

Gender Inequality in Educational Status of Tribals in India – An Extensive Review of Studies

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Abstract:

Education is not only a means of development, but also it is an end in itself. Education to women is as essential as to men. Among the weaker sections in India, the Scheduled tribe is considered as the most backward community lagging far behind other communities in terms of educational and socio-economic development. As in every patriarchal society in general, women are subservient and dominated by men that indicates gender inequality and lower status of women, so also in majority of tribal communities, the patriarchal system has gradually evolved due to various forces of social change which has produced different facets of gender inequality and lower status of women in general. Today, the educational status of tribal women in many parts of India is also observed as very low as compared to their male counterparts. Development of literacy among tribal women is a challenging issue in the present scenario. Despite various constitutional provisions and government policies for the development of tribal in general and tribal woman in particular, they still are lagging behind other categories of women in respect of their literacy and education as such. There are many critical issues and problems in the field of tribal women's education which need proper attention of government while making policies and programmes. Based on an extensive review of secondary resources and available literature, this paper reveals a grave issue of gender inequality in educational status while dealing with various problems of tribal women's education and it suggests some remedial measures for their educational empowerment and development.

Introduction:

Education is not only a means of development, but also it is an end in itself. Swami Vivekananda said that education is meant for "perfection of human mind" which leads for development of human life. It is closely related to socio-economic development of a community or society as a whole. It also sustains the cultures and values which are backbone of human society. Modern education is a fundamental right that provides opportunities for socioeconomic upliftment of people. Education is one of the essential means of empowering weaker sections of society including women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence, which is necessary to participate fully in various productive and extension activities. It leads to higher productivity, efficiency and better socio-economic development of the individual as well as society. It is also conceived as one of the most powerful means of all-round development of a nation.

In fact, in the history of India, the problem of illiteracy and ignorance has been a primary causal factor of acute poverty and underdevelopment of the weaker sections in the country. In view of massive illiteracy in the country, since independence the Government of India while following various

guidelines of India's Constitution, has made strategic provisions in its policies and programmes in respect of educational development of people. In fact, immediately after independence, Constitutional provisions and accordingly systematic arrangements were made, under article 45 of the Constitution and through successive five-year plans, to achieve the target of 100 percent literacy through mandatory and free education for the children up to 14 years. After three decades of Independence, in order to achieve the target of Universal Elementary Education (UEE), the National Policy on Education 1986 and 1992 also gave top priority to set up manifold programmes and incentives for universalizing and enhancing the quality of elementary education in India. Even then the fact that raises grave concerns is that the aim of Universal Elementary Education could not be achieved (Sen and Barik 2020).

It is a fact that in India, among the weaker sections, the Scheduled tribe is considered as the most backward community lagging far behind other communities and categories of marginalized people in terms of educational and socio-economic development (Nayak K.B. 2020). For the promotion of educational interests of the Scheduled Tribe, the Constitution of India includes an article in the chapter related to the Directive Principles of the State Policy stating that the "State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all form of exploitation". The Constitution of India also recognised the right to equality as a "fundamental right" "of all citizens of India. All children in the age group of 6-14 have the right (under article 21A) to free and compulsory education as part of their right to live. Further, the Article 46 is exclusively emphasizing on the Promotion of Educational and Economic interests of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections (including women), as the fundamental duty of all the States of India. Besides these constitutional rights, through Five Year Plans, the government of India has been taking up many policies and schemes specifically for Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections (including women). In this regard, this paper focusses only on educational status of tribal women.

A Review of Strategies for Educational Development in Tribal Society of India: - Starting from the First Five Year Plan Period (1951-1956) the Government of India has been steadily allocating financial resources for the purpose of tribal development. Towards, the end of the Plan, 43 Special Multipurpose Tribal Development Projects (MTDPs) were created. During the Third Five Year Plan Period (1961-1966), the government of India adopted the strategy of converting areas with more than 66 per cent tribal concentration into Tribal Development Blocks (TBDs). By the end of Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974), the number of TBDs in the country rose to 504. Additionally, in 1972 the Tribal Sub-Plan Strategy (TSP) was implemented by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. The TSP was based on twin objectives of socio-economic development and protection against exploitation. It was generally implemented in the areas where the Scheduled Tribe population was more than 50 per cent of the total population. A centrally-sponsored government scheme of ashram schools exclusively for the ST children, from elementary to higher secondary levels, was initiated in the 1970s. But the poor quality of education in ashram schools, however, has undermined the main objective of education as a vehicle for social mobility. Even then, some studies revealed that the goal could not be achieved and there was wastage in tribal education. For instance, a study by Reddy K.S (1970) on Causes of Wastage in Tribal Education of Andhra Pradesh revealed that in Andhra Pradesh, the tribal literacy rate is less than that in other South Indian States. Female literacy is still worse. Even the tribal literacy is lower than that of Harijans and other communities in the state.

During the period 1970s, some other studies also showed backward educational status of tribal women in different parts of India. For instance, a study conducted by Tara Patel (1984) on development of education among tribal women in Gujarat. The study observed that female tribal workers, (as agricultural) labourers, and cultivators are higher in percentage when compared to white collar occupations (according to 1961-1971 census). About 94% tribal women were residing in 1971 in rural areas. There was very low literacy rate which indicates that most tribal women did not have even the rudimentary ability of reading and writing. This study also observed that in the state of Gujarat, there was considerable variation in educational development which was indicative of an unequal utilization of the expanding education facilities as well as of the special programmes of assistance for their educational development.

In terms of educational and other aspects of socio-economic development, it was observed by a number of committees and commissions that the tribal people are lagging far behind other sections of people in India. From the beginning of first Five-Year Plan in India, it has been observed that one of the important factors relating to the education of tribal groups has been the question of language. Language is a powerful symbol of identity. Government policies and official documents as early as 1950s have advocated that primary education should be imparted in the mother tongue to children belonging to the linguistic minority groups. The Dhebar Commission in early 1960s and the Kothari Commission in 1966 highlighted the importance of language in the schooling of tribal children and had advocated for the tribal language that to be the medium of instruction in the first years of School. This was again echoed by the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986. Recommendations have been made by different Commissions to prepare textbooks in tribal languages and recruit teachers familiar with the spoken tongue. But the steps towards this have been quite slow and neglected. Needless to say, this fact has affected the tribals' access to education. All these problems taken together have negatively affected education of tribal women as well (Mishra, Subrata 2017). Therefore, in respect of educational development, the National Policy on Education 1992 subsequently came up and gave top priority for the accomplishment of goal of Universal Elementary Education (UEE).

Later on, multiple programs and incentives were started for universalizing education and improving the quality of elementary education in different parts of India including tribal areas. Then followed the PESA (The Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, in 1996 which has made it mandatory for the States having the 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. Some studies reveal that the impact of the PESA Act on tribal education has hardly been significant. Even the Janshala Programme as a collaborative effort of the Government of India (GOI) and the UN Agencies – UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and UNFPA (a community based primary education programme), was started which aims to make primary education more accessible and effective, especially for girls and children in deprived communities, marginalized groups, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes/ minorities, children with specific needs (Devi and Mahesh, 2011).

