



Educating tribals children in India: Challenges and development

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Abstract

There is no set definition of Scheduled Tribes but under Article 342 of the constitution, certain classes are declared as Schedule Tribes. The scheduled Tribes' population in India is 8.6 percent of total population, as per 2011 census. According to 2011 census the literacy rate (58.96 percent) of Scheduled Tribes is very low as compare to the total population. The country has special concern and commitment for the wellbeing of scheduled tribes. Will of the government notwithstanding, population in remote and low-density areas; in general, do not have adequate access to basic amenities and education opportunities. The main vision of the government is educational advancement of Scheduled tribes to bring them to the level of the rest of the community. The basic educational development of scheduled tribes will help development of their economic, cultural, health and nutritional states and reduction of total fertility of scheduled tribes. The process of basic education intervention at the right time and space, keeping in view the ability of the recipients shall be of great help to the population, particularly the scheduled tribes who suffer from educational backwardness. The children need special attention in this regard. For educational development Scheduled there have been different schemes formulated and implemented from time to time. These schemes are mainly to improve the educational level of Scheduled tribes through pre-matric and post-matric scholarship/stipends, hostels for boys and girls separately, residential/ashram schools in tribal areas, boarding grants, opportunity costs, free supply of books, stationary, uniforms, etc.

Keywords: Scheduled, definition, uniforms, Educating

Introduction

India is a pluralist country, with rich diversity, reflected in the multitude of culture, religions, languages and racial stocks. The Indian population includes different castes, communities and social groups. The prevalence of such pluralism has made the social fabric stratified and hierarchical, consequently, social and economic opportunities are differently distributed on the lines of caste and class affiliations. At geographical level also, India has equally pervasive and diverse features. It has large tracts of hinterland, hilly terrain, a dense forest cover and fertile coastal belts besides Indo-Gang tic plains. Such divergence in ecology and geography has ensured an occupational and spatial differentiation, but the predominant occupation is agriculture, which is a major occupation of three quarters of Indians. Apart from a minuscule minority the rest live in the areas of India; almost 80 percent of India's population live in rural areas. Rural India is characterised by lack of infrastructural facilities, poverty and indebtedness, which has led to the perpetuation of layers of inequalities and disparities at various levels. As result, not only have certain deprived groups and sections of the population been unable to partake in the process of development, but also affects has been the very pace of the country's process of development. This is particularly severe in the case of scheduled Tribes as they not only live in hinterlands, bereft of basic amenities of modern life, but are also socially and economically marginalized. Their social deprivation is aptly reflected in their educational backwardness. In this context

it can be said that tribal India is the least developed area and the tribals' area the worst sufferers as they are doubly disadvantaged.

Who are the Scheduled Tribes?

The Adibasi who are the original inhabitant of the land, constitutionally known as scheduled Tribes for all legal and formal purpose. As par the constitutional provisions Article 342, a community can be notified as scheduled tribe by president of India with the recommendation of the concerned state Governor. While governor selecting any community to be declared as scheduled tribe looks the following characteristics of the community such as:

- Primitive Traits
- Geographically isolated
- Distinct culture
- Shyness of contact with community at large
- Economically backward
- Believe in ghost and spirits and worship them
- Profess primitive religion known as 'Animism'
- Speak tribal dialects
- Their chief occupations are gathering forest products, hunting, etc.
- They are, by and large, meat eaters.

Tribal Population in India

The scheduled tribes' population in the country, which was 5.3 percent of the total population as per 1951 census, has increased to 104,281,034, which is 8.60 percent of total

population, as per 2011 census. Increase in the population of STs' is partly attributed to inclusion of more communities as STs' in various states. There are about 700 tribes and sub-tribes in India in different parts of India. Ethnologists have classified tribes of India into four major groups such as;

1. The tribes of North-eastern frontier Agency (NEFE) and Eastern India, belonging to Mongolite ethnic community.
2. The tribes of Jharkhand and Orissa- the Proto-Australoids
3. The tribes of western and central Himalayas-the Mediterranean Nordic and
4. The tribes of South India-have strain of Australoid, and Alpine.

The main concentration of tribal population is in the central India and the North Eastern states. More than 50 percent of the total population is in the central India and the North Eastern states. More than 50 percent of the total STs' of the total STs' population is concentrated in the six states of Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Gujarat and Jharkhand. In some of the states and Union Territories Schedule Tribes population is predominant such as Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Dadar, Nagar Haveli, Lakshadweep, Manipur, Tripura, Chattisgarh and Orissa.

