

Impact of Socio-Economic Status on the Tribal Education in Alipurduar, West Bengal

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Abstract:

Scheduled Tribes are groups that are economically, socially, and geographically secluded. Sincere and coordinated efforts were made for the economic and educational advancement of Tribes throughout the post-independence era. In spite of these efforts, the tribes' educational achievement is much worse than that of the Scheduled Castes. According to research on tribal education, policymakers gave culturally connected education minimal consideration. This has had a direct effect on their general educational condition and resulted in dropouts. The paper's goal is to compare the gender parity index, dropout rates, gross enrolment ratio, and literacy rate in Alipurduar with those in India in order to examine the effects of socioeconomic position on tribal education. One of the most important prerequisites for creating persons and a country is education. It is essential to the growth of human capital. Character, abilities, and information are imparted via education. In order to meet the requirements of the Directive Principles of State Policy, Indian administrations increasingly depended on literacy campaigns that emphasized the 3Rs (reading, writing, and math) after gaining independence. The study critically evaluates the educational condition and statistics of Tribes in Alipurduar and across India in light of the New Education Policy 2020, which is expected to be implemented soon.

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Introduction:

Tribes play a role in the social development between bands and countries; a tribal society is a collection of tribes arranged according to kinship. A tribe may consist of both individuals and families cohabitating. There are several different types of indigenous people living in India. The scheduled tribe population represent one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized group India challenges of tribal children in education.

Definition of Tribal

G.S. Ghureya, in his book The Scheduled Tribes (1963)- “The scheduled tribes are neither called the ‘aborigines’, nor did the ‘adivasis’, nor do they treat as a category by themselves. By and large, they are treated together with the scheduled caste and further envisaged as one group of the backward classes.”

Ghureya mentions three ways for solution for the problems of the tribal people:

1. No change and revivalism
2. Isolationism and prevention and Assimilation
3. Provide them education

Scheduled Tribes:

President under article 342 is empowered to declare communities as scheduled tribal while parliament by law can amend the list. According to census 2011, tribes constitute 8.6 % of our total population and out of which only 50.96% are literate. Some problems which barrier in education of tribal:

- Poverty and exploitation: Because of poverty and exploitation maximum parents do not want to send their children school.
- Economic and technological backwardness
- Socio – cultural problem
- Problem of their assimilation with the non – tribal population.

Education of Scheduled Tribe Children:

- GER at primary stage is 137 as against 116 of their non – tribal counterparts.
- GER at upper primary stage is 88.9 as against 85.5.
- GER at elementary stage is 199.7 as against 104.3

Education, especially in its elementary form, is considered of utmost importance to the tribals because it's crucial for total development of tribal communities and is particularly helpful to build confidence among the tribes to deal with outsiders on equal terms. Despite the sincere and concerted efforts by the government for the overall development of the scheduled tribes, they are still far behind in almost all the standard parameters of development. They are not able to participate in the process of development, as they are not aware of most of the programmes and policies made for their upliftment. This is mainly due to the high incidence of illiteracy and very low level of education among the tribal people. Hence, the educational status of the scheduled tribes and the role of governance in this direction are highly essential. It is well known that the educational background of tribes is very discouraging as compared to the rest of the population. So, education is an important avenue for upgrading the economic and social conditions of the Scheduled Tribes. In this context, the objective of this paper is to analyse the trend of literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, dropout rates and Gender Parity Index of tribal education in India.

Development should not be studied in isolation. Development is not synonymous with the growth of a few affluent persons. As Amartya Sen (1999) stated unless the capabilities among human beings are adequately addressed and deprivations faced by marginalized groups are overcome, development cannot take place. In

fact, he stressed on the capabilities and human freedoms, and this freedom can only be achieved when the people are guaranteed political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency, and security. Although these conditions are different from one another, they are all inter-connected.