Although in the post-Independence period of India, during last six to seven decades, sincere efforts have been made for the economic and educational development of tribes but still, the performance of the tribes in respect of education is much lower than the Scheduled Castes and non-scheduled tribal population. It is mainly because in the past and even today, they had/have been subjected to various forms of deprivation such as alienation from land and other resources. Tribal women, in particular, had also been facing deprivation of various basic amenities like- health issues, water availability, primary education, etc (Nayak K.B. 2008, 2014, 2020). Recently, the Xaxa Committee which was set up in 2013 under the chairmanship

of Prof. Virginius Xaxa, studied five critical issues faced by the tribal people in India: 1) livelihood and employment, 2) education, 3) health, 4) involuntary displacement and migration, and 5) Legal and constitutional matters. In a similar vein, another report of a high-level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India, submitted in 2014 to the Government of India says that the state has paid a lot of attention to issues of development in tribal areas without caring for protecting them from the elements which have been exploiting them. Thus, educational status along with socio-economic status of tribal people in general and tribal women in particular should be improved considerably by the government initiatives on priority basis. In this regard, not only their literacy level has to be upgraded but also the quality of their education needs to be improved.

However, despite various constitutional provisions and policies as well as special measures of schemes for the tribal population as a whole, it is a hard reality that the tribals in general and tribal women in specific, still are lagging behind other backward communities in many respects. Their low level of economic life, social backwardness, low level of literacy, poor health conditions make it important for more systematic efforts of tribal development. In fact, tribal women work very hard and contribute significantly towards improvement in the economic condition of their families, but they are still reeling under acute poverty mostly because no proper efforts are oriented towards them. Review of literature based on a number of studies as systematically discussed below reveal that during last six decades of Five Year Plan periods, various programmes have been taken up for the development of the Scheduled Tribe population. Although a lot of betterment has been already done. For instance, there is at least a primary school in every remote village of the tribal belts within their easy approach. But still, a lot more requires to be done. The families need to have a sufficient income for enabling them to cross their actual poverty levels. Since economic status determines other aspects of their life and living conditions, improving the economic status of tribal people is of utmost importance. Proper education, (not merely literacy), as a means of economic betterment of tribal people, is also an essential means of their all-round development and upliftment.

Some studies observed a number of constraints on the way of tribal education. For instance, in a case study of Yanadi tribe in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh, Sujatha K (1987) reported that the scheduled tribes were out of formal education for centuries owing to structural constraints. Their geographical and social isolation kept them totally aloof from the developmental process. She observed that household work along with agricultural work and lack of interest on the part of Yanadis (tribal) children for education were the main reasons for the poor enrolment in schools. There was a sharp fall in attendance during agricultural and rainy seasons. Care free nature of Yanadis children and instability of family-life due to frequent changes of spouses acted as constraints. Even though hostels were primarily meant for high school candidates, there were more girls in primary classes and only 5% of the girls were in grade X. Similarly, in the boys' hostels only 10% of boys were found in grade X. In view of low literacy levels among female population, there was an urgent need to establish more hostels for girls in small towns and cities.

Another study by Patel S (1991) found that the problem of wastage and stagnation are the greatest problems of particularly the school education in tribal areas while the utilization of the educational facilities have not kept pace with rapid expansion of the educational system, tending towards lopsidedness, ill balanced development in respect of tribal education. He suggested that education among the tribals should focus on: 1) the school timings should be fixed in tribal areas with reference to the local conditions; 2) certain innovative institutional methods may be adopted in the special areas like sub-schools, pre-primary cum primary institutions, elementary school complexes and residential schools in the sparsely

populated areas. Even then, among many studies one study of Narendra Kumar Shukla and Manish Sharma (2000) revealed that there is a need of a well-planned policy of upgrading the literacy level, beside infrastructure, there is an urgent need of motivation among the tribal population for education, particularly for the female literacy rate. It is also found that, the parents are complaining about the teachers that they do not want to have more students and for that they do not give admission to new entrants. Sujatha K (2000) in her study added that the ST parents used to train their children in the necessary skills for hunting, paddy cultivation, collecting forest produce, etc. The parents being illiterate could not help their children in study. The whole responsibility was on the school to ensure their attendance at school. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 also expressed same opinion with regard to education of tribal students. Some research studies reveal that the tribal people lagged behind not only the general population of India and but also the Scheduled Caste population in terms of literacy rate and level of education. This disparity is even more remarkable among Scheduled Tribe women, who have the lowest literacy rates in the country (Maharatna, 2005). Since tribal women are engaged in all kinds of labour works, tribal females in the workforce are 43.49 % while the all-India figure is much lower at 25.51%. Since the literacy rate is much lower amongst tribal women, it should be encouraged further through special literacy campaign and educational programs. Besides, more systematic awareness programs can be used to make parents realize the importance of education. In spite of these programmes and facilities, there are a number of problems in female education. In some other parts of India, it is also observed that there is not only wide difference in the literacy level between the general population and tribal population but also in the level of male female literacy rate. For instance, in the state of Odisha, it is observed that the tribal women's literacy rate is low, which is less than 30%. A historical account of the School programs in Scheduled Tribe area of Odisha shows that there are some major programs of the government to enrol the tribals. These are the Non Formal Education (NFE), District Primary Education program (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The Govt. of Odisha has established special schools like Sevashrams and Kanyashrams for tribal children. While some other studies in Mayurbhanj, Phulbani and Keonjhar districts of Odisha show various problems relating to tribal education. Enrolment and dropout rates are related to distance and geographical barriers like difficult terrain and water bodies, which has an effect on the girls to access the school. Very few schools have boarding facilities for girls. Further there is a mismatch between the life style of the tribal groups and the demands of the conventional school system (Mishra, 2010; Pradhan, 2010). It may be noted that the culture, socio-economic condition of the individual family, village, and district play a significant role in the development of education, which unfortunately, in tribal areas, is not paid adequate attention. Due to all these reasons tribal girls either fail to enrol or they go for dropouts (Barma, 2012)

In spite of various schemes, even after more than five decades of independence, the aim of universal elementary education could not be achieved. Nearly 10 million girls of school going ages were not attending elementary schools due to various reasons like poverty, no access to schools etc (Sen and Barik 2020). The Government of India started a new scheme; known as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in the year 2001-2002 in partnership with the local self-governments and state Governments. It is an extensive and integrated major program of government of India to achieve universal elementary education covering the whole country in a mission mode. The following are the main objectives of the scheme: i) Enrolment of all children in school, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate Schools, Back-to-School camp by 2003; ii) All children complete five years of primary school 2007; iii) All children complete eight years of elementary school by 2010; iv) Focus on elementary education of satisfying quality with significance on

education for life; v) To bridge all gender and social category interval at primary level by 2006-07 and at elementary education level by 2010; vi) Universal retention by 2010. Other than this, Government of India also started many other encouragement schemes to maintain the children in the schools which includes: (1) Free text books, Stationary, school bags etc; (2) Free uniforms, (3) Mid-day meal scheme, (4) Attendance scholarship for girls etc. Besides, some significant measures are implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs that aimed at safeguarding the inclusive educational development of the tribal women, for instance 1) The scheme of Ashram schools in tribal areas. 2) The scheme of girls' and boys' hostels for STs. 3) The scheme for STs Girls of low literacy districts to strengthen the education level among them (Sen and Barik 2020). In order to promote their Higher Education, there are some other schemes in the form of scholarships such as Pre- Matric and Post Matric Scholarship, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship, etc. Further, the "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" scheme is administered by the Women and Child Development Ministry, which is projected to provide the advantage of all women, including the ST Women (For reference see: Govt. of India, Welfare of Tribal Women. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Press Information Bureau, 2017).

