

Research Article

Inequality of Educational Opportunities: With Special Reference to Bodo Tribe of Deulkuchi Village in Assam

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ABSTRACT

In the world, every country has its own constitution with a philosophy of its own which embodies the ideals, values, hopes and aspirations of its people. It is, therefore, natural that education should find an important document. The Indian constitution makes it an obligatory responsibility of the Government of India to promote the educational interest of the weaker sections of the society. Education is considered the most effective instruments for ensuring equality of opportunity but the tribal people are lagging far behind. Policy makers and social scientists had envisaged that education will bring change in the lives of the tribal people. After independence a series of programmes and policies in relation to education by the government, the desired level of education and socio-economic development for tribes have not yet been achieved. There seems to be a wide range of gap between planning and implementation as well as the implementing agencies and the beneficiaries in this regard. This gap should be abridged so as to bring the tribal at par with the main stream of Indian society.

Keywords: Tribe, Programmes and policies, Educational inequality, Literacy, Drop out, Deulkuchi village

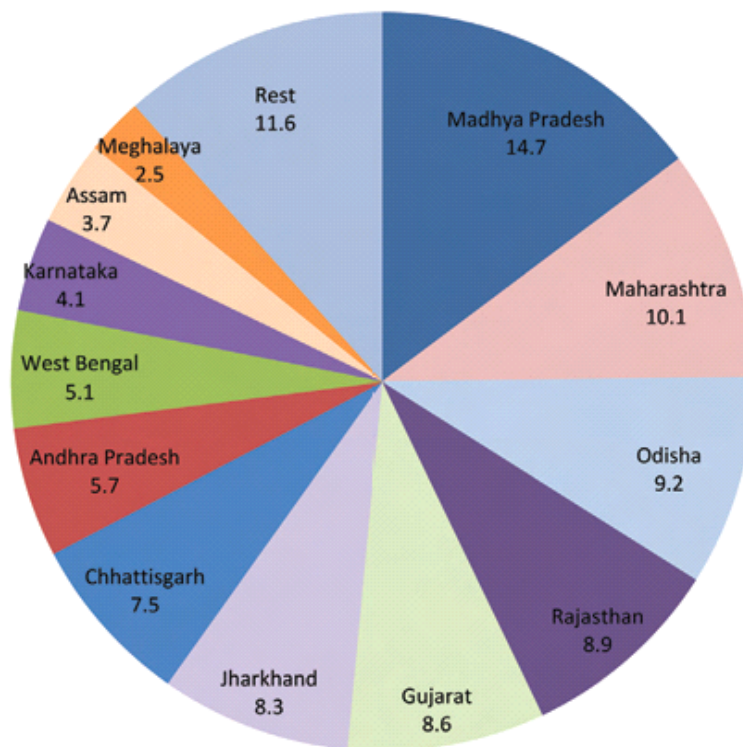
INTRODUCTION

Education is considered the most powerful instrument of social change and development. It is only through education that people can bring desirable changes and development by developing their personal, social and economic conditions. Those countries are socially and economically advance which are also educationally advance. At present, no nation can think of social or economic development without ensuring an abundant supply of highly educated and skilled people. Education is an essential component for overall development of any society. It not only gives knowledge but also act as an agent to make an individual capable to participate in social, economic and political activities. In order to acquire a better quality of life and to generate development, education is of great importance among the other factors. The study proposes to investigate how and to what extent government policy help Indian tribe to bring improves in their educational life.

