

Educational Status among the Scheduled Tribes: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Scheduled Tribes have always been a geographically, socially isolated group and are economically marginal. Over centuries they maintained their own law and order system. With the advent of British, the tribal regions were thrown open for development. In the name of development they were pushed into margins. In the post-Independence period, sincere and concerted efforts were made for the development of tribals both economically as well as educationally. Despite these efforts the performance of the tribes in education is much lower than the Scheduled Castes. As the studies on tribal education suggests that most of the time the policy makers approach was only to develop national curriculum rather giving importance to their culturally linked education. This in turn encouraged them to be dropouts at primary level. This off course directly impacted their overall educational status.

Keywords: Tribes, Panchcheel Approach, Dhebar Commission, Primary Education, Dropouts, India

Introduction

Education, the essential components of man-making and nation building, can be understood at different level—from information on general knowledge to epistemology. Population is potential only with human resources. Education makes human resources possible. Population with human resource is the most invaluable asset of the nation state. Without it, population remains to be the liability of the government. To make a point clear, education holds knowledge, skill, and character. The Governments of independent India did not take due note of education as the key to man making and nation building. The Governments relied more on literacy mission based on 3Rs (*Reading, Writing and Arithmetic*) to fulfil its welfare schemes as incorporated in the *Directive Principles of State Policy*. At the backdrop of the *New Education Policy* coming up, the paper makes a critical attempt to appraise the status and statistics of the education among Tribes across India.

Development cannot be considered in isolation. Moreover, the mere development of a few affluent persons few cannot be attributed to the overall development of the country in general and the tribal (population) in particular. While referring to development, *Sen (1999)* stated that unless the capabilities among human beings are adequately addressed and deprivations faced by these groups are overcome, development cannot take place. In fact he stressed on the capabilities and human freedoms, and this freedom can only be achieved from political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency, and security, which are all different but inter-connected.

India has been bestowed with rich diversity—be it flora or fauna and corresponding habitats by the benign nature. The civilizations and their cultures constitute the rich heritage of India. However, a sizeable part of Indian population is yet to get benefits out of it. They are still living with a culture

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considered to be primitive by the urban conglomerate. Going by anthropologists, they live in secluded areas and constitute a distinct ethnology group (Verma 1996). The term “tribe” is applied to people who are considered to be primitive and live in tribal areas as specified by the govt. A tribe is a self-contained unit; it constitutes a society in itself.

The *Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1911* defines a tribe as a “collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous though originally it might have been so” (Nithya 2014). According to Majumdar quoted by Verma (1996), “A tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous with no specialization of functions, rule by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise united in language and dialect, recognizing social distance with other tribes or caste without any social obloquy attaching to them, as it does in the caste structure, following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas, from alien sources, above all conscious of homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration”.

Considering the above definitions, the Indian tribes (*ethnic groups*) are characterized in respect of distinctive social and cultural ethnic groups residing in areas of hills, forests, sea, and islands. Their life style is quite different from those civilized (Preet 1994). Their societies are not static, rather dynamic. However, the pace of social change in tribal society is very slow. Since they are socially and economically backward, attempts have been made by the Government to develop them. Today, the governments are paying special attention to the development of the Tribes (Nithya 2014). Though our national leaders and constitutional makers were committed to uplift these sections, a desired development has not yet been achieved in this regard (Chandra Guru et. al: 2015).

Based on the above observations, the proposed paper on ‘Educational Status among the Scheduled Tribes: Issues and Challenges’ would critically examine the following objectives.

Objectives of the Paper

1. To study the complexity among variables responsible for lower level of education among tribals;
2. To review the effectiveness of different educational programmes and their impact on tribals,
3. To assess the educational gaps and suggest suitable remedial measures for improvement of their education.

The present paper is mostly based on secondary data from various research studies including census data, committee reports on tribal, annual reports of tribal welfare ministry, Report on Selected Educational Statistics, and also NSS reports, etc.

