

Tribes of Maharashtra, List of Major Community, Significance

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Tribes of Maharashtra are communities with a common language, culture, traditions and historical identity. They have traditionally lived in forest, hill and remote regions of the state. Maharashtra has 36 districts and the largest tribal population is concentrated in the eastern forest belt of Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Bhandara, Gondia, Nagpur, Amravati and Yavatmal, along with the western hilly districts of Dhule, Nandurbar, Jalgaon, Nashik, Palghar and Thane. Their cultural diversity and traditional knowledge form an important part of the state's social heritage.

Tribes of Maharashtra

A tribe is a social group that shares common ancestry, language, customs and cultural practices. In India, tribal communities notified under Article 342 of the Constitution are recognised as Scheduled Tribes (STs). Maharashtra has more than 50 tribal communities, with several classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). The state has 29 Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) Offices for tribal welfare. Among these, Nashik, Kalwan, Taloda, Jawhar, Dahanu, Dhaarani, Kinwat, Pandharkavda, Gadchiroli, Aheri and Bhamragad are identified as the most sensitive tribal development areas.

List of Major Tribes of Maharashtra 2026

The major Tribes of Maharashtra mainly inhabit the **Western Ghats, Satpura Range, Sahyadri Hills** and eastern forest regions. They preserve distinct languages, customs, festivals and traditional occupations.

Bhil

- It is one of the largest tribal communities of Maharashtra.
- Major sub groups include Bhilala, Vasava, Pawara, Kokna, Bhil Mavchi, Pardhi Bhil, Bhil Garasia, Bhil Gamit, Barda Bhil and Dhanka Bhil.
- Bhils mainly inhabit Dhule, Nandurbar, Nashik, Jalgaon, Ahmednagar and Pune.
- They celebrate traditional **harvest festivals** and maintain strong **folk dance** and archery traditions.

Gond

- Maharashtra's largest forest tribe includes Maria Gond, Raj Gond, Dorla Gond, Dhurve Gond, Pardhan Gond, Naikpod Gond and Khatola Gond.
- They are concentrated in Gadchiroli, Chandrapur, Gondia, Nagpur, Bhandara, Wardha and Yavatmal.
- Nature worship, clan based traditions and **festivals** linked with agriculture remain central to Gond culture.

Kolam

- A recognised PVTG in Maharashtra. Major groups include Kolam, Gondhali Kolam, Pardhan Kolam, Dorla Kolam and Raj Kolam.
- They mainly live in Yavatmal, Chandrapur, Nanded and Wardha.
- **Shifting cultivation**, forest produce collection and traditional spiritual practices remain important.

Korku

- Found mainly in Amravati and Akola districts. Important groups include Bhil Korku, Halam Korku, Nihal Korku, Bharia Korku and Nahul Korku.
- Agriculture, forest resources and colourful community festivals shape their traditional lifestyle.

Warli

- Famous worldwide for **Warli painting**, an important tribal **folk art** using simple geometric designs.
- Major groups include Warli, Dhodi Warli, Kholcha Warli, Kudala Warli and Mokhada Warli.
- They mainly reside in Palghar, Thane, Nashik and nearby hill regions.

Mahadeo Koli

- Found across western Maharashtra, especially Nashik, Pune, Satara and Ahmednagar.
- Important groups include Thakur Koli, Kadam Koli, Rathod Koli, Dhangar Koli and Dhuri Koli.
- Farming, hunting traditions and local village festivals remain significant.

Katkari

- Also recognised as a **PVTG**.
- Important groups include Rajkatkari, Dhor Kathkari, Son Kathkari, Toli Kathkari and Dhankar Kathkari.
- They are mainly distributed in Raigad, Palghar, Thane, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg.
- Bamboo work, forest produce collection and seasonal labour support their livelihoods.

Thakar

- Major groups include Thakar, Thakar Vareli, Thakar Dhodia, Thakar Kholcha and Thakar Kudala.
- They are largely concentrated in western Maharashtra and continue traditional farming, **folk songs** and religious celebrations.

Dhangar

- Important groups include Hatkar Dhangar, Ahir Dhangar, Khutekar Dhangar, Khatik Dhangar and Gavli Dhangar.
- Many communities traditionally practise sheep and goat rearing, pastoralism and seasonal **migration** across Maharashtra.

Tribes of Maharashtra Significance

- **Constitutional Recognition:** Scheduled Tribe status provides constitutional safeguards, reservation benefits, welfare programmes and focused development through tribal specific schemes.
- **Geographical Distribution:** Tribal communities are concentrated in eastern forests and western hills, making these regions important for **biodiversity conservation** and balanced regional development.
- **Integrated Tribal Development:** Maharashtra operates 29 ITDP Offices. Eleven offices, including Gadchiroli, Aheri, Jawhar, Dahanu, Taloda, Nashik, Kalwan, Dhaarani, Kinwat, Pandharkavda and Bhamragad, receive priority attention because of higher developmental challenges.
- **Cultural Heritage:** Tribal communities preserve unique languages, folk music, dances, rituals, oral traditions, handicrafts and world famous Warli painting, enriching Maharashtra's cultural identity.
- **Traditional Knowledge:** Indigenous knowledge of forests, medicinal plants, biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use continues to support environmental protection and local livelihoods.
- **Economic Importance:** **Agriculture**, animal husbandry, bamboo crafts, forest produce collection, **fishing** and handicrafts remain major livelihood sources and contribute to the rural economy.
- **Social Challenges:** Limited education, seasonal migration, temporary settlements and dependence on forests continue to affect socio-economic development in several tribal regions.

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