



Tribals in Higher Education: Issues and Response

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ABSTRACT

Higher education plays a vital role for socio-cultural and economic development of a nation. The role of higher education is to impart training and skill for the empowerment of all. It is key to empowering disadvantaged groups to overcome poverty and to ensure equitable development. Nonetheless it is an effective instrument of upward social mobility. But the tribals of India lag behind in enrolling themselves in higher education, compared to other social groups. The paper aims to explore the structural and functional issues involved in low enrolment of tribals in higher education and envisage an accommodative framework for their inclusion.

KEYWORDS : Human Development, Enrollment, Dropout, Literacy.

Development is a diffusive idea. Its broad spectrum includes discussions ranging from industrialization, GDP growth, scientific and technological advancement to the more recent human development. The human component was juxtaposed with development in the concluding part of the 20th century with a strong affirmation that "people are the wealth of nations" (Human Development Report 1990). Human development aims at improving the quality of all human lives. It is therefore inclusive reaching out to the marginalized and underprivileged sections of the society. Development has come to be considered as a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population (United Nations Declaration on Right to Development 2011).

Human Development Index emphasizes that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country. Accordingly, it recognizes knowledge as foundational to capability development along with long and healthy life and a decent standard of living. But the tribals of India are extremely backward in terms of education. They constitute the critical mass of India's indigenous people, who represent the economically impoverished and marginalised groups. Indigenous peoples are those groups especially protected in international and national legislations as having a set of specific rights based on their historical ties to a particular territory and their cultural or historical distinctiveness from other populations. The legislation is based on the conclusion that they are backward in terms of major indicators of development and thus disconnected from the national mainstream development. With a population of more than 10.4 crores, India has a sizeable portion of tribal population in the world. Plans and Programmes have achieved little progress to uplift their conditions partially due to disconnect between laws, its implementation and monitoring as well as the tribals' distinctive socio-cultural prescriptions which resist and is apprehensive of any form of change. Therefore their issue is sensitive and their development requires a comprehensive and holistic approach. Education is one of the vital remedies to overcome their backwardness. Education is an input not only for economic development but also a viable medium to inculcate in them an open and receptive mind to actively participate in the process of their own development. The value of education is both 'instrumental and intrinsic' (Dreze and Sen:1996). The former refers to education as a means to improve opportunities for social and economic mobility measured largely in terms of employment, income growth whereas the latter refers to improvement in quality of life of an individual going far beyond the quantifiable limits that education provides.

The census figures of 1931 disclosed that only 0.7% of the tribal people were literates. This rose to 8.5%, 11.3%, 16.11%, 29.6% and 47.10% in 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 respectively. However,

the general literacy rates stood much high at 24% (1961), 29.4% (1971), 36.23% (1981), 52.2% (1991) and 64.8% (2001). Further, it is found that though the literacy rate of STs in 2011 is 63.1%, it is still far behind to match up the general literacy rate which is 74.04%. Again, very few of this literacy percentage take up higher education. Alarming low, the ST enrollment in higher education is 11.02%. An intensive study on the issue would require an analysis of their demography, literacy rates, comparative picture of their enrollment in school and *drop out scenario seriously affecting higher education, the impediments underlying their low enrollment in higher education and remedial measures for their uplift.*

DEMOGRAPHIC STATUS OF ST IN INDIA

India has a total tribal population of 10.43 crores (Table-1) which is 8.6% of total population of India (Table -2). The states which have high percentage of ST population are Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya. There are also some states like Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Delhi and Pondicherry which have no tribal population (Table 3).

Table -1 Scheduled Tribe Population

Scheduled Tribe Population		
Total	Rural	Urban
104,281,034	93,819,162	10,461,872

Source – Census of India, 2011

Table -2 Percentage of ST to total Population

Percentage of ST in 2001			Percentage of ST 2011		
Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
8.2	10.4	2.4	8.6	11.3	2.8

Table -3

State wise Percentage of Scheduled Tribes to total populations: 2001-2011							
State / UT code	India/State/Union Territory	Percentage of Scheduled Tribes 2001			Percentage of Scheduled Tribes 2011		
		Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	INDIA	8.2	10.4	2.4	8.6	11.3	2.8
01	Jammu & Kashmir	10.9	13.8	2	11.9	15.4	2.5
02	Himachal Pradesh	4	4.3	1.3	5.7	6.1	2.6
03	Punjab	NST	NST	NST	NST	NST	NST
04	Chattisgarh#	NST	NST	NST	NST	NST	NST
05	Uttarakhand	3	3.8	0.7	2.9	3.8	0.9
06	Haryana	NST	NST	NST	NST	NST	NST
07	NCT of Delhi#	NST	NST	NST	NST	NST	NST
08	Rajasthan	12.6	15.5	2.9	13.5	16.9	3.2

