

SCHEDULED TRIBES EDUCATION IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Education system is the backbone of a nation and it should cater the needs of all the citizens without any discrimination. India is pluralistic country which accommodates persons from different cultures, backgrounds and sections. Scheduled tribe is one of the most marginalised groups in India that is backward in all aspects. This paper is an attempt to evaluate the educational level of scheduled tribe population and to highlight the issues and challenges regarding the same.

Keywords: scheduled tribe, marginalised, educational level.



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Introduction

The relationship between education and human being this is very close man has achieved success in almost every field and made his life comfortable. But this development or achievement has been gained at the cost of his knowledge and skills which has been acquired through education, As it is regarded as the most powerful instrument for emancipation and empowerment of human beings (Mishra – 2001). Indeed, education is a process of human enlightenment and empowerment for the betterment and quality of life. It not only enhances mans knowledge, skills, competencies, potential, values and attitudes but also transform his belief and thoughts. At the same time, it is assumed as the training of the human soul in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue, (Dongaonkar 2004).

The present millennium is witnessing phenomenal global changes and no nation can isolate itself from the process. In the process of global changes and development India has achieved success in various fields i.e., agriculture, industrialisation, modernisation, urbanisation, trade and commerce, transport, communication, science and technology, production and so on. With the result of these phenomenal changes education are expanding at every corner in India, as it is assumed as the human resource development (HRD) in the country. However, after independence, the country has become more conscious to educate

her people. Therefore, it has introduced various educational schemes and programmes to attain higher level of education and also to achieve socio-economic as well as overall development. But this educational expansion or change has not taken place for everyone and all sections of society. The scheduled Tribes and unprivileged people are still lagging behind in all stages of education. Despite constant efforts both by Central and State governments to spread the education of scheduled tribes and other weaker sections, the level of education among scheduled Tribes is very low in comparison to general population.

Review of Related Literature

Ample amount of literature is available on the condition of tribal education in India. Some of the studies relevant to the paper Sujatha (1994) in a study on tribes of Andhra Pradesh contends that the perspective adopted for educational development of tribal communities fails to adequately address the specific disadvantages characterizing the tribal population and reported that one of the major constraints of tribal education at the planning level is the adoption of a dual system of administration. Rani (2000) observed that due to the language barrier the tribal children are unable to establish communication link with the teacher and thus leading to the termination of their education in some point or the other. Sujatha (2008) revealed that government policy focused on education as the main avenue by which to integrate them into mainstream society. Jha & Jhingran (2002) have strongly advocated the use of the mother tongue or home language as medium of instruction in early stages of education. This assumes larger importance in the context of education of scheduled tribe children because their mother tongue is often quite distinct from the major languages in the state or regional languages and it is needed to have a local tutor from the same tribal area. The Praitichi Committee Report (2002) identifies cost of schooling, lack of motivation of teachers, lack of inspection, and the increasing dependence on private tutoring to be the main hurdles in the path of education for tribal children. Gautam, (2004) in his article found that due to wrong medium of instruction, the appointment of non-tribal teachers in tribal areas and communication gap between the teachers and tribal children are the causes of high dropout rates in tribal schools. Maharatna (2009) stressed on how a more voluntary and mutual interaction between tribes and mainstream society can be developed. Lal (2005) found that among all school dropouts, Adivasis and Dalits form the biggest group. Further, the largest group amongst them is girls. Education, thus for the marginalized sections of the society needs to become the solution and an inclusive development policy for their economic and social up-liftment. Nair (2007) has given stress on distance education in tribal areas

specifically to provide access to the group of children in remote areas. Sedwal and Kamat (2008) focused on issues related to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes – groups which are recognised for affirmative action within the Constitution of India. Abdulraheem (2011) explained that education as an important parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy and the policies have to focus on inclusive rather than divisive growth strategies. Rami's (2012) paper discusses the status of primary education in the tribal district of Dang in Gujarat. In the district, there are about 412 primary schools; out of which 378 primary schools are run by the district panchayat. The paper concludes that most of the schools have buildings, but they fail to attract the girl students owing to lack of other essential amenities like drinking water as well as separate toilets for boys and girls. Another problem that makes tribal students leave schools is the medium of instruction which is quite different from their own vernacular dialect. Brahmanandam and Babu (2016) in their evaluative study revealed that despite sincere efforts the performance of the tribes in education is much lower than the Scheduled Castes. Further they reported that the policy makers paid little attention to culturally linked education that led to drop outs and directly impacted overall educational status of scheduled tribes. Dar and Najjar (2017) studied the special features of the educational system in the tribal areas of khanshaib, Jammu & Kashmir, India having main tribes of the areas are sedentarized and nomadic Gujjar and Bakkarwal. The study revealed that under the flagship Programme of Sarva Shiksha Abiyan (SSA) government has been partially able to uplift the educational infrastructure however the teacher student communication has been improved in the last few years by recruiting local tribal and non-tribal teachers Recently Punnaiah (2018) in his paper attempted to examine government policies for tribal education, tribal populations and literacy rates. He also highlighted the major issues and challenges of tribal education in the state of Telangana

