

# **TRIBAL EDUCATION IN INDIA : A MICROSCOPIC ANALYSIS**

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## **Abstract**

For the development of a society there is need for equitable and balanced progress of all the sections of human communities and for this perspective, it is imperative to bring the weaker, deprived and discriminated sections such as Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India to the forefront of educational revolution and mainstream of national development. Education imparts knowledge, and knowledge of self-identity and human environment will infuse a sense of confidence, courage and ability among the weaker sections of the society to know and overcome their problems associated with exploitation and deprivation, and avail socio-economic and political opportunities extended to them. Although there is a significant increase in the literacy of population of all categories in India, the tribals are far behind from the national increase. Despite special initiatives on tribal education by the government since independence, the achievement is not as per expectations. This paper is a humble endeavor to focus on the overall scenario of tribal education in India since independence. It mainly puts stress on the constitutional safeguard, several committee and commissions, study teams etc. related to the tribal education. In the final section, some useful suggestions are presented for the proper development of Tribal education in India.

**Key words :** Tribal, weaker and disadvantaged section, constitutional safeguard, backwardness.

## **Understanding Tribal / Scheduled Tribe :**

There are approximately two hundred million tribal people in the entire globe, which constitute about 4% of the global population. They are found in many regions of the world and majority of them are the poorest amongst poor. India has the second largest tribal population in the world next to African countries. There are 533 tribes (with many overlapping types in more than one state) as per notified schedule under Article 342 of the Constitution of India in different states and Union Territories of the country. According to 2001 Census Report, the population of

scheduled Tribes in the country was 84.3 million, consisting about 8.19 % of total Indian population.

The scheduled Tribes are generally called tribal people, survived with their unchanging ways of life for centuries. The tribal people are the earliest among the present inhabitants of India. They are still in primitive stage and are far from the impact of modern civilization. They live in the forest areas, hilly regions, mountainous places and deep valleys. They are known by various names such as — primitive tribes, animists, jungle people, adivasis, aborigines, original inhabitants of India and so on. Gandhiji called them 'Girijans'. The constitution of India has referred to them as the 'Scheduled Tribes'.

Though the term 'tribe' or 'tribal' has not been defined anywhere in the Constitution of India, according to the Article 342, Scheduled Tribes represent the tribe or tribal communities that are notified by the President. Article 336 (25) defines Scheduled Tribe, "Such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution." Article 342 prescribes the procedure to be followed in the matter of specification of Scheduled Tribes. The criteria followed or specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe are : (i) indications of primitive traits; (ii) distinctive culture; (iii) geographical isolation; (iv) shyness of contact with the community at large and (v) backwardness.

However, the term 'tribe' has been defined by various thinkers and writers in different ways. Two or three definitions are cited here for a clear understanding of the term 'tribe' or 'tribal'.

**Dr. D. N. Majumder (1961) :** A Scheduled Tribes refers to "a collection of families or groups of families, bearing a common name, members which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed as well as assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations".

**Mishra (2002) :** Defines Scheduled tribes as people who (i) claim themselves as indigenous to the soil; (ii) generally inhabit forest and hilly regions; (iii) largely pursue a subsistence level economy; (iv) have greater regard for traditional religious and cultural practices; (v) believe in common ancestry and (vi) have strong group ties.

**Gillin and Gillin (1989) :** "A tribe is a group of local communities which lives in a common area, speaks a common dialect and follows a common culture".

### **Tribal Welfare Activities :**

The tribals constitute a sizeable proportion (8.19%) of the total population of India. The tribals are also the citizens of India and hence promotion of their welfare is of equal importance. Not only the Central and the State Governments have undertaken various steps in this regard, but also various voluntary organisations have evinced interest in this task. Organisations such as the **Bharatiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh, the Bhil Seva Mandal, the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, the Indian Red Cross Society, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Ramakrishna Mission, the Rashtreeya Swayam Sevak Sangh, etc.,** carry on welfare activities among the tribals. The Government through its Department of Tribal Welfare and through its Five-Year Plans has been trying to elevate the tribals from the state of ignorance, illiteracy and poverty. Some of the tribal welfare measures of the Government may be examined here.

### **Constitutional Safeguards :**

The Constitution of India has made various provisions to safeguard the interests of the tribals.

Article 15 of the Constitution provides equal rights and opportunities to all the citizens of India (including the tribals) without any discrimination.

Reservation in employment is made for the tribals under Article 16(4) 320(4) and 335.

Seats have been reserved for them in the legislatures (in Lok Sabha and State Vidhana Sabhas) under Articles 330, 332 and 334.

Under Article 19(5) the tribals can own property and enjoy it in any part of the country.

According to the Article 275 a large amount of money can be taken from the Consolidated Fund of India to be spent on tribal welfare activities.

Article 338 empowers the President of India to appoint a Commissioner to look after the tribal welfare activities.

Under Article 339(2) the Central Government can give directions to the States in the formulation and execution of tribal welfare plans, projects and programmes.

Under Article 275(i) the Centre is required to give grants-in-aid to the States for approved schemes of tribal welfare.

Article 164 empowers the State Governments to appoint a separate minister to look into the welfare of the tribals.

Article 46 consists of provisions that protect the economic and educational interests of the tribals.

Article 224 gives instructions to the administration to take special care to protect tribal interests in “Scheduled Tracts” or “areas”.

Article 342 gives power to the President of India to declare on the recommendation of the Governor some groups or communities as “scheduled tribes”. It also gives details on the basis of which new groups could be recommended as “scheduled tribes” entitling them for all the constitutional benefits.