Education and Tribes

Education is the basic requirement for 'development' of an individual, a society, State, region or country. An important challenge the scheduled tribes encounter now is the question of overall development through education. The basic educational input for scheduled tribes will help development of their economic, cultural, health, and nutritional status. The basic education imparted to these people, particularly women, will have bearing on increasing the standard of living at household level, reduction of total fertility rate, improving of health and nutritional level. The expansion of educational facilities in tribal areas and rise in the enrolment of scheduled tribe children have recorded since independence. However, the face of educational development has not been satisfactory and in practice education has not always conceded readily. Education, thus for the tribal, should be accepted as the first charge on available resources for development-financial, material, and personal, which holds protection and development of tribal communities. Despite several innovative measures on the educational development are underway, attempts to remove of the scheduled tribes through education have been daunting owing to various reasons, primary, being the lack of basic educational knowledge and awareness. Every person shall be able to benefit by education 'designed' to meet through basic 'learning', both essential learning tools (literacy, oral expression and numeracy) and basic learning content(knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by them for survival, developing skills, improving the quality of life and to live and work in dignity. Learning could be considered as any change in behaviour, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, skills or capabilities which cannot be ascribed physical growth. Learning acquired by an individual or a society depends on cultural background. However, one has to focus, that whether or not expanded educational facilities incorporate useful knowledge, reasoning ability, skills and values, the focus of basic

education must be on actual learning acquisition rather than exclusively upon enrolment or completion of certification requirement. The process of basic education intervention at the right time and space, keeping in view the ability of the recipients shall be of great help to the population, particularly the scheduled tribes who suffer from educational backwardness. The children need special attention in this regard.

The most important and effective instrument to take advantage of various provisions of the constitutional schemes implemented for the development of scheduled tribes is to bring them at a reasonable level of educational attainment. For educational development of the STs', there have been different schemes formulated and implemented from time to time. These schemes are mainly to improve the educational level of Sets through pre- and post- matric scholarship/ stipends, hostels for boys and girls separately, residential/ashram schools in tribal areas, boarding grants, opportunity costs, free supply of books, stationary, uniforms, etc. special attention has been paid on tribal women's education. It is proposed to establish an educational complex for Schedule Tribes, where the literacy among the women is below two per cent. This complex is aimed at providing education and skills development in traditional art and crafts for female children.

Problems of Tribal Education

In spite of constitutional guarantees and persistent efforts, tribal communities continue to lag behind the general population in education. The reason for this can be categories as external constraints are related to problems and difficulties at levels of policy, planning, implementation, and administration. Internal constrains refer to problems associated with the school system, curriculum, medium of instruction, pedagogy, academic supervision, monitoring, and teacher –related problems. The third set of problem related to social, economic, and cultural background of tribal and psychological problems of first-generation learners.

1. External constraints

The perspective adopted for educational development among tribal communities fails to adequately address the specific disadvantages characterizing tribal population and distance norms formed by the government have not been beneficial to tribal locations because of their spare population and sporadic residential patterns. Further, in formulating policies and programmes for tribal education is essential to understand the complex realities of tribal life and the expectation of tribals from the system, and this has never been done either by tribal welfare department or by the education department. Consequently, no worthwhile policy for tribal education has been formed. One of the major constraints of tribal education at planning level is the adoption of a dual system of administration. The tribal welfare department deals with tribal life and culture and administers development work at the local level, including education. But the tribal welfare department lacks expertise in educational planning administration in general and academic supervision and monitoring in particular. On the other hand, the educational department is the sole authority for planning of educational development at the state level. It formulates implementation guidelines and instruction regarding curriculum, textbooks, teacher requirement, transfer policies, and so on. In this the department tends to

formulate uniform policies for the entire state. The school calendar is a case in point, where vacations and holidays cater to the needs of formal school set up in a non-tribal context, with little consideration for local context and tribal festivals. This lack of sensitivity to their problems and failure in understanding tribal social reality, coupled with faculty selection and appointment of teachers in tribal areas, have resulted in poor performance and teacher absenteeism in tribal schools. Under the system of dual administration, absence of coordination and complementarities as well as inadequate scope for reciprocal use of expertise and experience between the two departments has invariably stunted educational development among tribal.

