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Education Exclusion of Scheduled Tribes in India

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Abstract:

In India, there are more than 533 tribal communities scattered all over the states and majority of them lives in difficult terrains, interiors of forests or remote areas which are difficult to access by mainstream population. Because of this geographical isolation, they are often excluded from developmental activities. The present study tries to identify the educational exclusion of tribes by comparing the literacy and educational attainments of the tribes with that of the other social groups. The study is descriptive and uses Census data published by Government of India for the analysis and interpretation.

Keywords: Education, Exclusion, Scheduled Tribes, Literacy

1. Introduction

In India, Scheduled Tribes constitute 8.6 per cent of total population numbering 104.28 million (Census of India, 2011). More than half of them are concentrated in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Jharkhand and Gujarat. Almost 90 per cent of them reside in rural areas particularly in difficult terrains, interiors of forests or remote hilly areas which are normally less accessible to the mainstream population. This in fact has led to the socio-economic backwardness of the community.

Even after more than five decades of developmental efforts, educational status among the social groups is found to be highly skewed in India. The marginalised communities such as Scheduled Castes and Schedules Tribes the degree of educational exclusion is extremely high. The important reason for the low level of education among tribes is their peculiar nature of habitations. Lack of sufficient educational institutions in tribal areas, poverty, and lack of nutritional and healthcare programmes are some of the important problems causing the situation. Besides, low literacy, poor enrolment at schools and high dropouts from schools are also significant among them (Suresh and Rajasenan, 2014).

The low representation of tribes to the total population often excludes from development processes. The present study analyses the educational exclusion of Scheduled Tribes in India using Census data published by the Government of India.

2. Data and Methods

The present study is descriptive in nature and explains the education exclusion of Scheduled Tribes using the Census Data which is published by the Government of India. Since the Indian independence, the government of India has conducted six censuses in the country. The census is conducted every ten years which started from 1961 and now, the department concerned has released a few details of the latest 2011 census. Comparative analysis is used for depicting the exclusion of tribes.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To analyse the disparity in literacy rates of STs
- To study the gender gap within the STs with respect to literacy attainments
- To identify the educational attainment of Scheduled Tribes

4. Disparity in Literacy Attainments of Scheduled Tribes

Literacy has got its importance in the development of individuals as well as nation. UNESCO (1997) defined 'Literacy' as an activity embedded in social and cultural practice aimed at bringing social and cultural transformation. In India, there is drastic difference in the level of literacy attainments across states, districts, social groups etc. This is marked by the intra-regional diversity along with the

disparity in socio-cultural traits among the people. The inter-State comparison between literacy rates among Scheduled Tribes also shows wide disparity. These variations reflect the differences in economic, social, cultural, religious and demographic characteristics of the different tribes and their exposure to the forces of modernization, urbanization and industrialization (Mitra and Singh, 2008). The literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes in India shows an increasing trend which indeed a good sign of acceptance of education as a sine qua non for the improvement of physical quality of life. But, there exists significant difference in the literacy rate between the total population and Scheduled Tribes in India (Table 1). For the year 2011, the literacy rate in India was 74.04 per cent which is significantly higher than that of the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes i.e. 59 per cent at national level. In all the census years, we can see that the literacy rate of the STs as well as the total population is showing an increasing trend. But, the literacy gap with Scheduled Tribes remains at higher level. Kerala has better literacy attainments compared to other States in India. It is clear from the Table 1 that the literacy rate of Kerala is well above the national average literacy rate for all the census years from 1961 to 2011. But, when we analyse the trend in the literacy achievement across STs and total population in Kerala, it is showing almost a similar trend of that we observed at national level. For all the decades, the literacy rate of STs in Kerala is much higher than that of national average literacy rate of STs. Even though, the literacy rate of STs in Kerala is higher than national level, the literacy gap with STs is comparatively higher in Kerala than at national level (Figure 1). After 1981 census, Kerala has managed to bring down the literacy gap of ST with whole population, but still it remains significantly higher than that of national level. The existing literacy gap clearly exhibit the education exclusion of Scheduled Tribes in the State.

