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Issues of Tribes in India: Education and Health

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Abstract: *The Scheduled Tribe population represents one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized groups in India. With a population of more than 10.2 crores, India has the single largest tribal population in the world. The tribes of India constitute 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country. Health and education, the primary agents of transformation towards development. The aim of this paper is to analyse the status of health and tribal education with literacy rate. The analysis is based on secondary data of Census of India, 2011.*

Key Words*: Tribes, Education, Literacy, Health, transformation*

INTRODUCTION

India is a home to a large variety of indigenous people. The Scheduled Tribe population represents one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized groups in India. With a population of more than 10.2 crores, India has the single largest tribal population in the world. The tribes of India constitute 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country (Census 2011). They belong to 645 groups, each group vastly different from the other from ethnic and cultural stand points. In fact it is this mosaic like canvass of the tribal population that contributes greatly to the country's diversity. Distributed all over the country the tribes practise a variety of economic activities ranging from gathering forest produce to hunting and gathering and shifting cultivation to manufacturing and selling handicrafts. Despite their practice of divergent economic activities the tribal economy can be described as subsistence economy and their role in the modern industrial activity is found to be minimal.

A tribe is viewed, developmentally or historically, as a social group existing before the development of, or outside, states. A tribe is a distinct people, dependent on their land for their livelihood, which are largely self-sufficient, and not integrated into the national society. It is perhaps the term most readily understood and used by the general public.

Education is one of the primary agents of transformation towards development. Education is in fact, an input not only for economic development of tribes but also for inner strength of the tribal communities which helps them in meeting the new challenges of life. It is an activity, or a series of activities, or a process which may either improve the immediate living conditions or increase the potential for future living. It is the single most important means by which individuals and society can improve personal endowments, build capacity levels, overcome barriers, and expand opportunities for a sustained improvement in their well-being. Professor Amartya Sen recently emphasized education as an

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important parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy. So, education is an important avenue for upgrading the economic and social conditions of the Scheduled Tribes. Literacy and educational attainment are powerful indicators of social and economic development among the backward groups in India. Currently, the tribes lag behind not only the general population but also the Scheduled Caste population in literacy and education. This disparity is even more marked among Scheduled Tribe women, who have the lowest literacy rates in the country (Maharatna, 2005). The male-female gap in literacy and educational attainment among the scheduled tribes is significant. 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.

In spite, of their educational problems, tribal people are facing health problems also. Health problems prevalent in tribal areas include endemic infectious diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, and diarrhoeal diseases, apart from mal-nutrition and anaemia. What is worrying is that the prevalence of chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes mellitus, hitherto rare in these populations, is rising, and stroke and heart disease are now the leading causes of death. Some of the highest rates of tuberculosis in the country have been reported from the Sahariya tribe of Madhya Pradesh. Similarly, deaths due to malaria occur disproportionately among tribals. So, education and health are the important avenues for upgrading the economic and social conditions of the Scheduled Tribes.

Review of Literature

Singh, et al (1996) writes in an article on Health status of Tribals in India, the popular image of the tribals in India being healthy and happy has been formed on the basis of disinformation spread by anthropological studies glorifying and romanticizing the Nobel savage image of the tribals and their way of life permeated with singing, dancing and drinking. But the empirical studies on the health of the tribals have reported high prevalence of disease and malnutrition. A review of the studies on the health of the tribals, including those done by Jabalpur ICMR Regional Medical Research Centre, Nutrition Foundation of India, and Post-Graduate Department of Psychology, Ranchi University, has concluded that tribal population has a very low health-nutrition status which is due to their rural, illiteracy and poverty. Eleven surveys,

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covering a total sample of 6051 cases, collected in Chota Nagpur and Santal Paragana region of Jharkhand, Bihar have reported very low level of knowledge, attitudes and practice in relation to physical and mental health, diet and nutrition, family planning and child care, health habits, and physical conditions of living. **Rani, M (2000)** observed in her study that due to the language barrier the tribal children are unable to establish communication link with the teacher and thus leading to the termination of their education in some point or the other. **Vaidyanathan and Nair, (2001)** suggested that teacher motivation contributes more to teaching – learning process than teacher competence. **Nair, P. (2007)** has given importance on non-formal education in tribal areas particularly to reach out to the hardest-to reach group of children in remote areas. NFEs therefore target children who are drop-outs from the formal system of education. This non-formal method provides room for innovations and injects flexibility to a rigid system in terms of organization, teaching method, content, target group of learners and evaluation procedures. **Sedwal, M. and Kamat, S. (2008)** focused on issues related to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes-groups which are recognised for affirmative action within the Constitution of India. **Abdul Raheem, A. (2011)** explained that education as an important parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy and the policies have to focus on inclusive rather than divisive growth strategies.

OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the education problems of the tribals.
2. . To analyse the health problems of the tribals.
3. To suggest suitable measures for transformation of Tribals towards economic development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology means using the scientific methods of investigation and analyse the phenomenon. No research work can be undertaken unless we adopt a proper research methodology. For the present research work, the scientific method has been followed which consists various stages such as formulation of the research problems, allocation of data, analysis of data, interpretation and presentation of the findings.

SOURCES OF DATA

Keeping in view the objectives of study, the data collection was carried out at secondary levels. The secondary data was collected from various secondary sources such as Journals, Magazines, Censuses, Economic and Political Weekly, Research Papers.

Status of Tribal Population in India

The tribal population constitutes a majority in the north-eastern states of Mizoram and Lakshadweep (94.4 per cent), Meghalaya (86.1per cent), and Nagaland (86.5per cent). The states with no Scheduled tribe groups are Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Delhi and Pondicherry. India has total tribal population of 10.43 crores (Table-1) which is 8.6 per cent (Table-2) of total population of India as per 2011 census.

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Table-1 Scheduled Tribe population and decadal change by residence in 2011

Scheduled Tribe population 2011			Decadal change 2001-2011		
Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
104,281,034	93,819,162	10,461,872	23.7	21.3	49.7

Source - Census of India, 2011

During 2001 and 2011, the decadal change in the scheduled tribe urban population is 23.7 per cent where as it is 49.7 per cent in urban area and 21.3 per cent in rural area. The urban India has only 2.8 per cent ST population but Rural India has 11.3 per cent ST population. (Table-2)

Table-2 Percentage of Scheduled Tribes to total population in India: 2001-2011

Percentage of ScheduledTribes 2001			Percentage of Scheduled Tribes 2011		
Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
8.2	10.4	2.4	8.6	11.3	2.8

Source - Census of India, 2011

Literacy Trends of Tribes in India

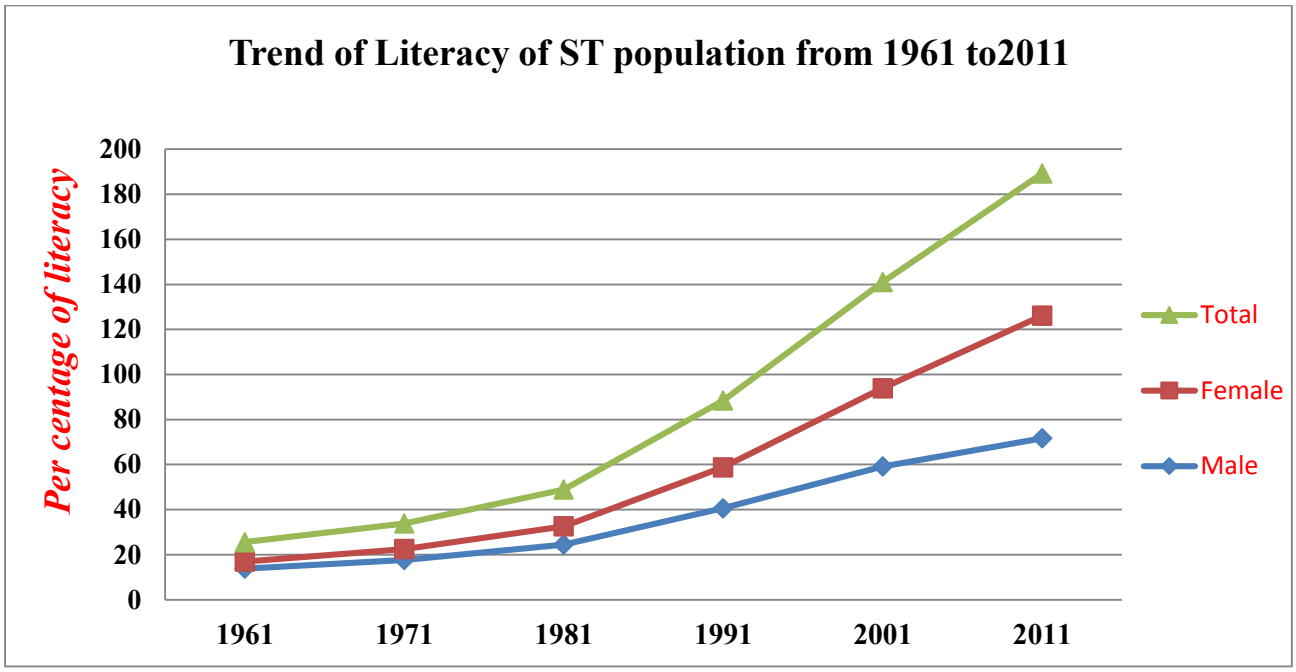
Literacy is an important indicator of development among tribal groups. The trend of literacy of tribes in India from 1961 to 2011 is shown in table-3. The percentage of literacy of tribes was only 8.54 per cent in 1961 which has increased to 63.1 per cent in 2011. But female literacy of tribes is only 54.4 per cent compared to male literacy of 71.7 per cent. During the post-Independence period, the Indian government implemented legislation and allocated funds to facilitate access to enrolment in primary education (grades I-V) in India. As a result, both literacy rates and gross enrolment ratios of boys and girls across the general population have increased substantially during the past 50 years.