As the British came to the Indian subcontinent, most of the tribal regions were brought under development for revenue collection (Sen 1992). On this point, Virginius Xaxa (2015) has made an important observation that the incorporation of the tribal regions into the colonial rule led to their integration into the larger social system, and this had helped the colonial masters to bring a uniform legal and administrative structure on one side and laying down or extension of roads, railways and other means of communication on the other. All these developments had adverse impacts on the socio-economic developments of the tribals. The powerful non-tribals found it an opportunity to encroach into the tribal lands with an excuse of development programmes. The non-tribals in due course evicted the tribals from their own land became the land holders of the same and made the tribals work for them as hired agricultural labours. As tribals became aware of land being the private property (written records of rights on land), there was unrest among tribals for the land they had been evicted from. This marked the beginning of unrest and rebellion in several tribal territories. The resistance movements compelled the British administrators to introduce partially or completely excluded areas of administration in British India. Following a policy, the British kept the Tribes in isolation and away from the national mainstream (Chandra Guru, et.al 2015). Hence it is clear that the British policy towards tribals was of isolation and allowing them to pursue their own socio-economic and cultural life. This has pushed them into backwardness (Bhowmik 1988; Sen 1992).

During the pre-independent period, the individual and collective efforts were made by many social workers and voluntary organizations to bring the tribals in to mainstream. The Christian missionaries introduced lots of development and welfare activities to the tribal people especially in areas of health and education. They did all these activities throughout the country, but they succeeded mostly in Assam, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh. Their zeal for social welfare was unique and their approach was humanitarian.

Among many others, *V. Elwin* (first a missionary and later an anthropologist) and some other anthropologists made their contributions by bringing different aspects of tribal life to limelight. Based on his prolonged experience of working in tribal areas, *Elwin* developed a firm conviction that tribals could be developed only “along the lines of their own genius” (*Sahay1998*). *Elwin’s* observation was criticized by a section of politicians and social workers including *G.S Ghurye*, who advocated for a complete assimilation of the tribals to the mainstream of Indian society. He argues that tribals are backward Hindus, and any attempt to isolate them would be meaningless (*Vidyarathi 1976*). While advocating this policy, they did not apprehend the negative consequences of the cultural contact. They also ignored the fact that a tribal culture has many positive and useful facets, and that must be preserved. *Elwin* and other anthropologists were thus considered as “isolationists”, “revivalists”, “no changers” and alleged to treat tribals as museum specie for academic purpose.

Subsequently after Independence, *Nehru* (the first Prime Minister of India) took a stance on *Elwin’s* arguments and outlined his Government’s approach to working on the development of tribals without imposing anything from outside. The logic behind this approach was to preserve their traditional institutions, customs, and practices. He then supplemented his famous five principles known as *Panchsheel*. The essence of these principles is that development should be along the lines of genius of the tribal community, and nothing should be imposed upon them.

Brief Review of Literature

Virginus Xaxa (2015) describes that the colonial state did nothing to improve the socio-economic conditions of the tribals other than providing them protective measures. He says that the post-independent India also continued the same policy with little modification such as providing certain percentage of seats in state sponsored educational institutions and government services. Under these provisions, 7.5 per cent jobs have been reserved both at the centre and states for tribals. This has opened a large pool of government services to them. Though reservation provides employment opportunities, the lack of educational qualifications and necessary skills denied them of the jobs, and the reserved seats remain vacant in many cases. In the case of quota for higher grade services, the condition is even worse as candidates with necessary qualifications are not available.

Rami’s paper (2012) 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 the lack of other essential amenities like drinking water as well as separate toilets for boys and girls. The common toilet facility has prevented many tribal girls from enrolling beyond 5th standard. Hence, the drop out ratio goes higher among the tribal girls. Another problem that makes tribal students leave schools is the medium of instruction which is quite different from their own vernacular dialect.

Pradhan (2011) describes that despite special initiatives like Ashram schools, introducing vernacular to primary level, and teaching in local dialects, the tribals are still lagging behind non-tribals. Under such circumstances, the government and policy makers should put best efforts to improve their educational status.

Ghosh’s (2007) paper provides in-depth literature on the tribal education of Jharkhand and West Bengal. He says that few tribals are badly in need of special attention for their literacy and basic education. He discusses on the tribals of “*Ho*” and “*Mahali*” in Jharkhand and “*Lodha*” in West Bengal and their low literacy, especially of female literacy. He also says that the female enrolment

ratio is much lower among these tribals than that of their males. Due to low overall enrolment ratio of these tribals, there is a further sharp decline of enrolment immediately after the primary education, and this trend continued among males and females. During the cultivation period, the drop-out rate is more because children are required to assist their family members in sowing, weeding, plantation, and harvesting activities. Economic hardship is also a major factor for the drop out of the tribal children. He also said about a number of initiatives taken by the governments like low-cost primary schools having one or two-teachers in sparsely populated tribal habitations. To achieve gender equity in education, a number of suggestions have been given by the author such as motivation of parents to send their daughters to school, curriculum to be customised to the needs of tribal children, separate toilets for girls, and other child care centres are some of the suggestions.