09	Uttar Pradesh	0.1	0.1	0	0.6	0.7	0.2
10	Bihar	0.9	1	0.5	1.3	1.4	0.6
11	Sikkim	20.6	21.2	15.9	33.8	36.6	25.5
12	Arunachal Pradesh	64.2	69.7	43.4	68.8	74.1	51
13	Nagaland	89.1	93.7	67.1	86.5	92.8	70.8
14	Manipur	34.2	44.4	6.1	35.1	45.6	13.4
15	Mizoram	94.5	96.3	92.6	94.4	96.6	92.5

Table -3 (contd)

16	Tripura	31.1	36.5	4.7	31.8	41.2	5.1
17	Meghalaya	85.9	90.2	68.3	86.1	90.1	70.4
18	Assam	12.4	13.6	4.5	12.4	13.7	5
19	West Bengal	5.5	7.2	1.2	5.8	7.8	1.5
20	Jharkhand	26.3	31	9.8	26.2	31.4	9.8
21	Odisha	22.1	24.6	8.1	22.8	25.7	8.5
22	Chattishgarh	31.8	37.6	8.4	30.6	36.9	10
23	Madhya Pradesh	20.3	25.8	4.9	21.1	27.2	5.2
24	Gujrat	14.8	21.6	3.2	14.8	23.1	3.5
25	Daman and Diu#	8.8	11.1	4.9	6.3	12.6	4.2
26	D and N Haveli#	62.2	74.9	19.4	52	82.4	17.2
27	Maharashtra	8.9	13.4	2.7	9.4	14.6	3
28	Andhra Pradesh	6.6	8.4	1.8	7	9.3	2.4
29	Karnataka	6.6	8.4	2.9	7	9.2	3.5
30	Goa	0	0	0.1	10.2	15.9	6.8
31	Lakshadweep#	94.5	95.6	93.1	94.8	95.2	94.7
32	Kerela	1.1	1.5	0.2	1.5	2.5	0.3
33	Tamil Nadu	1	1.6	0.4	1.1	1.8	0.4
34	Puducherry#	NST	NST	NST	NST	NST	NST
35	A and N Islands#	8.3	11.9	0.9	7.5	11.3	1.3

Source -2011 Census Report, 2001 Census Report

LITERACY AND DROPOUT TRENDS OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN INDIA

Literacy is an important indicator to judge the level of development of the people and society. On analysis of different censuses, it is found that there is a quantum jump in the literacy rates of STs. While in 1961 it was 8.54% in 2011 it is 63.1% (Table -4). Though this gives a very positive picture of the ST literacy but the enrolment of STs in higher education is unsatisfactory at 11.02% (only 1,31,5000 out of a population of 11,92,6000 in 18-23 yrs age group are enrolled in higher education (Table-6b). One of the vital reasons is their high dropout rates at school level in comparison to SC and All Categories (Table- 5a, 5b, 5c)

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

Year	Male	Female	Total
1961	13.83	3.16	8.54
1971	17.63	4.85	11.39
1981	24.52	8.05	16.35
1991	40.65	18.19	29.60
2001	59.17	34.76	47.10
2011	71.70	54.4	63.1

Source: National Commission for SC's & ST's, Fifty Report and Census, 2011.

Table 5 (a) Drop-Out Rates in School Education. All Categories of students

Year	Classes I-V			Classes I-VIII			Classes I-X		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2011-12	23.4	21.0	22.3	41.5	40.0	40.8	48.6	52.2	50.3
2012-13	23.0	19.4	21.3	41.8	35.7	39.0	50.4	50.3	50.4
2013-14	21.2	18.3	19.8	39.2	32.9	36.3	48.1	46.7	47.4

Figures for 2011-12 taken from the Publication Statistics of School Education

Figures for 2012-13 (p) and 2013-14(p) have been calculated from U-DISE NUEPA Enrolment Data

Table 5 (b) Drop-Out Rates in School Education. Scheduled Caste Students

Year	Classes I-V			Classes I-VIII			Classes I-X		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2011-12	22.3	24.7	23.5	43.3	36.4	40.2	55.0	55.6	55.3
2012-13	20.9	17.4	19.2	43.3	35.3	39.7	55.6	48.4	52.5
2013-14	17.7	15.4	16.6	42.4	34.4	38.8	51.8	48.0	50.1