STATUS OF TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA

Tribal communities live in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas. Tribal groups are at different stages of social, economic and educational development. While some tribal communities have adopted a mainstream way of life and others end of the spectrum. Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India refers to Scheduled Tribes as those communities, who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. According to this article only those communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending Act of Parliament will be considered to be Scheduled Tribes. Article 342 provides for specification tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which are deemed to be for the purposes of the Constitution the Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union Territory (Xaxa, 2014). In pursuance of these provisions, the list of Scheduled Tribes are notified for each State or Union Territory and are valid only within the jurisdiction of that State or Union Territory and not outside. The tribal population of the country, as per 2011 census, is 10.43 cores, constituting 8.6% of the total population. 89.97% of them live in rural areas and 10.03% in urban areas. The decadal population growth of the tribes from Census 2001 to 2011 has been 23.66% against the 17.69% of the entire population. Scheduled Tribes are broadly inhabited into two distinct geographical areas-the Central India and the North-Eastern Area. More than half of the Scheduled Tribe population is concentrated in Central India, that is, Madhya

Pradesh (14.69%), Chhattisgarh (7.5%), Jharkhand (8.29%), Andhra Pradesh (5.7%), Maharashtra (10.08%), Orissa (9.2%), Gujarat (8.55%) and Rajasthan (8.86%). The other distinct area is the North East that is Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. **Graph 1** shows the states' share of ST population out of India's ST population:



Graph 1: Distribution of scheduled tribe population by states – 2011 (%)

Source: Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India, 2013

EDUCATIONAL CONDITION OF TRIBE AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

Education forms an important component in the overall development of individuals, enabling them to greater awareness, better comprehension of their social, political and cultural environment and also facilitating in the improvement of their socio-economic conditions. These holds true in the case of the Scheduled Tribes in India (Mathur, 2007). The levels of education of the Scheduled Tribes in India are as follows.

Table 1: Comparative LRs of STs and Total Population (%)

Category/census year	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total population	28.3	34.45	43.57	52.21	64.84	72.99
Scheduled Tribes	8.53	11.30	16.35	29.60	47.10	58.96
Gap	19.77	18.15	19.88	22.61	18.28	14.03

Source: Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India 2013

Table 1 clearly reflect that Literacy Rate (LR) of Scheduled Tribe Population in India increased from 8.53% in 1961 to 58.96% in 2011 for Scheduled Tribes while the corresponding increase of the total population was from 28.30% in 1961 to 72.99% in 2011.

ENROLMENT OF TRIBAL STUDENTS

The education system in India has made significant progress over past few decades. The literacy of tribe has been a matter of concern even after so many years of independence. This is despite the fact that the largest proportions of centrally sponsored programmes for tribal development are related to the single sector of education. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is implemented as India's main programme for universalising elementary education. Its overall goals include universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social category gaps in education and enhancement of learning levels of children. The law provides a justifiable legal framework that entitles all children between the ages of 6–14 years free and compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education (Pathak, 2012). It provides for children's right to an education of equitable quality, based on principles of equity and non-discrimination. Therefore, it is important to have the enrolment data to maintain a secured system of the databases of the enrolees. Table 2 reveal that some improvement in the percentage enrolment of ST students to all categories has been made in 2010–11 since 1995–96, at the Primary, Upper Primary and Secondary level.

DROPOUT RATES OF SCHEDULED TRIBE STUDENT

Dropout Rate is the proportion of pupils/students who leave school during the year as well as those who complete the grade/year level but fail to enrol in the next grade/year level the following school year to the total number of pupils/students enrolled during the previous school year. It is a critical indicator reflecting lack of educational development and inability of a given social group to complete a specific level of education. In the case of tribes, dropout rates are still very high-35.6% in

Table 2: Percentage Enrolment of ST Students

Year	Primary	Upper primary	Secondary
1995–96	8.8	6.1	4.9
1996–97	9.2	6.3	4.9
1998–99	9.6	6.7	5.1
1999–2000	9.4	6.9	5.0
2000–01	9.7	7.2	5.4
2002–03	9.7	6.9	5.4
2003–04	9.8	7.5	5.6
2004–05	10.5	8.1	5.6
2005–06	10.6	8.5	5.7
2006–07	10.8	8.5	6.1
2007–08	10.8	8.2	6.3
2009–10	11.2	8.6	6.3
2010–11	11.0	8.7	6.4

Source: Selected Educational Statistics, M/HRD, 2010–11

Classes I to V; 55% in Classes I to VIII; and 70.9% in Classes I to X in 2010–11 and significantly higher than the all India figures which is shown in Table 3.