2. Internal constraints

The internal problems of tribal education refer to the quality of school provision, suitable teachers, relevance content and curriculum, medium of instruction, pedagogy, and special supervision. A majority of schools in tribal areas are without basic infrastructure facilities. Normally, school buildings in tribal areas have thatched roofs, dilapidated walls, and non-plaster floors. Research evidences shows that a large number of tribal schools do not have teaching-learning materials, or even blackboards. In tribal areas the opening of a school is equated with the posting of a teacher and same is the case with 'ashram' school. It is found that in most of ashram schools which are residential in nature, there is no space for the children to sleep. Consequently, the classroom turns into the dormitory and vice versa. Due to lack of minimum sanitary provisions, it is not uncommon to find that children studying in ashram are afflicted with contagious diseases like scabies and diarrhoea, leading to high drop-out rates. Schools in tribal area just function with bare minimum facilities.

a. Content and Curriculum

Through the demand for changing the content and curriculum to suit tribal context has an old one, no serious efforts has been made in this direction in any state, except for some sporadic pilot projects. The uniform structure and transaction of curriculum has put tribal children at disadvantage. In respect of pedagogy, it has been found that the rigid systems of formal schooling, which emphasized discipline, routine norms, teacher-centred instruction, etc., have made the children wary of school. This goes against the culture of free interaction and absence of force as embedded in tribal ethos and culture prevalent at home. This has led to sharp division between home and school leading to lack of interest among the children towards school, and research findings have shown this as a major factor behind non-enrolment. Another area is the inherent fear of tribal children towards the teacher, and their inability to establish a communication link with the teacher and this is reflected in low attendance and high dropout rates. This could be tackled to a great extent by using the regional language as the medium of instruction in case the constitution of India allows the use of tribal dialects (mother tongue) as the medium of instruction in case the population of the said tribe is more than one lakh. But this has not been adopted on the grounds of feasibility and viability of introducing and sustaining such a change. In recent years, some efforts have been made for preparing primers in tribal dialects but again they been nullified in the context of inter-tribal rivalry, hierarchy, etc and also, being on a very small scale, are incapable of influencing mainstream practices.

b. Socio-economic and Cultural Constraints

In a broad sense, these socio-economic and cultural factors can be outlined as poverty and poor economic conditions, social customs, cultural ethos, lack of awareness and understanding of the value of formal education, conflict and gap between the home and school, etc. studies on educational deprivation of tribal have inevitably linked it to their poor economic condition and poverty. The main occupation of tribal is agriculture, practised either through shifting cultivation or terrace cultivation where productivity remains very low, consequently, children play an important role, contributing directly or indirectly to family occupation and household works like cattle grazing and fuel and fodder collection is deemed free and additional incentive are given to children, in practice, it is not free due to several reasons. First, the incentive schemes do not have full coverage, and thus, have limited value at community level. Second, many of the benefits do not reach the beneficiaries. Third, even though incentives like slates and uniforms are given, they are poor quality and do not reach in time, thus nullifying the entire purpose. It should be noted that the impoverished economic status of tribal makes even the small amount of private expenditure involved in procuring writing material, clothing, etc a serious burden on the family. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising if education isn't given priority. In an economy dominated by struggle for survival, options are limited. Since education does not provide any visible and immediate benefit and tribal do not provide see beyond their present state, the participation of tribal children in education also becomes limited. Another reason for low participation is the opportunity cost involved, as the majority of non-enrolled children are required to work in households work or family occupations. Even if the economic contribution of children is indirect, they certainly facilitate the participation of parents in economic activity. In recent years the efforts of the government have been directed towards improving economic conditions of tribes by introducing various developmental programmes and schemes, mostly related to agriculture, horticulture, and cattle rearing, backed by subsidies and monetary and non-monetary inputs. A critical analysis of development programmes and their effect on tribal households shows that till tribal households reach a threshold level of income and land size, the economic development programmes can come into conflict with other activities like education. In a way it can be said that these development programmes seem to be adversely affecting the education of tribal children.

Constitutional provisions

The constitution of India provides for an elaborate framework for socio-economic, political development of schedule tribes and for preventing all sorts of exploitation by other groups of the society. Article 46 enjoins upon the state to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of weaker section of the people, and in particular, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social, injustice and all forms of exploitation. Article 275 provides for grants to be enable the state by the union government as may be necessary to enable the state government to the cost of the schemes that may be undertaken by the state government with the

Approval of the union government for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the scheduled tribes in the state or raising the level of administration of the scheduled areas therein. The constitution also provides for reservation of seats for scheduled tribes in the House of people (Article 332) and the services of posts of the union and state governments (Article 335). The fifth schedule and sixth schedule of the constitution, in fact, are the basic contours of the constitution scheme for the protection of scheduled tribes and the administration of scheduled areas. While taking into account the special socio-economic problems in different religions, various, enabling measures provided under the constitution present a comprehensive and well-designed scheme for tribal development.