Socioeconomic status is the blend of economic and sociological measures of an individual work experience and the economic and social position of an individual or family in connection to others on the premise of income, educational level and occupational status. For the investigation of a family socioeconomic status, the household income, education of earner and occupation are checked and in addition consolidated wage contrasted and a person, when their own attributes are assessed. Socioeconomic status is by and large partitioned into three categories i.e., high socioeconomic status, middle socioeconomic status and low socioeconomic to clarify the three fields a family or an individual may fall into. At the point when putting a family or individual into one of these classifications, any or the majority of the three variables i.e., income, education, and occupation can be investigated and evaluated.

Alipurduar is home to a rich diversity of tribal groups, many of which have historically migrated from Tibet and Bangladesh. Despite this rich cultural heritage, the district's tribal populations, particularly groups like the Rava, Santal, and Toto, continue to face severe educational barriers (Tribal Education 2016). The district's topography, which is dominated by rivers, hills, and tea gardens, further compounded these challenges by limiting access to schools and educational infrastructure. Additionally, deep-rooted socio-cultural and economic barriers further hinder the educational progress of tribal students. The alarming dropout rate among tribal students is a pressing issue (Mukherjee et al., 2016; Joshi, 2010; Naik, 2017).

Review of literature:

Biswas, et al (2020). The prevalence of thinness of the studied adolescent girls was very high. There were several factors like mother's education, as well as physical activity level which significantly influenced this prevalence rate. Future nutritional and health intervention programmes should focus on these factors. Amelioration of their nutritional status may be achieved by addressing these confounding covariates.

Emayavaramban (2020). The objective of this study is to identify the barriers prevailing among the tribal girl students in the attainment of their education. A qualitative study was conducted in 7 hill ranges of Salem district, Tamil Nadu, India, with a semi-structured interview schedule. A total of 21 small group discussion for female tribal students (n=50), teachers are working in tribal areas (n=31), and parents of tribal girl students (n=18). It was found that lack of public transport, poor staff pattern, unavailability of basic infrastructure facilities like road, the curriculum that does not provide support for their poor economic conditions, with very little scope for vocational education, formed barriers to educational attainment. It is concluded that providing proper public transport, vocational education, stable and sufficient staff, due care by the parents, availability of nearby schools would raise educational attainment.

Tahir. T. et. al, (2021). The current research study focused upon effect of socio-economic status of parents on the students' academic achievement at secondary level. The study's goals were to determine the socioeconomic status of parents in relation to their children's accomplishments, their educational attainment and academic performance, their income and academic performance, and their occupation and academic performance of 171 secondary school students, 50 of whom were male and 50 of whom were female. A questionnaire was used to gather the data. Information was gathered from secondary school pupils. It was determined that the socioeconomic position of parents, their financial situation, and their moral and financial support all have an impact on students' academic performance. Additionally, the availability of a home learning environment and parental incentives encourage children to put in more effort and accomplish more. It has been shown that a parent's money is a significant factor influencing a student's academic performance. Consequently, it is advised that the government provide students incentives.

and support poor families. Free books supplemented by stationeries; scholarships are recommended which has the capacity to boost the performance of the students academically.

Rationale of the study:

India has a rich glorious heritage, but a sizeable part of Indian population is yet to get benefits out of it. They are still tribal communities which are primitive and live in secluded areas (Verma 1996). The Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1911 defines 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 D.N. Majumdar “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” (quoted in Varma 1996). The tribes in India usually reside in hill areas, forests, near the seas, and in islands. Their life style is quite different from non-tribals (Preet 1994). “It is not that their societies are static, but the pace of social change in tribal society is very slow. Since they are materially and economically backward, attempts have been made by the Government to develop them. Today, the governments in all countries are paying special attention to development of the tribes (Nithya 2014). Though our national leaders and constitutional makers are committed to uplift the tribal people, a desired level of development has not been achieved yet” (Chandra Guru et. al: 2015).

Objective of the study:

In the light of above observations, the paper critically sets the following objectives.