Gautam's (2003) paper on *Janasala* experience is the record of a collaborative programme undertaken by both the Government of India and United Nations agencies (*UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNESCO and ILO*) to achieve universal elementary education especially for girls and children from the deprived communities, working children, and children with specific needs. The programme covered nearly three million children; out of it, 33% would be tribal children. Under *Janasala*, many favourable interventions were undertaken to improve quality education of tribal children. As the tribal children possess cognitive abilities, a suitable curriculum and teaching methods should also be adopted. Finally, the paper concludes that the non-tribal education has very limited value in the tribal cultural milieu because it does not match with the lifestyle of individuals and the needs of the tribal community. Linking school education to life in general and the needs of the tribal communities in particular is the most important step that requires serious attention, and efforts should be made in this direction.

Rana et.al (2003), while reviewing the situation of primary education in West Bengal, made certain observations, stating that the primary education across India has been facing multiple problems such as infrastructure, shortage of schools, shortage of teachers, and financial handicap of the parents. He also observed that just addressing the problem of infrastructure would not provide any guarantee to improvement either in quality or spread of primary education. To improve the literacy level, a number of issues were suggested such as parents' participation in monitoring and governance to improve the delivery of primary education. It can be cited in this regard that the Bengal Government's "*Sishu Siksha Karmasuchi*" (SSK) experiment provides the cost-effective primary education particularly to the most underprivileged sections of society. Finally, the evils of private tuition must be put an end.

Tribal Scenario

The tribal population in India is numerically a small minority, but they represent an enormous diversity of groups. Tribals vary among themselves in respect of language, dialects, physical features, size of the group, habitat etc. They live largely in isolation, but they spread over the length and breadth of the country. Prior to the Constitution, 1950 the tribes were variously termed as *aboriginals, adivasis, forest tribes, hill tribes, primitive tribes*, etc. Upto 1919, the so called groups were included in the '*Depressed Classes*'. Later, the *Indian Franchise Committee*, 1919 had accorded a separate nomenclature for these groups for census reports, and in 1931, they were recognised as *primitive tribe*. Only in 1951 order, they were identified as scheduled tribe (*Verma 1996*). In 1951, the number of schedule tribe groups was only 212, and their number has increased to 573. In spite of their own vernacular, they can speak in common language of the state where they live. There are more than 270 such languages in India (*India Education Report, 2002*). As per 2011 census, they are 10.43 crores constituting 8.6% of the total population of the country and occupying about 15 percent of the country area in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plain to forest, hills and inaccessible areas. There are 75 ethnic groups considered as *Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)*. Scheduled Tribes are in largest number i.e. 62% in the state of Odisha. The largest concentrations of indigenous or Schedule Tribe people are found in two distinct geographical areas. More than half of the Scheduled Tribe population is concentrated in Central India, i.e., Madhya Pradesh (14.69%), Chhattisgarh (7.5%), Jharkhand (8.29%), Andhra Pradesh (5.7%), Maharashtra (10.08%), Orissa (9.2%), Gujarat (8.55%) and Rajasthan (8.86%). The other populated areas are in the North East, i.e., Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim, and Arunachal

Pradesh. Among the states of India, Mizoram has the highest proportion of Scheduled Tribes (94.43). In contrast, Uttar Pradesh stands with the lowest proportion of Scheduled Tribes (0.57). In India, as many as 20 states and 2 union territories have the highest concentration of ST population. The national average is 8.6%.

