

Educational Status of Scheduled Tribes in Erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir Contesting the idea of Inclusion

MOHMAD SALEEM JAHANGIR*, SHUMAILA** AND NADEEM AHMAD WANI***

Abstract

The role of education is crucial in progress towards creating more inclusive and just societies. It is the most effective tool for overcoming the exclusion of economically and socially marginalised sections of the society. The Scheduled Tribes represent one of the marginalised sections of the society lagging behind in most of the human development indicators especially literacy. The paper argues that despite constitutional guarantees and other related efforts, the Scheduled Tribes of Jammu and Kashmir continue to lag behind in education as compared to the mainstream population. The paper aims to investigate the educational status of Scheduled Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir by highlighting the trend of their literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio and dropout rate. Tribal education is a matter of great concern in Jammu and Kashmir, which necessitates the removal of disparities and equalisation in educational opportunities by addressing the special needs of those who have been deprived so far.

INTRODUCTION

Socially inclusive societies recognise and accept all citizens thereby inculcating in them a sense of belonging. Enhancement of human well-being requires inclusive growth

with a greater focus on development and planning, and reduction of inequalities among vulnerable social groups like Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs). This well-being encompasses attainment

* Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir.

** Adjunct Faculty, Department of Higher Education, Jammu and Kashmir.

*** Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir.

at various levels like education, employment, healthcare, nutritional level and other amenities for individuals besides guaranteeing them civil rights and protection against atrocities and crimes. Amartya Sen (1999) stated that unless the capabilities among human beings are adequately addressed and deprivations faced by marginalised groups overcome, development cannot take place (Brahmanandam and Basu, 2016). The basic tool for achieving well-being and development at the individual as well as the social level is the provision of education to the citizens. Education is the most effective and crucial tool for empowering people. It acts as a primary vehicle for empowering the socially and economically marginalised sections of the society like the STs and helps them raise from the existing levels of poverty. Unless these underprivileged sections of the society receive the minimum required education, they cannot exercise their civil, political, economic and social freedom (National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, 2005–2006). Education enables them to have greater awareness, better comprehension of their social, political and cultural environment and also facilitates improvement in their socio-economic conditions (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013). Hence, the education of STs has assumed special importance in the context of planned development of the human resource.

To work out a broader policy for educating the Scheduled Tribes, the Dhebar Commission (1961) established the appropriateness of Mahatma Gandhi's concept of 'basic education' to the tribal societies (Report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, 1961). The Kothari Commission (1966) highlighted that 'intensive efforts' must be made for providing early education up to five years to all tribal children. The Commission also suggested educating their parents simultaneously to achieve a literacy rate among the tribals. A centrally sponsored scheme (Scheme for Construction of Hostels for ST Girls and Boys) was launched in 1961 to promote literacy among tribal students. The Tribal Sub-Plan (1974–75) also accorded priority to the promotion of education among Scheduled Tribe children and women (Xaxa, 2011). The *National Policy on Education* (1986) has paid special attention to the education of the Scheduled Tribes. The policy suggests the expansion of residential schools, including Ashram Schools, *Anganwadis* and Adult Education Centre's to promote the tribals to higher education, especially technical, professional and para-professional courses. The policy includes the provision of incentives for tribal students in the form of scholarships, special remedial courses and other programs removing psycho-social impediments. The *National Policy on Education*, (modified in 1992) also

emphasises the positive role of education in removing social and regional imbalances, empowering women and in securing a rightful place for the disadvantaged, linguistic groups and minorities (Report of the high-level committee on socio-economic, health, and educational status of tribal communities of India, 2014).

In 2002, the 86th constitutional amendment codified the right to education as a fundamental right by introducing article 21A in the Indian constitution. Though the Article was inserted into the constitution in 2002, it was only in 2009 that the *Right to Education Act* was enacted to provide a statutory framework for the realisation of the right to equality in elementary education. The RTE Act guarantees free and compulsory quality education to every child in the age group of 6–14 years and obligates the state to satisfy that right. Furthermore, section 12(1) of the act mandates that the unaided private schools must fill 25 of their students with children from weaker and disadvantaged sections of the society free of cost to foster diversity and to eliminate segregation and discrimination (Kothari, 2018).

The Twelfth five-year Plan (2012–17) with the objective of inclusive growth demands that all social groups have equal access to the services provided by the State and equal opportunity for upward economic and social mobility (Government of India, 2015). Thus,

the promotion of ST education would support the Eleventh Plan endeavour in equitably distributing the growth benefits among the ST community and other sections of the society (Sanjeev, et al., 2017). Furthermore, reservation policy has been advocated as a strategic tool for bringing the spatially and culturally isolated Scheduled Tribe community into mainstream society. This is sought to be achieved through provisions for preferential treatment in education, government employment, and reservation of seats in parliament, state legislatures and local bodies.

