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TRIBAL EDUCATION IN ODISHA, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES, AND SEVERAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

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Abstract

Since Education is a powerful tool for social, economic and political change of society and education for all is one of the emerging issues in India. The literacy rates among tribal population are not only very low but also shows a huge level gender disparity. Despite of government policies, even today it falls below national average. This paper is an attempt to explain the educational issues and challenges i.e. dropping out of STs Children from school and different government initiatives among Scheduled tribes in Odisha. To carry out this study, the researcher has studied a variety of articles, reports, research papers, textbooks, government websites, and online resources. The paper concludes that literacy rate of ST children in Odisha is increasing where the dropout rate of ST students is also higher among all social groups.

Key Words: Status of Tribal Education, Issues and Challenges, Government Initiatives

I. Introduction:

Education is a powerful tool for social, economic and Political change of society. As we consider social and economic development among the backward and marginal groups in India, educational attainment is act as most powerful indicator. However education has a large influence on a person’s life and an important component of every community. It helps to build character, opinions, and intellect, a person’s thought and mind. Having education in certain area helps people to create “how do they think”, “what do they feel and how do they behave”, which leads them on the path of success. For human development, acquisition of quality and enhanced education, knowledge and skill; a long and healthy life and rising standard of living are the measures. Professor Amartya Sen recently emphasized education as an important parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy. India is heading towards inclusive growth but lack of education, skills development and transparent governance became great hindrance in the pathway of inclusive growth. So the Changes in the education system should also reduce social gaps by allowing adequate recognition insofar as one is capable of continuing or acquiring competence. The tribal community in all of India has been subjected to various forms of deprivation, including the alienation of land and other resources. Even if some constitutional guarantees are provided, there has been no economic, social, and political mobility in this community. The Scheduled Tribes remain backward and socially excluded and still living in the severe environment than others. Education is one of the most important measures to improve Scheduled tribe’s capabilities, constraints and builds enlarged opportunities along with the choices for a sustained improvement in well-being.

Tribal Population and literacy in India

The Scheduled Tribe population represents one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized groups in India. There are over 500 tribes (with many overlapping communities in more than one State) as notified under article 342 of the Constitution of India, spread over different States and Union Territories of the country, the largest number of tribal communities being in the State of Odisha. Although Scheduled Tribes are a minority, they constitute about 8.2 % of the total population in India. About 93% of the tribal people live in rural areas and are engaged in agricultural pursuits. Nine States like Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and West Bengal which together account for more than four-fifths of the total tribal population in India.



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Table-1: Gender wise Literacy Rates of Total and STs Population in India from 1961 to 2011

Year	All			Scheduled Tribes		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	8.53	13.83	3.16
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	11.30	17.63	4.85
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	16.35	24.52	8.04
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	29.60	40.65	18.19
2001	64.84	75.26	53.67	47.10	59.17	34.76
2011	73.00	80.90	64.60	59.00	68.50	49.40

Sources: Census 2011, Office of the Registrar General, India

The Comparative Literacy Rates of STs and Total Population in India from 1961 to 2011 are shown in table – 1. The percentage of literacy of tribes was only 8.53% in 1961 which has increased to 72.99 % in 2011. But female literacy among tribes is only 54.4 % compared to male literacy of 71.70%. From the table no. 1, it may say that despite government efforts to promote education among the Scheduled Tribes (STs), their literacy rates as compared to the national average have remained low. The literacy rate as per Census 2011 is 73% but for STs is 59% only. The female literacy rate is also lower as compared to the national average. The overall literacy gap amongst the various groups and STs has come down from 19.77% in 1961 to 14.03% in 2011.

Tribes and Tribal Education in Odisha

In 2011, there have been recorded 9590756 scheduled tribe people and records 22.8% against total population 36804660. The districts like Mayurbhanj has recorded highest ST population i.e. 58.7% followed by Malkanagiri (57.8%), Nabarangpur (55.8%), Gajapati (54.3%), Kandhamal (53.6%), Sundargarh (50.7%) and Koraput (50.6%) having tribal population more than 50%. Whereas Puri district has lowest ST population i.e. 0.4% followed by Kendrapara (0.7%), Jagatsinghpur (0.7%), Bhadrak (2%), Ganjam (3.4%), Cuttack (3.6%) Kendrapara (5.1%).