Assessment of Enrolment:

The educational development of scheduled Tribes has been encouraged date back to the prior period to independence, yet it has not yielded satisfactory result. Literature and many reports available reveal that in spite of all the constitutional provisions and efforts put in the successive five-year planning period; their education level is very low. It seems that people belonging to scheduled tribes still have to go a long way to come up to the general level in the field of education. These can be compared through number of enrolments at various stages of education.

According to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) Annual Report, 2014 – 15, total number of scheduled Tribes students enrolled from class I to XII is 25,454 thousand which is far behind the number of enrolled students from general category i.e. 259468 thousand. India has total tribal population of 10.43 crores (Table-1) which is 8.6 per cent (Table-2) of total population of India as per 2011 census.

Table-1 Scheduled Tribe population and decadal change by residence in 2011

Scheduled Tribe population 2011			Decadal change 2001-2011		
Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
104,281,034	93,819,162	10,461,872	23.7	21.3	49.7

Source - Census of India, 2011

Table-2 Percentage of Scheduled Tribes to total population in India: 2001-2011

Percentage of Scheduled Tribe 2001			Percentage of Scheduled Tribe 2011		
Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
8.2	10.4	2.4	8.6	11.3	2.8

Source - Census of India, 2011

Enrolment in primary and middle levels of education is the foundation that determines the future educational development. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the number of scheduled tribes students enrolled at various levels of education and can be compared with non-scheduled tribe population. The enrolment of scheduled tribe and general population students in various courses from primary to senior secondary stages are given in table 3.

Table 3: Level-wise Enrolment in School 2014-15

(In thousands)

Stages	General			Scheduled Tribes		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	girls	Total
Primary (I-V)	67609	62892	130501	7309	6824	14133
Upper Primary(VI-VIII)	34501	32664	67165	3371	3181	6552
Secondary (IX-X)	20121	18180	38301	1678	1574	3252
Senior Secondary (X-XII)	12440	11061	23501	802	715	1517

Source: Annual Report, MHRD, 2016.

The above table reveals that there is a variation in the enrolment of general and scheduled tribe students at different stages. Up to primary and upper primary stages, enrolment ratio is very high but after that, it declines rapidly in both categories. This is precisely because of high dropout rate at this level. Similarly, there is a wide disparity in the

level of education between boys and girls in general and scheduled tribe students. The enrolment of girl students is much lower than that of boys in both cases that is scheduled tribe as well as general students. This is because of gender biasness and social discrimination against girl child. Further, it also illustrates that there has been substantial increase in the number of students belonging to scheduled tribe at all stages of education, particularly in the primary level.

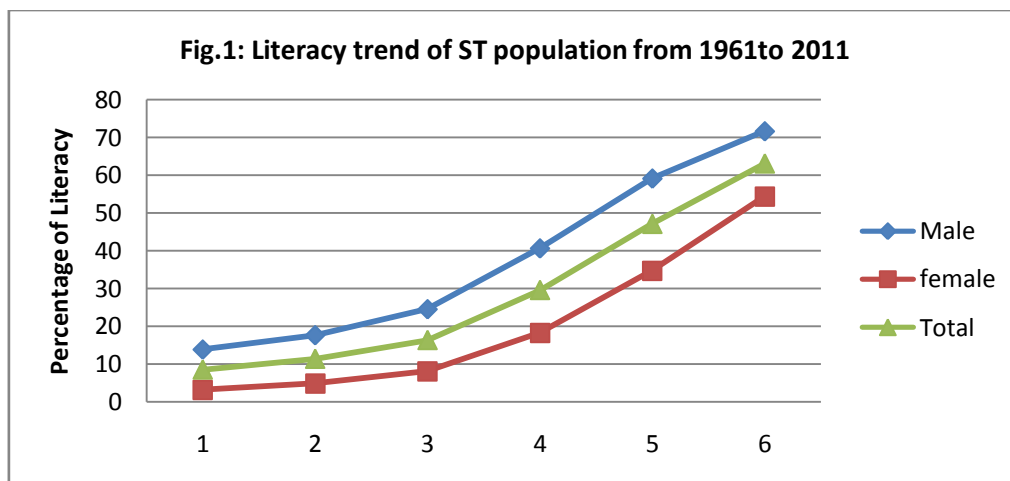
Further, in order to understand the progress of education level of scheduled tribe population, an evaluation can be made in the percentage differences in literacy trends in different decades (table 4).

