

## STATUS OF EDUCATION AMONG ADIVASIS: WITH REFERENCE TO ORAONS OF CHHATTISGARH

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### Abstract

*In pre independent era, the Adivasis for various reasons, mainly to avoid confrontation with non-Adivasi exploiters often retreated to seclusion (Kamat, 1998) and lived in geographical and social isolation. This isolation on the one hand help them to maintain and preserve their distinct culture, control over the land, forest, and other resources. Though backward in the opinion of rest of the world, they lived a self sufficient and contented life with the nature. However, the process of modernization and industrialization encroached and grabbed the natural habitats of Adivasis, resulting in displacement, poverty, exploitation and marginalization (Nambissan, 2000; Sinha, 2000; Xaxa, 2011). At this juncture, it was impossible for the Adivasi communities to stay isolated. They were brought face to face with rest of Indian people. They were brought in competition with rest of Indian for which they were not prepared. They had to be incorporated into the larger society. After independence the constitution entrusted the task to India government. Education was considered as crucial in bringing change, development and transformation in life and communities of Adivasis. Many schemes and programmes were introduced to promote education among the Adivasis. If implemented fervently these can bring immense changes in the education life if Adivasis. Thus, the paper aims to study the status of education among Adivasis with special reference to Oraon community of Chhattisgarh.*

**Keywords:** Adivasi, Oraon, Kurukh, Aboriginal, displacement, Exploitation



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### Introduction

Education has been considered as an essential, elemental and efficient tool for human resource development. It is a fundamental activity for social, economical and cultural development of any society. It is a process of developing and promoting social, economic, political, health, cultural and other consciousness among human beings. World Bank (1980) in its document 'Education Sector Policy Paper' acclaimed education as (i) a basic human need (i.e. education require to acquire a broad base of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills) (ii) a means of meeting other basic needs (i.e. education influences and is influenced by access to other basic needs--adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, health services, and

shelter) and (iii) an activity that sustains and accelerates overall development by preparing and training skilled workers.

UNESCO (2005) says that education is a programme that can control or enhance the freedom of people; preserve or destroy the culture; integrate or assimilate the culture. Young (2011) says that education can create and uphold knowledge. It provides conditions for innovation and change. It is rightly said that the rise and fall of a civilization is inextricably linked with the educational system.

Education widens the mind and trains the critical faculties of thought and judgment empowers people with the ability to discern about the actuality of events of the society. Education improves the strength of individual and institution (Adams, 2002) and inspires people to organize themselves against tyranny and overcome conventional inequality of caste, class, race and gender (Engels, 1845, cited in Cole, 2008; Dreze & Sen, 2002). It enhances the self-respect, increases political and economic involvement of people and empowers them in all aspects of life. Thus, education is absolutely essential for the development of any kind of skill, attitude, values, thoughts and judgment amongst people.

India has a rich glorious past in the field of education. Many educational institutions like 'Gurukul' and pathshala of Hindus, Monastery of Buddhist, Maqtabas and Madarsas of Muslim and the schools of English etc. existed since olden days. There were worldwide recognized ancient centers of learning like Nalanda, Takshashila, Ujjain, Vikramshila Universities. However, large parts of the Indian society were unable to benefit from these institutions. One major community among these was Adivasi. In 1961 the literacy rate of Adivasis was 8.53% (Female 3.16% and Male 13.83%) against 28.31% (Female 15.35% and Male 40.4%) of India and 10.2% (Female 3.29% and Male 16.96%) of scheduled caste.

After independence, constant effort is been made for imparting formal education to the children belonging to Adivasi communities. The Constitution of India places a special responsibility on the Government for the educational advancement of the Adivasi communities. Article 46 in the Constitution enjoins that the "State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation." Following the mandates of the constitution many schemes and programmes like scholarship, free book distribution, hostels facilities, ashram schools free coaching etc. were introduced.