However, the major policies of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs aimed at ensuring the overall development of both Scheduled Tribe men and women. But, within the Scheduled Tribes, women often suffer from a number of problems and face much more disadvantages. Therefore, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, while trying to ensure that women benefit equally from general schemes, has implemented some special schemes meant for the benefit of the ST women and girls as discussed below:

(i) **Scheme of Hostels for the ST Girls and Boys:** Under this scheme, assistance of Central Government is given to the States / UTs / Universities for construction of new hostel buildings and / or extension of existing hostels. State Governments are eligible for 100% of the share of the Central Government for construction of all Girls hostel and also for construction of Boys hostel in the Naxal affected areas. The funding pattern for other Boys Hostel to State Governments is on 50:50 basis. In this regard, earlier some studies suggested for establishment of special girls hostels in tribal areas. For instance, in a case study of Yanadi tribe in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh, Sujatha K (1987) reported that the scheduled tribes were out of formal education in the past owing to geographical and structural constraints. In view of low literacy levels among female population, there was an urgent need to establish more hostels for girls.

(ii) **Scheme of Ashram Schools in Tribal Areas:** The objective of this scheme is to provide residential schools for the STs for increasing the literacy rate among the tribal students and bringing them at par with other population of the country. Under this scheme, State Governments are also eligible for 100% central share for construction of all Girls Ashram Schools and also for construction of Boys Ashram Schools in Naxal affected areas. The funding pattern for the other Boys Ashram Schools is also on 50:50 basis. However, some studies expected more from the scheme of Ashram Schools. For instance, Pushpa Mandal (2000) studied Ashram schools in Bihar, in depth administrative financial and educational status; the level of achievement of students in relation to the available resources; the achievement of students of ashram and day school located more or less in the same surroundings and compared the administrative set up of the above two categories of institutions. This study recommended that accessibility is to be enhanced in the aim of ashram schools. Since the achievement of students differs from both type of schools, a greater number of ashram schools is to be opened in order to achieve the goal of education for all.

(iii) **Scheme for Strengthening Education among the ST Girls in Low Literacy Districts:** This scheme is implemented in 54 identified low literacy Districts where the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population is 25% or more, and where the ST female literacy rate is below 35%, or its fractions, as per 2001 census. Any

other tribal blocks in a district, other than aforesaid 54 identified districts, which fulfil the same criteria for tribal population and the ST female literacy rate, are also covered under this scheme. The areas inhabited by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and Naxalite affected areas are given priority in this scheme. However, this scheme aims at: bridging the gap in literacy levels between the general female population and tribal women, through facilitating 100% enrolment of tribal girls in the identified Districts or Blocks, more particularly in Naxal affected areas and in areas inhabited by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs); and reducing drop-outs at the elementary level by creating the required ambience for education. The scheme is also implemented through Voluntary Organizations (VOs) / Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and autonomous society / institutions of State Government / Union Territory Administration. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs provides 100% assistance for running and maintenance of educational complexes for the ST girls which include free education, boarding and lodging, books, uniforms, medical help, coaching, incentives to girls, periodical awards, etc. This scheme also envisages a convergence with the schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya of Ministry of Human Resource Development. It also meets the requirement of primary level students as well as middle/secondary level students and provides residential facility to the ST girl students in order to ensure their retention in schools. In addition, in order to maximize retention of ST students within various stages of school education and promoting higher learning, monetary incentives are also provided by Ministry of Tribal Affairs in the form of scholarships such as Pre-Matric Scholarship, Post Matric Scholarship, National Overseas Scholarship, Scholarship for Top Class Education and Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for the ST students. Some studies, as referred in this text and discussed below also observed a number of problems and constraints on the way of tribal education schemes.

(iv) **Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub Scheme (SCA to TSS)** (hitherto known as SCA to Tribal Sub Plan (TSP)): This scheme provides 100% grant from Government of India. Its main objective is to bridge the gap between the Scheduled Tribes (ST) population and others by providing support for education, health, sanitation, water supply, livelihood, skill development, minor infrastructure etc. In fact, it is a flexible scheme and it supplements the efforts of the government Ministries/Departments. In spite of such schemes and programmes of tribal education in India, the literacy data and educational profile of tribal women in backwards areas (as discussed below) are not so satisfactory as compared to other marginalized communities.

Educational Profile of Tribals and Gender Inequality in India: -

It has also been observed that after independence, during the period between 1961 and 1991, the literacy levels of the various tribal groups in India differed widely. On the one hand, there were tribal communities with higher literacy rate. The urban Nagas had literacy rates of 71 percent, 61 percent and 66 per cent for males, females and total population respectively in 1981. On the other hand, there were tribal communities with very little literacy rate. In several tribal groups the female literacy was about 1 percent, for instance, among the Bhils of Rajasthan it was even less than 1 percent. Among the Santals, which is one of the largest tribal groups, the female literacy rate was 4 to 5 per cent in Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal in 1981. In general, in 1991, the rural tribals had a literacy rate 21.81 percent as compared to 46.35 percent in the urban tribals. According to Anthropological Survey of India Report, 194, in 1961 census the literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribes at the national level was 5.53 percent, which increased to 11.30 per cent in 1971 and to 16.35 percent in 1981. Thus, it is observed that during a period of two decades (1961-1981) the literacy among the Scheduled Tribes has almost

doubled. Similarly, the sex wise literacy rate during this period shows a positive trend. According to 1961 census 13.89 per cent of the males and 3.16 per cent of the females were literate. This number increased to 17.63 per cent of the males and 4.85 per cent of the females in 1971, which in the next decade further increased to 24.52 percent of males and 8.04 percent of females (Sangan and Sonnad 2014).

During last six decades, the data of literacy among the tribal population in India from 1961-2011, show significant progress has been made over the decades. In fact, there has been a considerable increase in the literacy rates of tribals from 8.53 % in 1961 to 47.10% in 2001. The Literacy rates among females also raised significantly during this period. Among the tribal women, living in urban areas there is nearly four fold increase in the literacy rates i.e. from 13.45% in 1961 to 59.87% in 2001. Simultaneously the literacy rates among rural tribal women also increased from 2.90% to 32.44% during these four decades. The total literacy among the tribal population gradually increased to 63.1% in 2011. But, to dismay, of total tribal women population, only 54.4 % are literate as compared to their male counterpart whose literacy rate stands at 71.7% in the year 2011.