Education thus helps the socio-economically and educationally backward tribal communities in achieving the minimum baseline for their inclusion in the mainstream of society. Education establishes equilibrium and wards off the forces of disintegration. It is the single most important means by which individuals and society can improve personal endowments, build capacity levels, overcome barriers, and expand opportunities for sustained improvement in their well-being. So, education is an important avenue for upgrading the economic and social conditions of the STs (Sahu, 2014).

PRIOR LITERATURE

Many studies have emphasised the importance of education for the marginalised groups in determining their chances of improving in prestige and economic position within

the society. Pawar et al., (1988) highlighted that the policy of reservation in educational institutions for STs of Madhya Pradesh had helped to a limited extent. A small section of the ST population had benefited from this policy because of the fact that the literacy rate among the tribal people was comparatively low as compared to other communities of the state. Furthermore, literacy among females was also very low. Vakil (1982) analysed various socio-economic measures which were initiated for the welfare of STs in Andhra Pradesh. He argued that the real poverty stricken STs and backward classes do not seem to get much from the various economic schemes. Jain (1987) explored that an overwhelming majority of STs are facing acute social and economic disabilities. The crucial factors that have contributed to these disabilities are lack of education, literacy, employment opportunities, assets, institutional credit and services on fair terms and indebtedness, humiliating conditions of life and work and social oppression.

Reddy (1990) highlighted the problems faced by STs in developing tribal literacy in Andhra Pradesh. Xaxa (2001) analysed that STs experienced exploitation at the economic level and domination at the political level. The tribal societies suffered from the absence of interdependence, division of labour/occupation and corresponding heterogeneity of values, skills, knowledge, income, wealth, status and privilege. Subramanyam

(2003) found that due to poverty and economic reasons, the dropout rate among children belonging to STs is highest among school-age tribal children. Xaxa (2015) opined that though reservation provides employment opportunities, the lack of educational qualifications and necessary skills denied them of the jobs, and the reserved seats remain vacant in many cases. The reasons for the educational backwardness among STs can be categorised as external, internal, and socio-economic. The external constraints are related to problems and difficulties at levels of policy, planning, implementation, and administration. Internal constraints are related to problems associated with the school system, content, curriculum, medium of instruction, pedagogy, academic supervision, monitoring, and teacher-related problems. The third set of problems relates to the social, economic, and cultural background of STs (Sujhata, 1994). The socio-economic status, nature of households, parental income, wealth, education and occupation, has been known to be the major determinants of educational enrolment and achievement (Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993). There is ample evidence that children of better-educated parents more often go to school and tend to drop out less (Huisman and Smits, 2009).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was undertaken to assess the overall educational status of STs

in Jammu and Kashmir including the present status, vulnerabilities, threats and gaps in the fulfillment of school education among the children of STs of Jammu and Kashmir. The study also aimed to highlight the nature of access and quality of education for STs for which the number of institutions, school enrolment, school dropout rates and gender parity index were used as primary indicators.

SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION

The study is primarily based on data collected from secondary sources including official reports of school education department, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Bureau of Planning, Census documents of India, books, journals, research papers and other non-governmental reports. Besides, a survey of relevant literature was also carried out to gain an understanding regarding the educational status of Scheduled Tribes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir (in India) is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual region having a population of approximately 12,548,926. The erstwhile state is geographically and culturally divided into three divisions — Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh (Jahangir and Shafi, 2013). However, with effect from October 31, 2019, the state now administratively stands divided into two Union territories, viz., 'Ladakh' and 'Jammu and Kashmir'.

TRIBAL SETTING IN JAMMU, KASHMIR AND LADAKH

The total population of the STs in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, as reflected in Table 1, is 1,493,299, comprising 11.9 per cent of its population and about 0.14 per cent of the total tribal population of the country (Census of India, 2011). Under the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) STs Order, 1989, eight communities were declared as STs in Jammu and Kashmir. However, with the constitutional (Scheduled Tribe) order (Amendment) Act, 1991, there was further inclusion of certain tribes in the list of STs specified in relation to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir thereby declaring 12 communities as STs. These are Balti; Beda; Bot, Boto; Brokpa, Drokpa, Dard, Shin; Changpa; Garra; Mon; Purigpa; Gujjar; Bakarwal; Gaddi and Sippi.

Majority of the tribals of the Jammu and Kashmir inhabit the rural areas. It is pertinent to mention here that there are around 766 villages which have more than 50 per cent ST population (ibid.).

