

Tribal Education in Kerala: A Situational Appraisal

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Kerala, the southernmost state of India with near total literacy, impressive health indicators and a vibrant society known to set benchmarks in several avenues of development. The state stand out from the rest of India with 94 per cent literacy rate and it has the lowest dropout rate of school students (0.53%) in the country. Education plays an important role in the socio- economic development of a society. For this we want to avoid the discrimination among the human communities. Several development policies and programmes were implemented in Kerala for the development of tribal communities. But such programmes were not reached at the actual beneficiaries. A conscious effort to expand educational facilities of the tribes began with the introduction of the strategy of Tribal Sub- Plan in the Fifth Five Year Plan. However in the present generation, some of the members in the tribal community have achieved higher education standard. The objective of the paper is to analyse the educational status of tribes, their educational constrains and the role played by the Government.

[Key Words: Literacy, Tribal, Development, Education, Economy]

Introduction

India is the home to number of tribal communities with different socio-economic and cultural background. The scheduled tribe population represents one of the most economically poor and marginalised groups in India. According to the 2011 census, Scheduled Tribes (notified by the Government of India under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution) constitute 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country, numbering 10.43 crores. The tribal population constitute a majority in North-Eastern states. The State with highest proportion of STs are Mizoram (91.58 per cent) followed by Nagaland (86.5 per cent) and Meghalaya (86.1 per cent). The State with lowest proportion of ST is Goa (0.04 per cent).The Union Territory with highest proportion of ST is Lakshadweep (92.28 per cent) and lowest is Andaman and Nicobar Island (8.3 per cent).

There are 645 types of tribes distributed over almost all the states and union territories. The states with no Scheduled Tribes groups are Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry. Tribes in India live in five territories.

1. The Himalayan Belt: (Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Hills of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh.
2. Central India: Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. 55% of the total population of India lives in this Belt.
3. Western India: Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.
4. The Dravidian Region: Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
5. Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands.

Education is one of the primary agents that lead them to development. It helps them to meet the challenges in their life. The planning commission report on Indian vision 2020 observes that the successful education policy would play an important role in nation building. The importance of education has been recognised by Indian constitution and so many provisions are also included. Article 45 makes provision for free and compulsory education for children, Article 46 states that “the state shall provide special care of the educational and economic interest of the weaker section of the people”.

It was only after independence many programmes for the upliftment of the scheduled tribes in particular was launched. During all Five Year Plan education in general and tribal education in particular has been priority of central as well as the state government. The development of the tribal society is depending upon their education. Still the communities are tried to avoid from the educational field. Education in the tribal areas has always been a matter of great concern. While discussing about the education of STs in Kerala, still tribal literacy is the lowest in Kerala when compared to other sections.

All of them understand about the importance of education and they also wish to educate their children. Only few parents are preferred to send their children to costly private schools. Most of them are depending government schools. The literacy rate amongst boys and girls in predominantly tribal areas has always been governed by two major factors: (1) the poor socio- economic conditions of tribal people, (2) the lack of political will and administrative commitment to provide adequate primary and secondary education in such remote tribal belts (Neeti 2004:139).

The tribal population has shown low social development compared to the overall population. The proportion of literate population in India has increased from 28.3% in 1961 to 74.4% in 2011 but the literacy rate among the tribes which was low as 8.5% in 1961 rose only to 58.96% in 2011.

Table 1. Literacy- Scheduled tribes and overall population in India (1961-2011)

Year	Literacy (%)- Scheduled Tribes			Literacy (%)- Overall		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	13.83	3.16	8.53	40.40	15.35	28.30

1971	17.63	4.85	11.30	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	24.52	8.04	16.35	56.38	29.76	43.57
1991	40.65	18.19	29.60	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	59.17	34.76	47.10	75.26	53.67	64.84
2011	68.53	49.35	58.96	80	65.46	74.4

Source: Census of India 2011

Among Scheduled Tribes, certain communities have declining or stagnant population, low level of literacy, pre- agricultural level of technology and are economically backward. 75 such groups in 17 States and one Union Territory have been identified and categorised as Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG). Most of these groups are small in number, have not attained any significant level of social and economic development. In South India, the share of the tribes in the State population ranges from 7.0% in Andhra Pradesh, 6.55% in Karnataka, 1.14% in Kerala and 1.5% in Tamil Nadu.