This progress is mainly due to the continuous efforts of the Government and Non government organisations towards educational development among Scheduled Tribes. As per Census 2011, there is variation of tribal literacy in different states of India. State-wise, the rate of literacy in the Scheduled Tribes is highest in Mizoram (91.7%) and lowest in Andhra Pradesh (49.2%). Among union territories, the highest rate of literacy in scheduled tribes is in Lakshadweep (91.7%). The census 2011 data also indicate that some states with higher concentration of tribal population have been doing extremely well. They are Mizoram(91.5%), Nagaland(80.0%), Manipur(77.4%) and Meghalaya (74.5%). Where as some states with more number of tribal habitations continue to perform very low. They are Jharkhand(57.1%),Madhya Pradesh(50.6%),Orissa(52.2%),Rajasthan(52.2%) and Andhra Pradesh (49.2%). The overall literacy rate of the Schedule Tribe in Odisha increased from 23.4% in 2001 to 41.2% in 2011. Despite this improvement, it remained lower than the national average which stood at 47.1 per cent (Jyotirmayee Mohapatra 2020).

Though there has been progress, over the decades, in terms of literacy of tribal people in general and tribal women in particular, but the poor quality of their education as viewed in terms of only literacy and its impact on their socio-economic life is questionable in view of acute poverty and many other problems of tribal people in different parts of India. Even then, there has been a gender gap in terms of literacy which reflects a kind of patriarchal nature of tribal society in different parts of India.

In India, the poorest of the poor and the most underdeveloped sections of people are the tribal people. As in every patriarchal society in general, women are subservient and dominated by men that indicates gender inequality and lower status of women, so also in majority of tribal communities, the patriarchal system has gradually evolved due to various forces of social change which has produced different facets of gender inequality and lower status of women in general (Nayak.K.B. 2020). Today, the educational status of tribal women in many parts of India is also observed as very low as compared to their male counterparts. Development of literacy among tribal women is a challenging issue in the present scenario. Without education of tribal women, meaningful, inclusive growth of the country is not possible. Educational status and economic empowerment of tribal women can be measured through the power they have over financial resources to earn income and their per capita income, access to education, access and availability of professional opportunities and participation in economic decision making and their access to political opportunities. Thus, education is the key factor in the process of women's empowerment as it helps in

building self-reliance, self-confidence and raising awareness in order to achieve equality with men or at least, to reduce gender gap considerably.

Despite special provisions embedded in the Constitution to meet the educational requirement of the ST women, the grim situation has continued even today. The tribal women meet extreme and more striking disadvantages in the field of education. There are substantial social, regional, and gender disparities in literacy. The ST communities have shallow levels of literacy. The gender gap in literacy rate among tribal women and men, instead of going down, it shows a snowballing trend over every year. In 1961, the gender gap in literacy among STs was only at a rate of 10.67%. However, during the year 2011, it reached a rate of 28.18%. While on the whole population, the literacy rate shows a converse trend. In 1961 it was 25.05%, but in 2011, it was 16.3%. Moreover, if we talk about higher education, it is very notable that regardless of an exceptionally all around planned approach of positive discrimination, the depiction of Dalit and Adivasis students is not satisfactory. Also, the picture of women from them is trivial. They, by and large, join standard training courses and are denied access to dexterous courses and elite institutions. According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report of 2017-18, all India GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) in higher education reported 25.8 percent, which is figured out for the 18-23 age of the group. Here the GER for men and women population is 26.3 percent and 25.4 percent respectively. In contrast to the figures GER of 25.8%, the ST students constituted 15.9 percent in which 17.0 percent for ST males and 14.9 percent for ST female students (See: Govt. of India, ALL India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18, Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, 2018). The gross enrolment ratio of the ST boys is more than the ST girls in all classes. The gross enrolment ratio is higher in class I to V which is 137.2 for the ST boys and 136.7 for the ST girls but it is only 90.7 and 87 in class VI to VIII. It implies that the tribal enrolment declines significantly in higher education (See: Source-Statistics of School Children, 2010-2011). The Gender Parity Index reflects the enrolment of girls in school in comparison to boys. The index for ST children is almost same as all categories of children except for class XI to XII (Paray 2019:2284).

In fact, the literacy rate of tribal women in India was 3.16 percent in 1961, which has increased to 49.40 percent as per 2011 census. Whereas the literacy rate of women in the general population was 15.35 percent in 1961 which has increased to 64.60 percent as per 2011 census. However, it is important to mention here that the literacy rate of tribal women is much lower than that of tribal men and men in general population. Even after seventy years of independence, the goal of universal education has not yet been achieved. About 10 million children of school going age are not getting education due to various problems and related critical issues which are discussed below.

Some Critical Issues and Problems of Tribal Women's Education in India: - There are many critical issues and problems in the field of tribal women's education (For instance See: Suman Kumari 2018) and some of those are discussed below:

Location of Tribal Village and School: Most of the tribal communities inhabit in the forests in a scattered manner. Therefore, it becomes impossible to open separate schools in each village where the required student's strength is not available. On other land, tribal habitations remain segregated from each other by some physical barriers like rivers, hills, nalas and forests. So, these physical barriers produce an obstacle for the girls of a tribal village to attend the school in a neighbouring village. In this situation, parents do not allow their girl child to attend schools. Generally, the post class V which either is in the Middle School or High School as situated at long distance from tribal village and thus tribal parents also feel it unsafe for

girl child to travel far. More residential schools should be established in districts of each state and it should be extended up to PG level in tribal areas (Sujatha K 1987; Patel S 1991; Pushpa Mandal 2000).

Insufficient Educational Infrastructure and Services: Educational institutions in tribal areas also lack sufficient infrastructure and facilities (Shukla and Sharma 2000). Even this lacuna is also observed in residential schools by some studies. For instance, Balaramulu D. (2006) studied the role of tribal welfare residential educational institutions in development of tribal education in selected areas of Andhra Pradesh. This study observed that (1) in the selected 23 tribal welfare residential schools most of the posts are vacant and not filled up for so many years. Majority of the principles of APTWREIS are not satisfied in case of craft, music, and librarian and lab assistants. (2) Still 52.2% of schools among the selected schools do not have proper building. (3) There are no counselling facilities in any of these schools. (4) Principals are not happy with parents and they expressed that parents are not in a position mentally to give suggestions and frequently they face some problems with parents.

Apathetic and Indifferent Attitude of the Parents: Most of the dropped-out girls are living with their family. In general, majority of their parents do not have proper education and they go for early dropouts. Tribal parents are mostly illiterate. They always show a very indifferent attitude towards the education of their girls. They are interested in providing household responsibilities to their girls even during early stage of their education and they have negative attitude towards female education (Oraw and Toppo 2012).

Poor Economic Condition: The problems of poverty and deprivation go together in tribal families. Generally, the tribal people depend on forests about 8 months and on agriculture about 4 months for their survival. Besides, the girls of the age group 4 to 6 are found to be helping their parents in collection of forest products. In this situation, parents do not allow to spare their girls or their labour force and allow them to attend schools. When a family not economically secure, prioritizing a girl child education take a backseat (Sen and Barik 2020; Mishra, 2010; Pradhan, 2010).

Appointment, Nature and Language of Teachers: In the remote tribal areas, the teacher's absence in school is a regular feature and it largely affects the quality of education. In tribal villages, there is virtually no relation between the teachers and villagers. Teachers face problem housing facility in the village, which makes them irregular which inhibits the normal routine of the school. Apart from this, the apathetic attitude of the villagers and the appointment of untrained teachers in tribal areas reduce the interest of students towards values of education. Besides, indifference of teacher, teaching without local tribal language has affected the tribal children's access to education. Some studies validate this fact (For instance See: Mishra, Subrata 2017).