Article 335 of the constitution states: "The claims of the members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the union or state." In pursuance of the constitutional provisions, various instructions on reservation in regard to educational development of the scheduled tribes have been issued from time to time. As a result of the implementation of the constitutional provisions on reservation, there has been an improvement regarding the representation in different services by the scheduled tribes. Besides, a special recruitment drive has also been carried out since 1989 to fill up the backlog of reserved vacancies.

Educational Reservation and concession

Article 15 is historic in nature in that it provides positive discriminatory treatment in favour of scheduled tribes in matters education. Thus, the responsibility of providing education with special protective measures has been accepted.

In view of Article 45 which provides for free and compulsory education for all children up to 14 years within a stipulated time frame and the declared emphasis on achieving the objective of universal enrolment and universal retention at elementary stage of education, prescribing any definite percentage of reservation of seats for scheduled tribes at school stage may not be very relevant. The effective educational incentives, however, to the children of those belonging to scheduled tribes would help in improving the educational level.

The guide lines issued by the ministry of education/university grants commission on reservation for scheduled tribes in university admission/ appointments provide as follows:

1. About 7.5 per cent of seats in all courses and programmes of study should be reserved.
2. Candidates belonging to scheduled tribes should be given relaxation of 5 per cent marks for the minimum level prescribed, if any, seats reserved for them still remain unfilled, further relaxation should be given in order of merit among such candidates so that all the reserved seats are filled by the candidates belonging to this category.
3. The above percentage of seats is also to be reserved in hostels.
4. In respect of reservation in appointments, the same percentage of 7.5 should be adhered to in respect of non-teaching posts and up to the level of lecturers/ assistant

Professors in respect of teaching posts.

The other facilities provided UGC to scheduled tribe candidates include:

- a. Reservation of fellowship/scholarships and research associates to various categories;
- b. Reservation of teacher fellowship;
- c. Reservation of seats in the universities/college hostel;
- d. creation of special cell in the universities to ensure implementation of the reservation policy;
- e. Establishment of coaching centre and institutional units for colleges with higher proportional enrolment of scheduled tribes; and
- f. Organising or preparatory and remedial courses.

State governments are governed by state legislatures. However, the reservation of 7.5 per cent for scheduled tribes has reportedly been brought to the notice of state governments for implementation. Generally, the state governments follow have been issued to state education secretaries/ vice chancellors of universities for strict implementation of reservation.

There is reservation for scheduled tribes (7.5 per cent) in regional Engineering colleges and IITs. The reservation quota is generally filled in the case of regional Engineering colleges. Special measures are there to increase enrolment and retention in IITs.

- a. The cut-off marks for admission in case of scheduled tribe students is 60 per cent of the lowest marks obtained by students belonging to general category.
- b. A preparatory course of one year duration of scheduled tribes students who marginally failed in joint entrance examinations (JEE). They are admitted directly after the preparatory course, subject to a performance test. Tutorial and remedial coaching is provided regularly to tribal students.

Reservation in Employment

The reservation policy was designed to uplift the scheduled tribes, socially and educationally through providing them reservation in civil post and services. The study team on tribal development programmes, headed by Shri Shilo A.O., has also observed, "As a measure calculated to promote the material welfare and improve the socio-economic condition of the tribals the study team attaches the greatest importance to the implementation, in letter as well as in spirit, of the provisions of the constitution bearing on reservation of posts in Government services for the members of the scheduled Tribes. It is true that agriculture is the mainstay of tribals in most parts of the country but as suitable land available for assignment is scarce and cannot meet even a small fraction of the demand, the scope for ameliorating the lot of tribals through the promotion of agriculture is limited. The benefit of the concession regarding the reservation of posts are many and varied. A tribal who enters government services, particularly in the middle or higher echelons, is not only benefited economically but acquires a social standing and a certain measure of sophistication which are almost certain to impel him to give to his children an education and upbringing such as will ensure for them a status not inferior to the status which he himself has attained. To the individual, therefore entry into government service is at once a privilege and an opportunity; to his children it means

a better start and a new and fuller life; and to the community to which he belongs a source of inspiration, shaking them out of one of their member.”

Direction contained in national policy on education (1986 and 1992) on the education of the Scheduled Tribes

The following measures will be taken urgently to bring the scheduled tribes on par with others:

Revised para (i)] priority will be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal ares. The construction of school building will be undertaken in these ares on prority basis under the normal funds for education, as wellas under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, tribal welfare schemes, etc.