In Kerala there are still 36 communities. According to the Census of 2011 the tribal population of Kerala is 484,839 (1.45%). Among this 2, 38,203 are males and 2, 46,636 are females. Among the 14 district in Kerala Wayanad has the highest rate of tribal population. More than one- third of the tribal population in Kerala State resides in Wayanad district. Among them five communities such as Kattunayakan, Koraga, Cholanaickan, Kurumbar, and Kadas are known as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) constitute 26,273 of the total population. Wayanad is the most backward district of Kerala. Adiyar, Paniyan and kattunaikan are the three tribal communities which are still seriously underdeveloped comparing with the others.

Table 2: District wise distribution of Tribal population in Kerala

District	Population	% of the STs to the total population	% within communities
Kerala	484839	1.45	100
Kasargod	48857	3.75	10.08
Kannur	41371	1.64	8.53
Wayanad	151443	18.55	31.24
Kozhikode	15228	0.49	3.14
Malappuram	22990	0.56	4.74
Palakad	48972	1.74	10.10
Trissur	9430	0.30	1.94
Ernakulam	16559	0.50	3.42
Idukki	55815	5.04	11.51
Kottayam	21972	1.11	4.53
Alappuzha	6574	0.31	1.36
Pathanamtitta	8108	0.68	1.67
Kollam	10761	0.41	2.22
Thiruvananthapuram	26759	0.81	5.52

Source: Census of India 2011

Table 2 shows the district wise population of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala. While comparing the population of STs in district wise, the size of tribal

population is highest in Wayanad. It has 31.24 per cent of the tribal population of the State, which constitute 18.55 per cent of the total population of the district. Then it followed by Idukki (11.51%), Palakad (10.10%) and Kasargode (10.08%). Alappuzha district has the least tribal concentration as well as population of tribes.

Table 3: Gender- Wise General and ST literacy rate

Year	General Literacy			STs Literacy		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
2001	90.86	94.24	87.72	64.40	70.80	58.10
2011	94.4	96.02	91.98	75.81	80.76	71.08

Source: Census of India 2001, 2011

Literacy rate of the Scheduled tribes in Kerala has increased from 64.40 per cent in 2001 to 75.81 per cent in 2011, but it much higher than the national average ST literacy rate 59 per cent. If we analyse the data of 2001 & 2011 we can see a wide difference in the attainment of education of tribes. In 2001 the STs Literacy rate is 64.40 per cent and in 2011 the literacy rate is increased to 75.81 per cent. So there is 11.41 per cent increase in the STs Literacy rate.

Central Government and State Government give more importance to Scheduled Tribes for their education. There are 14,479 schools in Kerala provided by the General Education Department Administrators.

Table 4: School Data

Type	Higher Secondary School	High School	Upper Primary School	Lower Primary School	Total
Government	757	1066	899	2528	5250
Private Aided	669	1429	1870	3979	7942
Unaided	419*	379	217	267	1282
	1845	2874	2986	6774	4479

*Includes 24 Technical Schools & 14 Residential Schools

Table 5: Students Data

Type	Higher Secondary School *	High School	Upper Primary School	Lower Primary School	Total
Government	141437	462892	373695	424870	1402894
Private Aided	132598	887202	873434	832752	2725986
Unaided	34687**	95652	110156	169658	410153
	308722	1445746	1357285	1427280	4539033

*Indicate number of students in plus two only as the admission for plus one for the current year is on-going.

**Includes 2263 students in Technical Schools and 561 students in Residential Schools.

Source: General Education Department, GoK

The percentage of ST students in Government schools, Private schools, unaided schools are 3.37%, 1.33% and 0.31% respectively. The drop- out rate of ST students is 2.33%. A survey conducted by the Kerala Institute of Local

Administration in association with local bodies and the Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department reveals pathetic living conditions of the Scheduled Tribes communities in the State. Most of them drop- out from schools at the primary level itself. Data on school education describes the low enrolment and high drop- out among tribal students in Kerala at each sections of school. This inequality in education is predominantly damaging the all tribal society. Poverty and lack of access to educational institutions are the major reasons. According to the survey 77,680 people in the age group 15- 59 are unemployed. This includes 2112 graduates, 200 postgraduates and 2066 with professional qualifications.

Reasons of Educational Deprivation

Socio- Economic Problems: Tribes are isolated from the mainstream of Indian life and culture. They are very shy and do not easily mingled with the non- tribe population. Poverty, inability to afford the necessities of education, inadequacy of financial assistance etc. are some of the economic hindrance of education. In Attappady numbers of issues were register based on the socio- economic problems. Due to the economic problems adivasis borrowed money from non- adivasis. But they do not able to repay that borrowed money. This finally leads to transfer of ownership of land. So they migrated to the different parts of Attappady. Naturally children lost their interest to attaining the education.