Lack of Proper Coordination between Government Departments: Some studies, as referred in the text, reveal that due to lack of proper coordination between the Tribal Welfare Department and the School Education Department, proper monitoring over education system is inhibited. Besides, in general, the negligence and indifference of government officials to work hard with sufficient commitment in tribal areas also partly aggravates the problem.

Lack of Achievement Orientation and Negative Attitude towards Formal School Education: As discussed above and below with references of some studies, many of the dropouts of tribal children are not in favour of formal education and they consider it as a boring process. They still are not convinced of the need of education for their livelihood. In fact, they lack "achievement orientation". Although they are only aware of the government's allowances for their education, but a negative attitude towards education makes them stay back in their homes than go to school.

Lack of Aspiration of Parents and Poor Personality Background of Tribal Students: - The tribal parents, because of illiteracy and ignorance, are unaware of educational opportunities as well as the value of education. Their children also do not have higher aspirations and achievement orientation as such. In general, it is assumed that educational backwardness of tribal students is not only due to their poor socio-economic background but also because of their deprivation of some cognitive and non-cognitive abilities involving their behavioural patterns and personality attributes like aspirations. A number of studies as discussed below reveal this fact.

A comparative study was conducted by Singh L.B., (1979) on personality of tribal students which revealed that: 1) the Santal students were significantly higher in anxiety, lower in intelligence, achievement motivation and academic achievement than the non-Santals; 2) extraversion was negatively but not significantly related with academic achievement of the Santals; 3) the relationship between achievement motivation and academic achievement was positive but not significant. Another study conducted by Kumar, Y. (1989) observed that: 1. no difference in adjustment between tribal and non-tribal students; 2. non-tribal students showed greater educational interest in science, English and Medical Science while tribal students showed greater interest in Agriculture, Humanities and Arts; 3. tribal boys and non-tribal girls showed greater vocational interest; 4. non-tribal students showed higher level of aspiration; and 5. level of aspiration was not found to be related to attitude towards school, adjustment and educational interest either for tribal and non-tribal students.

Some other studies regarding parents' aspiration to educate their daughters, reveal that the parents in the studied four communities had different response. More than half of them wanted to send their daughters to schools but others thought it was useless. In the absence of hired labour the girls work at home and fields. Eventually the girls have to get married early age and start their families. Where some parents are enthusiastic about educating their daughters, they enrol their daughters in schools but rarely allow them to complete their schooling. The girls study up to primary or middle level and get married earlier. Sometimes girls are withdrawn from school after three years (when they have learned to write their names) to work, while preference for education is given to boys. There is major gender disparity, in terms of more limited educational opportunities available for girls. Although some of the Bhutia and Bodh girls have benefited most from increased access to educational facilities (Bhasin V. 2007; Archana Pole 2017).

Fatmi S M B (1986) observed that: 1) racial background, sex, religious background, and caste status influenced achievement-related motivations. Non-tribals, girls, caste Hindus and forward and backward caste groups were superior in achievement-related motivations; 2) the area of residence and socio-economic status were important determinants of achievement-related motivations; 3) family type had little to do and ordinal position motivations and 4) the achievement motivation of a person had a significantly positively correlated with other achievement-related motivations. A comparative study of Nayak B.P. (1990) observed that the non-tribal group stood higher than their tribal counterparts in achievement motivation and level of aspirations. While Gautam, Rajni (1990) observed that various groups such as the Savara Tribe, the Scheduled Caste and backward class candidates were found to be significantly different from each other in terms of personal values, teaching attitudes, achievement and creativity. Annaraja, P. and Thiagarajan, A.P. (1993) observed that 1) regarding intelligence, non-ST adolescents were better than STs; and 2) with regard to academic achievement, non- STs were better than STs.

Mavi, N.S and Patel, I (1997) in a study on tribal high school students' academic achievement in relation to selected personality variables, identified a significant positive correlation between academic achievement and personality adjustment, intelligence, self-concept and level of aspiration. A significant

positive correlation between personality adjustment and intelligence, and level of aspiration and between personality adjustment and self-concept were found. There was also significant negative correlation between intelligence and self-concept. A significant positive correlation between intelligence and level of aspiration were also observed. Nima M Joseph and G. Porgio (2006) had a comparative study on depression, self- acceptance and scholastic achievement of tribal and non-tribal high school students. This study observed that 1) the depression of tribal high school students is higher than that of non-tribal high school students; 2) there is no significant influence of religion on the level of depression, self-acceptance and scholastic achievement of the students; the scholastic achievement of non-tribal high school students is greater than the scholastic achievement of tribal high school students. Sex, standard of living, area of residence (rural, town) type of school (government, aided and mixed school), occupation of parents, etc., also influence scholastic achievement of students, and 3) there is negative correlation between depression and scholastic achievement and positive correlation between self-acceptance and scholastic achievement. While Ajmeera Leela (2009) had a study on the educational status of tribal girl students (from class V to X) awareness and aspirations of their parents in Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh. This study observed that: 1) Majority of the tribal girl students opined that there is a partial provision for their continuing education; they opined that they have partial awareness as programmes provided by the Government; and education should be job oriented which enable them to get employment opportunities; and 2) All sub-categories of students opined that their performance in study is moderate.

There is also difference of performance between students of Missionary schools and others. Some studies observed that high school tribal students in the Christian and Missionary schools performed better. Regarding cognitive and non-cognitive abilities of the Christian tribal students some studies reveal some interesting facts. A study was conducted by Balakrishna (1984) to know the effect of socio-cultural deprivation on some cognitive and non-cognitive abilities of tribal adolescents. This study observed that the Christian tribal students possessed more intelligence, better reasoning ability and higher achievement motivation than non-Christian tribal students and the Christian tribal group aspired higher and set themselves higher goals than the non-Christian tribal group. In the Mission schools, as run by the Christian Missionaries, generally the students' performance is better than other schools. In this regard, Alka, Saxena (2002) in another study opined that the Mission schools have been doing a good service to the tribals, except for the fact they have combined theology with education. Thus, the children who went those schools became 'alien to their own homes and looked down upon their old ways of life. But the children learning in these schools have acquired some distaste for their own institutions like Dhumkuria or Gitiora and have taken the views held by the Christian fathers as the only correct view without putting the contention on the touch-stone of reasoning. For, theology is such that it does not permit reasoning.

In fact, there has been significant improvement in the educational status of tribes in the North-East region mainly because of the Christian Missionary services, as compared to other regions of India. For the promotion of educational interests of the Scheduled Tribes in this region, the number of educational institutions as well as teachers has been increased every year and today there are schools and colleges in every district town. Besides, there are special incentive schemes of scholarship and grant of books for scheduled tribe children to encourage the intelligent students to continue their education up to higher level. These facilities are provided by both the Government and Christian Institutions. The State Government has provided a number of facilities as a part of the tribal education programme in the tribal areas. The rate of scholarship for girls is slightly higher. The students have higher expectations from education. Hence, the tribal girls in the North-East region of India are favoured in matter of education

and there is less discrimination on ground of sex in matters of education (Sangan and Sonnad 2014). A case study by Gojendra Deuri (2020) on role of education in the upliftment of socio-economic status of Deuri Tribal Women in Assam state of North-East India supports the above fact about North-East region. The Deuri women are also very hard workers and are experts in many fields like agriculture, piggery, poultry, weaving and fishing. They are not lagging behind in any activities than their male counterpart. In spite of their contribution to society and economy, they are still facing various age old social problems. Thus, educational empowerment of women is essential for emancipation of women from the social evils that lie in age-old traditions and customs.

