

An Overview of Education among Scheduled Tribe Children in Jharkhand

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Abstract

The Indian government has recognized that the hierarchies of caste, economic status and gender characterizing Indian society deeply influence children's access to education. The Scheduled Tribes across the country today constitute one of those communities that continue to experience social exclusion and discrimination in the education system, which leads to low access, retention and completion rates. Jharkhand is one of the states of Indian union which contributes 8.2% ST population to the total ST population of the country. Years of planning, budgetary allocation of funds and numerous schemes have not been able to provide the basics to education to the tribal population of Jharkhand. Consequently, ST children exhibit abysmally low participation in education and poor learning at all levels.

This paper is a modest endeavor to examine the educational status of Scheduled Tribe children as against the All Category children figures in the state at various levels. Further it also highlights the needs to be addressed for ensuring their educational development. Data have been collected from various secondary sources such as GOI, NSSO, Primary Data (2009-10), Statistics of School Education Report, 2010-11, Annual Status of Education Report, 2007 & 2012, All India Survey on Higher Education (Provisional) 2011-12 & Abstract of Statistics of School Education 2007- 08.

Key words: Education, Scheduled Tribes, Jharkhand

Introduction

Jharkhand, the 28th state of Indian union has been carved out of unified Bihar on 15th November 2000 by Bihar Reorganization Act. This state shares the border with Bihar in the north, Uttar Pradesh and Chattisgarh in the west, Orissa in the south and West Bengal in the east. This state is widely known for its reservoir of mineral resources, forests and waterfalls. It has emerged after long years of struggle for demands of separate statehood on the grounds of cultural distinctiveness

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and tribal people concentration. It has been homeland of tribal people which represents 8.4 percent of tribal population (104281034) in our country. In Jharkhand, the population of Scheduled Tribes according to 2011 census is 865042. The major concentration of tribal Population is in the five districts of Khunti, Simdega, Gumla, Lohardaga & West Singhbhum where more than 50% of tribal population of Jharkhand resides. About 25% to 50% of the tribal population inhabits in the districts namely Jamtara, Ranchi, Saraikela, Kharsawan, East Singhbhum, Sahebganj, Dumka, Latehar & Pakur. There are 32 tribes (2011) in Jharkhand of which Santhals are most numerous accounting for one third of the total tribal population followed by Oraon, Munda and Ho contributing more than 10% to the total tribal population. Other tribes such as Kharwar, Lohra, Bhumij and Kharia have a share of less than 3% each while Mahli, Mal pahariya, Bedia and Chero have share of 1-2% each. The tribes with less than 1% contribution to the state's tribal population include Karmali, Gond, Chick Baraik, and Generic tribes, Kisan, Sauria Paharia, Korwa, Kora, Paharia, Binjhia, Asur and Birhor. The most marginalized tribes with less than 0.01% are Savar, Birjia, Gorait, Baiga, Bathudi, Banjara and Khond. The Scheduled Tribes are primarily rural as 91.01 per cent of them reside in villages and the rests are urban. Amongst them 54.2% of rural STs and 45.1% of urban STs are below the poverty line (Planning Commission report 2004-05). During thirteen years since inception of the state the government has brought a number of welfare measures for amelioration of the socio-economic conditions of the disadvantaged communities in general and Scheduled Tribes in particular. No one can deny that education is key to success of all the developmental measures launched for Scheduled Tribes. Education 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 (Bagai & Nandi, 2009). A host of programmes and measures have been initiated to support of the education of STs at all levels of learning. In School Education sector, the strategies are establishment of Ashram Schools in Tribal sub plan area, opening of EGS & AIE, free text books for ST Children from class I TO VIII, recruitment of local tribal teachers, special coaching/ remedial classes for improving learning outcomes of ST children, deployment of tribal coordinators at the state level and tribal dominated districts to monitor SSA activities, providing adequate representation in VEC/SMC/SEC etc. But these measures have failed to borne the fruit yet. Many of the programmes did not benefit the tribal community because these

programmes were not contextualized and localized considering regional, geographical and physical differences and barriers (Kumar, 2008).