**Table – 1 An overview of schemes / programmes for Tribal Students :**

Sl. No.	Name of Schemes / Programmes	Objectives
1.	Grant-in-aid to NGOs for ST including Coaching & allied scheme and award for service exemplary	To provide coaching to ST candidates through pre-examination training Centres for preparing them to compete in civil service and competitive examinations
2.	Vocational Training Centres in Tribal Areas	To provide skill upgradation training to tribal youth for better employment avenue
3.	Educational Complex in low literacy pockets	To impart both formal and vocational education to tribal girls in rural areas where the literacy rate is very low
4.	Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for ST students	To provide financial assistance for ST students for pursuing higher studies leading to M.Phil and Ph.D.
5.	Scheme of Post-Matric, Book Banks & Upgradation of Merit of ST students	To provide text books to students study in classes XI & XII
6.	Girl Hostel & Boys Hostel for STs	To provide facilities to ensure more enrolments of tribal students in educational institutions
7.	Ashram Schools in Tribal Sub-Plan Areas	To promote education among STs living in remote areas
8.	Research, Information & Mass Education, Tribal Festival and other	To conduct action research, evaluation studies holding seminars/workshops, tribal museum, exhibition of artifacts on socio-economic development of tribals
9.	Job Opportunity	Reservation of posts in Govt. Services
10	Etc.	

Source : Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India

#### **Committees and Commissions :**

In addition to the constitutional provisions mentioned above, the government appoints committees, commissions and study teams from time to time to look into the way in which the target groups are making use of the constitutional provisions,

the problems faced by them and to suggest measures for further improvement. Examples of some commissions and Study Teams : (i) Backward Classes Commission (1953-55), headed by Kaka Kalelkar; (ii) the Study Team of Social Welfare and Welfare of Backward Classes (1958-59) headed by Renuka Ray; (iii) The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission – 1960-61 under the chairmanship of U.N. Dhebar; (iv) The Second Backward Classes Commission (1976-80) under the chairmanship of B.P.Mandal etc.

**Profile of Tribal Literacy in India :**

As per 2001 Census, the literacy rate among tribals (47.10%) is found to be far below the overall literacy of the country (64.84%). The female literacy rate among tribals is far lower (34.76%) as compared to overall female literacy of the country (53.67%). However, the significant point is the increase in total as well as female literacy among tribals, though still at lower pace as compared to the overall population of the country.

**Table 2 : Literacy amongst STs and all Social Groups (In percent)**

Year	STs			All Social Groups		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	13.83	3.16	8.53	40.40	15.35	28.30
1971	17.63	4.85	11.30	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	24.52	8.04	16.35	56.38	29.76	43.57
1991	40.65	18.19	29.60	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	59.17	34.76	47.10	75.26	53.67	64.84

*Source :* Census 2001, and Working Group Report on Education for Disadvantaged Sections-SCs and STs, Minorities, Women, Handicapped and other Disadvantaged Sections for the formulation of Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07), Ministry of Human Resources Development, Department of Secondary and Higher Education, 2001.

**Some Useful Suggestions :**

Some useful suggestions are presented categorically here for the proper development of education of STs :

**Educational Institutions :**

- (i) Diversification of curricula at the secondary and higher secondary levels and extension of facilities for more short-term vocational courses pertaining to vocations available specially in rural areas.
- (ii) Provision for more freedom for selection of courses and combination of courses to students.

- (iii) Providing for introduction of facilities of courses in every subject, e.g., certificate course, diploma course, degree course, etc, and making these more flexible and open.
- (iv) Opening up of more polytechnics and more professional colleges in rural areas, with life oriented and employment viable skills development.
- (v) Ensuring almost full-proof universal elementary education under SSA and general community development programmes.
- (vi) Extension of non-formal education, adult education and open school/universities and improvement in their quality and functioning.

**Parents :**

- (i) Ensured improved arrangement for providing counselling and guidance to backward class parents to make them aware of the importance of education of their children and of their role and responsibility in it, if possible through local bodies.
- (ii) Introducing schemes to encourage parents to enroll their male as well as female children and retain them at least till the completion of elementary education.
- (iii) Augmenting more participation of parents in various awareness promotional programmes organized by local schools.

**Government :**

- (i) The scope of scholarships for general, vocational and technical courses should be expanded for the tribal students.
- (ii) Providing facilities of study hall and reading room as much near to the school or home as possible.
- (iii) Organizing every level special coaching classes for providing additional training to students.
- (iv) Ashram schools will have to be established in sparsely populated areas in large numbers.
- (v) Seats should be reserved for admission in every stage of education for STs.
- (vi) NGOs working in tribal areas should be encouraged.
- (vii) Preparation of books and reading materials in the tribal languages should be taken up to promote good education among the tribal children.

**Teachers and School Authorities :**

- (i) Maintaining proper etiquettes by the Principal, teachers and other school personnel when addressing or relating to SCs/STs/OBC students, their home conditions and parents.

- (ii) Enhancing interaction between backward and non-backward students.

**Bureaucracy :**

- (i) The officers and other staff involved in welfare programme for backward class students are expected to develop awareness of existing facilities available to them, occasionally advertise them in regional language. They are expected to deliver humane treatments to the disadvantaged groups.
- (ii) Making application procedure for recurring available benefits as simple as possible and provide guidance and help in applying. The forms should be printed in vernacular.

**Conclusion :**

Education is the most effective instrument for ensuring equality of opportunity but the tribal people are lagging far behind non-tribals due to one or more reasons. The problems associated with education of the tribal children in India are manifold, complex and inter-related. Factors like poverty, apathy of the parents, superstition and prejudice, lack of suitable teachers, alien language, inadequate facilities in the educational institutions and wastage and stagnation cause major hindrances in the process of education in the tribal schools, schools located in tribal areas and spread of tribal education. In this context, educating tribals needs concerted effort by the central government, state governments and NGOs.

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