Once we look back and review the progress of our country in various areas, we find that we have made substantial progress since independence but we still have not been able to achieve all our targets. Just after Independence, government of India was proposing the formulation of a National Policy on Scheduled Tribes. The policy seeks to bring Scheduled Tribes into the mainstream of society through a multipronged approach for their all-round development without disturbing their distinct culture. The Constitution through several Articles has provided for the socio-economic development and empowerment of Scheduled Tribes. But there has been no national policy, which could have helped translate the constitutional provisions into a reality. Five principles spelt out in 1952, known as *Panchsheel*, have been guiding the administration of tribal affairs.

Table 3: Dropout Rates

Class	Boys		Girls		Total		
	ST	All	ST	All	ST	All	Gap
Classes I–V	37.2	28.7	33.9	25.1	35.6	27.0	8.6
Classes I–VIII	54.7	40.3	55.4	41	55.0	40.6	14.4
Classes I–X	70.6	50.4	71.3	47.9	70.9	49.3	21.6

Source: Statistics of School Education, 2010–11

The Directive Principle of the Constitution that requires that the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of society, including tribes, is especially promoted (article 46). Besides these, there are provisions in the 5th or 6th schedule of the Constitution (Articles 244 and 244(a) that empower the state to bring the area inhabited by the tribes under special treatment of administration. The provisions in the Constitution range from creation of the scheduled and tribal areas, to providing representation in Parliament and State legislatures including special privileges in the form of reservation of certain percentage of posts in government services and seats in educational institutions. In short, the Constitution aimed at safeguarding, protecting and promoting the interest of tribal people.

In the field of education, various Committees and Commissions were constituted which did wider consultations and made recommendations. On the basis of recommendations, a National Policy of Education was formulated in 1986 and a Programme of Action was developed in 1992 which spelt out short term, medium term and long-term measures to achieve the targets as spelt out in National Policy of Education. This was followed by various programmes and projects, both at the National and State levels and the progress made under them were considered. At the primary and elementary level, some of such programmes were District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), SSA, Shiksha Karmi Yojana, Bihar Education Project, Lok Jumbish, Non-formal Education Programme, Education Guarantee Scheme and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya which had their own advantages and specific objectives. Five-year plans of the country have taken care of various achievements to set up further targets and allocate resources for the same. However, even today, the system has several challenges which need to be met though the enrolment of children in schools has gone up. Even though, the population of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are represented in appropriate proportion, substantial numbers of children drop-out at upper primary level. The reasons for the same are well known and efforts are being made to give them another opportunity to complete their education at least till the elementary level. In spite of this, the country felt the need for making education a fundamental right in 2009 by RTE Act passed and elaborated upon steps to be taken up to achieve it. We, as a country, are moving towards Universalisation of Secondary Education but cannot overlook the existing problems of Education at the Elementary Level.

In Assam, drop-out rates have been falling, they are still high. The gender disparity has reduced considerably at the primary stage. The drop-out rates of Scheduled Tribes students in Assam is shown in following Table 4. The preamble of the