ST Literacy Trends in Jharkhand: Literacy rate for a community measured by the percentage of total population of that community found to be literate is an important socio-demographic variable which affects many other socio-economic, demographic, cultural etc. characteristics in a population. Table 1 reflects that in Jharkhand the literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes (56.6%) is abysmally low in comparison to General Population literacy rate (67.6 %). Male – female disparity also exists in education of Scheduled Tribes in the state. The ST females lag behind the ST males in the state by gap of 21.4%.

Table 1 (Literacy rate: Non ST vs. Jharkhand ST)

	Males (%)	Female (%)	Gap	Total
General Population	78.4	56.2	22.2	67.6
ST	64.4	43.0	21.4	56.6
Gap	14	13.2		11

Source: GOI, NSSO, Primary Data (2009-10).

Enrolment: In 2010 when the Right to Education came into force, Jharkhand had three years to get its own acts together. The state government's effort to bring the children in the arena of School through implementation of SSA and Mid day meal programme has given a boost to the School Education. Data in the Table 2 indicate that Gross Enrolment Ratio among ST children as well as All category children in the state is high at the entry level (Primary level) and reduces with advancing level of education. The maximum reduction in GER is observed as the child has reached sixth grade of schooling. Data also highlights that the GER for ST children is marginally higher than GER for All category children.

Table 2 (Gross Enrolment Ratio: Overall Children vs. ST)

	Classes (I – V)	Classes (VI – VIII)	Classes (IX-X)	Classes (XI-XII)
All Category Children	147.1	81.3	40.9	10.1
ST Children	164.5	82.4	45.3	12.6
Gap	17.4	1.1	4.4	2.5

Source: Statistics of School Education Report, 2010-11

Table 3 (Gross Enrolment Ratio at Higher Education: All Category vs. ST)

	Male	Female	Gap	Total
All Category	9.1	7.6	1.5	8.4
ST	3.9	3.9	0	3.9
Gap	8.5	5.3		

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (Provisional) 2011-12. Table 3 shows grimmer picture of access to Higher Education among Scheduled Tribe students as well as All category students in Jharkhand. Higher education equips youths to contribute to the economic development of society and lead it in intellectual, political and social spheres. Development of the higher education depends on the out-turn of the students from higher secondary schools, provisions of appropriate educational avenues and facilities for them and availability of suitable conditions of their access to these facilities (Hussain, 2013). Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for ST All category students in Higher education in India is 9.1 which is calculated for 18 – 23 years of age group while the GER for Jharkhand ST is abysmally low (3.9). There is no male – female disparity in GER for ST students in the state.

School Attendance: School Attendance is an important index which reflects how far the school based activities as well as curriculum has been able to bring the children into the schools. Table 4 exhibits that 25.7 % students of the ST category have never attended schools because of various reasons. Among them 5.3% did not attend because they and their parents were of the opinion that education was not important. Among the given three social categories, the ST children have registered highest percentage (25.7%) of never attended school incidences. In School Attendance also the STs are at the bottom (69.7%) in comparison to other caste groups such as SCs (76.3%) and OBCs (80.7%). More over it also reveals that cases of never attended schools are alarmingly high for the ST females in the state.

Table 4 (School Attendance among Different Social Categories)

Social Categories		Scheduled Tribes			SC	OBC	Others	Total
		Males	Females	Total				
Never Attended	School too far	0.5	1.3	0.9	NA	0.4	0.0	0.4
	To support Household income	1.0	1.3	1.1	0.6	0.5	1.5	0.9
	Education not necessary	3.4	7.3	5.3	2.3	3.7	4.6	4.0
	Attend domestic chores	0.2	2.5	1.3	2.6	1.2	0.5	1.4
	Others	17.2	17.2	17.2	15.2	10.6	11.7	13.2
	Never Attended Schools	22.3	29.6	25.7	20.7	16.4	18.3	19.8
Attending	Non Formal Education	NA	0.3	0.1	0.5	0.5	NA	0.3
	Total Literacy Campaign	0.1	NA	0.0	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Pre-Primary	4.6	3.7	4.2	11.0	9.2	8.1	8.0
	Primary	60.3	49.8	55.4	52.3	54.8	42.9	52.7
	Middle	6.3	10.7	8.4	12.0	13.7	19.2	12.9
	Secondary	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.0	3.1	7.4	3.1
Attending the School		73.1	66	69.7	76.3	80.7	77.5	76.7