Educational Status of Tribals in India

India is moving towards an inclusive growth, but owing to the lack of education and skill development, the marginalised sections are not part of the inclusive growth. To make them to be part of the inclusive growth, the Constitution has empowered the backward classes with reservations in education and jobs. For this purpose, the Constitution of India has earmarked certain special provisions to enable the SCs and STs to access to education. These special provisions were adopted through the amendment to the Constitution in 1951, and a special clause was added to article 15(4). This clause empowers the state to make special provisions for the educational development of the SCs and STs (*Sahoo 2009*). These special provisions too have failed to bring impressive impacts on their literacy level as many tribals have their own peculiar and vernacular language different from the common language spoken in the state where they reside. It's found that as many as 22 per cent of tribal habitations have less than 100 population, and more than 40 per cent have between 100 to less than 300 people, while others have less than 500 people (*Panda 2011; Sujatha 2008*). Because of these, their literacy rate did not go beyond 8.5 per cent in 1961. In the same period, the female literacy rate was much more depressing than that of male literacy that was 3.2 per cent. Recognizing their deprivation and marginalization in Indian society, the Government of India has started an innovative scheme for the promotion of education among Scheduled Tribes, i.e., the establishment of Ashram Schools. The Ashram school concept was started in the Third Plan in all scheduled areas across India. It aims to promote education to the marginalised in a customised way. In addition to Ashram schools, there was construction of hostels for boarding and lodging to tribal students in the schedule areas. These special measures were introduced to achieve targeted results in elementary education among the tribals. In spite of this, the literacy rate has not crossed beyond 11.39 percent in 1971 because of the complex nature of issues like absenteeism, stagnation, drop-out, and seasonal migration by the tribal children.

In the meantime, the *Dhebar Commission* of 1960 identified certain specified reasons for the educational backwardness of tribals. They were vague generalisations like inappropriate and unattractive teaching methods adopted by the teachers, etc. It also touched upon the other problems like poor economic condition and subsistence economy. In such a situation, children are seen as economic assets to supplement the family income by working with the parents and with others (*Hasnain, 2004*). In a situation of dire necessities of life, education becomes a matter of luxury for the tribal family (*Pradhan 2011*). All these factors have contributed to work out a broader policy for tribal education. In this background, the *Dhebar Commission* recommended to provide the mid-day meal, clothing, free book, reading and writing materials, etc. to all the tribal children in backward areas. The commission further considered the difficulties of children in respect to topographical factors and recommended the opening of schools in localities where there were at least 30 school-going children, though there should be a school within one mile. The commission then suggested the adjustment of timings, vacations, and holidays of schools to suit the tribal social and cultural life. It even proposed to create an atmosphere of tribal culture in the schools (*Ministry of Tribal welfare, High powered Committee, Govt. of India Report 2014:158-159*).

The *Kothari Commission* has also highlighted that the tribals deserve education with great emphasis and attention (*Kothari 1966*). In view of this, the Kothari Commission endorsed the recommendations of the *Dhebar Commission* with a note of urgency that "intensive efforts' must be made to provide for five years of early education to all tribal children by 1975-76. In order to achieve the literacy rate in tribals, the Commission also suggested in educating the parents simultaneously. Despite intensive efforts on tribal education, it could only bring a marginal difference from 11.3 per cent in 1971 to 16.35 per cent in 1981 (*Table-1*); whereas in female literacy, there was no sign of relief, and it remained single digit, i.e., 8.04 per cent in 1984. This indicates that in the first three decades of

independence, the growth of tribal education was very slow due to high dropout rate and the growing gap between tribals and non-tribals. Due to this the tribal higher education suffered severely.

Table 1: Scheduled Tribe Literacy Rate and Gap, 1961-1981

| Year | Schedule Tribe | Scheduled Caste | GEN | Gap between ST and SC | Gap between ST and GEN |
|------|----------------|-----------------|-------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1961 | 8.54 | 10.27 | 27.86 | 1.73 | 19.32 |
| 1971 | 11.29 | 14.67 | 33.80 | 3.37 | 22.5 |
| 1981 | 16.35 | 21.38 | 41.30 | 5.03 | 24.95 |

Source: Census of India, Registrar General of India

Recognising the low literacy rate, the Tribal Sub-Plan which was introduced in the Fifth Five Year Plan for overall development has also accorded priority on promotion of education in children and women (*Sujatha 2008; Xax 2011*). In spite of these efforts, the *Fourth All India Educational Survey* (1978) revealed certain harsh facts on tribal education that more than 25,000 tribal habitations had no school at all. As far as secondary schooling was concerned, 82.18 per cent of the tribal population was within reach of eight kilometres, and only 18.8 per cent of them had access to higher secondary school (*Ministry of Tribal welfare, High powered Committee, Govt. of India Report: 2014*).