Problem of Dropouts among Tribal Students: - Among many problems arising on the way of tribal education, the problem of dropouts is a major one (Mishra, 2010; Pradhan, 2010; Barma, 2012). The root cause of this problem is poverty which is the biggest problem and mother of all problems in tribal society. Just for their survival livelihood, tribal parents do not prefer their children to continue their education instead they pressurize their children to drop education and work for livelihood in their locality or far off places. Therefore, some studies observed that the tribal drop-outs at primary, upper primary and secondary level was much higher than that of the general population in 2001- 02. The data on drop-out rates for the period 2005-06 to 2011-12 indicate a decreasing trend and hence an improvement in the status of school-going tribal children at all levels. During 2005-06 to 2011-12, the all India dropout rates fell down by 3.4 per cent for all children in classes 1-5 and 4.5 per cent for tribal children. In 2010-11, the dropout rate in 1st to 5th standard got reduced in all cases including ST children. However, the same phenomenon is not noticed in higher classes. On the contrary, the dropout rate increased in 7th to 10th classes in rural areas. The reasons for girls dropping out of schools have been varied. It could be due to the impact of external factors like lack of security of the girl while travelling to school, lack of security at school premises, lack of or no separate functional toilets for girls in school, lack of female teacher in schools and internal factors like the understanding of the need for education for a girl child by the parents, not interested in studies, most of the parents belief a girls future is linked to marriage and child bearing, girls are required for domestic work/household work, getting married in early age, girls are required for the care of siblings at home etc. It requires to train and educate the parents and to create consciousness in them in order to send their girl children to schools and colleges as well as there is a need to create interest among the girls towards education through counselling, sharing success stories, motivational talks etc., (Jyotirmayee Mohapatra 2020).

In a study, Meenakshi Hooja (2004) also observed that the socio-economic situation in tribal area plays a vital role in a high rate of non-attendance of students in school as well as drop out from school. The tribal boys and girls are very homesick in nature, who does not find the atmosphere quite conducive to them. The dormitories attract them more than the school. In tribal societies the parents are strongly hesitant to education of their children. Poor economic conditions coupled with cultural constraints are some of the important factors responsible for developing such an attitude in them. At the same time their ignorance about the utility and value of education cannot be ruled out. Medium of instruction is a major bottle neck in the field of tribal education. Because of the gap in communication between the teachers and taught they continue to remain alien to one another for, years.

A survey conducted in Khammam districts Andhra Pradesh by Malyadri, Pacha (2012) revealed that there are very high-rate of dropouts in tribal areas. Only 15% to 40% tribal children attend the school. It identified certain important reasons for the drop out problem in the district. (i) The medium of teaching such as, Telugu language is a foreign language for the tribal children. (ii) Non-tribal teachers are posted

to schools located at tribal areas, which are not aware of tribal cultural values and schools having single teacher and they reside interior pockets and neglecting their duties. (iii) Absence of tribal cultural and regional materials in class books. (iv) The school environment does not attract the tribal students; some schools are not having their own buildings. (v) Irregular supply of mid-day meals and untimely supply of study materials. (vi) Lack of communication facility. (vii) The pre-conceived notions of the teachers that the tribal children cannot grasp anything beyond nature, forest and agriculture create barriers in expanding primary education among the tribal areas. (viii) Children's engagement in household works agriculture coupled with parent's indifference towards their children's studies deprive the teachers to render their services in the classroom. Ashram schools are best fitted for the tribal children. In the primary schools, no effort is made to provide incentives and scope to music, dance, games, paintings, etc. which remains as latent potentialities with a child. The kits that have been provided to the schools under the Operation Black Board Scheme are not properly utilized by the teachers.

Furthermore, due to acute poverty and massive underemployment, a large segment of tribal girls and women along with their male counterparts migrate seasonally to nearby or far off places in search of migrant labour for their survival. A study on migrant tribal women and girls in ten cities: "A Study of Their Socio-Cultural and Economic Reference to Social Intervention" by Gummadi Naresh (1914) reveals that a little more than 55 percent of women and 29 percent of girls were illiterates, about 12 percent and 16 percent respectively were educated up to middle school level and about 7 and 16 per cent respectively up to higher secondary level. Only 6 percent of women and 11 percent of girls were graduates mainly in faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Those with P.G. qualifications were hardly 1 percent and 2 percent respectively.

Some Case Studies on Other Problems of Tribal Education in India: - Vijayalakshmi G (2004) observed that the tribal students had more problems with regard to their parents and family followed by personal, infrastructural facilities, academic and teacher related. The individual problems are low social status and illiterate parents, cultural backwardness of the family, low educational levels of the siblings and nomadic life of parents. Some other problems affecting tribal students are: lack of academic help from the teachers, non-availability of teachers, insect bites in the school premises, inconvenient school timings and absence of teachers in the school.

While Nafisa Goger D'Souza, Laya (2003) indicated that mainstream educational institutions do not educate the tribal students properly because the curriculum does not give due consideration to the rich cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and value systems prevalent within tribal societies. These institutions do not create an opportunity to develop and learn skills which are relevant to needs, lifestyle and aspirations of tribal communities. Tribal institutions of secondary education are irrelevant and do not actually 'educate' them. Mainstream educational institutions need to create an separate group of youngsters with few opportunities to use their capacities. She suggested that there is a need to review the relevance of curriculum and methodologies of education currently in the tribal context. More specifically need to campaign for a policy, which takes into consideration the learning needs of tribal youth, dropouts at the school and pre university levels.

Whereas Krishna Rao (2007) observed that the tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh face many situations. The tribal welfare programmes introduced during the various plan periods have unleashed a series of reactions which are both positive and negative. While the positive impact gave rise to sustained growth, the negative one resulted in maladjustment and the consequent disharmony as expressed in group imbalance, Naxalism, minor uprisings or other disruptive activities against the established system. This

study suggests that with a little training, say for a period of 3 to 4 months, a semi educated tribal youth i.e. a dropout from 10th class or under graduate or even graduate level will be more preferable to teach in pre-primary and adult literacy classes with a little monetary incentive for teaching latter. Even the teacher unions should work for the promotion of tribal literacy and education.

Some studies reveal that people of the remote area are superstitious and addicted to blind beliefs. Because of some negative situations, the tribal students drop their education and they do not understand the value of education. An in-depth case study by Dipankar Oraw and Daly Toppo (2012) in Tapan Block of South Dinajpur District of West Bengal reveals that the tribal women are deprived of education which is the integral part of their life. Even the tribal family and organisation makes discrimination between the sexes regarding education and empowerment. However, there has been an overall increase in the enrolment of children belonging to STs. At the primary stage, against an overall increase of 15%, ST enrolment increased by 25%, whereas that of ST girls increased by 36% against overall increases of 23% from 2000 to 2004. But, the dropout rate among tribal school children is alarming. Even various steps are taken by State Governments to check the number of dropouts, including free distribution of books, scholarships, reimbursement of examination fees, mid-day meals, etc. which have had an impact but still fall short. The performance of certain states in providing grants, maintenance of service and management of hostels is not encouraging. The pace of construction of hostels has been very slow and the basic amenities provided therein are substandard. Low literacy especially among tribal girls and high dropout rates at elementary and higher levels is a serious issue even today. The main causes for this problem are (i) poverty, (ii) contents of the education, (iii) inadequate educational institutions and supporting services in tribal areas, (iv) absenteeism, (v) medium of instruction and (iv) education policy.