At this backdrop this paper seeks to study the demographic profile and educational status of Oraon Adivasi residing in the state of Chhattisgarh. This study makes use of secondary data like census 2011, educational statistics, DISE, researches etc. The paper has been divided into three parts. First part presents a brief description of the Adivasi communities residing in Chhattisgarh, second the demographic profile of the Oraon Adivasi community and the third part provide detailed description of the educational status of Oraon community of Chhattisgarh.

### **Adivasis of Chhattisgarh**

Chhattisgarh is the central-east state in Indian union carved out of erstwhile Madhya Pradesh on 1 November 2000. It is bordered by the states of Odisha to the east, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh to the west, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand to the north and northeast and Telangana to the south. It has land area of 135,194 square km. According to census, 2011 around 25,540,196 people are residing in it.

The state has around 42 Adivasi communities each one with their distinctive culture and ethos. The state has approximately 7,822,902, which is 30.6% of the total population of the state. This makes Chhattisgarh the fifth largest Adivasi populated state in the country. Gond, Arakh, Bhatola, Kawar, Kanwar, Cherwa, Oraon etc. are some the Adivasi communities of the state. A list of Adivasi communities with more than 10,000 populations is given in below.

**Table-1: The Adivasi communities of Chhattisgarh**

Name	Individual Adivasi Population			% to Total ST Population	Literacy Rate
	Male	Female	Total		
All Adivasi	3,873,191	3,949,711	7,822,902	100.00	59.1
Gond, Muria, Maria, etc.	2,120,974	2,177,430	4,298,404	54.95	56.7
Kawar, Kanwar etc.	441,242	446,235	887,477	11.34	67.0
Oraon	373,065	375,724	748,789	9.57	68.9
Halba, Halbi	183,877	191,305	375,182	4.80	76.2
Bhattra	105,283	108,617	213,900	2.73	48.7
Sawar, Sawara	64,769	65,940	130,709	1.67	65.0
Korwa, Kodaku	64,866	64,563	129,429	1.65	38.7
Binjhar	59,653	60,065	119,718	1.53	60.9
Bharia, Bhumia etc.	57,370	56,597	113,967	1.46	48.5
Nagesia, Nagasia	57,536	56,996	114,532	1.46	51.4
Baiga	44,847	44,897	89,744	1.15	40.6
Khairwar, Kondar	40,165	39,651	79,816	1.02	61.5
Agariya	33,384	33,812	67,196	0.86	47.0
Majhi	32,739	32,288	65,027	0.83	44.1
Bhaina	27,896	28,079	55,975	0.72	60.5
Majhwar	27,613	27,707	55,320	0.71	38.3

Dhanwar	25,723	25,272	50,995	0.65	41.7
Kharia	23,975	25,057	49,032	0.63	56.2
Kamar	13,070	13,460	26,530	0.34	47.7
Kol	10,433	10,440	20,873	0.27	58.3

Source: GOI Census, 2011

According to the table-1, Gond with the population is 4,298,404 is the largest Adivasi community in Chhattisgarh. It contributes 54.95% to the total Adivasi population of the state. Kavar is the second largest Adivasi community and contribute 11.34% Adivasi population of the state. The subject of our study 'Oraon' is the third largest Adivasi community of the state. According to census 2011 there are around 748,789 Oraons living in Chhattisgarh forming 9.57% of Adivasi population of the state. Halba (4.80%) and Bhattra (2.73%) Adivasi communities occupies fourth and fifth place. Besides these other Adivasi communities are lesser in number (below 1.5 lakhs). Adivasis are scattered all over the state, however 85.88 % of Oraons live in three districts of the state viz. Sarguja, Jashpur and Raigarh (see table-3)