During the Sixth Five Year Plan, it was estimated that nearly 56 per cent (49 per cent boys and 70 per cent girls) of the tribal children were yet to receive elementary education. Looking at this challenge, the *National Policy on Education (NPE)* was framed in 1986 with an aim to reduce the stagnancy at primary level and increase the participation of disadvantaged sections participation at higher level. On the other, the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) also gave the ‘overriding priority’ to universalization of elementary education to all the children in the age-group of 6-14 years by 1990. These policy developments helped to pay special attention on tribal masses by the government. Based on the understanding of tribal problems, the NPE recommended a number of measures like developing curricula and study materials including text books in tribal language at primary level and then gradually switch over to the regional languages. It was also stressed to use mother tongue, especially local dialects, as the medium of instruction in order to attract more and more tribal students and facilitate them to access to formal education. All these initiatives have changed the primary education graph of the STs from low to high, and it get reflected in higher education. Due to this, the gap between the ST and non-ST population got reduced from 22.21 to 14.03 per cent between 1991 and 2011, and it (including female literacy) continues falling below the national average (*Table-2*).

The 2011 census data indicate that the educational development of STs is quite uneven among different states. The data indicate that some states with higher concentration of tribal population have been doing extremely well. They are Mizoram (91.5%), Nagaland (80.0%), Manipur (77.4%), and Meghalaya (74.5%). Whereas some states with more number of tribal habitations continue to perform very low. They are Jharkhand (57.1%), Madhya Pradesh (50.6%), Orissa (52.2%), Rajasthan (52.2%), and Andhra Pradesh (49.2%).

Table 2: Literacy Rate of All Social Groups, SC and ST Population (1991-2011)

| Year | All Social Groups | | | Scheduled Caste | | | Scheduled Tribe | | |
|------|-------------------|--------|-------|-----------------|--------|-------|-----------------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 1991 | 64.13 | 39.29 | 52.21 | 49.91 | 23.76 | 37.41 | 40.65 | 18.19 | 29.60 |
| 2001 | 75.26 | 53.67 | 64.84 | 66.64 | 41.9 | 54.69 | 59.17 | 34.76 | 47.10 |
| 2011 | 80.89 | 64.64 | 72.99 | 75.17 | 56.46 | 66.07 | 68.53 | 49.35 | 58.96 |

Source: Census of India, Registrar General of India

The working group on *Empowerment of Scheduled tribes (2007)* has categorically indicated that the large scale industrialisation and exploitation of mineral resources on one side and the construction of

irrigation dams on the other side have uprooted the tribal people out of their lands. Displacement has adversely affected the school going children and prompted their discontinuation. The socio-cultural practices or socialisation has also directly impacted on the education of tribal children. On socio-cultural factor, *Xaxa (2011)* has made an important observation that reading and writing were unknown to the traditional tribal society. It was the Christian missionaries who introduced this alien phenomenon of education to tribal society. As the school environment was alien to the young tribal child, and they didn't wish to stay in it. The school was new and external to the children who-could hardly adjust, and those engaged in imparting knowledge were also strangers to their society (Sattar 1984). All these issues have made the tribal children unattractive to education. The high drop-out rate in tribal society is to a great extent linked to this fact also. The issue of drop-out is most serious as far as the education of tribal children is concerned. The drop-out of tribal students at primary, upper primary and secondary level was much higher than that of the general population in 2001-02. The data on drop-out rates for the period 2005-06 to 2011-12 indicate a decreasing trend and hence an improvement in the status of school-going tribal children at all levels. During 2005-06 to 2011-12, the all India drop-out rates fell down by 3.4 per cent for all children in classes 1-5 and 4.5 per cent for tribal children. For classes 1-10, the drop-out rates for children all over India fell by 11.3 per cent during 2005-06 to 2011-12. In case of tribal children, the figure for the same period was 12.6 percent (*Statistics of School Education 2011-12*).

Table 3: Dropout Rate, 2004-05 & 2010-11 Scheduled Tribe (Provisional)

| Year | Sex | Classes 1st to 5th | | | Classes 1st to 7th | | | Classes 1st to 10th | | |
|---------|-------|--------------------|------|----------|--------------------|------|----------|---------------------|------|----------|
| | | All | S.T | Gap | All | S.T | Gap | All | S. T | Gap |
| 2004-05 | Boys | 31.8 | 42.6 | (-) 10.7 | 50.4 | 65.0 | (-) 14.6 | 60.4 | 77.8 | (-) 17.4 |
| | Girls | 25.4 | 42.0 | (-) 16.6 | 51.3 | 67.1 | (-) 15.8 | 63.9 | 80.7 | (-) 16.8 |
| | Total | 29.0 | 42.3 | (-) 13.3 | 50.8 | 65.9 | (-) 15.1 | 61.9 | 79 | (-) 17.1 |
| 2010-11 | Boys | 28.7 | 37.2 | (-) 8.5 | 40.3 | 54.7 | (-) 14.4 | 50.4 | 70.6 | (-)20.2 |
| | Girls | 25.1 | 33.9 | (-) 8.8 | 41.0 | 54.4 | (-) 13.4 | 47.9 | 71.3 | (-)23.4 |
| | Total | 27 | 35.3 | (-) 8.3 | 60.8 | 54.5 | (+) 6.3 | 49.1 | 71.0 | (-)21.9 |

Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2004-2005, 2010-2011, (MOHRD, GOI) Statistics of School Education

The above table-3 is on the dropout rates of Schedule Tribe children at two intervals between 2004-05 and 2010-11. In both the periods for all the classes, i.e., 1st to 5th, 1st to 7th, and 1st to 10th, their ratio of dropout rates is higher than all groups. In 2004-05, except in 1st to 5th and the remaining classes, the dropout rate of the ST girls is higher than that of the ST boys. In 2010-11, the dropout rate in 1st to 5th Std. got reduced in all cases including ST children. However, the same phenomenon is not noticed in higher classes. On the contrary, the dropout rate got increased in 1st to 7th and 1st to 10th classes. The increase of dropout rate in higher classes may be due to the impact of external factors like non-availability of schools nearby, safety and security of the girl, non-availability of toilets, etc. These are some of the peculiar factors which are linked to the girl's dropout.

Scheduled Tribes students' participation in the premier institutions

The Scheduled Tribe students are very few in specialized courses offered by the premier institutions like *Indian Institute of Technology (IITs)* and *Indian Institute of Management (IIMs)*. Since 1973, these premier institutions have been following the constitutional provisions of reservation of seats—15% for SC and 7% for ST. Initially, the *IITs* had quota system, but the quota system was scrapped and a modified scheme was introduced in 1983. In lieu of the quota system of reservation prevalent across the country, there is slightly a different scheme in place at *IITs*, as these are the Institutes of National Importance. This strategy was evolved on the basis of experience of implementing the quota system over a decade (1973–1983). The logic cited for this change is that the *IITs*, being Institutes of

National Importance, should not compromise on the quality of students studying there. Accordingly, students admitted through the reserved quota have no relaxation in qualifying the courses or getting the degrees. They are, however, allowed to complete the program at a slower pace (take longer to get the degree). In case, a good number of candidates fail satisfy the minimum eligibility criteria in written tests, the SC/ST candidates are given a relaxation of 50%. If vacancies still exist, a further relaxation is offered with a deferred admission after one year of preparatory course covering Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. After one year of study, only those candidates who are able to clear a cut-off in the final semester are allowed to continue the regular studies. The seats reserved for SC/ST students are not transferable to general category and roll on to the next year's students for the *Preparatory Courses*.

As against the 22.5 per cent of seats reserved for them, only 12 per cent of seats get filled up by the SC and ST students combined at the IITs, according to recent estimates (*see Table-4*). The scheduled Tribes students share has not gone beyond 4 percent except in Assam. The latest data indicate that only 7 per cent of the seats are utilised by SCs against the constitutional provision of 15 per cent. In other words, a sizable chunk of SC/ST students are out of these courses, even when they get admissions. Their capacity to utilise the available opportunities was found to be below 3 per cent.

Table 4: Representations of SC/STs in IITs

| IITs | Year | per cent of seats filled by the SCs | per cent of seats filled by the STs |
|------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Madras | 2003-04 | 14.0 | 3.7 |
| Guwahati | 2003-04 | 9.4 | 4.3 |
| Delhi | 2003-04 | 10.6 | 2.4 |
| Bombay | 2003-04 | 9.1 | 2.5 |
| Khargpur | 2003-04 | 12.0 | 3.2 |
| Kanpur | 2003-04 | 9.2 | 2.0 |
| Rootkee | 2003-04 | 10.6 | 3.7 |
| All IITs (Utilisation) | 2005-06 | 12.00 | 4.00 |

Conclusions

From the beginning, the tribals remain to be the forest dwellers. In many terrains, forests are unreachable and inaccessible. Moreover, the tribal life and livelihood is directly linked to the forest resources. Due to this, their relations with outside world are either forged or severed depending on their circumstances. During the British rule, the tribal regions were made open for revenue collection mostly in the name of development. Moreover, the agrarian policy evicted the tribals from their own lands that went to the hands of non-tribal landlords and moneylenders. This gave rise to widespread discontent among the tribals who revolted against the British rule at several occasions. Due to this, the British opted for the policy of appeasement as it had long term colonial interests in India. The sole aim was to let the tribes live in their own way as long as they did not cause trouble, and thus to allow them to maintain their status quo.

