



Tribal Education in India: Convergence or Divergence?

Dr.Sukumaran M

Assistant Professor

Department of Economics

Dr. B. Ambedkar Memorial Govt. Arts and Science College

Balussery, Kozhikode, Kerala

Abstract : Tribes in India are one of the most backward and marginalised segments of the society. Myriads of factors are responsible for their backwardness and marginalisation from time immemorial. Education is seems to be one of the deterministic factors of all round vulnerability of tribes. Earlier tribes in India were very backward with respect to the attainment of education. It was attributed by the then socio-economic and anthropological circumstances. Now it is seems to be the tribes in India are attempting to attain education as a result of the drastic changes in the socio-economic, cultural, anthropological and political changes. This paper is intended to examine whether the education of tribes in India has been in convergence or divergence with the other social strata in Indian society. The paper used secondary data from various censuses and reports of Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The study found out that, tribal education in India is moving towards convergence with other strata of the society.

Key Words: Tribes, Education, Convergence, Divergence

Introduction

The notion or identity of tribes is particularly complex in Indian subcontinent, where indigenous or primitive inhabitants were neither eliminated, nor quite absorbed, by the rising civilization in the course of history (Arup Maharatna 2011). Anyway the tribal people in India are called Scheduled Tribe in Indian constitution. They are the earliest among the inhabitants of India. Hence the tribes in India have a great historical legacy in their culture, economy, sociology and politics. The Scheduled Tribes belong to different types of tribal groups and they had their own distinct socio-cultural and ecological surroundings (Preetha, 2007).

They are quite different from the outer world with respect to the livelihood settings, traditions, sociology, culture and economy. The socio-economic structure of the tribes in India is entirely different from non tribal people. In the past, they have a very simple technology which fits well with their ecological and conservative outlook. Lack of education was one of the reasons of their socioeconomic and cultural deprivation in the past but in the contemporary India, it is observed that, remarkable changes have been occurred among the tribes in India. The educational upshot of the tribes in India has been considered as a stepping stone to the all round development trend of the tribes in India.



It is a fact that, even though tribes in India have been accomplished various mile stones of educational development, still there is a gap between tribes and non tribes with respect to educational development.

The original Article 45 in the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution had mandated the State to endeavour to provide free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of fourteen years within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution (NUEPA, 2014). Education is the process of teaching or learning in a school or college or the knowledge that the individual gets from this. It will make some cognitive changes in his experiences and he finds reliable routes to optimal states when he finds himself in non-optimal states. Education gives knowledge, skill and capability. It enables the man to perceive accurately, think clearly and act effectively. If people lack this

Necessary condition for life building, the mere physical existence will be a burden to the society. Even now the tribal people are enmeshed with various socio-economic issues. Educational backwardness is one among them which keeps them permanently away from the mainstream activities in the socio-economic and political spheres. It demands the attainment of adequate education for ensuring equality in the socio-economic and political arena. Hence this paper examine the changes of tribal education in India with respect to literacy, school education, senior secondary education, school dropouts and higher education of the tribes in India over the years. It also examine whether education status of tribes in India is in

convergence or divergence with the other social segments in India.

2. Significance of the study

It is observed that, most of the development indicators of tribes in India have been very poor and lagging far behind the other social groups. Their socio-economic and political landscapes are obviously different from any other social groups. Education is a basic tool of self difference in society where social interaction often leads to the development of human beings. Education enables people to partake in social production and political activity which are necessary for moving up in social mobility. To participate successfully in a democracy one should acquire necessary skills like literacy, numeracy and knowledge through education, a catalyst of social change. The spread of education helps to overcome the traditional inequalities of caste, class, gender and superstition (Rao and Francis, 2000). Therefore, education can play a pivotal role in the all round development of the tribal population also. Hence, an enquiry in to the historical legacy of tribal education will enable to assimilate the strength and weakness of tribal education in India and chalk out innovative educational policies and development strategies in tune with the demand of the present generation to fill the gulf between tribes and non tribes in education. Thus this paper will have a strong impulsion on the educational development and resultant all round development of the scheduled tribes in India.

3. Methodological epistemology of the Study

This paper is purely based on the secondary data. The secondary data on



the educational statistics has been collected from the publications of government reports such as reports of Census of India, Educational Statistics at a Glance published by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, Annul Reports of Ministry of Tribal affairs, Government of India and the articles from various journals. The historical legacy of tribal education in India has been analysed empirically and explained theoretically by using the available data and some of the existing theories in economics and sociology.