### **The Oraons and their Habitat**

*Oraons* are one of the important Dravidian aboriginal communities of Chhotanagpur region in the state of Jharkhand, India. They speak Dravidian language and call themselves *Kurukh*. However, government and other people term them as Oraon. As per their oral history and the close relation of their culture, food, ornaments, and language to the Indus valley civilization; they are the offering of Indus valley civilization (Kurukhworld.com). It said that around 2500 B.C. they lived in Indus valley but migrated to southern part of the country to escape from frequent constant attack from Aryans, floods and anomalous atmosphere (Kurukhworld.com). They migrated again to Rohtasgarh (presently in Bihar) in seventh century and fortified it. However, Rohtas was not the destination they were meant for. They were attacked again and had to move further into the deep forest presently known as Chhotanagpur (Thapar & Siddiqi, 1979). Since then Chhotanagpur region has been the home of Oraons. Thus, present state of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Bihar are the home of Oraons. However, at present Oraons could be found all part of the country. Due to modernization, progress in transport and information technology and rapid industrialization encroachment of their natural habitat is taking place and they are forced to migrate to other parts of the country. Apart from this, the traditional methods of agriculture, lack of scientific investment on agriculture and the lack of market have made farming unenviable and inefficient for the rural population especially the youth. Therefore, both educated and uneducated Oraons have migrated to different parts of India in search of employment. At present a large population of Oraon society can be seen

working on the tea gardens Assam and Bengal. These are the people whom the British took as cheap laborers from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha in nineteenth century (around 1840s and 1860s) (De, 2015). Similarly, a large number of Oraons can be found in Andaman and the metropolis like Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai, Kolkata etc. Report of the Planning commission for eleventh five year plan reveals that an estimate of 8.5 to 10 million Adivasi have been displace from their home in 60 year after independence. Few rehabilitated but vast majority moved to other parts of the country in search of livelihood. Table-2 lists presence of Oraon Adivasi in various states of India.

**Table-2: Population of Oraon in Indian States**

State	All Adivasis	Lit. Rate (All ST)	Oraon Population			% of Oraon to Total ST pop	Lit. Rate (Oraons)
			Persons	Male	Female		
India	104,281,034	59.0	36,82,992	18,39,800	18,43,192	3.53	68.16
Bihar	13,36,573	51.1	1,44,472	73,917	70,555	10.81	44.5
Chhattisgarh	7,822,902	59.1	7,48,789	3,73,065	3,75,724	9.57	68.9
Jharkhand	8,645,042	57.1	17,16,618	8,55,210	8,61,408	19.86	67.0
Madhya Pradesh	15,316,784	50.6	28,431	14,275	14,156	0.18	80.9
Maharashtra	10,510,213	65.7	43,060	22,943	20,117	0.41	79.5
Odisha	9,590,756	52.2	3,58,112	1,77,457	1,80,655	3.73	67.6
West Bengal	5,296,953	57.9	6,43,510	3,22,933	3,20,577	12.14	59.0

Source: GOI, Census 2011

Oraons community has a population of 36,82,992 in India, which is 3.53% of the total Adivasi population. This is the fifth largest Adivasi community in the country. The population of Oraon aboriginal is greater than the population of Tripura (36,73,917), Meghalaya (29,66,889), Manipur (28,55,794), Goa (14,58,545), Puducherry (12,47,953), Mizoram (10,97,206) Chandigarh (10,55,450), Sikkim (6,10,577), etc. and the number of people who spoke Kurukh were more than one million, they were kept in five different states (Sunder, 2002). When separate states were demanded for the holistic development of Adivasi residing in central India, two more states, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand were formed further dividing the Oraons in seven states. Table-2 shows Jharkhand hosts the largest number of Oraons. 17,16,618 Oraons reside in Jharkhand which is 19.86% of Adivasi present in the state and 46.61% of the total Oraon population. In other words, we can say that 46.61% Oraons of the country live only in Jharkhand and rest 53% reside in six states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

### Oraons of Chhattisgarh

Oraons of Chhattisgarh are the part the group who entered Chhotanagpur from north-west after being attacked at Rohtas (Thapar & Siddiqi, 1979). The total population of Oraons in Chhattisgarh is 7,48,789, which is 9.57% of the total Adivasis present in the state and 20.33% of Oraons present in the country. Chhattisgarh is the second largest habitat of Oraon Adivasi community. Generally, Oraons can be found in all the districts of the state, but 74.8% of the population live in Sarguja (38.18%) and Jashpur (36.62%) district. Raigarh is the third largest Oraon populated district where 11% Oraons of the state inhabit (See table 3).

