

Problems of Tribal Education in India: A Study from a Village of Jharkhand, West Bengal

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to examine and understand the low literacy level and education among Bhumij tribal community in the state of Jharkhand, India. The paper discusses the present scenario of educational level of Bhumij Tribal community as well as the role of government institutions and their programmes and the link between education and development. Various programmes and schemes have been initiated but very few of them have reached the tribal children and benefited them. Many of the programmes did not benefit the tribal community because the programmes were not contextualized and localized considering regional, geographical and physical differences and barriers. Other reasons of not getting the benefits of the programs by the tribals are lack of political will, corruption, and lesser attention on development of tribal areas. The paper highlights the need for special focus on tribal education, which includes context specific traditional and innovative interventions.

Keywords: Education, Enrolment, Literacy, Tribes, Bhumij, Educational Development Project.

Introduction

A Large variety of indigenous people lives in India. The Scheduled Tribe population represents one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized groups in India. With a population of more than 10.2crores, India has the single largest tribal population in the world. According to the 2011 census, this constitutes 8.6 percentage of the total population of the country. Education is one of the primary agents of transformation towards the 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 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. 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 tribes 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 need for special focus on tribal education, which is inclusive of context specific traditional and innovative interventions [8] are needed.

Objectives of the Study

Following are the main objective of this study may.

1. To know the status of Tribal Population in India.

2. To know the literacy trends of Tribes of India
3. To know the level of education among the major tribes of Jharkhand.
4. To know the level of education among the Bhumij of Garigram.
5. To know about the causes of school dropout among the Bhumij in Study area.
6. To know the problems related to education among the Bhumij tribe in the village where the study has been conducted.
7. Govt. Policies and programmes for the tribal education in India.

Table 1. Indian Tribal population in 2011

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

Source - Census of India, 2011 [2]

Table 2. Literacy Trends of Tribal population in India from 1961 to 2011 (in Percentage)

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 [5,2]

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 enrollment in primary education (grades I-V) in India. As a result, both literacy rates and gross enrollment ratios of boys and girls across the general population have increased substantially during the past 50 years. The literacy rate among Schedule Tribe (ST) boys is 71.7 per cent and among girls is 63.1 per cent. During the period of 1961 (8.54 per cent) to 2011 (63.1 per cent) a significant improvement in ST literacy rate can be witnessed

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for the study, this ensured that both statistical and non-statistical analysis was used in order to support the findings of the results of the study. Primary data was collected using questionnaires from the study area. Beside this, Secondary data was gathered from different sources such as enrolment records, and various documents from the School Register book that was available in the schools. Census 2001 & 2011[1, 2].

Tribal Population in India

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

Table 3. Levels of Education among the Major Scheduled Tribes in Jharkhand

Name of Schedule Tribe	Literate Without Education Level (in %)	Below Primary	Educational levels attained (in %)				
			Primary	Upper Primary	Matric/ Secondary/ Higher Secondary	Technical and Non-technical Diploma	Graduate and above
Santal	3.5	34.6	30.0	17.0	13.2	0.1	2.0
Oraon	2.4	26.9	25.3	18.5	20.8	0.1	5.9
Munda	2.8	27.9	29.6	18.9	17.1	0.2	3.7
Ho	2.4	26.4	28.4	19.9	19.7	0.1	3.1
Kharwar	5.5	38.2	32.3	11.3	10.8	0.1	1.8
Lohra	3.5	35.5	30.5	16.1	12.5	0.1	1.9
Bhumij	2.9	36.1	32.8	15.7	11.1	0.0	1.4
Kharia	2.0	26.0	26.5	18.3	21.4	0.1	5.6
All Tribes	3.0	30.6	28.6	17.7	16.5	0.1	3.5

Source: Census of India, 2001[1]

The data shows that the proportion of tribal literates decline sharply in higher level of education as the percentage of students after matriculation drops down to almost one third in higher secondary level. Out of the total 19.8 lakh tribal children in the age group 5 -14 years, only 8.5 lakh children have been attending school constituting 43.1 percent. Alarming, as many as 11.3 lakh (56.9 percent) children in the corresponding age group have not been going to school. The table below shows that among the major STs, Oraon, Kharia and Munda have more than 50 percent school going children whereas among Santhal, Ho, Lohra only 36 - 47 percent children are attending schools.