Source: Annual Status of Education Report, 2007

Drop out: Data from table 5 indicate that the dropout rate between classes I to X is as high as 79.80 % for ST Children in comparison to 69.5 % of All category students. This implies that only small portion of ST Children in the state opted for higher secondary education and above. Dropout rate has increasing tendency on advancing towards higher classes. The gap between All category children and ST children in terms of the dropout rates is more or less same at all the levels.

Table 5 (Dropout Rate at Different levels of Schooling: All Category vs. ST)

	Classes I - V	Classes I - VIII	Classes I - X
All Category	28.4	45.1	69.5
ST	37.5	55.8	79.8
Gap	9.1	10.7	10.3

Source: Statistics of School Education, 2010-2011

Examination Results of ST students: Table 7 reveals that ST Girls excel ST boys in High School & Higher Secondary School Examination conducted by Jharkhand Academic Council in 2007. It is also evident from the data in the given table that more than 20 percent students have failed in both examinations. Limited attainments at the

higher secondary level ripple their entry into the higher education.

Table 6 (ST Student's High School & Higher Secondary School Examination Result, Jharkhand Academic Council, 2007)

	High School			Higher Secondary School		
	Appeared	Passed	Pass Percentage	Appeared	Passed	Pass Percentage
Boys	35570	27157	76.35	19328	12703	65.72
Girls	23051	18883	81.92	13277	9779	73.65
Total	58621	46040	78.54	32605	22482	68.95

Source: Abstract of Statistics of School Education 2007- 08

The data discussed above substantiate that low percentage of literacy, skewed enrolment, high dropout rates, poor attendance, low educational attainment are the main features that characterize ST education in Jharkhand The Scheduled tribe children are at the bottom level on various parameters of their educational development.. Lack of education is directly related with poor prospects of livelihood opportunities and future living potentialities. It has also given birth to composite problems of alienation, indebtedness, atrocities, displacement, unemployment etc.

Current Needs of ST Children in Jharkhand: The government is doing its level best and substantial progress has been made in the field of education. Jharkhand has established network of educational institutions comprising 24,842 primary schools, 13,407 Upper Primary Schools 1,730 Secondary Schools, 351 Higher Secondary Schools and 138 Degree Colleges having Classes XI & XII (8th All India School Survey, NCERT). The survey also reports that 3.9 % schools are still being run either in dilapidated buildings or in open space, 19.23 % schools have no drinking water facility in the school premises, 40% schools are without usable toilet as well as 71.12 % schools have no playground. Sizable populations of teachers are working in these schools: 52463 in primary schools, 71870 in upper primary schools, 15745 in secondary schools, 7794 in Higher Secondary Schools But it is unfortunate that this massive network is inadequate to deliver inputs which are required for uplifting the educational standard of Scheduled tribe children in the state. Acute shortage of trained and qualified teachers and high absenteeism among them is a serious lacuna in the school systems. Pupil teacher ratio tends to be high especially in higher classes: 48: 1 in upper primary, 51: 1 in secondary schools, and 48: 1 in higher secondary schools. The situation aggravates when the teachers are engaged in the non academic activities such as census work, election

duties or supervision of mid day meal. How one can think of a teacher taking remedial classes or tutorial for ST children in case he is overburdened with non academic work?