**Table-3: District wise distribution of Oraon population in Chhattisgarh**

Dist	All ST Total	Population of Oraons			% to Total Oraon Pop	% to Total ST Pop
		Total	Male	Female		
Chhattisgarh	78,22,902	7,48,789	3,73,065	3,75,724	100.00	9.57
Surguja	13,00,628	2,85,885	1,42,756	1,43,129	38.18	21.98
Jashpur	5,30,378	2,74,224	1,35,471	1,38,753	36.62	51.70
Raigarh	5,05,609	82,932	41,365	41,567	11.08	16.40
Korba	4,93,559	30,255	15,256	14,999	4.04	6.13
Koriya	3,04,280	24,469	12,342	12,127	3.27	8.04
Bilaspur	4,98,469	17,063	8,478	8,585	2.28	3.42
Janjgir–Champa	1,87,196	12,895	6,471	6,424	1.72	6.89
Raipur	4,76,446	5,060	2,577	2,483	0.68	1.06
Kanker	4,14,770	3,601	1,901	1,700	0.48	0.87
Durg	3,97,416	3,409	1,702	1,707	0.46	0.86
Rajnandgaon	4,05,194	2,276	1,195	1,081	0.30	0.56
Bastar	9,31,780	1,763	957	806	0.24	0.19
Bijapur	2,04,189	1,747	938	809	0.23	0.86
Mahasamund	2,79,896	1,490	703	787	0.20	0.53
Dantewada	4,10,255	1,125	641	484	0.15	0.27
Kabeerdham	1,67,043	211	92	119	0.03	0.13
Narayanpur	1,08,161	215	135	80	0.03	0.20
Dhamtari	2,07,633	169	85	84	0.02	0.08

Source: GOI, Census 2011

### Formal Education among the Adivasis

Education in India is age old phenomenon. ‘Gurukul’ in Vedic period, monasteries in Buddhist period and Makhtab & Madarsa in the medieval period provided formal education. Centers of higher learning like Nalanda, Takshashila, Vikramshila etc. attained world famous yet formal education among Adivasi did not begin until the Christian missionary entered the into the Chhotanagpur region of the country in 1840s. Anthropologist and Sociologist like G. S. Ghurye, K. S. Singh, Nirmal Kumar Bose etc. considered Adivasis part of Hindu society. They say that Adivasis and Hindus live side by side since for many years. However, Adivasis

remained away from the educational institutions. Singh (1979) says that in Chotanagpur region, Adivasis in general and Oraons in particular and Hindus have lived in close proximity, but in Hindu education institutions; *tolls* and *pathshala* only the upper class of Hindu society and in Maqtab and Madarsa children of Muslim ruling classes were taught. Adivasis never featured in these institutions to receive education.

Colonial government in India provided Rs. 100000 (one lakh rupees) in 1813 A.D. and Rs. 1000000 (ten lakh rupees) in 1833 A.D. for the expansion of education in India, but nothing was said about tribal education. It was William Adams (with the objective to stop the growing revolt among Adivasi) for the first time in 1838 A.D. expressed the desire to educate the Adivasis (Bara, 1997). Thereafter, in about 1848 A.D. Christian missionaries entered into Chhotanagpur region and started schools for the Adivasis. Thus, began the formal education among Adivasis.

However, formal education among Adivasi in a planned manner began only after independence. Many programs have been started by the Government (relaxation in the rule of opening schools in Adivasi areas, scholarships at all stages of education, hostels facilities, free education etc.).