Table 5 (c) Drop-Out Rates in School Education. Scheduled Tribes Students

Year	Classes I-V			Classes I-VIII			Classes I-X		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2011-12	36.1	34.4	35.3	57.3	57.1	57.2	64.4	67.6	65.9
2012-13	33.3	31.2	32.3	50.6	47.5	49.2	63.2	62.2	62.7
2013-14	31.9	30.7	31.3	49.7	46.4	48.2	63.2	61.4	62.4

If we make a comparison of the above tables (5a, 5b and 5c), we find that the drop-out rates of STs from classes I-X for 2013-14 is quite higher at 62.4% while it is 50.1% for SC and 47.1% for All Categories of students. Further the dropout rate increases as one moves upwards to higher classes. Ultimately there are few residual students to enrol in higher education. While the dropout rate from classes I –V for 2013-14 is 31.3%, from classes I to VIII is 48.2% and from classes I to X, it is a whopping 62.4%. As a result few students reach upto the level of higher education.

Table 6a shows the details of Scheduled Tribes students studying at different levels of education during 2004-05.

Table. 6a Schedule Tribe Students at different level of Education in India (2004-05)

Educational Level	Boys	Girls	Total
Ph.D	793	544	1337
M.A	14271	8808	23079
M.Sc	3324	2160	5484
M.Com	2296	1347	3643
B.A/B.A (Hons)	124645	71533	196178
B.Sc/B.Sc (Hons)	33142	16620	49762
B.Com/B.Com (Hon)	31353	17018	48371
Others* Not included in specified faculty	38754	27445	66199

Source: Internet Selected Educational Statistics Government of India, Ministry of Human Resources, Statistics Division, 2004-05.

*Other include data of Open and Distance learning institutions in 8 states namely Bihar, Gujarat, M.P. Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, U.P and West Bengal

The age for higher education in India is 18 to 23 years and may also continue above that. The estimated population of ST in this age group (MHRD 2012-13) was 11926000 (Table 6b) but enrolment in higher education was only 1315000 (Table 6c). Therefore the percentage of ST in higher education is 11.02% vis a vis their population. Further the enrolment of tribals is phenomenally less compared to SC and All categories (Table 6c). It is 36 percent when compared to SC and a meagre 4.43 percent compared to All Categories.

Table 6b Estimated Population by age group 2012-13 in Higher Education (Figure in 000)

Age group	Estimated Population 2012			Estimated Population 2013		
18-23 Yrs	Total	SC	ST	Total	SC	ST
	140559	24049	11904	140802	24077	11926

Data Source: Population Projection of MHRD

Table 6c Level-wise Enrolment in School and Higher Education (Figure in 000)

Level	All Categories			SC			ST		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Higher education on Total	16329	13301	29629	2005	1632	3637	729	586	1315

AISHE 2012-13 (Provisional)

SCHOLARSHIP SCHEMES FOR TRIBALS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Article 46 of the Directive Principles of State Policy contained in the constitution seeks to promote the educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Tribes in India. Improving education levels is one of high priority goals of the Central Government. To make higher education attractive, the tribals have been provided with a supportive system of scholarships and fellowships so that they can pursue the same.

- 1. National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST Students
- 2. Post Matric Scholarships
- 3. National Overseas Scholarship

1.The National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST Students:-

This is a Central Sector Scheme. It has two components a) fellowship b) scholarship

Fellowships are provided to ST students to take up higher studies after completing Post Graduation, such as M.Phil and Ph.D courses and awarded on the lines of UGC Fellowships for research students pursuing such courses on regular and full time basis.

The Scholarship Scheme aims at Top Class Education for ST Students and encourages meritorious ST students to pursue courses at Graduate/Post Graduate level in identified Institutions of excellence, Government and Private, in professional fields such as Management, Medicine, Engineering, Information Technology, Law, Commercial Pilot License Training etc.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the scheme is to encourage the ST students, a section of society with the lowest literacy levels in the country, to acquire the higher education in the form of (a) fellowships to pursue M.Phil and Ph.D Courses, with a view to create a pool among them ,qualified to hold posts of teachers/professionals and other higher stages of employment and (b) pursue Graduate and Post Graduate studies with scholarship in Top Class Institutions of National repute.