Psychological Problems: Different studies are conducted based on this problem. They noticed some problems like tribal students feel insecurity in the schools because they are not interested to mingle with the other communities. Financial problems of the tribal community always make the tribal students in a very depressed condition.

Academic and Administrative problems: The major academic problems are lack of school facilities, teacher's problem etc. They are not adjusted with the existing system of education. Above this some administrative problems are there. The school managements do not give any special consideration to the tribal students. Teachers have negative attitudes towards the tribal students. Teachers like students who perform well and start neglecting the poor performance. In the remote tribal areas the teacher absenteeism is a regular phenomenon and this affects largely the quality of education. The other problem is they did not know the tribal dialect nor did they know their culture. So they don't take much interest to educate them.

Inaccessibility to the settlements (The location of the village): The physical barriers create a hindrance for the children to attend the school in neighbouring villages. Their villages are far away from the school and most of them are residing in forest areas. So daily travelling expenses are barrier the parents. This leads to the in accessibility of the school and no more hostel facilities for the tribal children. Most of these schools have limited connectivity with available of motor facilities. For example, in Wayanad district so many tribal students are residing in Vendale colony near Cheeral in Sulthan Bathery. The near school

facility was at Cheeral at a distance of 2.5 km. They have to go through dense forest to reach the school. It leads them forced to stop their schooling.

Language barrier (Medium of language): Language barrier is one of the important constrains of tribal children to access the education. They are not familiar with regional language. The medium of instruction which was often the regional language was rather difficult for the children to follow. In Wayanad district the Paniya community are more in number. Their language is entirely different from other tribal communities. The fear of Malayalam and English was a major problem among Paniya children. This leads to laziness and cause dropouts.

Lack of motivation from the parents (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. They are not aware about the government policies and programmes for the tribal children and their benefits. They consider education is a boring process.

Constitutional Safeguards for Tribes: It is the duty of government to promote the welfare of weaker sections of its people especially the SC/ST. Promotion of planned efforts for the development of backward communities particularly for the tribal groups had its foundation in pre- independence India, more or less, the tribal communities were self- governed with their own political structure, which were headed by hereditary chieftains and kings, the entry of British into India and bringing tribal dominate areas under their hegemony was strongly opposed in some regions of the country (Behara 2006:54). Recognising the special need of the STs, the constitution of India provides certain special safeguards to protect these communities from all social injustice.

Several constitutional provisions deal with the Schedule Tribes for their protection and welfare. Article 14 states equal rights and opportunities to all, Article 15 states prohibition of discrimination on grounds of caste, sex, religion, race etc., Article 15(4) states enjoys upon the state to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes, Article 16(4) states empowers the state to make provisions for reservation in appointments or posts in favour of any backward classes of citizens, which in the opinion of state is not adequately represented in the services under the state, Article 46 states enjoys upon the state to promote with special care to educational and economic interest of the weaker section of the people and in particular, Article 275(1) states promises grant- in- aid for promoting welfare of STs and for raising the level of administration of the Scheduled Areas, Article 330, 332 and 335 states stipulates reservation of seats for STs in Lok Sabha and in the State Legislative Assemblies and in services, Article 340 states the constitution also empowers the state to appoint a commission to investigate the conditions of the socially and educationally backward classes, Article 342 states to specify those tribes or tribal communities deemed to be as STs, Article 244(1) states the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India lays down certain

prescriptions about the Scheduled Areas and STs in the states other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram by ensuring submission of Annual Reports by the Governor to the President of India. These reports regarding the Administration of the Scheduled Areas and setting up of Tribal Advisory Council to advice on matters related to the advancement and welfare of the tribal communities, Article 244(2) states the Sixth schedule of the Constitution of India also refers the administration of the tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram by designating certain tribal areas as Autonomous Region and also by constituting District Councils and Regional Councils. The 73rd and 74th Amendment of the constitution are being extended to the Scheduled Areas through Panchayat Extension to the Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act 1996, to ensure the effective participation of the tribes in the process of planning and decision making.