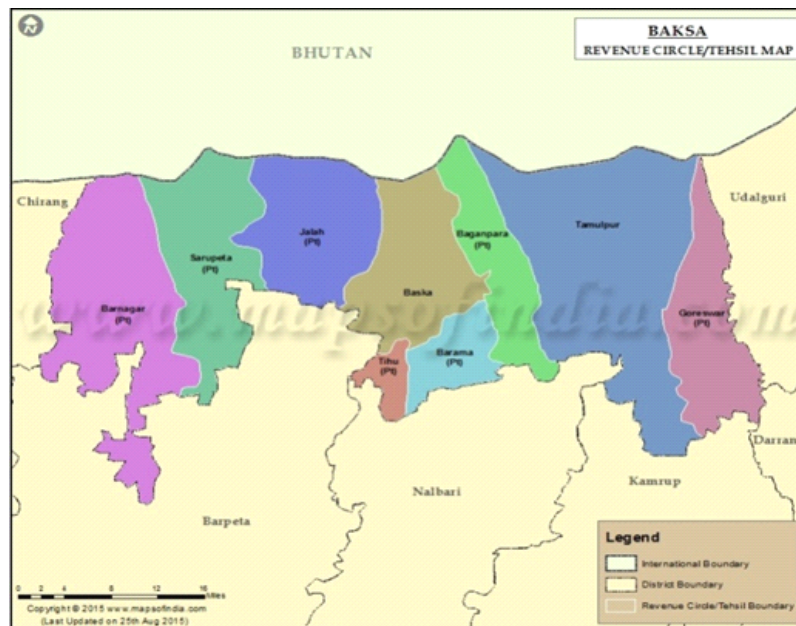
Table 4: Dropout Rates of Scheduled Tribes Students in Assam

State	Classes I–V			Classes I–VIII			Classes I–X		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Assam	0.00	0.00	0.00	78.89	74.64	77.11	86.99	85.49	86.36

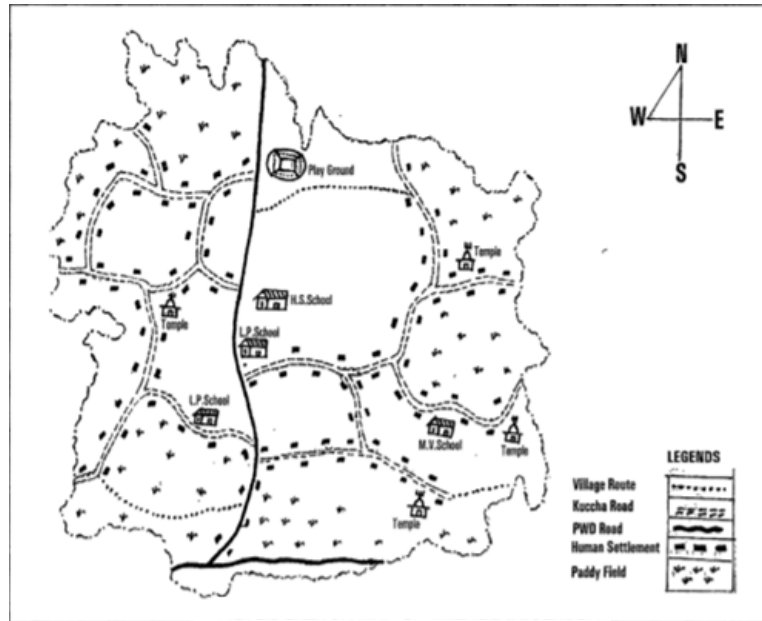
Source: GOI, Educationforallindia.com, Selected Educational Statistics

Note: Zero indicates that there is no Drop-Out.

constitution also assures equality to all the citizens and it can be said that Indian constitution is committed to the principle of equality and accepted it as an article of faith. This is how ever not the scenario among the people in Deulkuchi village of Baksa district in Assam (**google map, 2018**). Deulkuchi village is located in Goreswar development block Baksa district in Assam, India and 39 km away from district headquarter Mushalpur. The geographical area of village is 367.34 hectares (**google map, 2018**). The total population of the village is 1,600 followed by 822 males and 778 females. A sizable number of Boro tribe living in Deulkuchi village in Baksa district of Assam. The tribe of Deulkuchi village in Baksa district is characterised by poor socio-economic condition as well as poor educational status. Genesis of their poor geo-political, Socio-economic Vis-a-Vis educational condition is social discrimination throughout generations.