The Study Area Jharkhand at a Glance

The 28th state of the Indian Union was brought into existence by the Bihar reorganization Act on 15th November, 2000 the birth anniversary of the legendary Bhagwan Birsa Munda. Jharkhand is famous for its rich mineral resources like Uranium, Mica, Bauxite, Granite, Gold, Silver, Graphite, Magnetite, Dolomite, Fireclay, Quartz, Feldspar, Coal (32% of India), Iron, Copper (25% of India) etc. Forests and woodlands occupy more than 29% of the state which is amongst the highest in India (Official Website of Jharkhand Government 2016).

Fact (Data As Per 2001 Census)	No./ Amount
Population	3,29,66,238
Male Population	1,69,31,812
Female Population	1,60,34,426
Density of Population	414 persons / Sq. KM
No. of Districts	24
No. of Sub divisions	38
No. of Blocks	260
No. of Villages	32620
National Highways	1844 KMs
State Highways	6880 KMs
Total Geographical Area	79.70 Lakh Hector

Source: <http://www.jharkhand.gov.in/about> [7]

The tribes of Jharkhand consist of 32 tribes inhabiting the Jharkhand state in India. The tribes in Jharkhand were originally classified on the basis of their cultural types by the Indian anthropologist, Lalita Prasad Vidyarthi. His classification was as follows:

Occupation	Name of Tribes
Hunter-gatherer	Birhor, Korwa, Hill Kharia
Shifting Agriculture	SauriaPaharia
Simple artisans	Mahli, Lohra, Karmali, ChikBaraik
Settled agriculturists	Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Ho, Bhumij, etc.

The Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of Jharkhand State is as per 2001 census 7,087,068 constituting 26.3 per cent of the total population (26,945,829) of the State. The Scheduled Tribes are primarily rural as 91.7 per cent of them reside in villages. District wise distribution of ST population shows that Gumla district has the highest proportion of STs (68.4 per cent). The STs constitute more than half of the total population in Lohardaga and Pashchimi Singhbhum districts whereas Ranchi and Pakaur districts have 41.8 – 44.6 per cent tribal population. Kodarma district (0.8 percent) preceded by Chatra (3.8 per cent) has the lowest proportion of the STs Population. Jharkhand has 32 tribal groups.

East Singhbhum

East Singhbhum district is situated at the southeast corner of Jharkhand. It has been formed after isolating nine blocks from old Singhbhum on 16th January 1990. From the industrial growth and mining quarrying point of view this district has leading position in Jharkhand. Before independence the entire area of Purbo Singhbhum district was part of old Manbhum district and old Dhalbhum estate. After independence it has been merged with greater Singhbhum. The total geographical area of district is about 3533 Sq. kms, which is about 2.03% of the whole state. About 53% of the total area of district is covered by residual mountains and hills consisting of granite, gneiss, schist. It is a part of Chhotanagpur plateau. The Dalma range extends from west to

east covered by dense forest on the northern side. The Subernarekha River flows from west to south-east direction. The district is rich in minerals and these are found abundantly [8].

About Bhumij

Bhumij are a tribal/ indigenous people living primarily in the Indian states of Assam, West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand, mostly in the old Singhbhum district. They speak the Mundari language of the Austroasiatic language family or sometimes the predominant local language such as Bengali.