Government Policies and Programmes

Kerala state had introduced several tribal educational programmes. Government is steadily allocating financial resources for the purpose of tribal development started from the First Five Year Plan (1951- 1956). Towards the end of the plan in 1954, forty- three special Multipurpose Tribal Development Projects (MPDPs) were created. During the Third Five Year Plan (1961- 1966) the Government of India adopted Tribal Development Blocks (TDBs). By the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969- 1974), the number of Tribal Development Blocks rose into 504. Additionally in 1972, the TSP strategy was implemented by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. The PESA (The Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 make specific provisions for tribes on the matters relating to decision making and the development of their community. The Kerala government created a Department of Tribal Welfare and also a Tribal Research and Training centre under a Director. All programmes are channelled through this department. The Directorate has five regional offices at Manathavady, Nilambur, Mannarkat, Thodupuzha and Punalur under a tribal Department Officer. Together with Special Component Plan a “Tribal Sub- Plan” was constituted during the Fifth Plan by Kerala to “promote the socio- economic conditions of the Schedule Tribes and free them from exploitation” (Economic Review 2002:311). To achieve this objective, Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDPs), with focus on socio- economic development of tribal communities, was started.

As educational development is a stepping-stone to economic and social development, and the most effective instrument for empowering the tribes, the Education Division of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs makes all efforts to supplement the efforts of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, which is the line Ministry, and the State Governments/UT Administrations by administering various schemes with the objective of enhancing access to education through provision of infrastructure by way of construction of hostels for ST students, Establishment of Ashram Schools, Vocational Training Centre as well as to maximize retention of ST students within the various stages of

school education and promoting higher learning by providing monetary incentives in the form of scholarships such as Pre Matric Scholarship, Post Matric Scholarship (PMS), Scholarship for Top Class Education, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship and National Overseas Scholarship for ST students (MoTA 2015).

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs gives emphasis to educational and economic development of scheduled tribes in the Ninth Plan. The scheme of 'Post- Matric Scholarships' (PMS) is an important centrally sponsored scheme to promote higher education among STs. The Ninth Plan has impressive increase in the funds for scholarships when compared to the previous plans. Hostel facilities for boys and girls reduce the drop- out. The scheme of Ashram School was launched in 1990-91, extending the educational facilities for ST Boys and Girls through residential schools.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) after modification in 1992, lays special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunities. The 8th five year plan (1992-97) had laid emphasis on certain measures for educational development of STs. The 1968 NPE had recommended to reviewing every Five Year Plans. But such review not made till 1985. The National Policy on Education, 1986 (revised in 1992) improve the educational status of the STs and to improve the accessibility of tribes who live in the remote areas. Therefore universalising primary education continued through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) programme. One of the special features of this programme is the participation of the ST parents in the schools activities. In the field of the higher and technical education special provisions such as reservation of seats, remedial coaching, scholarships, relaxation in minimum qualifying cut- off percentage etc., are being extended by the Department of Education.

Lack of awareness about the importance of education results in educational backwardness among the tribal community. The main objective of the development plan is to promote socio- economic welfare among them and to free from exploitation. To achieve this objective, top priority is given to the educational development. Government implements some educational incentives, scholarships and other kinds of assistance to tribal pupil from pre- primary to graduate level. They are exempt from payment of all kind of fees. Income limits are not a provision for allowing scholarships and stipends to ST students. To ensure proper and regular attendance of tribal pupil, the parents are granted incentives. Financial assistance is also given to SSLC failed students for their studies. Complimentary incentives are also granted to the ST students. The main objective of the scholarship is to motivate ST pupil in learning. To improve the standard of ST pupils government introduced a special coaching scheme from 1989-1990 onwards. For the exclusive benefits of ST pupil several educational institutions are run by the ST development departments. To provide better educational facilities Ashram Schools have been functioning. In addition to these pre-metric hostels, subsidised pre-metric hostels are functioning for ST

pupils. They are run by the NGOs and are approved by the tribal development department. The other major schemes are:-

Balavadis/ Nursery Schools/ Single Teacher School: There are 43 balavadis are set up under this scheme. The scheme is meant develop attitude in learning, to encourage the children for developing their intellectual level etc. The Scheduled Tribes Development Department runs 14 nursery schools and 12 single teacher schools. Nursery school students get free mid meals and dress in addition to lump sum grant. Admission is being given to children of 3 to 5 years. Single teacher school set up with the intention of creating awareness about education, health etc.

Educational Facilities up to the High School Level: Government offers full fee concessions to all scheduled tribe students, lump sum grand and special stipend are also being given to them. In case any student failed in the final examination are being given half the amount of the lump sum grant. Other concessions are being offered to them.

Hostel Facilities: One hundred and eleven pre- metric and three G.R.B schools are being run to help the education of Scheduled Tribes students. The beneficiaries of hostel facilities are those students who do not stay within reasonable distance from the schools. Each hostel contains 30 students. Accommodation of more than 30 students is on the basis of available space and facilities of the hostel. The hostellers are provided with free meals, educational aids and books.