In this study area of Tapan Block, where so many tribal communities i.e. Oraon, Santal, Munda, Mahali, etc. exist, the tribal men have negative attitude towards female education. In every community man is commandant of family and they make decision about all the matters. They think education is only for male and females are born for housekeeping and cooking. Although some tribal men are motivated to send their girl children to nearby schools now-a-days, but many tribal schools are found as plagued by high dropout rates. Children attend for the first three to four years of primary school and gain a little knowledge which is nothing better than illiteracy. A few students who enter into high school up to the tenth grade but a few of them manage to finish high school. Therefore, very few are eligible to attend institutions of higher education, where the high rate of attrition continues. Whereas the peasant tribal families are reluctant to send their children because they want their children to work in the fields. Besides, the recruitment of qualified teachers and appropriate language of instruction also remain a problem in tribal schools. In some regions, tribal children entering school are bound to learn the official regional language, which is completely unrelated to their tribal dialect.

Another case study by Anirba Mukherjee (2009) on the Santal, Birhor, Kharia and Lodha tribes in Bankura, Birbhum, Puruliya, and Paschim Medinipur districts of West Bengal, reveals that the modern education system makes little attempt to address cultural specificities in designing education policies for tribal students which results in the development of a negative self-image. Moreover, although claimed to be free by the Indian government, achieving success in the education system involves subsidiary costs like private tuition which represents an obstacle for poverty stricken tribal families. The problem is further complicated due to the unempathetic attitudes and beliefs of teachers and the ill-conceived developmental policies designed by educational planners that fail to incorporate curricular elements compatible with tribal culture.

Whereas a study by Surajit Mal and Sahina Khatun (2022) on the status of tribal women in West Bengal reveals that there is a large literacy rate gap between the ST males and females. Female literacy rate of some tribes is much high than the literacy rate of females of some other tribes of the study area. Such as 77.93 percent female populations of Lepcha tribe, 74.70 percent female population of Limbu tribe, 73.28 percent female population of Tamang tribe are literate. But women of some other tribes lag behind from men in respect of literacy rate. For example, the literacy rate of women of Saver tribe is 31.52 percent, the literacy rate of women of Lodha tribe is 36.21 percent and the literacy rate of Mal Pahariya tribe is 36.50 percent. Gender disparity in literacy among the tribal communities of West Bengal is a very burning problem. The highest gender disparity in literacy has been noticed among the Savar tribe (0.21) and the gender disparity is also a common fact among the Kora tribe (0.20), the santal tribe (0.20), Lodha tribe (0.19), Ho tribe (0.19), Bhumij tribe (0.18) and remaining in all other tribes. It has also been observed that in 1961, the literacy rate of tribal women in West Bengal was very low, only 1.76 percent. But in the same census year, the literacy rate of women in the general population was 20.27 percent. According to the 2011 census, the literacy rate of tribal women in West Bengal has increased to 47.71 percent. On the other hand, the literacy rate in the general population has increased to 70.54 percent, which is much higher than the literacy rate of tribal women. According to 2011 census, the literacy rate of tribal men in West Bengal is 68.17 percent and that of tribal women is 47.71 percent. At the national level, the literacy rate of tribal men is 68.50 percent and that of women is 49.40 percent. In any case, the literacy rate of tribal women is lower than that of any other social groups of the study area. So, literacy rate of tribal women is always lower than the literacy rate of tribal male in spatial-temporal dimension. In fact, female belonging to low socio-economic family background and low parental education often get discouraged to go to school than the females of belonging to developed socio-economic family background and literate parental family.

In fact, the government of India has introduced various gender specific schemes and programmes at different phases of time with the objective to encourage girls' literacy. In order to encourage girls' education, the governments of various states have adopted different strategies. For instance, the State government of Odisha has provided scholarships to students both at pre-matriculation and post – matriculation levels, boarding and hostel facilities for girls, bicycles for girls and exclusive schools for the girls from marginalised communities. The government has given special focus on educational and infrastructural development in schools in tribal and backward areas through various schemes in order to improve retention rate and to check drop out among underprivileged students. The main aims of taking such steps are: to encourage the scheduled tribe women and girls towards education is to change their patterns of life, to make them economically independent, to motivate them to organise themselves, to educate them to understand their rights and responsibilities, to make them understood their situations, analyse the situations and to enable them for participating meaningfully in different spheres of their development and contribute for their overall development as well as development of the society as a whole (Jyotirmayee Mohapatra 2020).

In fact, educational deprivation of tribal girls is a distinct dimension of gender inequality in tribal areas of India. Motkuri Venkatanarayana (2006) in an empirical study observed that incidence of educational deprivation among children is higher for the SCs and the STs than others. This study maintained that the agricultural development through infrastructure facilities like irrigation, commercialization, rural development activities, and infrastructure like roads, could play an important role in improving tribal children's schooling. Another study in the state of Odisha by Rashmi Rekha Das and Padmalaya Mahapatra (2017) reveals that equal access to education for women and girl is the guiding principle of

education policy in the state. Special measure has been undertaken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender sensitive educational system, increased enrolment and retention rates of girl and improve the quality of education to facilitate lifelong learning as well as development of vocational technical skill by women. Reducing gender gap in secondary and higher education would be the focus area. Sectoral time existing policies have been achieved with a special focus on girl and women, particularly belonging to tribal women. Sarva Sikha Abhiyan (education for all 6-14 year age), Ashram schools, mid-day meal schemes the number of Adivasi (tribal) children going to school and finishing at least primary school is low. The number of ST girls in school is even lower. Maltidevi Prak Vidyalaya Paridhan Pre-school creation, Biju Juba Sasaktikaran Yojana providing laptops to meritorious students between age group of 18 to 25 and Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDMS) have been launched especially to provide food security to 6-14 year girl child. Though there was an increase in total literacy as well as female literacy among tribals, it is still at a slower pace as compared to the overall population. In case of tribal female the literacy rate has increased from 23.37 % (2001 census) to 41.20 % (2011 census).

Education to women is as essential as it is for men. It makes women to find the proper way to their development. Even today in most parts of the country, the tribal women remain steeped in poverty, superstitions and ignorance with men presiding over their destiny. The main aim of education is to change the cultural norms and patterns of life of tribal women to make them economically independent, to organise themselves to form strong groups so as to analyse their situations and conditions of living, understand their rights and responsibilities and to enable them to participate and contribute to the development of women and the entire society. The population of STs is very high in some states and in some states there are no STs. With regard to the literacy rates, female literacy has raised considerably in the past decades both in urban as well as rural areas. Moreover, the percentage of Schedule Tribe girls in higher education has been gradually increasing. The fact remains that a large number of tribal women in rural areas might have missed educational opportunities at different stages and in order to empower them varieties of skill training programmes have to be designed and organised. Their achieved skills could be useful for assuming political leadership or for economic self-reliance or even social transformation in tribal communities (Rani and Neeraja 2011).