Another factor that hinders the educational participation of ST children in the state is their inaccessible geographical locations. Majority of the ST children dwell in the rural settings whose topography is mostly undulating, hilly and sloping with mountains, forests, river basins and valleys. Only 25% villages are connected with metal roads in the state. Out of 59,931 habitations throughout the state, there are 3,334 habitations having primary schooling facility beyond one kilometer & 6,514 habitations having upper primary schooling facilities beyond three kilometers. Even since 1991, the Ashram Schools have been started by the government to cater to the educational needs of the ST Children but most of them are poorly maintained and even lack basic facilities.

Moreover low educational level of parents as well as their poor economic status continues to obstruct the access of ST children to school and the quality of education they receive. The capacity to educate their children becomes very difficult on their part as the family decision revolves around earning for their livelihood and survival. Even in elementary education, hidden costs still occur, such as the purchase of notebooks or transportation costs or payment for private tuition classes in classes 6-8 to make up for teaching in government schools (as much as Rs 3000 per year). These costs further increase in senior secondary schools (classes 11-12) in the state, due to the very limited number of such schools primarily at the block headquarters.

Empirical evidence suggests that tribal children possess the basic cognitive abilities and psychological dispositions for successful participation in schools, and their low achievement levels are attributed to school-related variables as would apply to non-tribal students (Gautam, 2003). Poor performance of tribal students and the below average situation of primary education in tribal areas is driven by inter-related factors. Most children tend to be first generation learners whose education is not reinforced or supported in their home environments. Based on 22 rural districts in Jharkhand, Annual Status of Education Report, 2012 (ASER) reports those 4.4% children in the age group of 6-14 years and 16.8% children in the age group of 15-16 years are out of school children (never enrolled plus drop outs). Another factor that leads to high dropout incidences among the ST children in the state is language barrier. The tribal children use santhali, Nagpuri Ho or Mundari for communication with their parents and neighbours. The Government schools use Hindi for teaching and communication, which is most often

not familiar to a tribal child at the pre-primary and primary levels. They are thus unable to fully comprehend classroom teaching and activities, read in the state language or understand the texts properly. Moreover the teachers employed in these schools are mostly outsiders and they show their reluctance in learning these local dialects. Hardly, they make any effort to encourage the ST students for better educational attainments. The curriculum (Absence of linkage with existing realities of tribal life) which is transacted in the classroom by the non tribal teacher is also illusive for the ST students. The ST Children are taught using a city syllabus, which is less applicable to tribal areas.

There is a complete absence of any spaces for participation by SC/ST communities in planning for the educational development of SC/ST children. Nor is any needs assessment carried out by the Education Departments or even SC/ST Welfare Departments regarding the educational needs of SC/ST children today. Instead, all planning is made based primarily on DISE data, which only gives a broad picture on enrolments and dropouts in education. In the absence of micro-planning for SC/ST children's education, moreover, new schemes have not been developed in recent years. Education officials seem more concerned that existing schemes have not reached all the intended beneficiaries yet. At most, new schemes like solar lamps for girl students or computer aided learning have been created by the Department of Human Resources Development after companies have piloted these technologies in some schools or areas. In other words, products are marketed to the department and thereafter emerging as schemes, rather than through any social mapping and needs analysis.

Having examined the major obstacles in the educational development of the ST children, the question arises: What do ST children need today to make themselves at par with Non ST children in educational settings. An in-depth study conducted by Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion & Swadhikar, New Delhi in 2013 suggests following needs which should form the basis of detailed planning for their educational development:

