCHGAON VILLAGE

Dr. Umesh Balu Gadekar

**Assistant Director/Assistant Professor,
Yashwantrao Chavan School of Rural Development,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur (MS)**

Abstract:

The socioeconomic landscape of communities is subject to continuous evolution due to various internal and external factors. This case study delves into the transformation of socioeconomic status within the Phaseparadhi community, focusing on the context of Unchgaon Village. The Phaseparadhi community, like many others, has experienced shifts in its social and economic dynamics over time. This study aims to understand the drivers, processes, and implications of these changes. Interviews, surveys, and ethnographic observations were conducted to capture the personal narratives and experiences of Phaseparadhi community members. Additionally, socioeconomic indicators such as income levels, education attainment, healthcare access, and housing conditions were analyzed to quantify the shifts in their status. The findings of this study shed light on the multifaceted factors contributing to the transformation of socioeconomic status within the Phaseparadhi community. These factors include changes in education systems, governmental policies, access to information and technology, and shifts in traditional livelihood practices. The results also highlight the complex interplay between cultural norms, social dynamics, and economic opportunities. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of socioeconomic change in rural communities, emphasizing the need for context-specific approaches to development policies. In conclusion, this case study of the Phaseparadhi community in Unchgaon Village illustrates the intricate process of socioeconomic transformation occurring within the community. By examining the factors driving these changes and their consequences, this research provides valuable insights into the broader discourse on rural development, cultural preservation, and the intricate balance between tradition and progress.

Key Words: Socio-economic status, Phase-Pardhi Community.

Introduction:

The Phase Pardhi community holds the status of a Scheduled Tribe in the state of Maharashtra. Historically, the tribe is linked to the practice of hunting, and their name, "Phase-Pardhi," stems from their adept use of the hunting instrument known as "Phasa," or trap. Originating in Rajasthan, they migrated to regions such as Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra due to changes in their habitat and hunting restrictions imposed by the government. Operating in groups for hunting, they shared strong bonds.

As the forest animal population dwindled and unlicensed hunting was prohibited, Phase Pardhis faced challenges in finding alternative means of survival. This led to a shift towards theft and dacoity, often committed in groups. Consequently, during British rule, the entire Pardhi population was categorized as a criminal tribe. This decision had far-reaching consequences, leading them towards ignorance, illiteracy, superstition, and extreme poverty.

While some Pardhis indeed engage in criminal activities, it's important to understand the underlying reasons for such actions. Their circumstances and historical factors deserve consideration. The Pardhi community's reputation as criminals has roots in their nomadic lifestyle. Unable to sustain their traditional hunting and gathering practices due to changes in the environment and regulations, they resorted to subsistence theft for survival. This switch to foraging in fields, villages, and towns for sustenance earned them a negative perception.

Notably, efforts have been made to uplift the Pardhi community. Settlements are prevalent in Maharashtra's Khandesh region, as well as districts such as Nasik, Solapur, Kolhapur, and Beed, along with Bijapur in Karnataka. In Maharashtra, they are commonly referred to as "Phase-Pardhi," while in Karnataka, they are known as "Anakh-Sincha."

Inclusion of the Pardhi tribe in the Criminal Tribe Act:

A historical account from the 1880 Bombay Presidency Gazette sheds light on the Pardhis, describing them as still engaging in hunting, poaching, and thieving. They were often observed in ragged attire, moving with a discreet demeanor. While their practices have drawn negative attention, it's essential to view their circumstances and choices within the context of their historical and environmental challenges.

The inclusion of the Pardhi tribe within the framework of the Criminal Tribe Act was a significant aspect of the colonial perception of Pardhis as a distinct social group. This perception was largely built upon the notion that criminal activities were rampant within their community. Suspicion from settled communities towards nomadic groups, who didn't conform to established village norms, was amplified by colonial reports that vividly described the methods used by Pardhis in committing thefts. These accounts fueled an atmosphere of suspicion and apprehension towards Pardhis in society (Enthoven 1975, Russell and Hiralal 1997).