According to 2014-15 DISE data, Chhattisgarh has 53299 Primary and Secondary Schools, 6225 Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools, 19 UGC recognized universities (12 Government and 7 Private).

### **Status of Education among Oraons of Chhattisgarh**

According to Census 2011, with the literacy of 68.9% Oraons are second most literate Adivasi community in Chhattisgarh; Halba/Halbi (76.2%) being the first (see table-1). The literacy rate of Oraons community is higher than the literacy of all Adivasi as national level (58.95 %) and all Adivasi at Chhattisgarh (59.09%). It is higher than the literacy of scheduled caste at national level but lower than the literacy rate of scheduled caste in Chhattisgarh. However, it is 3.1% lower than the overall literacy rate of the country (73%). It is more than the national average rate of literacy rate (59%) of all tribals.

Literacy rate of Oraons are better as compared to other Adivasi communities of the state. However, in-depth analysis would provide a different picture. There are 31.07% Oraons (23.43% male and 38.61% female) are still illiterate. The level of education of Oraons too calls for greater attention. The table below provides the level of education among the Oraons.

**Table-4: Level of education of Oraons**

Category	Person	% of Oraon	% of Male	% of Female	% of Female	
Above 6 years	644,204	100.00	320,055	100.00	324,149	100.00
Illiterate	200,143	31.07	74,996	23.43	125,147	38.61
Literate	444,061	68.93	245,059	76.57	199,002	61.39
Literate without Education Level	11,937	1.85	6,607	2.06	5,330	1.64
Below Primary	90,879	14.11	49,161	15.36	41,718	12.87
Primary	108,583	16.86	58,235	18.20	50,348	15.53
Middle	107,010	16.61	58,940	18.42	48,070	14.83
Matric	52,161	8.10	29,753	9.30	22,408	6.91
Higher Secondary	40,701	6.32	23,670	7.40	17,031	5.25
Graduation and Above	30,274	4.70	17,071	5.33	13,203	4.07
Technical Diploma	1,078	0.17	821	0.26	257	0.08

Source: GOI, Census 2011

Table-4 reveals the weaker side of the high literacy rate. There is a gap of 15.18% between male and female literacy rate. According to the table above 1.85% Oraon people are literate without even going to school and 14.11% are literate by attending just two or three years of schooling. 16.86% and 16.61% people has studied till primary and upper primary respectively. Further, 8.10% and 6.32% people have studied secondary and higher secondary respectively and only 4.70% people of Oraon community have reached the level of higher education. We can observe two trends from the table; 1) higher the stage of education lesser is the possibility of people from Oraon community to attend and 2) the gap between male and female remains at all level. This calls for much attention from the stakeholder and the Oraons people themselves.

### Conclusion

The paper has attempted to analyze the status of education among the Oraons of Chhattisgarh with the help of census data, DISE data, educational statistics, and researches undertaken in field of education of Adivasis. The analysis reveals some genuine and significant facts. Vast majority of people from Oraon community still live in remote areas of the state. They live in the periphery of the state (far away from the state capital). The overall literacy rate of Oraons of Chhattisgarh is quite high in comparison to national average of Adivasis and scheduled caste and not remarkably lower than the overall literacy of India. It is an encouraging result for those who believe that education is nothing but mere increase of literacy. However, there is a consistent gap between male and female literacy. Hence, the spread of education among females has to be given special care. Further, very few people from Oraon community are



able to reach the higher education. It has been noticed that there is a large fall between different levels of education among Oraon Adivasi of Chhattisgarh. The focus of education among Adivasi seems to have been only to increase enrolment and literacy and not to educate the Adivasi. Education provided to increase enrolment and literacy cannot integrate the Adivasi but alienate them. Finally it can be concluded that high literacy does not ensure and guarantee quality education. Therefore, the focus of education should not be only to increase literacy but to enhance capability of the Adivasi people. Education provider must arrange schools and colleges in such a way so as to develop the capability of Adivasi.

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