Table- 4 Literacy Trends of Scheduled Tribes in India from 1961 to 2011(In Percent)

Year	Male	Female	Total
1961	13.83	3.16	8.54
1971	17.63	4.85	11.39
1981	24.52	8.05	16.35
1991	40.65	18.19	29.60
2001	59.17	34.76	47.10
2011	71.70	54.40	63.10

Source: National Commission for SCs & STs, Fifth Report & Census, 2011

The literacy rates of scheduled tribes in India from 1961 to 2011 are shown in table – 4. The percentage of literacy among tribes was only 8.54 per cent in 1961 which has increased to 63.1 per cent in 2011. Gender analysis also reveals a substantial increase in the literacy rates of tribal population through the six decades. The female literacy increases from mere 3.16 per cent in 1961 to 54.4 in 2011. However male literacy is much better than the females it increases from 13.83 in 1961 to 71.70 per cent in 2011. The data urges that there is a need to make more efforts for improving the literacy rate of female tribal population. The literacy trend over the six decades is presented graphically in figure 1.



State wise distribution patterns

Many literatures and several studies reveal that education distribution of scheduled tribes in India is not uniform in all states. There is unequal distribution and it varies from state to state as well as region to region. The imbalances exist not only amongst states but also between gender and communities. Indeed, the State wise spatial distribution of scheduled tribe education presents original disparity and variation. There is a wide gap between developed and backward states as well as smaller and larger states/UTs. The State wise spatial distribution of total enrolment of scheduled Tribes students at various levels of education is presented in table 5.

Table 5: State-wise Enrolment by Stages of School Education of ST Students – Pre-Primary, Primary, Upper-Primary-2010-11.

S. No	State/UT	Pre-Primary			Primary / Jr. Basic (Classes 1-V)			Upper Primary / Middle /Sr. Basic (Classes VI-VIII)		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Andhra Pradesh	13039	9009	22048	396410	373650	770060	152900	131787	284687
2	Arunachal Pradesh	22554	20227	42781	88778	84121	172899	30383	29362	59745
3	Assam	79777	77174	156951	208254	208186	416440	106867	103504	210371
4	Bihar	0	0	0	107790	73483	181273	25907	18463	44370
5	Chhattisgarh	11824	10489	22313	515217	480322	995539	209672	185570	395242
6	Goa	0	0	0	4876	4442	9318	3659	3233	6892
7	Gujarat	0	0	0	634761	590277	1225038	187876	167521	355397
8	Haryana	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	Himachal Pradesh	0	0	0	17946	17016	34962	12776	11749	24525
10	Jammu & Kashmir	3867	3250	7117	69940	59897	129837	29361	23593	52954
11	Jharkhand	14450	10913	25363	776465	741070	1517535	243861	234147	478008
12	Karnataka	0	0	0	226014	212191	438205	119299	108162	227461
13	Kerala	0	0	0	22408	20447	42855	13335	12381	25716
14	Madhya Pradesh	0	0	0	1414673	1380106	2794779	467462	479138	946600
15	Maharashtra	130971	269412	699875	635160	1335035	307643	260591	568234	
16	Manipur	26212	24952	51164	74778	62123	136901	21821	19885	41706
17	Meghalaya	134878	272079	223494	223553	447047	64465	73058	137523	
18	Mizoram	19530	18579	38109	77608	71228	148836	33341	30896	64237
19	Nagaland	57032	51783	108815	107526	99190	206716	43593	40310	83903
20	Orissa	0	0	0	684634	654098	1338732	210031	184846	394877
21	Punjab	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	Rajasthan	28834	18768	47602	725213	618299	1343512	265026	189458	454484
23	Sikkim	0	0	0	14915	15207	30122	5298	6713	12011