In the 2001 census, they numbered 336,436 in West Bengal, accounting for 7.6 per cent of the scheduled caste population of the state [1]. In Odisha, Bhumij had a population ranging from 248,144 to 321,592 and they were among the twelve most populous tribes [1]. In Jharkhand Bhumij were one of the eight most populous tribes, their population ranging between 164,022 and 192,024. In Assam Bhumij had a population around 150,000. Bhumij means one who is born from the soil. They form one of the Hinduised Adivasi groups in Jharkhand. Bhumij, Kols have adopted the surname 'Singh' [9].

Table 4.Age-Sex Composition of Bhumij at Garigram

Age Group (Years)	Male	Female	Total
0-10	40 (33.33)	23 (23.71)	63 (29.03)
11-20	20 (16.66)	21 (21.64)	41 (18.89)
21-30	24 (20.00)	22 (22.68)	46 (21.19)
31-40	16 (13.33)	14 (14.43)	30 (13.82)
41-50	11 (9.16)	11 (11.34)	22 (10.13)
51-60	6 (5.00)	2 (2.06)	8 (3.86)
61 and above	3 (2.50)	4 (4.12)	7 (3.22)
Total	120	97	217

Figures in parentheses represent percentage out of

Table 6.Age- Sex Wise Literacy Among Bhumij, Garigram

Age Group	Male		Female		Total
	Total Number of Individual	Actual no. of Literate	Total Number of Individual	Actual no. of Literate	
5-10	36	22 (61.11)	19	14 (73.68)	36 (27.48)
11-20	20	19 (95.00)	21	14 (66.66)	33 (25.19)
21-30	24	22 (91.66)	22	8 (36.36)	30 (22.90)
31-60	16	12 (75.00)	14	6 (42.85)	18 (13.74)
41- 50	11	9 (81.81)	11	1 (9.09)	10 (7.63)
51	9	4 (44.44)	6	0	4 (3.05)
Total	116	88 (75.86)	93	43 (46.24)	131

Figures in parentheses represent percentage out of column total

This table shows the literacy level of Bhumij at Garigram. From this table it may be said that

column total

From this table we can understand that the existence of male member individually reduced their number in relation to incensement of their age. In the age group 11-20 years both male and female individual reduce their number according to the other age groups. There is probably because of bad weather or epidemic disease. In the age group of 51-60 years, the total number of female is very low in relation to that of male. It indicates that in this age group the females are suffering probably from some incurable diseases.

Table 5.Educational Status of Bhumij, Garigram

Educational Status	Male	Female	Total
Illiterate	28 (24.13)	50 (53.76)	78 (37.32)
Can Sign also	8 (6.89)	5 (5.37)	13 (6.22)
Primary	45 (38.79)	29 (31.18)	74 (35.40)
Secondary	23 (19.83)	9 (9.67)	32 (15.31)
Higher Secondary	5 (4.31)	-	5 (2.29)
Others	7 (6.03)	-	7 (3.34)
Total	116	93	209

Figures in parentheses represent percentage out of column total

From this table we can understand the educational status of Bhumij tribe of Gobarghusi village. It is clear that the percentage of illiterate female is very high (53.76 percent), but in case of male this is low (only 24.13 percent). This observation indicates that they have more interest to male child education. In secondary level the percentage of level of male education is very high than the female. This observation also indicated that females are not interested to their education after marriage

presently female individual have been interested to their literacy because in the age group 5- 10

years only 61.11% male are literate where as 73.68% females are literate. Besides that, in all age groups the literate males are higher in number. In the age group of 20- 30 vast differences between literate male and female are found there, because of some international educational program. In the age group of 51- 60 years, there are no literate female, where as 44.44% male are literate, which indicates that the females were ignored in earlier times in the field of education.

Causes School Dropouts

Ignorance and lackadaisical attitude towards education of parents is another important challenge. Poor socio-economic conditions is a major constraint to educational access, impossible for marginalized households to make investment in education in the form of school fees, costs of books, uniforms, meals and transportation. Children from poor families contribute to family income either directly by working as labour or indirectly by contributing in doing household chores.