LITERACY OF STs OF JAMMU, KASHMIR

Education is becoming widely recognised by several countries worldwide as a means of developing an efficient human resource capacity that is required to ensure economic growth and sustainable development. The individual benefits of education

Table 1
Population Distribution of STs in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh

District	STs		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Kupwara	70352	36913	33439
Budgam	23912	12383	11529
Leh	95857	47543	48314
Kargil	122336	62652	59684
Punch	176101	90274	85827
Rajouri	232815	121374	111441
Kathua	53307	27693	25614
Baramula	37705	20237	17468
Bandipore	75374	39398	35976
Srinagar	8935	5021	3914
Ganderbal	61070	32554	28516
Pulwama	22607	11837	10770
Shupiyan	21820	11311	10509
Anantnag	116006	60990	55016
Kulgam	26525	13888	12637
Doda	39216	20377	18839
Ramban	39772	20940	18832
Kishtwar	38149	19889	18260
Udhampur	56309	29142	27167
Reasi	88365	46330	42035
Jammu	69193	36323	32870
Samba	17573	9188	8385
Total	1493299	776257	717042

Source: *Census of India (2011)*

are well known. It ensures better employment, higher salaries and a greater ability to consume and save (Jahangir, 2012).

Table 2
Literacy Rate

Scheduled tribes	Total Population			Literacy (Percentage)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
India						
All tribes	104,281,034	5,24,09,823	5,18,71,211	58.96	68.53	49.35
J&K						
All tribes	1493299	776257	717042	50.6	60.6	39.7
Tribe-wise Distribution in J&K						
Bakarwaal	113198	59621	53577	31.8	40.5	22.2
Balti	51918	26473	25445	71.1	82.5	59.3
Beda	420	216	204	68.7	75.0	61.5
Bot,Boto	91495	45295	46200	70.3	79.2	61.6
Brokpa, Dropka, Dard, Shin	48439	25240	23199	67.9	79.5	55.2
Changpa	2661	1355	1306	57.0	66.8	46.7
Gaddi	46489	23808	22681	53.5	68.2	38.2
Garra	504	275	229	71.3	81.3	58.8
Gujjar	980654	510710	469944	47.3	57.2	36.5
Mon	829	418	411	72.3	81.7	62.7
Purigpa	39101	20119	18982	67.5	78.6	55.7
Sippi	5966	3064	2902	53.1	66.1	39.2

Source: Census of India (2011)

Table 2 highlights that overall literacy rate of the STs is 50.6 per cent. This is much lower than the national average of 58.96 per cent aggregated for all STs. Male and female literacy rates (60.6 per cent and 39.7 per cent respectively) are much below if compared to those recorded by all STs at the national level (68.53 per cent per cent and 49.35 per cent). If on the one hand, *Balti*, *Bot*, *Garra* and *Mon* tribes have comparatively higher literacy rate, however, *Gujjar*,

Gaddi and *Bakarwal* tribes, on the other hand, lag behind the national average. The literacy rate of the females among these tribes shows the similar trend. Thus, on analysing the figures, it can be assessed that the educational background of tribes is not encouraging when compared to the national level. The reasons for their educational backwardness are manifold. On the one hand, the satisfaction in their primary occupation does not push them

towards those occupations which primarily demand education as a pre-requisite; equally, on the other hand, the geographical disadvantages and subsequently the non-availability of adequate infrastructure do not attract them towards education. Besides the sense of insecurity of unemployment which prevails across the nation becomes another barrier for them to get educated, the only reason being that nowadays, people primarily understand education more as a tool of getting economic security (in terms of getting job) and less in terms of personality development.

EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STs

Schools and other educational institutions, as a main institution for imparting education in society, are established to make education universally available to people from all economic and racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Table 3
Number of Institutions in UT of Jammu and Kashmir

Institutions	Total
Universities (including NIT, IIT, IIM, IIMC)	14
Colleges	225
Senior Secondary/ Secondary Education Board	1
Senior secondary schools	597
High/Secondary schools	1194
Upper Primary Schools	6665
Primary Schools	14171

The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya	79
District Institutes of Education	22
Institutions for STs in Jammu and Kashmir	
Hostels	23
Total	22991

Source: Government of Jammu and Kashmir (2021)

The above table suggests that in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, the total number of schools as education institutions is 22,991. However, the total number of senior secondary school (597) is less than secondary school (1,194). Similarly, the total number of upper primary schools (6,665) is less than the primary schools (14,171). Higher education sector has expanded over the past few years. The numbers of colleges have increased from 33 (in 2000) to 225 (in 2021) which include both private as well as government colleges in erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. Besides, there is a total number of thirteen universities/deemed universities which are operational and cater to the needs of students. Higher education sector would improve further from the strength of its college system. But the focus should be laid on a long-term plan in terms of access to education and quality of education which is abysmally low and needs to be enhanced. There exist drawbacks in higher education in Jammu and Kashmir like the lack of learning materials, reference books,

teachers, remoteness of education facilities, high dropout rate, etc. Thus, the participation rates of population in higher education are quite low (RUSA, 2013).