Table-2: Literacy Rates of Total and STs Population in Odisha from 1961 to 2011

Year	Percentage of Literacy		Tribal Disparity
	Total	STs	
1961	21.66	07.36	14.30
1971	26.18	09.46	16.72
1981	34.23	13.96	20.27
1991	49.09	22.31	26.78
2001	63.08	37.37	25.71
2011	73.45	52.20	21.25

Source: (Registrar general of India, census 2011)

The above table shows the percentage of literacy in Odisha from 1961 to 2011 in both total and scheduled tribes. In both the case, literacy rate have been increasing continuously i.e. 21.66% of total and 7.36% of STs in 1961 and 73.45% of total and 52.20% STs in 2011. Though, literacy rate has been increasing but if we compare them, then tribal education is far behind to total literacy rate in Odisha. If we consider tribal disparity in literacy had steadily increased from 1961 to 1991 and registered a magical decrease in 2001 and 2011, which is more than 20%. So when there has been a steady growth of population.



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Enrolment at elementary level in 2021-22, Odisha has recorded 1672515 ST children i.e. 30.36% against 5507698 children at Elementary level and the above following districts having more than 50% STs Population have recorded good number of enrolment at primary level, but they recorded high percentage of dropouts children in as we consider primary to higher secondary level of education. If we consider district wise enrolment of Scheduled Tribes student, then Gajapati district shows maximum enrolment at elementary level in 2021-22 followed by Mayurbhanj shows 2nd place i.e. 69.16%, Malakanagiri shows 3rd place i.e 68.62%, Rayagada and Nabarangpur show 4th and 5th place in maximum ST enrolment i.e. 67.31% and 66.11% etc. Whereas Puri district shows minimum ST enrolment i.e. 1.09% followed by Kendrapara (1.39%), Jagatsinghpur (2.19%), Bhadrak (4.39%), Ganjam (4.96%), Cuttack (6.91%) etc.

Objectives:

1. To discuss the educational attainments and challenges faced by scheduled tribe children of Odisha.
2. To analyze the initiatives from government to attain universalization of elementary education.

Methodology of the Study

This study is basically descriptive in nature and purely based on secondary sources.Data has been collected from various documents, books, journals, government reports, different published materials from Economic Survey, statistical abstract 2012, District information System for Education (DISE), OSEPA reports, Annual Educational Reports 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23.

Challenges Faced by Tribal Students during their Attainment

Major challenge faced by tribal children while attaining their foundational course is dropping out of children without completing their level of education. From the UDISE+ 2022-23 data report, Odisha has experienced dropout only in case of STs i.e. 1.44% in primary and it has been increasing to 6.72% in U.P. level. It has also noticed that more dropouts is recorded as we move from higher level of 20.57% in secondary level. This dropout may be due to following problems among scheduled tribes.

1. Geographical Barrier- As tribal people live in forested area with remotely location and they prefer calmness, good environment and solidarity instead of polluted, crowded urban life. So this physical barrier creates a hindrance for the children to attend the school in a neighboring village.
2. Economic Barrier- Maximum of population of STs are engaged in primary and their allied economic activity like cultivation, agricultural laborer, fire wood and forest goods collection etc. About 45% of STs live in rural and 35% in urban area live in below poverty line. This leads to deprivation and malnutrition of children.
3. Language Barrier- Since scheduled tribe people have their own culture, tradition and language. So understanding of Odia language is one of the important constraints of tribal children which prevent them to access education at primary level.
4. Teacher Related Issue-As remotely located tribal areas, the teacher absenteeism is a regular phenomenon and this affects largely the quality of education. Due to insufficient of female teachers in educational institution the adolescent girls feel uncomfortable to go to school.
5. Lack of proper monitoring: Proper monitoring is hindered by poor coordination between the Tribal Welfare Department and School Education Department.
6. Attitude of the parents: As many students are still first generation child for education and education does not yield any immediate economic return, the tribal parents prefer to engage their children in remunerative employment which supplements the family income. In case of girl child, they prefer to stay them at home for taking care and child marriage is another big issue in some tribal dominated districts. Child marriage is a manifestation of much social, cultural and economic discrimination until unless we cannot prevent this education of girl children cannot be improved.