1. To study the impact of socio-economic status 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.

Results and Discussion:

According to the 2011 census, there are 10.46 corers in India, or 8.6% of the country’s total population. In Alipurduar, the Schedule Tribe (ST) made up 0.76 percent of the total population, while the Schedule Caste (SC) made up 18.04 percent. 22,876 people out of the entire population were working or running a company. However, just 54.4% of tribal women are literate, compared to 71.7% of males. The Indian government enacted laws and provided funding to make it easier for people to enroll in elementary school (grades I–V) in India after independence. Tribal community and social group since independence. It is evident that between 1961 and 2011, both the literacy rates of Scheduled Tribes and all of India improved dramatically; nonetheless, the difference between these two groups remains at 14. In Alipurduar, the Schedule Tribe (ST) made up 0.76 percent of the total population, while the Schedule Caste (SC) made up 18.04 percent. 22,876 people out of the entire population were working or running a company. There were 3,649 ladies and 19,227 men among them. Alipurduar City’s literacy rate is 91.03% higher than the state average of 76.26%. In Alipurduar, the literacy rate for men is around 93.34%, while the rate for women is 88.65%. The Alipurduar Municipality provides basic services including water and sewerage to 15,556 homes within its entire supervision.

Issues and concerns:

- At the primary school level, these kids' participation is now about proportionate to their population share.
- The primary school dropout rate is 35.6%, compared to 27% for their non-tribal peers.
- The primary school dropout rate is 55%, compared to 40.06 percent for their non-tribal peers.
- Compared to their peers in all categories, ST girls drop out of elementary school at a rate of 33.9 percent.
- ST males drop out of elementary school at a rate of 37.2% compared to 28.1%.
- Research indicates that aboriginal children have the fundamental mental skills and psychological makeup needed to succeed in school.
- Under-related elements are the main cause of tribal pupils' poor performance and the subpar state of elementary education in tribal communities.

Internal issues: Internal issues are intrinsic of the structure of the education system

Problems of Tribal Education

There are many critical issues and problems in the field of tribal education. They are as follows:

- **Medium of language:** Language is one of the important constraints of tribal children which prevents them access to education. In most of the state official / regional language are used for class room teaching and these are not understood by the tribal children at primary level. For them these languages seem to be a foreign language as they speak only in their mother tongue. Language has been the biggest constraints in tribal Education. The entire curriculum and teachers' module are designed in official / regional language which is lien for tribal student.

Infrastructure challenges: The majority of schools in tribal areas lack basic infrastructure, failing to maintain even the most basic hygienic facilities and lacking in study aids and instructional resources.

- **Community participation and ownership:** Improving the literacy in general and ST female literacy in particular is challenge and require serious effort which is not possible without the active involvement of various section of the people, though this platform we are inviting ideas, suggestions, views, opinions, solutions, criticism and best practices for innovative intervention.
- **The Location of the Village:** "The physical barrier creates a hindrance for the children of a tribal village to attend the school in a neighbouring village".
- **Economic Condition:** "The economic condition of tribal people is so poor that they do not desire to spare their children or their labour power and allow them to attend schools".
- **Attitude of the parents:** "As education does not yield any immediate economic return, the tribal parents prefer to engage their children in remunerative employment which supplements the family income".
- **Teacher Related Problems:** "In the remote tribal areas the teacher absenteeism is a regular phenomenon and this affects largely the quality of education".

- **Lack of Proper monitoring:** “Proper monitoring is hindered by poor coordination between the Tribal Welfare Department and School Education Department”.

External issues: External issues lie outside the education system. Example: Gender bias, access and migration of parents.

Gender bias: Gender bias places tribal girls at a disadvantage at all levels of education. Tribal girls have a higher tendency to drop – out and a lower tendency to enroll in school. School attendance for tribal girls is below that of tribal boys. In many tribal communities, parents give minimal importance to girls’ education due to economic and social limitation.

Access: Physical access to schooling un-tribal areas is often difficult mainly due to geographic condition, sparse population, remoteness of the tribal village and migratory pattern of tribal. In tribal areas, there is reliance on non – formal / alternative education.

Migration of parents: Children of migrant worker are deprived of the basic child right. Seasonal migration has become common in several tribal areas. Migrant populations are mostly from tribal communities. Children tend to accompany their parents, drop out of school and forced into hard at work sites.