Furthermore, there are two under-construction Eklavya Model Residential Schools exclusively meant for ST students for the promotion of education. Also, the less availability of hostel facilities (for 23 only) for STs to pursue their career in educational career without dropping out remains unfulfilled (Social Welfare Department, 2015). Moreover, the mobile primary schools commonly known as mobile schools were set up in erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1970 to provide educational facilities to the children of nomadic Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes. These schools could not continue for long after the onset of armed conflict (Ali, 2013). However, some seasonal mobile schools (1163) continue in some areas of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir (Kashmir Times, 2013).

Table 3 shows that there has not been a considerable increase in the spread of educational institutions. Schools fall short for various reasons such as poor leadership, ineffective teaching, or misplaced priorities, inadequate funding, lack of community support, or communities strained by poverty and social dysfunction. The success of a democratic society depends on the competency of its citizens. Without educational institutions, the need to produce citizens who would understand political and social issues, participate in civic life, protect their rights and freedom and the society

from inside and outside threats, will remain unfulfilled.

ENROLMENT IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

Though the education system has made significant progress over the past few decades, literacy of the STs has remained a matter of concern even after so many years of independence. Number of programmes for tribal development is related to the single sector of education. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was implemented as one of the main programme for universalising elementary education. The new law provides for a justifiable legal framework that entitles all children between the ages of 6–14 years to free and compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education. It provides for children's right to an education of equitable quality, based on principles of equity and non-discrimination (Ministry of Tribal Affairs Statistics Division, 2013).

The table below shows the enrolment of STs by stages of Primary (IV), Middle/Upper Primary (VI–VIII) and Secondary/Sr. Secondary (IX–XII) levels of school education. The study highlights that there has not been a considerable increase in enrolment of STs at higher secondary schools. It is very less as compared to the enrolment in primary and elementary stages of school education. Thus, it is very important that the current efforts for promoting education among children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections should have been a mix of both general and specific in order to enhance the enrolment ratio among

the scheduled tribes. General efforts include expanding infrastructure for physical access, incentives like uniforms, books, tracking disaggregated data to reflect social groups and gender dimensions, provision of mid-day meals, etc. Specific programmes include Hostels and scholarships for STs (Annual report of Ministry of Human Resource Development 2014–15).

Statistics at a Glance, 2012). After the enactment of Right to Education (RTE) Act in 2009, overall enrolment of students has moved up at all India level and in order to have more clarity on enrolment status of tribes in Jammu and Kashmir, the data in Table 5 below highlights the gross enrolment ratio of Scheduled Tribes. The GER of J&K tribal students declines significantly from 61.4 per cent to 2.0 per cent at

Table 4
Enrolment in School Education

Class	Scheduled tribes (Boys)	STs (Girls)	Total
Primary	69940	59897	129837
Upper Primary	29361	23593	52954
Elementary	99301	83490	182791
Secondary	10324	6591	16915
Senior Secondary	6560	4152	10712

Source: *Statistics of school education (2011–2012)*

GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO

The gross enrolment ratio is useful in providing an average picture of progress over time. Gross Enrolment Ratio for any stage (Different Classes) is defined as percentage of the enrolment in that stage to the estimated child population in the respective age group (Educational

different stages of education. This shows a gap which is alarmingly high. Gender wise comparison also indicates that the Girls GER has declined from 58.6 per cent to 1.8 per cent whereas ST Boys have performed better than their counterparts during the same study period. This is due to low enrolment

Table 5
Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

Classes	ST (Boys)	ST (Girls)	Total
Primary	64.1	58.6	61.4
Upper Primary	47.4	42.0	44.8
Elementary	58.0	52.7	55.5
Secondary	27.9	20.1	24.3
Senior Secondary	21.8	15.8	19.0
Higher Education	2.3	1.8	2.0

Source: *Statistics of school education (2011–2012)*; *All India survey on Higher education, MHRD (2013)*

and high absenteeism at lower levels of education which further hindered participation in higher education (Ambasht, 1970).