24	Tamil Nadu	10781	8822	19603	59409	54523	113932	27748	25721	53469
25	Tripura	1030	877	1907	86356	81761	168117	39303	34925	74228
26	Uttar Pradesh	0	0	0	79876	74630	154506	26719	21696	48415
27	Uttarakhand	0	0	0	26183	23128	49311	11203	11129	22332
28	West Bengal	0	0	0	309164	299240	608404	165412	166229	331641
29	A&N Islands	61	58	119	1222	1148	2370	889	756	1645
30	Chandigarh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31	D&N Haveli	0	0	0	13516	12765	26281	7019	5892	12911
32	Daman & Diu	31	36	67	954	860	1814	570	464	1034
33	Delhi	231	231	462	3361	2775	6136	1747	1417	3164
34	Lakshadweep	476	523	999	3001	2846	5847	1845	2122	3967
35	Puducherry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	INDIA	565371	521540	1086911	7674617	7177742	14852359	2837031	2584718	5421749

Source: Selected Educational Statistics, MHRD, 2010-11

Table 5 provides a varied picture and scenario with respect to State wise dispersion pattern and depicts the following points:

- There is unequal distribution of education level of scheduled tribe students among the states/UTs in terms of total numbers, sex as well as at stages. However, variations and disparities exist everywhere.
- States of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Andaman and Nicobar Island, Lakshadweep, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu have very low or more regional ratio of scheduled tribe enrolment. It is precisely because these states/UTs are predominantly inhabited by tribal population.
- Enrolment of scheduled Tribes students are higher in those states/UTs via scheduled tribe population is proportionately higher. For example, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Delhi etc.

Therefore, the observations of the above analysis justify that the level of education of scheduled Tribes is very low and present a vulnerable scene in the country. At the same time, it raises many questions. Even after 57 years of independence, these people are struggling to achieve higher level of education. The Constitution of India promises free and compulsory education to this community and more than 57 years have passed, yet majority of the scheduled tribe population is illiterate. What does it indicate? A constitutional fraud? This has serious implications for a country like India. Why have the promises not been kept? Was there any shortage of resources or management problems?

This is very alarming and needs immediate intervention. No doubt the literacy trend has improved over the last six decades, but still it is far behind and the low education level of these people is not only hampering the socio-economic development but also raising several issues and challenges. These challenges can be discussed as:

- it is creating manifold socio-economic disorder in the society;
- lower education level is deteriorating the condition of all well-beings and other sections seriously;
- socio-economic backwardness, unemployment, mass migration and many more problems are attributed due to low education level among these people and in general;
- lower education level is accentuating discriminations and deprivation among these peoples;
- it is not only generating problems and miseries in the country but effecting society at all levels and scales; and
- if these evolving trends continue, it will accelerate the number of illiterates in the country.

Conclusion

Education is an important indicator of socio-economic development and also a prominent component of population studies. Equally, it is considered as an essential trait of civilisation and overall development of human beings. Emancipation and empowerment of people can be achieved only through education. Indeed, the country's advancement and development largely depends upon the level of education as it provides enlightenment, power, privilege, protection and prestige to the people.

The evaluation of education level for the scheduled tribes in India reflects pathetic scenes. Their level of education is fairly very low. Despite the constitutional provision and persistent efforts to improve the levels of education since Independence, there exhibit high degree of dispersion and disparities. In fact, is a matter of serious concern and worrisome for the whole nation as it affects each and every individual of the society. It is imperative that measures proposed for the country's educational level should be in harmony of scheduled tribes and unprivileged people as we all know that ignorance is disastrous and leads to irrationality. Therefore, following measures can be taken effectively:

- There is a need of major shift of attention to make education a priority sector in respect scheduled tribe people.

- Education development among scheduled tribes in India urgently requires a shift in focus to bring out intensive educational programs to achieve higher level of education.
- There is in need of quick implementation of strong and effective education policies in the country. For this, a monitoring body should be constituted under the supervision of high cabinet level and action should be taken to the persons and officers who show any negligence.
- Higher proportion of the country's budget needs to be spent to do scheduled tribes related education programs.
- As education among scheduled tribes suffers due to acute poverty, unemployment and lack of awareness, however, there is a need of mass campaign and creating awareness, providing full financial support and scholarships, guidance and counselling to parents.
- A well thought out and integrated education policy initiative with main thrust on primary and vocational education is the need of the hour, before disparities and inequality of education get further enmeshed in quagmire.
- Lastly, it is also essential to provide a congenial atmosphere in the country. For this, government and people's participation is equally essential. The whole study demonstrates every complex scenario and suggests that there is a need of change of people's mind and attitude and put collective efforts to improve education level of scheduled tribes in the country. The realisation of dream can come true if the government takes strong and effective steps in the implementation of countries education policies with the assumption that education is the essence of human beings and the best contraceptive to socio-economic development.

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