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Recent Initiatives from Governments:

After establishment of our new constitution in 1950, there has been more focusing on free and compulsory education to all children irrespective of all caste, clan and religion, the aim was to achieve the goal of **Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE)** within next ten years i.e. by 1960. But the goal was too far to achieve within short period. Till 1960, all efforts were focused on provision of schooling facilities and latter was shifted to its access of components of UEE like universal enrolment and retention and recently, the main focus is Quality of Education. Several government projects and centrally sponsored schemes have been initiated after **National Policy of Education** in 1986 and coming on action in 1992. In elementary scenario, it tried to recognize insufficient infrastructure, poor environmental condition at school, measures taken for SCs and STs Girl's participation, acknowledging the 10+2+3 structure, ensured free and compulsory education up to 14 years by 1995. Also is provided to all children also have universal provision to facilities like enrolment and retention, enrolment in 11-14 age group, operation blackboard (OB), new program of non-formal education and also provided provided universal facilities like enrolment and retention, enrolment in 11-14 age group, operation blackboard (OB), new program of non-formal education etc.

Operation Blackboard (OB)- was launched in 1987 to improve facilities in schools by providing for more teachers, rooms and teaching learning equipment. This Scheme seeks to bring both the quantitative and qualitative improvements in primary education through three components, namely (i) an additional teacher to single teacher primary schools; (ii) providing at least two classrooms in each primary school; and (iii) providing teaching-learning equipment to all primary schools. A total of 523000 primary schools and 127000 upper primary schools have been provided with funds for the development of the academic infrastructure and resources.

District Institutes of Education and Training- The District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) was initiated in 1987 to strengthen teacher education by establishing quality training institutions. The scheme proposed to create viable institutional, academic and technical resource base for orientations, training and continuous up-gradation of knowledge, competence and pedagogical skills of school teachers' in the country.

National Programme for Nutritional Support (Mid-day Meal)- The National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (launched in 1995) provides food grains/cooked meals to children in primary classes. The program assures 100 grams of grains per day for attending schools for at least 80 per cent of the total school days in a month. The program had benefited more than 98 million children spread over 0.69 million schools. The evaluation of the program shows that on one hand it has given boost to enrolment in a few states; on the other hand it has had a positive impact on attendance in other states.

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. A centrally-sponsored government scheme of ashram schools exclusively for Schedule Tribe children from elementary to higher secondary levels was initiated in the 1970s. But the poor quality of education in ashram schools, however, has undermined confidence in education as a vehicle for social mobility

SarvaShikshaAbhiyan- More recently, the Government of India has also initiated an ambitious program called SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA): An Initiative for Universal Elementary Education to achieve the goal of UEE. Unlike the District Primary Education Programme, the SSA envisages to develop district-specific elementary education plans within the framework of decentralized management of education with a focus on Panchayati Raj Institutions. The targets under the SSA is that all children will bring back to school by 2003 and complete five years of schooling by 2007 and eight years by 2010. The SarvaShikshaAbhiyan has a special focus on the educational needs of girls, SCs and STs and other children belonging to deprived, disadvantaged and marginalized communities. The SarvaShikshaAbhiyan is expected to accord the highest priority to community monitoring, transparency in the programme planning and implementation of capacity building at all levels as also to the adoption of a mission approach by the mainstream Education Department functionaries.



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In Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya program, Merit-cum-poverty scholarship for meritorious students of class-III & class-V, Pathani Samanta mathematics talent scholarship from upper primary to +2 level etc. which are described below-

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009

In August 2009, Parliament passed the historic Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. The new law must be observed from the viewpoint of children. It provides a justifiable legal background that permits all children between the ages of six to fourteen years to an education of rational worth, based on principles of justice and non-discrimination. It provides for children's right to free and compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education. More essentially, it provides for the child's right to education that is free from anxiety, pressure and apprehension.

Non-Formal Education (NFE) and EGS & AIE - The scheme of non-formal education

(NFE), introduced in 1977-78 on a pilot basis and expanded in subsequent years, focused on out of school children in the age group of six to fourteen years. These children have remained outside the formal system due to socio-economic and cultural reasons. The scheme was primarily limited to ten educationally backward states, covering urban slums, hilly, tribal and desert areas. The scheme has certain limitations, these are, lack of interest on the part of the teachers, deprived quality of training, uncertainty in curriculum, instructional methods and text-books, lack of community participation, weak management system, inadequate outlay, lack of emphasis on mainstreaming and so forth. Moreover, most NFE centres were in habitations already served by formal schools.