Government Policies and Programmes for Tribal Education:

The government has been providing financial resources for tribal development from the First Five Year Plan Period 1 (1951–1956). Forty-three Special Multipurpose Tribal Development Projects (MTDPs) were established at the conclusion of the plan (1954). The Indian government implemented the plan to create Tribal Development Blocks (TBDs) in regions having a tribal concentration of above 66% during the Third Five Year Plan Period (1961–1966). There were 504 TBDs in the nation at the conclusion of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969–1974). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare developed the Tribal Sub-Plan Strategy (TSP) in 1972. TSP was founded with the dual goals of preventing exploitation and promoting socioeconomic development. Scheduled Tribes accounted for more than half of the population in the regions where it was typically applied.

In reality, states with scheduled areas are required under the PESA (The Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, to include explicit provisions for granting the tribes broad authority over issues pertaining to community development and decision-making. In the 1970s, the government launched a state financed program of ashram schools that were solely for ST students in elementary school through upper secondary school. However, trust in education as a means of achieving social mobility has been weakened by the subpar instruction provided at ashram schools.

The Janshala Programme is a collaborative effort of the Government of India (GOI) and five UN Agencies – UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and UNFPA – A community-based primary education program seeks to improve the effectiveness and accessibility of primary education, particularly for females and children from underprivileged backgrounds, marginalized communities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, minorities, and children with special needs.

Suggestions for improvement:

Some suggestions for improvement of tribal education are as follows-

Literacy Initiative: To raise awareness of the value of education, a suitable awareness campaign should be planned. To literate the tribal, a comprehensive literacy campaign may be prioritized in the districts where the tribes predominate.

The tribal parents' attitude: Through appropriate counseling and coaching, the indigenous parents' attitudes about schooling should be modified.

Useful Study Resources in Regional Languages: All learning materials have to be provided in the tribes' native tongues.

The selection of female and local educators: It is recommended that additional female and tribal instructors be sent to the tribal communities. Teachers in tribal communities should pay close attention to the ecological, cultural, and psychological traits of tribal children.

Various Scholarships and Stipends: Tribal students pursuing higher education, especially in the fields of medicine, engineering, and other vocational fields, should be given special ST Scholarships since there is a lower level of higher education among the tribes.

Household Schools: In every state and district, more residential schools need to be founded, and in tribal regions, they ought to be expanded to the postgraduate level.

Social Security: In residential schools, students' social security, particularly that of teenage females, is a major issue.

Adequate Monitoring: Higher ranking authorities should regularly inspect how well schools are operating in terms of instruction, schedules, and attendance records. Indian Tribal Education's Difficult Problems

Conclusion: Education is the key to tribal development. Tribal children have very low levels of participation. Though the development of the tribes is taking place in India, but the pace of development has been rather slow. This is mainly due to the high incidence of illiteracy and very low level of education among the tribal people. Therefore, the scheduled tribes' level of education and the government's involvement in promoting it are crucial. The state of education among tribes will be one of misery, hopelessness, and death if the government does not take some decisive action to advance tribal education. Therefore, it is now necessary to give indigenous education and inclusive growth careful consideration. To solve this issue and increase funding for indigenous education in the federal and state budgets, different government actions, planners, and policymakers are desperately needed. To integrate indigenous children into the mainstream of economic growth, they should be given easier access and more chances.

No civilization could thrive without its citizens being educated. Since gaining independence, the Indian government has implemented a number of initiatives, programs, and projects and allocated monies to various plans aimed at promoting education among the indigenous people. All of these initiatives are undoubtedly important and well appreciated, but the pace of educational advancement among the indigenous people is still relatively slow. The successful strategy to lessen the barriers to education for tribal children is not met by the representation of tribal people in higher education. In addition to government initiatives, the tribal people may only consider economic growth if local media and other NGOs play a significant role in raising awareness among them. The current educational system is set up to benefit the dominant group; therefore, mechanisms that support the integration of tribal children into the formal education system must be established. These mechanisms include the use of both tribal and state languages in pre-primary and primary education, the development of additional tribally relevant learning materials, and the introduction of financial incentives for teachers in tribal areas.

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