The list of identified institutions has been revised from 2015-16 and now a total number of 158 Top Class institutions have been listed for National Scholarship for Higher Education for ST students.(The list may be seen on Ministry's website). Earlier 213 Institutions were listed under the scheme. ST students who have secured admission in any of the notified 158 institutions will be eligible for the scholarship under the scheme. The total family income of the candidate to be eligible for this scholarship from all sources should not exceed Rs 4.50 lakh per annum.

GENERAL CONDITIONS FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

- The scholarship will become payable immediately after a student has secured admission and has started attending the classes.
- The scholarship, once awarded, will continue till the completion of the course, subject to satisfactory performance.
- The students already in these schemes will continue to be in the existing scheme till they complete their studies.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme and Ministry of Tribal Affairs will provide 100% funding for the scheme. The funds will be released by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in a single instalment for Scholarship immediately after the registration/admission.

CRITICISMS

- In case the number of candidates exceeds the number of available awards fixed each year, then the scholarship will be awarded on "first come first served" basis, which is quite partial a measure and not holistic.
- Earlier 213 institutes were identified under institutions of excellence and students selected in these institutes were awarded scholarships. But the government has taken a very harsh measure in limiting the number of institutions to 158 from the academic year 2015-16(Ministry of tribal affairs, GOI)

POST MATRIC SCHOLARSHIP

The scheme covers professional, technical as well as non-professional and non-technical courses at various levels including correspondence courses covering distance and continuing education. The scheme was introduced during the year 1944-45 and has since been revised from time to time. The scheme provides financial assistance to the Scheduled Tribe students studying at post matriculation or post-secondary stage. It covers all ST students whose annual income is below 2,50,000/-. Compulsory fees charged by the educational institutions are reimbursed and scholarship amount of Rs230 per month to Rs 1200 per month are given depending on the courses of study. It also covers central assistance to States/UTs for setting up Book Banks. ST candidates who have passed the matriculation or higher secondary or any higher examination of a recognized institution or Board of Secondary Education are eligible for this scholarship. The Scholarship are available for the study of all recognized post matriculation or post-secondary courses in recognized institutions except certain identified training courses like Aircraft Maintenance Engineer's Courses, Private Pilot License courses etc. Students studying through correspondence courses are also eligible (Ministry of tribal Affairs).

NATIONAL OVERSEAS SCHOLARSHIP

It is a Central Scheme to provide financial assistance to meritorious students for pursuing higher studies in foreign university in specified files of Master Level Courses, Ph.D and Post-Doctoral research programmes, in the field of Engineering, Technology and Science. The Scheme was introduced during the year 1954-55 and has since been revised from time to time. This was Non-Plan Scheme, which became a Plan Scheme from 2007-08.

Benefits

- The selected candidates are given cost of tuition and other educational fees charged by the foreign university etc., and other grants along with travel expenses.
- Only Passage Grants are available to four ST candidates every year who are in receipt of merit scholarship for Postgraduate studies, Research or Training abroad (excluding attending Seminars, Workshops, Conferences) from a Foreign Government/ Organization or under any other schemes where cost of passage is not provided.
- The awardees are permitted to supplement their prescribed allowances by undertaking Research/Teaching Assistantship up to prescribed ceilings. Where income earned is beyond the ceiling, the maintenance allowance under the scheme shall be correspondingly reduced by the Indian Missions abroad.

HINDRANCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In spite of a supportive scholarship framework ,tribal communities continue to lag behind the general population in higher education. The reasons for this can be categorized as external, internal, socio-economic and cultural constraints. The external constraints are related to- (i) problems and difficulties at levels of policy, planning, implementation, and (ii) dual system of Administration where education for tribals is dealt by two departments- tribal welfare department as well department of education (mass and higher).Internal constraint refers to problems associated with the – (i) school system, (ii) content, (iii) curriculum, (iv) medium of instruction, (v) pedagogy, (vi) academic supervision,(vii)

monitoring, and (viii) teacher-related problems which are causes of dropouts, thereby, restricting onward transmission of tribals to higher education. The third set of problems is related to social, economic, and cultural background of tribals and their psychological problems.

Socio-economic and Cultural Constraints constitute one of the real impediments in higher education. In a broad sense, these socio-economic and cultural factors can be outlined as (i) poverty and poor economic conditions, (ii) social customs, (iii) cultural ethos, (iv) lack of awareness and understanding of the value of formal education, (v) spatial gap between the home and educational institutions. The main occupation of tribals is agriculture, practised either through shifting cultivation or terrace cultivation where productivity remains very low. Consequently the older children play an important role, contributing directly or indirectly to family income by participating in the family occupation and household works like cattle grazing and fuel and fodder collection, etc.