The programme was researched upon and renamed the Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS & AIE) in 2000. It provided for opening EGS schools in areas where there are no schools within a radius of one km. The EGS & AIE scheme will assist varied strategies for out of school children including bridge courses, back-to-school camps, seasonal hostels, summer camps, teachers and assisting coaching classes. The investment cost per child per year has been increased from Rs. 375 to Rs. 845 at the primary level centre and from Rs. 580 to Rs. 1,200 at the upper primary level.

Janshala (GOI-UN) Programme - The Janshala (GOI-UN) Programme is a co-operative effort of the Government of India (GOI) and five United Nations (UN) agencies, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, UN Economic and Social Commission (UNESCO), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNFPA. It provides programme support to the on-going efforts towards achieving UEE. UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA have committed to contribute \$ 20 million for the programme while UNESCO and ILO have offered technical know-how. Janshala is a community based primary education programme that aims to make primary education more accessible and effective, especially for girls and children belonging to deprived communities, marginalised groups, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities groups. These also include working children and children with special needs. The programme covers 139 blocks in nine states, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, with a total project outlay of Rs. 103.29 crore. The programme is to operate for five years, from 1998 to 2002. Janshala has started a large number of alternative schools in small and remote habitations in the program areas. Other major areas of accomplishment are in teacher training, multi-grade teaching, intervention for education of the disabled, establishing of block and cluster resources centres and reinforcement of the capabilities at the state, district and block levels.

National Education Policy-2020 (Elementary Education) -With objectives of "By 2025, every student in grade 5 and beyond has achieved foundational literacy and numeracy". This policy firstly tries to explain primary cause of learning crisis including lack of preparedness, too little curricular emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy, teacher capacity, teacher development, health and nutrition. To solve these problems of crisis specific measures are designed i.e. expansion of midday meal programme (including nutritious breakfast and midday meal), increase focus in school on foundational literacy and numeracy through redesign the school and classroom curriculum for grade 1-5, redesign of teacher education for foundational literacy and numeracy, piloting other technological interventions as aids to teacher i.e.



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computers, tablets, smart phones and relevant software, importance of parental participation, Ensuring proper teacher pupil teacher ratio under 30:1 at every level and mobilization of local community and of volunteers.

NIPUN Bharat Program- Ministry of Education has launched a National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat), for ensuring that every child in the country necessarily attains foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27. The mission will focus on children of age group of 3 to 9 years including pre-school to Grade 3. The children who are in Class 4 and 5 and have not attained the foundational skills will be provided individual teacher guidance and support, peer support and age appropriate and supplementary graded learning materials to acquire the necessary competencies. The goals and objectives of the mission are required to be achieved by all Govt., Govt. Aided and Private Schools so that universal acquisition of FLN skills can be achieved by 2026-27.

Recommendations for Improving the Tribal Education

- Government and stakeholders should place a priority on reducing and removing obstacles, which prevent to those little children from obtaining an education.
- More effective policies and schemes should be taken to tackling financial difficulties of parents, avoid transport facility by providing more ashram schools and ensuring for safe and secure and welcoming environment at school.
- Invest on more teachers training programs recruit more lady teacher and MLE teacher to tackle the language barrier of STs Children.
- Develop and enforce policies to stop gender-based violence particularly to those vulnerable tribal girl children.
- Establish and strengthen robust data collection systems to monitor enrolment and its outcomes, which may be resulted evidence based policies and interventions, track progress and identify those areas needing improvement.
- More collaborative partnership between government and civil society organization, educational institution. Stakeholders should effort best practices to improvement of tribal education.

Conclusion:

Education is the key to tribal development. Tribal children have very low levels of participation. Though the development of the tribes is taking place in India, but in a very slow manner. If government will not take some proper steps in an innovative way for the development of tribal education, the status of education among tribes will be a story of distress, despair and death. Hence time has come to think it seriously about tribal education and inclusive growth. So, this is the duty of various government interventions, planners and policy makers to address this problem and allocate more funds in the central and state budgets for tribal education. Easy access and more opportunities should be provided to the tribal children in order to bring them to the mainstream of economic development. Education, especially in its elementary form, is considered of utmost importance to the tribes and their development education also help to build confidence among the tribes to deal with outsiders. 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 and not able to participate in the process of development.

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