The biased perspectives held by mainstream caste society and colonial administrators toward Pardhis culminated in their classification as criminal tribes under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, along with its subsequent amendments. By 1952, Pardhis were officially designated as a criminal tribe in regions such as

Bombay, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Bhopal. This categorization resulted in the stigmatization of Pardhi identity, branding its members as "criminals by birth."

The implementation of the Criminal Tribes Act led to the forced settlement and segregation of Pardhis into agricultural and industrial communities. Within the Bombay Presidency, Pardhis constituted the largest ethnic group within settlements and free colonies, notably during the years between 1933 and 1947 (Agrawal 2010). These settlements, established in various locations such as Solapur, Bijapur, Bagalkot, Gadag, Hubli, Kanpur, Belgaum, Baramati, Ambernath, Jalgaon, Dohad, Ahmadabad, Dhulia, and more, were effectively akin to confinement facilities. In these settlements, Pardhis were subjected to demanding labor conditions, serving as laborers in spinning and weaving mills, railway workshops, factories, road construction, metalwork, lumbering, and cultivation. The environment mirrored that of imprisonment, where they were detained for uncertain periods and exposed to rigorous work regimes.

Identity and Existence of Pardhis in postcolonial India

Following the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA), Pardhis emerged as one of the most marginalized sections of society, necessitating special constitutional protections. In specific districts of states like Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Karnataka, Pardhis gained recognition as a Scheduled Tribe (ST). However, in certain Madhya Pradesh districts, they were categorized as Scheduled Castes (SC). In Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, specific sub-groups of Pardhis were classified as having an economic focus. The implementation of policies and laws that restricted their access to forest and wildlife resources led to a disruption of their traditional livelihood patterns. Unfortunately, this transition to new means of sustenance wasn't consistently accompanied by the establishment of alternative livelihoods in their customary rural settings. Consequently, many families chose to migrate to urban areas, resulting in not only physical relocation but also significant shifts in economic and socio-cultural dynamics. (source: http://www.academia.edu/1885553/Status_of_Pardhi_in_Mumbai_City).

An additional significant aspect of the CTA was the authority given to local governments to establish schools and settlements of an industrial or agricultural nature for the Criminal Tribes. These settlements were intended to provide employment opportunities, either on government-owned agricultural land or within private enterprises. The members of these tribes were subject to stringent restrictions, including obtaining permission to leave the settlement, which was granted at the discretion of the settlement manager. Further measures of "discipline" could be imposed by the local government if any member attempted to escape from these settlements. Rules dictated various aspects of settlement life, including working hours, payment rates, and the handling of products created by the settlers.

Many nomadic communities were deemed criminal and were forcibly placed into these settlements. Within these settlements, they were subjected to unpaid labor in establishments owned by British entities, such as plantations, mills, quarries, and factories. The intention behind this measure was to reform them, and the surveillance of these communities was conducted through missionary organizations. The Salvation Army, in particular, wielded significant influence with the British government, perceiving these settlements as

experimental centers for "rehabilitating criminals." Unfortunately, the communities that had already lost their traditional livelihoods faced severe challenges due to their designation as Criminal Tribes. The label of criminal further exacerbated their difficulties in finding employment, as they were often met with fear and mistrust. The British administration even acknowledged that those registered under the CTA were at the mercy of subordinate police officers.

Ch. Shahu Maharaj and the Phase-Pardhi in Kolhapur

The Phase-Pardhi community, as implied by their name, are adept at trapping birds and animals. As nomads, they have utilized their tracking and stalking skills for generations to engage in activities such as theft and dacoity, which has led to their stigmatization by settled communities. Originating from Dravidian lineage, similar to Korvis and Ghisadis, Pardhis also assert a connection to Rajput heritage and claim to have departed Rajasthan following Maharana Pratap's passing. Over the course of their extensive migrations, Pardhis eventually settled in the western jungles of the Kolhapur region.