Financial Assistance for Boarding: The Scheduled Tribes students who seek admission in boarding are being paid Rs.200/- per month

Grand to Parents: The parents who sent his/ her children regularity to school will get an annual grant of Rs.100/-

Promotional Prize to Students: Students who get 45% or higher mark in 8th and 9th class are given Rs.50/- and those who get 45% or more mark in 10th are given Rs.200/-. Students who got first class in S.S.L.C, +2, Degree are given Rs.2500, 3000, 3500. In the case of Malappuram, Wayanad and Palakkad District 20 students who pass S.S.L.C in highest marks are given Rs.1500/- and 5 students from +2 and Degree are given Rs.2000/-. In case of other districts same amount but only to 10 students and 2 students from +2 and Degree are given Rs.2500/-.

Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Asram School: RGMAS has been started in 1991 in Noolpuzha Panchayath in Wayanad district as a LP school. This school is functioning for the development of Scheduled Tribes "Kattunaikkar". All students in this school are in these tribes. The main purpose of this institution is giving accommodation and coaching belonging to efficient tribal students.

Residential Schools: To avoid the educational constraints government introduced a new system which is known as the Government Residential Basic Tribal Schools. G.R.B.T adopted in every corner of the tribal areas to remove the illiteracy in the district of Wayanad, Kannur, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Palakkad and Idukki. There are so many advantages of such residential schools:

inculcating sense of discipline, emphasis on co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, avoid the practise of private tutors etc. The teachers in the G.R.B.T schools are well specialised in the field of each subjects. Such types of schools are setup under the various government schemes and programs. Some prominent examples are Ekalavya School setup by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in tribal areas, Navodaya Vidyalayas setup at the rate of one per district.

Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM): Saakshar Bharat Mission is a National Literacy Mission launched on the 8th September 2009, by the Government of India. It covers in a faced manner, all such districts in the country that has less rate of female literacy. The aim of the mission is to impart functional literacy to 70 million adults in the age of 15 years. The main objectives of this mission are:

- I. Impart functional literacy and numeracy to non- literate and non- numerate adults.
- II. Enable the neo- literate adults to continue this learning beyond basic literacy and reach levels equivalent to formal education system.
- III. Impart non- literate and neo- literate relevant skills development programme to improve their earning and living conditions.
- IV. Promote a learning society by providing opportunities to neo- literate adults for continuing education.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA): Tenth Five Year Plan launched the mission of SSA. The goal of this mission is to provide elementary education for all children in the 6 to 14 age groups. The main objectives of this mission are:

- I. Impart functional literacy and numeracy to non- literate and non- numerate adults.
- II. Enable the neo-literate adults to continue this learning beyond basic literacy and reach levels equivalent to formal education system.
- III. Promote a learning society by providing opportunities to neo- literate adults for continuing education.

The Janshala Programme: It is a joined programme between Government of India and Five UN agencies- UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO and UNFPA. It is a community based primary education programme. It aims the primary education more accessible and effective, especially for girls and children in deprived communities, marginalised groups, SC/STs etc.

Ministry of tribal affairs is the nodal ministry for overall policy, planning and coordination of programmes for development of STs. As educational development is a stepping stone to economic and social development, and the most effective instrument for empowering the tribals, the Education Division of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs makes all efforts to supplement the efforts of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, which is the line Ministry, and the State Government/UT Administrations by administering various schemes with the objective of enhancing educational background of tribes. Government of Kerala provide lots of fund for their education. But still the drop-out rates are increasing. Most of the tribal students and their parents do not have a proper awareness about the government

programmes that provided to them. They didn't take it as a serious one and not bothered about the positive sides of these benefits.

Conclusion

Education is a key to tribal development. But their educational level is very low and the enrolment in primary, secondary and higher education are not commendable. Drop- out rate is also high among the tribal students. Their educational backwardness leads them to economic exploitation which again results into poverty and social oppressions. Therefore action need to be taken not only for strengthening the on-going programmes but also taking additional steps to tackle the problems of low literacy, high drop- out, easy access of residential schools, scholarships, other incentives etc. among the tribes of Kerala. Educated youth in general should look down upon their norms and values, their own economic system and tribal culture. Government provides successive Five Year Plans for tribal welfare and also offers some incentives for the better attainment of tribal education. But the educational attainments of these peoples have not improved just even to a satisfied level. Nowadays they are not able to make a positive sign even towards the formal educational programmes. In the context of tribal education, a balance between preservation of tribal culture, identity, economic prosperity and stretching these elements to mainstream society are essential. Proper implementation of educational programmes and policies enables this goal into a successful one.

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