Country/ State	Variable	Census years					
		1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
India	Total literacy	28.31	34.45	43.56	52.21	64.84	74.04
	ST Literacy	8.53	11.3	16.35	29.6	47.1	59
Kerala	Total literacy	55.08	69.75	78.85	89.81	90.92	93.91
	ST Literacy	17.26	25.72	31.79	57.22	64.35	75.81

Table 1: Literacy rate of STs in India and Kerala
 Source: Compiled from various census data, Ministry of tribal Affairs (2010)

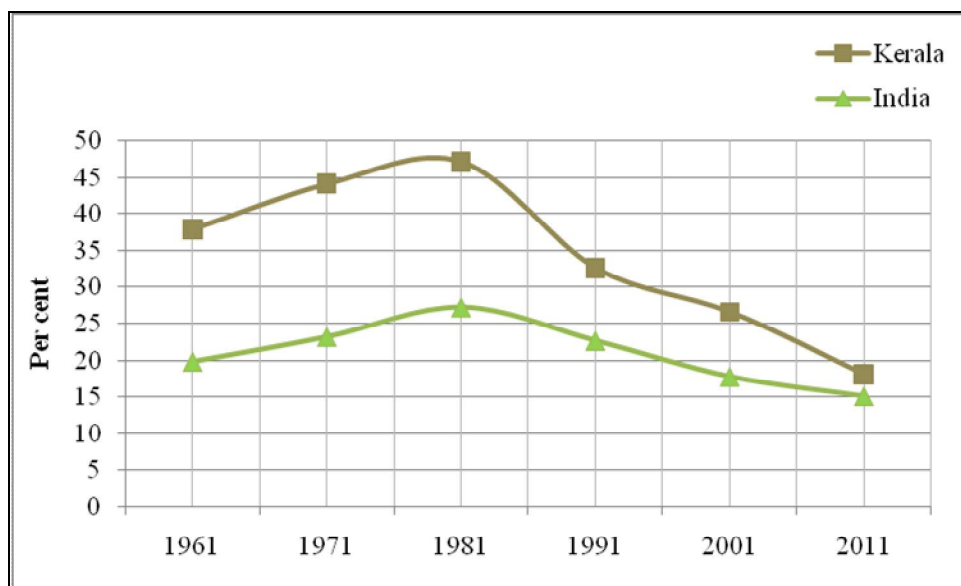


Figure 1: Literacy gap between STs and Total population
 Source: Compiled from various census data, Ministry of tribal Affairs (2010)

Category	literacy		Rank*	
	2001	2011	2001	2011
Total	90.92	93.91	1	1
Male	94.24	96.02	1	1
Female	87.72	91.98	1	1
Scheduled Caste	82.66	88.73	2	3
Scheduled Tribe	64.35	75.81	6	7

Table 2: Rank of Kerala in literacy achievement for the Census years 2001 and 2011
 Source: Compiled from Census data, (2001 and 2011)

*Rank among the 28 states in India

Comparison of literacy rate between the social groups of Kerala with that of other States in India indicates the extent of exclusion of marginalised communities in literacy attainment programmes. For the census years 2001 and 2011, Kerala remained first position to attain highest literacy rate than any other States in India. Besides, the State has managed to remain first position in terms of highest literacy rate among the males and females. However, the authorities concerned failed to extend this literacy achievement to socially vulnerable groups such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Table 2). The Scheduled Tribe literacy rate of Kerala for the year 2011 is 75.81 per cent and the State remained at seventh position, one position down from 2001. Even though, the State was able to achieve a decadal growth rate of 17.8 during 2011 with respect to ST literacy rate, it was far from making them on par with general population. It is evident from the analysis that the authorities concerned were unable to increase the pace in the literacy achievements with regard to STs to uphold a better position as they achieved in case of total population. One of the reasons for the exclusion of Scheduled Tribes of Kerala is their marginal representation to the total population of Kerala.

5. Wide Gender Gap Persists among Tribes in Kerala

Among the total population of Kerala, we can see drastic decrease in the gender gap of literacy rates (Table 3). During 1981, the gender gap with regard to literacy rate of total population was 11.2 per cent and after 40 years the gap reduced to 4 per cent in 2011. As far as STs are concerned, the gender gap was as same as that of total population during 1981. Still, the authorities concerned were not successful in reducing the gender gap of STs as it is 9.7 per cent during 2011.

