



Mahadev Koli Tribe

Why in News?

A new study highlights that **the Mahadev Koli tribe** has remained **largely excluded from mainstream environmental discussions**, despite holding **rich medicinal and ecological knowledge** that could significantly strengthen [global climate resilience](#).

Key Points

▪ About Mahadev Koli tribe:

- The Mahadev Koli tribe is an indigenous forest-dwelling community in Maharashtra, mainly located in **the Akole block of Ahmednagar district**, part of the **North [Western Ghats](#)**.
- Their name is derived from their **deity, Mahadev**, and they traditionally inhabit the Mahadev Hills in Maharashtra.
- They are officially recognized as a [Scheduled Tribe in India](#).
- They speak Marathi and write in the [Devanagari script](#).
- The **community comprises 24 exogamous clans**, with members adopting their clan names as surnames.
- Besides agriculture, they engage in **cattle rearing**, [dairy and poultry farming](#), and **wage labour**.
- **Traditional Knowledge:**
 - The Mahadev Koli community holds rich **Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)**, using over **50 native tree species** for treating various ailments.
 - They are particularly known for their use of **bark, leaves, and fruits**—especially from plant families such as **Fabaceae** and **Moraceae**—in traditional medicine.
 - The community has remarkable **expertise in observing and interpreting subtle changes in climate and biodiversity**.
 - They rely on **seasonal calendars, indigenous taxonomies, and forest-based ecological indicators** to monitor environmental shifts and guide their practices.
- **Key Findings of the Report:**
 - The Mahadev Koli tribe reside in the **Western Ghats, one of the top 8 [global biodiversity hotspots](#)**, known for its unique and endemic plant and animal species.
 - The research was conducted by the **Watershed Organisation Trust - Centre for Resilience Studies (W-CReS), Pune**.
 - Findings are featured in **Springer's book: Mitigation & Adaptation Strategies Against Climate Change in Natural Systems**.
 - The research documents and validates the **tribe's Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (LEK/TEK)** on medicinal plants and climate variability detection.
- **Medicinal Knowledge:**
 - The Mahadev Kolis use 51 native tree species across 41 genera and 25 families to **treat ailments** like fevers, dysentery, coughs, joint pain, skin infections, and snake bites.

- **Scientific Contribution:**

- Their TEK is presented as **adaptive, scientific knowledge, not mere folklore**, and is crucial for local climate response.
- Their observations form a **ground-level climate dataset** absent from standard meteorological systems.
- Their **ecological knowledge** spans plant taxonomy, healing systems, land-use patterns, seasonal calendars, and spiritual plant practices.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/mahadev-koli-tribe>