During this time, Chh. Shahu Maharaj became aware of the disturbances caused by Pardhis in nearby villages. Additionally, he learned of their intentions to ambush Chatrapati's camp. Responding with compassion, Chh. Shahu's response was unconventional – he didn't subject them to harassment or torture, but rather ensured their well-being and comfort. Acknowledging their reputation, Chh. Shahu aimed to delve into the root causes of their criminal behavior and empathized with their circumstances. Pardhis were moved from the jungles of Katkal to Chh. Shahu's preferred retreat at Sontali camp, near Kolhapur. Here, they were accommodated in temporary shelters and provided with daily food supplies.

Chh. Shahu recognized the bravery and courage within the Pardhi community, realizing that their circumstances had shaped their actions. As a result, he took the bold step of establishing a unit of Pardhi guards for his Sontali camp. This decision was met with surprise by many, as Maharaja attempted to transform predators into protectors. Maharaja frequently tested the vigilance, attentiveness, and reliability of these Pardhi guards, and they consistently proved their capabilities.

Maharaja's intentions extended beyond mere security. He aimed for the Pardhis to interact with other members of society and learn the ways of civilized life. The Pardhis were eventually settled on a 15-acre plot of land near Ujlaiwadi in Kolhapur city proper. Although this land was later acquired as the campus of Shivaji University in 1962, the Pardhis were relocated nearby. In the present day, they have established their cooperative housing society named 'Shantinagar.' Many older men secured jobs at Shahu textile mill, while the younger generation ventured into the stone crusher business, an ancillary activity to the construction industry.

(source:https://www.worldwidejournals.com/paripex/file.php?val=january_2014_1390044502_f2793_77).

Research Methodology:

The study on the transformation of socioeconomic status in the Phasepardhi community in Unchgaon Village would involve a comprehensive methodology to understand the changes and factors influencing their socioeconomic conditions. Here's a proposed outline of the methodology for the case study:

1. Research Design:

- Chosen a descriptive and exploratory research design to thoroughly investigate the socioeconomic transformation in the Phasepardhi community.

2. Data Collection:

- Utilize a combination of primary and secondary data sources to gather comprehensive information.
- **Primary Data Collection:**
 - Conduct surveys using structured interview schedule to collect data directly from Phasepardhi community members.
 - Interviews: Conduct semi-structured interviews with key informants from the community, local leaders, and relevant stakeholders.
- **Secondary Data Collection:**
 - Gather relevant data from existing studies, reports, government documents, and academic literature related to the community's socioeconomic status.

3. Sampling:

- Used purposive sampling and collected data from 80 families to select participants who represent different age groups, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds within the Phasepardhi community.

4. Quantitative Data Analysis:

- Use statistical software to analyze survey data, calculating frequencies and percentages for each variable.

The methodology outlined above aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the socioeconomic status of the Phasepardhi community has evolved over time in Unchgaon Village. It combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure a well-rounded assessment of the community's conditions and the factors that have contributed to their transformation.

Discussion and Result:**Table No. 1: Demographic Findings in the Phasepardhi Community**

Sr. No.	Variable	Findings
1.	Age	The majority (46.7%) of respondents belong to the 31 to 45 age group.
2.	Marital Status	The majority (93.3%) of respondents are married.
3.	Language	All respondents (100%) use their own dialect.
4.	Type of Family	53.3% of respondents live in nuclear families.
5.	Family members	46.7% of respondents have 5-7 family members.
6.	Educational Qualification	50.0% of respondents are illiterate.

The table No. 1 provides insights into various demographic characteristics of the Phasepardhi community. Here's a breakdown of the findings:

- Age:** The majority (46.7%) of respondents belong to the age group of 31 to 45. This suggests a relatively balanced distribution across different age groups.
- Marital Status:** A significant portion (93.3%) of respondents is married, indicating that marriage is a common status within the community.
- Language:** All respondents (100%) use their own dialect, reflecting a strong adherence to their cultural and linguistic heritage.
- Type of Family:** Around 53.3% of respondents live in nuclear families, indicating that smaller family units are relatively common within the Phasepardhi community.
- Family Members:** Nearly half (46.7%) of the respondents have 5-7 family members. This indicates a moderate family size among a substantial portion of the community.
- Educational Qualification:** Half (50.0%) of the respondents are illiterate. This points to a significant need for educational interventions and initiatives within the community to promote literacy and education.