Another challenge in providing primary education to tribes is geographical location. Most of the primitive tribes still live in hills, dense forest with difficult terrain and many a times, it is difficult to reach them because of lack of road and transport facilities. It is a challenge to provide education to tribes and setting schools and institutions in small, scattered and remote tribal habitations. The majority of the tribes live in sparsely populated habitations in the interior and in inaccessible hilly and forest areas. At the time of creation of Jharkhand, there were about 12,000 revenue villages/inhabited totals that did not have a primary school within 1 kilometer radius. Under Sarva Shiksha a Abhiyan/Gram Shiksha Abhiyan, nearly 11,500 alternate schools have been opened since August 2002 but now there is a need for qualitative improvement, in terms of infrastructure, staff allocation, provision of books and other facilities. High school drop-out rate among tribes is another reason for their lagging behind in education [3]. Many schools enrolling tribal population are plagued by high drop-out rates. The survey conducted by different agencies and compiled by the Jharkhand Education Project Council (JEPC), carried out among 25,703 school drop-outs in the age group of 6 to 14 years, reports that compulsion to earn a livelihood forces hundreds of students to leave household work, 12.25 percent lack interest in studies and over eight percent drop-out due to socio-cultural and other reasons. Despite the various steps taken by the State governments to check drop-out, including free distribution of books and stationery, scholarship, reimbursement of examination fee, and mid-day meal, etc., it has shown very little impact. Teacher absenteeism is high in schools in

tribal areas, primarily because when appointments are made at the district level, the candidates who are selected are normally from in and around the district headquarters and do not want to go to the interior areas. Since schools as institutions and teachers as critical agents have remained fundamentally unchanged, the school atmosphere is not very conducive to accept and retain tribal children in schools. Tribal children's school experience is an important variable which determines whether the child continues to be in school or decides to drop-out. Generally, children attend primary school for first three to four years and gain a smattering of knowledge, only to lapse into illiteracy later [4].

Problems of Bhumij Education in the Study Village

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

a. **Medium of language** – Language is one of the important constraints of tribal children which prevents them access to education.

b. **The Location of the Village** - The physical barriers create a hindrance for the children of a tribal village to attend the school in a neighboring village.

c. **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.

d. **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.

e. **Teacher Related Problems** -In the remote tribal areas the teacher absenteeism is a regular phenomenon and this affects largely the quality of education.

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

Government Policies and Programmes for Tribal Education

Starting from the First Five Year Plan Period (1951 - 1956) the government is steadily allocating financial resources for the purpose of tribal development. Towards, the end of the plan (1954), 43 Special Multipurpose Tribal Development Projects (MTDPs) was created. During the Third Five Year Plan Period (1961 - 1966), the government of India adopted the strategy of converting areas with more than 66 per cent tribal concentration into Govt. Policies and programmes for the tribal education in India and named its Tribal Development Blocks (TBDs). By the end of Fourth Five Year Plan

(1969 - 1974), the number of TBDs in the country rose to 504. Additionally, in 1972 the Tribal Sub - Plan Strategy (TSP) was implemented by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. TSP was based on twin objectives of socio - economic development and protection against exploitation. It was generally implemented in the areas where the Scheduled Tribe population was more than 50 per cent of the total population.

The PESA (The Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 in fact, has made it mandatory for the States having scheduled areas to make specific provisions for giving wide-ranging powers to the tribes on the matters relating to decision-making and development of their community. 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 programme, aims to make primary education more accessible and effective, especially for girls and children in deprived communities, marginalized groups, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes/minorities, children with specific needs [6].

Suggestions

Some suggestions for improvement of Bhumij education in the study area are as follows-

a) **Literacy campaign** - Proper awareness campaign should be organized to create the awareness about the importance of education.

b) **Attitude of the tribal parents** - The attitude of the tribal parents toward education should be improved through proper counseling 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) **Residential schools** - More residential [1]

schools should be established in each states and districts and extended up to PG level in tribal areas.

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

g) **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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