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1. the socio-cultural milieu of STs has its distinctive characteristics including, in many casses, their own spoken languages. This underlines the need to develop the curricula and devise institutional materials in Tribal languages at the initial stages, with arrangements for switching over to the regional languages.
2. Educated and promising Scheduled Tribes youths are encouraged and rained to take up teaching in tribal ares.
3. Residential schools, including Ashram Schools will be established on a large scale.
4. Incentives schemes will be formulated for the scheduled tribes, keeping in view their special needs and life styles. Scholarship for higher education will emphasise technical, professional and para-professional courses. Special remedial courses and other programmes to remove psycho-professiona courses. Special remedial courses and other programmes to remove psycho-social impediments will be provided to improve their performance in various courses.
5. Anganwadi, Non-formal and adult Education Centre will be opened on a priority basis in ares predominantly inhabited by scheduled Tribes.
6. The curriculum at all stages of education will be designed to create an awarness of rich cultural identity of tribal people as also of their enoromous talent.

Table 1: Gross Enrollment Rate of Scheduled Tribe Students (2015-16)

Level	Male	Female	Total
Primary (I-V)	107.8	105.7	106.7
Upper Primary (VI-VIII)	95.4	98.2	96.7
Elementary (I-VIII)	103.4	103.1	103.3
Secondary (IX-X)	73.7	75.4	74.5
Senior Secondary (XI-XII)	43.8	42.4	43.1

Source: Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2018, MHRD, GOI

Due to implemntation of Sarva Sikhya Abhiyan Gross Enrollment Rate of tribal children has increased. But as they are moving higher classes the gross enrollemnt rate is falling down. At the primary level gross enrollment ratio is more than hundren because in primary level overage children also enrolled. But at the senior secondary stage GER of tribal children is only 43.1 percent.

Schemes for Educational Development of Schedule Tribes

1. **Post Matric scholarship:** the post matric scholarship scheme provides financial assitance to all STs Students for pursuance of post-matric studies in recgnised institution with in India. The scheme provides for 100% assitance from the ministry to state governments and UT Administrations in implementing the scheme, over and above their respective committed liabilities.
2. **Book bank scheme:** The ministry also gives financial assistance for setting up Book-Banks in institutionsrunning professional course like medicine, engineering, law, agriculture, veterinary, chartered accountancy,business management, and Bio-sciences.
3. **Overseas scholarship:** Annually, ministry provides financial assitance to 9 meritorious STs students for post graduate, Doctoral and post-Doctoral studies in foreign universities/institutions of repute.
4. **Upgradation of merit of STs Students and scheme for coaching:** The scheme provide 100% central assistance to state/UT Administrations. The upgradation of merit scheme is for arranging coaching classes in reputed colleges for developing competence among STs students for their better performance in competitive examinations conducted by various universities institutes for admission to medical and engineering courses while the scheme for coachoing is for conducting pre-examination coaching for tribals students for various examinations conducted by UPSC, SSC, Banking services recruitment Boards etc.
5. **Rajiv Gandhi National fellowship:** the objectives of the scheme is to provide fellowships in the form of financial assitance to students belonging to scheduled tribes to pursue higher studies such as M.phil and Phd in regular and full-time course.The scheme covered all universities/ institutions recognized the Universities Grants Commission(UGC)under section 2(f) of the UGC Acts.
6. **Scheme of establishment of Ashram Schools:** constuction of Ashram schools for the primary, middle, secondry, senir-secondry stage of educationas as well as upgradation of existing Ashram schools for scheduled tribe boys and girls including PGTs. Ashram schools provide education with residential facilities in an environment conducive to learning. The scheme is in operation since 1990-91.
7. **Scheme of establishment of Hostels:** The scheme is for STs boys and girls (including Primitive Tribal Groups). The primary objective of the modification is attract the implementing agencies for undertaking hostel construction programme for STs Girls studying in middle schools, higher secondary schools, colleges and universities towards the broader vision of containment.

Conclusion

Education of tribals cannot be left to shotr-term plan strategies. It is important that planners take a long term view which is embededin a meaningfull policy framework. Emphasis should be on quality and equity rather than quantity as has been the case in the past. The prime focus should be on provisionof quality education that makes tribal

Communities economically effective and independent. In tribal context it is essential that the school schedule be prepared as per local requirement rather than following a directive from the state. It has been found that vacations and holidays are planned without taking into consideration local contexts, and thereby, unnecessarily antagonize tribal communities and keep them out of school. Though it has been highlighted time and again, no concrete step has been taken to provide locally relevant material to tribal students. Availability of locally relevant materials will not only facilitate faster learning but also help children develop a sense of affiliation to school. Skill development, competency building, and teachers' motivation also need to be strengthened for sustaining educational development. The teacher should be made the centre of educational transformation, and therefore, must remain the primary facilitator.

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