TYPE OF NEEDS	NEEDS
<i>IFORMATION</i>	Access to information on educational schemes for them
	Access to information on norms and provisions of the Right of all Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act)
	Awareness programmes for SC/ST parents on the various education schemes for their children as well as community mobilization.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT	A quiet room within schools in which to study, given the often noisy atmosphere their crowded homes
	Computer facilities and computer education in schools.
	Special classes for academically weaker students, so that they do not need to go outside for private tuition classes.
	Free coaching for SC/ST students in classes 10 and 12 to prepare for the competitive exams
	Curriculum in tribal languages at the primary school level
	A review of the curriculum at all stages of school education from the perspective of dalits and adivasis, to ensure their rich cultural identity and important leaders are acknowledged in positive ways
	Special coaching in English, access to English medium schools
BASIC ENTITLEMENTS	Systems to ensure that the full scholarships, textbooks, etc. reach the students on time and Increase the scholarship amounts by at least 10% every year.
	Free computers for SC/ST students in secondary schools
	Free textbooks, notebooks and stationary at least up to class 10, if not class 12
	Decent quantity and quality of midday meals in schools
	Move towards free education for SC/ST children up to class 1 to 12.
HOSTELS/ RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS	Transport or escort facilities for SC/ST students, especially girls
	Hostels for SC/ST girls and boys at the block and district levels
	A residential school of JNV standard in every block for SC/ST students
	Separate schools for ST Paharia and Birhor students in Jharkhand, who are extremely socio-economically marginalized
	Greater access to vocational and technical education schemes/centre
EXTRA CURRICULAR SUPPORT	Education resource centre-cum-library in the villages in which students can study and learn, even be provided with tuition.
	Block level resource centers should have SC/ST representatives
	Guidance and counseling on social issues such as child marriages and how to negotiate social conflict, as well as career guidance
	A special guidance counselor for girls
	Karate and boxing training for students, especially girls
	Extra-curricular activities such as sports, music and art provided in all schools with adequate equipment
	Monthly health checkups for all students
Educational tours for secondary school students	
PARTICIPATION	Ensure electricity in all SC/ST habitations and in schools (via generators if necessary)
	Regular meetings should be organized between SC/ST parents and children with Education Department officials in order to share on issues and plan on education
	Building better relationships between SC/ST parents and teachers
	Proper monitoring systems in schools to ensure regular, quality teaching takes place, that teachers are not over-burdened with other non-teaching works, and that basic facilities like toilets and drinking water are adequate and clean
MONITORING	Regular impact analysis of SC/ST educational schemes to ensure match to SC/ST children's needs
	Specific intervention programmes to address discrimination in schools and ensure SC/ST children are not made to do extra work in the schools like cleaning
	All education volunteers working with SC/ST communities should be properly trained and regularly monitored in terms of their sensitivity towards these communities and their work
GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL	Ensure electricity in all SC/ST habitations and in schools (via generators if necessary)
	Specific intervention programmes to address discrimination in schools and ensure SC/ST children are not made to do extra work in the schools like cleaning
	Special training for teachers and school management on issues of discrimination and exclusion, equity and inclusion
	Grievances redress system in schools to deal with discrimination and other violations of the right to education.

Conclusion: The Scheduled Tribes representing more than one third of the population of Jharkhand state constitute massive workforce. The extremely low literacy level among STs is an important bottleneck in the development of the state. The Scheduled Tribe children's statistics reflect that they are lagging behind the all category children on various indicators such as GER, Drop out, Attendances, High School & Higher Secondary School examination pass percentage. Education is pre-requisite for transforming this segment into human resource. A host of programmes have been initiated by the government to uplift the educational standards of the ST children at par with the all category children, but these desired results have not been achieved so far. Merely launching lofty the schemes and incentives is not the panacea for ills of illiteracy and educational backwardness of ST children. Rather there is immense need to understand the tribe specific educational needs and aspirations. Tribal Education Programs needs an overhaul starting from planning to feedback. Decentralization of educational management is essential. There should be culturally sensitive programs of school education that ensure dignity of tribal groups. There is a need to evolve a sensitive model of tribal education rooted in the psychological strengths of tribal children. For maximum effectiveness, teacher training has to be an ongoing process, and not a one-time effort. In addition to training, capacity building of teachers on academic competence and pedagogy is needed.

In the last but not least, the educational deprivation of the ST children should be seen from another view point of all kinds of deprivation of the community and various programmes in social sectors related with health, employment, sanitation, rural development, housing etc should be interrelated with each other. The bureaucratic inferences, unnecessary paper work and documentation should be stumped out for proper implementation of these programmes.

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