In the post-independence period, the Government of India followed a policy of limited assimilation following *Nehru's Panchsheel* policy that again restricted the planners to act contrary to the cultural and traditional life. Due to this, the policy makers have made targets without understanding the nitty-gritty of their cultural and traditional life. This resulted in a situation where, according to *Roy Burman*, the new laws seeking to protect the tribals actually led to greater exploitation of tribals. It appears that development is possible only with the involvement of local people. Based on this observation, the orientation of planning must be customised, i.e., the planners must study the problems of tribals and plan accordingly.

Education is an important avenue for upgrading the economic and social status of an individual in the society. It's very essential for backward communities like SCs and STs. Based on the discussion in the paper, the government has to do a lot to improve their educational status. Even after the implementation of *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan*, only 88.46 percent of ST households are covered under primary schools in a radius of 1 km. There is decline in the percentage of school dropouts and out of school children among the tribals, but to further reduce the number, the curriculum should be prepared in their mother tongue. There can be mid-day meal, night school, adult education centres etc. Moreover, the government must appoint some tribal members as teachers wherever possible. This will certainly bring confidence and also motivate the tribal students to get enrolled to the school and keep on continuing. Along with this, more number of Ashram schools should be opened in their areas, and the government rules are to be given little more relaxation so that more and more children can get into the school system. The premier institutions like *IITs* and *IIMs* are to reach out to the tribals if they fail to turn up. There should not be any discriminatory treatment at such institutes, even if they joined. In view of all these conditions, priority must be given to the sector wise plans and its implementations for the betterment of the tribal children.

Recommendations

The dearth of adequate schools and competent teachers to fulfil the goals of *Right to Education Act, 2009* is another impediment in achieving the target of education in tribal areas. For addressing the current scarcity of competent teachers in tribal areas, special efforts must be made to train the teachers so that more number of competent teachers can get into the education system. Most of the educational schemes are not really supportive to their betterment, and they have not generated any significant impact. The state education machinery is largely responsible for this situation. There should be proper accountability of the state education department to mobilise tribals to primary education and skill developments. It's pertinent to note that the skill development is very essential along with primary education. There is a good number of *Self-Help Groups (SHGs)* based on micro-finance credit system. Many tribals get into it and have had first-hand experience self-determination.

Inclusion of local culture, folklore, and history to the curriculum can help building confidence among the tribal children, and this approach may help in increasing their enrolment and retention at school since music and dance are the essential aspects of their cultural life. Therefore, storytelling, theatre, painting, music, and dance performances should be promoted at schools. Similarly, sports like archery, football, and other popular local sports are extremely beneficial remedies for dropouts; it should be promoted. The tribal literature and ethnology constitute the invaluable indigenous knowledge. It should be documented, researched, and promoted. For developing a better understanding of the tribal cultures and their promotion, there should be adequate number of cultural research and educational centres in tribal regions. An important step in this direction is to teach tribal history and culture at schools to both tribal and non-tribal children. It would indirectly help to overcome the paucity of teachers in tribal areas. Institutions of *ITDA/ITDP* and micro-projects should support the tribal schools for betterment, inclusion of more children, and prevention of dropouts.

The residential schools should be set up specifically for nomadic tribes. The basic criteria should be: (a) The schools should be at places where the weather is least harsh; (b) there should be special security for the children, including girl children for whom there should be women wardens; (c) the parents should be informed of the curriculum and activities of their children; (d) there should be proactive efforts by officers on Tribal Affairs to approach to every family and to help them make an informed choice to send their children to the schools; (e) during breaks, children should be allowed to go back home and live with their parents; (f) at social gatherings, such as village fair, wedding, etc. children should be allowed to join, if possible, with their relatives and parents. There is a marked absence of quality education both at secondary and higher secondary schools in tribal areas. The governments need to establish full-fledged residential schools like *Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya* up to XII Std., closer to their habitations (within a radius of ten kilometres). These schools must provide comprehensive quality education including health care and prepare children for competitive exams to uplift the marginalized children. This, in due course, will bring substantial and desired changes.

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