4. Objectives of the study

This paper has the following objectives

1. To examine the educational status of tribes in India
2. To theoretically explain the effects of education on tribal development.

3. 5. Results and Discussions

5.1. Tribal Literacy in India

Literacy plays a decisive role in the development of individual, society and nation as a whole. Literacy and educational attainment is powerful indicator of social and economic development. Literacy for all is at the

heart of basic education for all. Creating literate environments and societies is essential in order to achieve the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy (Moretti and Frandell, 2013). It is a fact that most of the tribal groups in India have been lived in scheduled area even during British rule. Therefore, even the British educational strategies did not succeed in the strategy to literate the tribal communities in India. The literacy rate of tribes and other social groups has been presented in Table.1. From the data it is evident that, during 1961 the literacy rate of tribes in India was very meagre. It was only 8.54 for tribes and 10.2 and 27.86 respectively for scheduled caste and other social groups. But it is a welcome note that the literacy rate of the tribal communities in India has been considerably changed over the years. As per census 2011, the literacy rate of scheduled tribes in India has been reached to 58.96 whereas; it is 66.1 and 73.0 respectively for the scheduled cast and non SC/ST population.

Year	SC	ST	Non SC/ST
1961	10.27	8.54	27.86
1971	14.67	11.30	33.8
1981	21.38	16.35	41.30
1991	37.41	29.60	57.40
2001	54.70	47.10	64.8
2011	66.10	58.96	73.0

Source: Census Various



5.2. School education

School education is a stepping stone to reach the higher education and to have higher academic achievement. The poor school education accelerates the educational backwardness of the individual, society and the nation as a whole with respect to their higher education and resultant socio-economic development. In almost all societies receiving an education is extremely vital and necessary if wants to achieve success (Sreenivasulu, 2013). The gross enrolment ratio of tribes in India has been presented in Table.2 and 3. The data presented in the Table unveil some of the interesting reality about the tribal education in India. The data clearly explains the status of gross enrolment

ratio in primary secondary and senior secondary education of the tribal students in India. It was 104 during 1991-1992 periods the same was increased to 110.2 in 2013-14 where; the gross enrolment ratios of the total students are less than that of the tribal students. But it is interesting to note that, as the educational standards of move from primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary education, the GER of the tribes in India has been getting worsened. In fact, the data on school education reflects the lacuna between tribes and other social groups in school education even in the latest data. All these empirical evidences reveal the political economy of educational backwardness of tribes in India.

Table. 2 Gross Enrolment Ratio(GER)

Level/ Year	Primary I-V (6-10 Years)			U. P. VI-VIII (11-13 Years)		
	All	SC	ST	All	SC	ST
1980-81	80.5	NA	NA	41.9	NA	NA
1990-91	83.8	106.4	104.0	66.7	52.7	40.7
2000-01	95.7	96.8	101.1	58.6	65.3	60.2
2010-11	115.5	131.4	137.5	85.2	92.2	88.9
2011-12	106.5	122.6	116.7	82.0	90.5	75.5
2012-13(P)	100.7	115.6	114.6	84.5	93.5	86.4
2013-14(P)	99.3	111.5	110.2	87.4	94.8	86.1
2015-16 (E@G)	99.2	110.9	106.8	92.8	102.4	96.7

Source: Educational Statistics at a glance, 2016

Table.3: Gross Enrolment Ratio(GER)

Level/Year	Secondary IX-X			Senior Secondary		
	All	SC	ST	All	SC	ST
2010-11	65.2	70.7	53.3	39.4	38.5	28.8
2011-12	66.6	73.87	53.8	45.9	48.2	32.3
2012-13(P)	67.7	0.7	61.9	43.6	44.0	30.7
2013-14(P)	73.6	76.1	67.1	49.1	48.8	34.4
2015-16	80.2	85.3	74.5	56.2	56.8	43.1

Source: Educational Statistics at a glance, 2016



5.3. Dropout Rate

Dropout in school education is one of the most significant factors which pull back the educational development. It acts as hindrance against the strategies of educational development. It is observed that in the beginning of the 19th century the dropout rate was very pervasive among all social groups in India. Myriads of factors are responsible for the increasing dropouts among the tribes in

India. Still rate of the dropout of tribal students is increasing gradually and there are number of reasons behind this, like lack of parental support and interest, inability to understand the medium of instruction due to mother tongue inhibition, lack of schools nearby, teacher absenteeism attitude towards girls etc. (Joy, etal Srihari,M,2014). The dropout rate of social groups in India has been presented in Table.4.