It should be noted that the impoverished economic status of tribals makes even the small amount of private expenditure involved in procuring writing material, clothing, etc a serious burden on the family. Another reason for low participation is the opportunity cost involved, as the majority of non-enrolled children older as well as young are required to work in house-holds or family occupations. They certainly facilitate the participation of parents in economic activity.

Poor health is another major hindrance in the promotion and participation of tribals in education. Contagious diseases like scabies, eye infection, malaria, and diarrhoea are common in tribal areas, and also affect their attendance at educational institutions. Further, some tribal communities are seasonal migrants and this leads to absenteeism among students and make it difficult for them to effectively benefit from education.

- Though reservation for tribals in college and university level is enforced by laws but absence of tribal universities, addressing their specific needs and culture, keeps them out of the purview of higher education.
- They system of reservation in jobs has facilitated their early induction in mostly class IV (entry level) jobs and this leads to a discontinuance of higher education.
- Traditionally they are happy and contented people and satisfy their minimal wants from nature. Therefore, their aspirations are not that high to pursue higher education.
- Poverty is also a genuine cause for discontinuance of their education.
- Further early marriages also restrict their education prospects

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

The strategy should be to mitigate the above mentioned impediments to facilitate transmission of more number of tribals to higher education. Building up of tribal universities as well as higher educational institutions nearby tribal habitations is important. Good road and railway connectivity would facilitate them to continue higher studies. Human Resource Development is the crux of any development agenda. Tribals should be provided with health and educational incentives in the form of small financial packages. They must be made aware regarding the long term benefits of education and motivated to pursue the same. The following few points highlight the steps to be taken at secondary level so that, there is less drop out and healthy retention which would facilitate onward transmission of students to higher education.

Emphasis should be on quality and equity rather than quantity as has been the case in the past. The prime focus should be on provision of quality education that makes tribal communities economically effective and independent.

- In the tribal context, it is essential that the study 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 institutions.

- It is been highlighted time and again that 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 develop their interest in education.
- In order to make education effective and sustainable, building partnership between the community and the government is important. Results from pilot projects in Andhra Pradesh show that community partnership not only augments state expenditure on education but also guarantees supervision and monitoring, thus addressing an intractable problem for the state. (Sujatha - 2002)
- Environment building is of immense importance in the context of educational development among tribal communities. Community awareness and community mobilization, orientation about scholarship programmes which are its core elements, should receive adequate importance and attention.
- Decentralization of education management is another aspect that needs special consideration in the context of tribal areas. In fact, considering the geographical terrain and communication problems in tribal areas, it is crucial to restructure the existing system of educational management. Adaptation of structures such as school complexes and VECs to tribal areas needs careful consideration.
- 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.

IMPORTANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ROLE OF TRIBAL UNIVERSITIES

Education is an integral part of the empowerment process. Empowerment of the tribal community means capacitating tribal communities to secure access and control of their land, forest and water resources as well as sustains and promotes viable alternatives for security of their livelihoods. Empowerment thus is an interactive process whereby tribal communities are enabled to participate actively in local governance (decision making that affects their own life situation). It is in this context that the role of higher education is necessary as it would-

- Develop an analytical capacity for assessing their external and internal environment impacting on their own communities;
- Develop confidence and capacity to articulate their interests and perspective thereby participating in decision making processes leading to better governance;
- Develop skills to initiate local relevant alternatives to improve livelihoods and challenge external pressures;
- Value self and community history with a critical appreciation of traditional knowledge systems.

The tribals therefore require a long term vision of development, where the role of higher education occupies an important place. Higher education would instill the spirit of debate, enquiry and rational thinking among the stakeholders i.e. tribals so that their development would be faster and all comprehensive. In this regard the creation of tribal universities is indispensable. These would be catalysts in disseminating advanced knowledge by providing instructional and research facilities in tribal art, tradition, culture, language, medicinal systems, customs, forest based economic activities, flora, fauna and advancement in technologies relating to natural resources of the tribal areas. Tribal universities as centres of excellence would necessitate collaboration with national and international universities and organizations especially for undertaking cultural studies and research on tribal communities. Besides, exposure to workshops, orientation and skill building programmes in these institutions would help to build the capacity

of tribals so that they would manage and administer their own needs and requirements.

Abbreviations:

U-DISE - Unified District Information System for Education.

NEUPA- National University of Educational Planning and Administration.

MHRD- Ministry of Human Resource Development.

AISHE-All India Survey on Higher Education.

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