Table- 3 Literacy Trends of Scheduled Tribes in India from 1961 to 2011(in Per cent)

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 SCs & STs, Fifth Report & Census, 2011



Problems of Tribal Education

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

I. Medium of Language

Language is one of the important constraints of tribal children which prevents them access to education.

II. The Location of the Village

The physical barriers create a hindrance for the children of a tribal village to attend the school in a neighbouring village.

III. 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.

IV. 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.

V. Teacher Related Problems

In the remote tribal areas the teacher absenteeism is a regular phenomenon and this affects largely the quality of education.

VI. Lack of Proper Monitoring

Proper monitoring is hindered by poor coordination between the Tribal Welfare Department and School Education Department.

Health status

- ❖ High level of consanguineous marriages leading to defects in the race and hereditary diseases.

- High prevalence of sickle cell anaemia and other genetic diseases o High fertility rates, low institutional delivery rates.
- Higher maternal mortality and infant mortality compared to national average.
- Inadequate immunization status.
- High prevalence on malnutrition-stunting and underweight-especially among preschool children.
- Communicable and Tropical diseases like malaria, and parasitic diseases widespread.
- Increasing burden of non-communicable diseases like diabetes mellitus.
- Kyasannur Forest Disease (KFD) is a looming threat to forest tribes with occasional deaths.
- Health care facilities absent or lacking in terms of infrastructure, personnel, finance, accessibility and availability.
- Poor hygiene and sanitation
- Lack of emphasis on mainstreaming their traditional systems of medicine
- Poor health seeking behaviour.

Suggestions

Some suggestions for improvement of tribal education are as follows

a) Literacy campaign - Proper awareness campaign should be organized to create the awareness about the importance of education. Extensive literacy campaign in the tribal dominated districts may be undertaken on a priority basis to literate the tribal.

b) Attitude of the tribal parents - The attitude of the tribal parents toward education should be improved through proper counselling and guidance.

c) Relevant study materials in local languages - All study materials should be supplied in local languages of tribes.

d) Appointment of Local teachers and female teachers - It is suggested to appoint more tribal teachers and female teachers in the tribal areas. The ecological, cultural, psychological characteristics of tribal children should be considered carefully by the teachers in tribal areas.

e) Stipends and various scholarships - Since higher education among the tribes is less, special ST scholarships should be provided to the tribal students perusing higher education, particularly in medical, engineering, and other vocational streams.

f) Residential schools - More residential schools should be established in each states and districts and extended up to PG level in tribal areas.

g) Social security- Social security of students, especially of adolescent girls is of great concern in residential schools.

h) Proper Monitoring - Higher level officials should check the functioning of schools frequently relating to the teaching methods, working hours, and attendance registers.

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