GENDER PARITY INDEX

Gender equality has been recognised both as a core development goal and a human right. The important determinant of society competitiveness is its human talent including skills, education and productivity of its workforce and women account one half of the potential talent base throughout the world. Thus, in order to maximise competitiveness and development potential, each society should strive for gender equality, i.e., to give the women the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as men (Hausmann, et al., 2008). There are marked differences across and within regions as witnesses by the gender parity index. Gender Parity Index (GPI) serves as a significant indicator of the empowerment of women in society.

Table 6
Gender Parity Index

Class	GPI
Primary	0.91
Upper Primary	0.89
Elementary	0.91
Secondary	0.72
Senior Secondary	0.72
Higher Education	0.78

Source: *Statistics of school education (2011–2012)*; *All India survey on Higher education, MHRD (2013)*.

There has not been any considerable improvement in the gender parity index for ST children.

GPI for STs is seen to be highest in the primary and elementary level of education and least for higher education. The findings of the study show that the progress towards gender equity and the level of learning opportunities available for women in relation to those available to men is not improving. Larger gender disparities are inconsistent with sustained rapid progress towards universal primary enrolment. This has brought new policy challenges for rapid progress in scaling up enrolment of female children of STs.

DROPOUTS

Dropouts reflect such students who leave school mid-way during an academic session and/or those who complete the grade but fail to enrol in the next grade. The factors identified to influence dropouts include poverty, low level of parental education, and long distance to schools, poor performance and poor attitude of teachers. The instances of dropping out of school have serious socioeconomic repercussions such as unemployment, augmented dependency ratio and increased proportions of child marriages in the rural areas (Abotsi, et al., 2018).

The data in the table highlights that the dropout rates are still very high at 81.7 per cent in Classes I to X vis-à-vis 44.2 per cent for all category students. For Classes I to V and I to VIII, ST dropout rates are 29.8 per cent and 61.7 per cent, respectively. The dropout

Table 7
Dropout Rates

Dropout rate of STs				Dropout rate of all categories		
Class	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Classes I-V	27.9	31.9	29.8	9.8	6.8	8.4
Classes I-VIII	57.4	67.2	61.7	9.6	13.8	11.6
Classes I-X	79.5	84.6	81.7	45.5	42.6	44.2

Source: *Statistics of school education (2011-2012)*.

rate of girls is higher than boys for both primary and elementary level of education. Furthermore, for every 100 ST students who entered Class I, only 61.7 completed elementary level in Jammu and Kashmir. Scheduled Tribe dropout rates show an increasing trend in school education (secondary level). Thus, the findings of the study reflect the lack of educational development and inability of STs to complete a specific level of education. Drop out does not happen overnight. In fact, dropping out is usually long process of student disengagement which includes educational performance, student's behavior, background of student's and family, school structures, resources and practices, and some educational system level policies (Lynche, 2010). Even socio-economic status is a stronger predictor of educational success. Student's personal factors also have an impact on his likelihood of low educational achievement and the risk of dropping out. Reducing dropout and reinforcing primary and secondary education quality and completion give high returns in both short and long term (OECD, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Exclusion of certain groups from mainstream social current is one of the most serious challenges facing the society today. Education is one of the dimensions of social inclusion of individuals and social groups in regular flows of contemporary society. It is an important means for reducing inequalities and exclusion of marginalised groups in society. Greater involvement in education system reduces the possibility for the creation of the 'culture of poverty', which is characterised by non-inclusion and non-participating in the main institutions of the wider global society, and a sense of marginalisation, dependence and helplessness (Slijepcevic, 2017).

The present study highlights that decades of educational development has not brought the desired effect of social inclusion of STs in the mainstream society. There has not been a considerable increase in enrolment of STs at higher secondary schools which is very less as compared to the enrolment in primary and elementary stages of school education. The GER of Jammu and Kashmir tribal students declines significantly

in different stages of education. The percentage of literates after graduation drops down to almost half in the post-graduation level and declines acutely onwards in technical or professional education. Thus, the increasing trend in the drop-out rate for STs is a matter of concern which reflects the lack of educational development and inability of STs to complete a specific level of education as this has an adverse effect on building capability and skills within the ST community. Thus, it is important to pay great attention to the educational advancement of the STs in achieving the minimum baseline for their inclusion in the mainstream of society. However, education of tribals cannot

be left to short-term plan strategies. It is important that planners take a long-term view which is embedded in a meaningful policy framework for social inclusion of STs in the mainstream society. The planned approach for socio-economic development of STs should lay considerable focus on the access and outreach of education at all the three levels — elementary, secondary and higher. The emphasis has not been merely restricted to literacy and school enrolment but expansion of network of schools and spread of institutions of higher education. Furthermore, infrastructure needs to be provided to the existing schools to ensure the right and appropriate quality education to ST students.

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