Map 1: Location of Baksa District (*Source: google map, 2018*)



Map 2: Deulkuchi Village (Source: google map, 2018)

Education has long been associated with upward mobility. But the villagers and their children face a number of hurdles in access to better education. The number of schools is found in this village. There are seven schools are primary level and two schools are higher secondary level within the jurisdiction. But here the minimum infrastructural facilities are not available. For further studies these children have to travel long distances. The problems are critical in the village is located in the isolated places with very poor connectivity to nearby urban centres. The young children are very often not able to cover a distance around five km on foot to reach school. This difficulty increases during the rainy season, when the road is bad and slushy. Economic life of majority of them is in bad shape. Boro family income in Deulkuchi village is mainly based on agriculture. Respondent's view that their daily wage is so less than one person's wage is not sufficient to maintain their family. That is why more than one member is engaged in other activities to meet their daily expenses. The monthly family income of the Bodo family in Deulkuchi village is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 reveal that almost half (46%) have low family income, range from Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,001 and 18% monthly income is very low, below Rs 3,000. Besides these, 12% of family income is medium Rs 5,001–7,000. While 20% average

Table 5: Monthly Family Income

Monthly income (in rupee)	Frequency	Percentage
<Rs 3,000	2	18
Rs 3,001–5,000	6	46
Rs 5,001–7,000	10	12
Rs 7,001–9,000	9	20
Rs 9,000>	23	4
Total	50	100

Source: Field study

monthly income and only 4% of respondent's family income is relatively high with above Rs 9,000 per month. Thus, we can say that Boroin Deulkuchi village live in poor condition. Poverty, illiteracy and ignorance are being capitalised among them. Their poor economic condition reflects their educational backwardness. The level of education of the Boro respondents is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Educational Level of the Respondent

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	24	48
High School	13	26
Higher Secondary	9	18
Degree	4	8
Total	50	100

Source: Field study

The Table 6 reflects that almost half of the respondents in Deulkuchi village are illiterate (48%) while 26% of respondent got education high school level and 18% respondent education up to Higher Secondary level. However, only a little segment that is 8% of the respondents have education is up to Degree level. Thus, it can say that educational level of the villagers is not satisfactory. Deulkuchi village as a whole are deprived of all government amenities. Awareness about the Programmes and Policies provided by Government for Scheduled Tribes is shown in following Table 7.

Table 7: Awareness of Government Programmes and Policies

Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	42
No	29	58
Total	50	100

Source: Field study

Data indicate that more than half of the respondents (58%) are do not know anything about the Government Programmes and Policies, only 42% has a little bit idea about the about Government Programmes and Policies of Scheduled Tribes. Respondents view that they totally deprived from all the facilities provided by the government of India for Scheduled Tribes. Their illiteracy and ignorance are used as weapons by government officials to deprive them from basic amenity provided to them by government.

METHODOLOGY

The data were collected in both primary and secondary sources. Secondary will collected from books, journals, census, periodicals etc. A qualitative research design was adopted in the study for better access and interpretation of data. Face to face interviews, telephonic conversations, focus groups and observation methods were applied for accessing and generating information. All in all, the study covered 50 Boro households in Deulkuchi village.

CONCLUSION

In the light of above discussion, it may be concluded that educational progress of Scheduled Tribes is inadequate. Tribes are not provided the basic equality of education. There have been specific efforts by central, state governments and voluntary organisations for improving conditions of education of these sections to suffer inequalities in educational opportunities. Economic deprivation, lack of easy access to school and lack of provision of infrastructure have contributed to the educational backwardness of Scheduled Tribes. Numerous schemes and programmes have been launched for their educational upliftment but the implementation aspects seem to be lacking. Thus, it can be said that it is not enough to formulate policies and programmes only, but also to evolve strategies to neutralise the ideological, structural and familial impediments so that the educational facilities are fully utilised.

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