Table.4. Dropout rates of social groups in school education I-X

Year	All Students	SC Students	ST Students
1990-91	71.3	85	85
2000-01	68.6	NA	NA
2010-11	49.2	56.1	70
2012-13	50.3	52.5	62.7
2013-14	47.4	50.1	62.4

Source: *Educational Statistics at a glance 2014*

The data on school dropout of students in India shows that, the dropout rate of the tribal students in India has been higher than any other social groups. It was 85 percent in 1990-91 whereas; it was 71.3 percent for all students. It reached to 62.4 percent and 47.4 percent respectively in 2013-14. It clearly explains the gap between tribes and non tribes with respect to the dropout rate in school education and the paralysation of tribal education in India attributed b more or less stagnant falls in dropout rate. It reminds the planners and educational policy makers to introduce innovative strategies to ensure the educational inclusion of tribal students in India by guaranteeing the effective schooling to the tribal students and bring them in par with other social groups in the society.

5.5. Tribal higher education in India

Higher education have very significant role in the development of an individual and the socio-economic development of

the nation. Higher education promotes social and economic development by building human and technical capabilities of society (Kumar, R and Kumar,N, 2013). Thus more the level of higher education, higher will be the socio-economic development and the lack higher education cause to lack of technical and socio- psychological and political capability. From the time immemorial tribes in India have been keeping far behind the other social segments in the society with respect to the attainment of higher education. The gross enrolment ratio of tribes in higher education India has been presented in Table. 4. From the statistical information it is emphatic that, the gross enrolment ratio of scheduled tribes in higher education is very meagre in India. In 2001-02 the gross enrolment ratio of tribal students in higher education was only 4.2, whereas, the GER of other social groups are 5.8 and 8.1 to scheduled caste and total population respectively. It is very desirable that the GER of tribal



students in higher education has been increased from mere 4.2 to 13.7 from 2001-02 to 2014-15. But the gap between tribes and non tribes is still pervasive.

Level/Year	All	SC	ST
2001-02	8.1	5.8	4.2
2010-11	19.4	13.5	11.2
2011-12	20.8	14.9	11.0
2012-13	21.1	15.1	11.0
2013-14	23.0	17.1	11.3
2014-15	24.3	19.1	13.7
2015-16	25.2	21.1	15.4

Source: Data Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India

6. Conclusions

The paper has been analysed and discussed educational status of tribes in India over the years. The analysis found out that, the educational status of tribes in India is getting better off in comparison to former years. It is also important to note that, even though the educational status is getting better off there exists clear lacuna between tribal population and other social groups in India. The lacuna between tribal population and other social groups with respect to education has been highlighted particularly in literacy rate, various stages of school education, dropouts and higher education of the tribal population and non tribal population in India. The solid evidence of gap between the social groups with the tribal population tends to realise that the educational status of the tribal population in India is still poor compared to the non tribal population. From the result it is promising that, in the future with adequate educational policies and programmes the education of the tribes in India would meet in to convergence with other social segments.

Education is one of the most significant indicator of human capital formation and development of the economic and all

round development of the people. It is widely acknowledged that education is the most important factors contributing to poverty alleviation. Education plays a central role and has a cross cutting impact on all aspects of human life. It is a vital investment for human and economic development (Latif. etal; 2015). When tribal population has been undergoing educational backwardness including low level of literacy, poor enrolment in school and higher education, it will affect the common sense, knowledge, the skill and efficiency of the tribal human resource. Hence the tribal population at a large extent exclude from the participation in the service sector employment and income generation. It will also lead to the social exclusion and poor participation of tribal representatives in the development discourse and development trajectory of Indian economic development. Moreover, the tribal people will largely embodied by the lack of capability and functioning in the course of decision making in their life.

The concept of functioning refers what a person does with the commodities of given characteristics that they come to possess or control freedom of choice or control of one's own life, is itself a central



aspect of most understanding of well being (Amartya Sen, 2004). It will accelerate the spread effect. Though, the poor educationally backward will ever be backward with respect to their socio-economic development attributed by the educational backwardness. Therefore the government and the policy makers should take concerted cognitive thought on the strategies to modify the educational amelioration of tribes in India and bring them in par with other population in the nation to ensure the inclusive educational and socio economic development. Education is supposed to be the most significant tool to achieve this great objective.

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