In summary, the demographic findings suggest that the Phasepardhi community comprises a range of age groups, with a majority being married individuals who predominantly use their own dialect. While a notable proportion live in nuclear families, family sizes can vary. However, the community faces a challenge with a significant portion being illiterate, highlighting the need for educational efforts to improve literacy levels

Table No. 2 Transformation of Socioeconomic Status

Sr. No.	Variable	Findings
1.	Awareness of Government Facilities	73.3% are not aware about Government Facilities
2.	Participation in Social & Traditional Activities	73.3% are participating in Social & Traditional Activities
3.	Ownership of Agricultural Land	73.3% do not have own land
4.	Perceived Societal Stability	56.7% indicated Chh. Shahu Maharaj provided jobs
5.	Festival Expenditure	53.3% spend Rs 1000-2000
6.	Acceptance of Bride-Price	83.3% responded are not accepting Bride-Price

The table No. 2 speak about the transformation of socioeconomic Status of Pardhi Community.

1. Awareness of Government Facilities:

- 73.3% of the respondents are not aware of the government facilities available to them.
- This suggests a lack of information dissemination or outreach programs to educate the community about the government's offerings.

2. Participation in Social & Traditional Activities:

- 73.3% of the respondents have been invited to participate in social and traditional activities.
- This indicates that the Phasepardhi community is engaged in their local social and cultural events, contributing to their integration within the broader society.

3. Ownership of Agricultural Land:

- 73.3% of the respondents do not own any agricultural land.
- This might imply a potential economic challenge for the community as land ownership is often associated with livelihood and economic stability, especially in rural areas.

4. Perceived Societal Stability:

- 56.7% of the respondents indicated that they feel stable in society due to Chh. Shahu Maharaj providing job opportunities.
- This suggests that historical efforts by Chh. Shahu Maharaj to provide employment have had a positive impact on the community's sense of stability and belonging.

5. Festival Expenditure:

- 53.3% of the respondents spend Rs 1000-2000 on festival-related expenses.
- This sheds light on their spending habits during festivals, possibly indicating their level of participation and engagement in cultural celebrations.

6. Acceptance of Bride-Price:

- 83.3% of the respondents responded with "No" to accepting bride-price.
- This indicates that a majority of the community does not endorse the practice of accepting bride-price, which could reflect evolving social norms and attitudes.

Overall, the findings suggest a mix of challenges and opportunities for the Phasepardhi community. While there are aspects such as lack of awareness about government facilities and limited land ownership, the community seems actively engaged in local social and cultural activities. Historical efforts by Chh. Shahu Maharaj appear to have positively influenced their perceived societal stability. The rejection of bride-price by a significant majority could signify shifts in traditional practices and social values. Further analysis and context would be needed to fully understand the implications of these findings on the community's socioeconomic status and well-being.

Future Directions:

Further research is warranted to explore the long-term impacts of socioeconomic interventions and initiatives within the Phasepardhi community. Comparative studies across different regions can provide a broader perspective on the community's transformation.

In conclusion, the case study underscores the importance of addressing educational, economic, and social aspects to drive positive changes in the socioeconomic status of the Phasepardhi community. The findings serve as a foundation for targeted interventions, policy enhancements, and collaborative efforts to uplift the community and pave the way for a brighter future.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the case study on the transformation of socioeconomic status in the Phasepardhi community in Unchgaon Village sheds light on the multifaceted changes that have taken place within the community. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the factors that have influenced the community's socioeconomic progress and the challenges they continue to face. The study underscores the need for educational initiatives and awareness campaigns to empower the Phasepardhi community with knowledge about available government facilities and services. As a substantial percentage lacks agricultural land ownership, promoting alternative livelihood options can enhance the community's economic prospects. Encouraging active participation in social activities can strengthen community bonds and improve the Phasepardhi community's social integration. The findings suggest the importance of policy interventions that address both economic

empowerment and social integration within the Pharsepardhi community. Collaborative efforts from both governmental and non-governmental organizations are essential to uplift the socioeconomic status of the Pharsepardhi community.

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