State/Social Group	Gender Gap				% Decline in Gap		
	1981	1991	2001	2011	1981 to 1991	1991 to 2001	2001 to 2011
Kerala	11.2	7.5	6.3	4.0	33.0	16.0	36.5
STs in Kerala	11.5	12.8	12.7	9.7	-11.4	0.9	23.8

Table 3: Gap in literacy rates of males and females

Source: Compiled from various census data

During the Census year 2011, there was a shrink in the gender gap of STs. But for the decades prior to 2011, the percentage change in the gender gap showed an increase during 1991 and for the subsequent census year, it was only a marginal decrease. Overall, there is no significant change in the gender gap of STs for the last 40 years. Lack of pace in the improvement of literacy of women is major cause for this problem.

6. STs Remain Backward in Educational Attainment

The educational level of the ST communities is dismal compared to that of other communities in Kerala indicating the horizontal disparity existing in the State (Table 4). More illiterates are from STs compared to any other social groups in Kerala which is evident from the Table 4. Besides, there is much decrease in the percentage of population going for secondary education immediately after the completion of middle level schooling. This is significant in the case of both SC and ST communities. This in turn, is reflected in the lower level of educational attainments at higher education leading to low level of human capital formation.

Level of Education	ST	SC	OBC	Others
Illiterate	26.36	23.6	17.36	11.67
Literate Without Formal Schooling	0.33	1.80	0.93	0.86
Below Primary	16.12	17.05	18.31	12.30
Primary	12.50	20.99	19.76	14.93
Middle	26.32	25.67	27.52	26.00
Secondary	8.22	7.49	10.72	19.50
Higher Secondary	5.26	1.67	3.20	7.44
Graduation above	4.90	1.73	3.20	7.30

Table 4: Level of Education among Social Groups, 1999-2000 (Rural)

Source: Kerala Human Development Report, (2009)

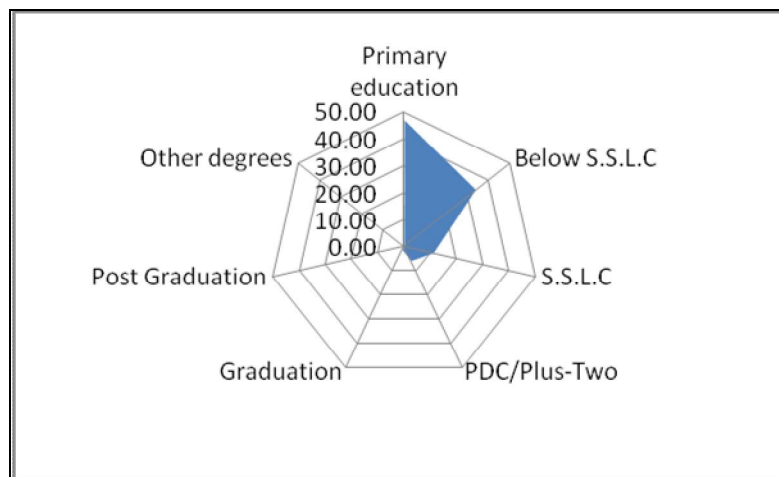


Figure 2: Educational attainments of tribes in Kerala
Source: Scheduled Tribes Development Department, (2013)

The educational attainment of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala is shown in Figure 2. This indicates that majority of them are having low level of education. About 80.7 percent of the literates have education below 10th level only but, 11.2 percent of literates have attained education up to matriculation level. Over the past 12 years, there has been improvement in the percentage of tribes with plus-two degree which is 6.02 percent during 2013 compared to that of 2.58 percent during 2001¹. The tribes with high level of education i.e. above graduation are only just above 2 percent of the literates indicating their marginalization at this level. It is evident from the analysis that tribes lag much behind other social groups of Kerala in the attainment of higher levels of education.

7. Conclusion

The study indicated that the Scheduled Tribes lags much behind the mainstream population with respect to literacy and educational attainments. The wide literacy gap between total population and STs continues even after six decades of Indian Independence. Among Scheduled Tribes of Kerala, there is wide gender gap with regard to literacy attainments where the male literacy is far higher than that of females. Moreover, the educational attainment of Scheduled Tribes also remains poor compared to that of other social groups. All these indicate a need of inclusive literacy campaigns in tribal areas of the country.

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¹ 2013 data is based on Socio Economic Report on Scheduled Tribes by GOK and 2001 data is based on Census of India.