In the history of India and even today in rural areas especially in tribal villages, female education is neglected because of some situational constraints. The low educational status of tribal women is reflected in their higher dropouts, lower literacy rate and lower enrolment rate in the school. The main reasons associated with lower status of education among tribal girls and women are: financial constraints, early marriages, submissiveness, motherhood, and parental perception of education on women's worldview. The girl child is deliberately denied for education in their own families. Girls have no say on the topic of education at home. It is entirely dependent on their parents' decision. The main reasons behind this hurdle are : economic limitations, financial backwardness, poverty, work for livelihood, humility, early marriages, ignorance and narrow perception of parents as well as other members of the family regarding girl's education. In some tribal communities, the parents or other family members want to educate their girls. However, they are significantly less. Some want to send their girls to school, while some others think that it was useless to educate girls. Mostly, they encourage girls to join labour work and to help in the economic condition of their house. Though in the beginning the tribal parents send their girls to school, but it is only for 3 to 4 years to get primary school education and to learn how to write and read their names and then after that, they withdrawn from school or they go for dropouts. It is also observed in many

tribal villages that there are high gender disparity feelings among parents to provide full opportunities to their girls and give more preference to boys for education (Bhasin V. 2007; Khan and Hasan.2021).

Suggestions

Education is the single most important means by which individuals and society can improve personal endowments, build capacity levels, overcome barriers, and expand opportunities for a sustained improvement in their wellbeing. In this era of globalization, it is necessary to protect the dignity and status of women in the tribal societies with the adoption of essential measures for the improvement of education, income of the females to fill the gap between male and female, reduction of poverty, preventing households from being single parentage or one side's desertion, re-examination with regard to property rights, termination of physical violence on womenfolk for the comprehensive development and progress of the whole society. The tribal women face a number of constraints which could be bravely encountered by the women entrepreneurs only if certain measures were taken care by their family, society, policy makers, legal institutions etc. First of all, the support of family members to women should be there in various respects such as taking care of children, helping in household work etc. The tribal women need opportunities for more and more exposure to every sphere of life with more free avenues of expression. Enough proper education to the tribal girls should be provided free of cost. Thus, appropriate educational institutions should be established in nearby tribal areas. Functional literacy and computer literacy should also be provided to tribal women. Training to tribal women about income generating enterprises so as to engage them in self-employment needs to be ensured. Reservation for women or girls in all sectors of government services as well as in educational institutions is also needed. All kinds of provisions should be made for maintaining equal status of women with that of men in the tribal society. There should be implementation of various other programmes or schemes for the empowerment of tribal women, economically, politically as well as socially. Moreover, strict law should be enacted and exercised against the injustice against tribal women so that the women can feel free, safe, secured and self-dependent. The Right to Education (RTE) Act must be implemented for the betterment of tribal women and girls. Besides, some other suggestions to overcome various problems and constraints in the field of education as faced by tribal women in India are as follows:

- To upgrade the level as well as standard of education, the Government needs to build educational institutions and libraries in rural area. More residential schools for tribal children should be established in each district of every state and it should be extended to PG level in tribal areas. Social security of students, especially of adolescent girls is a matter of great concern in residential schools. It must be ensured by the school, local people, NGOs as well as government machinery. The School Curriculum should be updated and improved, through the holiday pattern in tribal dominated areas, as per the current needs and demands in the market and society.
- Educational programs run by the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should be activated in full swing in order to expand the female literacy rate across the region and attempts should be made to make people conscious of opportunities and services. For monitoring, high-level officials should often check and monitor the working of schools related to teaching methods, working hours and attendance registers etc.
- Special package should be allotted for tribal population to raise their literacy rate. The tribal students should be provided with employment opportunities in secondary sectors as per their qualification.

- Female tribal students should be given priority for employment in secondary sector activities, which may have significant role in socio-economic development for tribal society.
- Family planning programmes should be operated at grass root level in order to check the alarming growth of tribal population.
- Planners, policy makers and academicians are suggested to conduct more researches at micro level in order to find out the root causes of socio-economic backwardness of tribal people.
- Government should make new schemes like MGNREGS, NRHM, RHS, PMEGP, BAUP, etc. that may help tribal families to come out of poverty level. Awareness programmes on these schemes should be frequently undertaken by the government machinery and NGOs.
- Government should make some strategies of tribal development, without disturbing their own cultural traditions, in which both tribal men and women can actively participate.
- Government should also ensure gender based educational infrastructure in the schools of tribal areas. In order to minimize the infrastructural cost and priority should be given to the development of basic infrastructure in the tribal areas so as to minimize the overhead cost in particular.
- Government should launch special and sustained education drives in low female literacy areas of tribal pockets. Focus should be given on tribal 'girls' education while providing them with all kinds of facilities and opportunities including different types of free ships, scholarships and stipends so that they will be more interested in education. Since the tribal girl students in higher education is very less, special ST stipends and scholarships should be provided to the tribal girls studying higher education, especially in engineering, medical, and other vocational streams. Although there are various scholarships and incentives available for the tribal children but either those are not updated properly or there are lacunae in implementation. Thus, proper monitoring on this financial issue is essential. It is also needed that the incentives should be streamlined "online" so that the students may avail all the facilities in proper time.
- More teachers, particularly tribal female instructors, should be recruited who can teach tribal children in their mother tongue at least at primary level. Ecological, cultural, psychological characteristics of tribal children should be carefully considered by the teachers. From the perspective of language, it is desirable to be a local teacher from the same tribal communities and all study materials should be supplied in local languages of the tribes.
- More than 50% of dropouts take place in primary school. In order to overcome this problem of dropouts, the government department of education should constitute a team of teachers who will go to the tribal areas while spreading awareness about various schemes of education offered by the government to encourage people in order to send their daughter to school.
- Since one of the major reasons for the lagging back of tribal girls is the apathy of their parents towards their education. The attitude of the tribal parents toward education should be improved through awareness programme, proper counselling and guidance by school teachers. In order to bring the tribal women to the schools, proper extensive literacy campaign in the tribal dominated districts awareness should be organized to create the awareness about the importance and value of education.
- Besides, novel system of schooling should be encouraged in tribal areas throughout India. A case study conducted by Prasanth Mathew (2001) on novel system of schooling arranged for tribal students in the Wayanad district of Kerala which finds that 1) The Kanavu community gives greater importance to tribal dialects in initial stages as a medium of instruction, work experience, crafts, music, dance, Kalari, meditation and yoga when compared to the study subjects like science and mathematics, and

curriculum. They earn money for learning through the productive works, crafts and arts since other source of financial assistance are very less; 2) the grouping of the children is done based on the mental capacity, talents, age and most easy over the competencies and skills; 3) the living of Kalari in Kanavu has been raised as one of the six Kalari academics in Kerala and this resulted in the financial assistance, attitudinal changes of public about the Kalari wing in Kanavu and participation of the local community in the activities of Kanavu resulted in the high publicity of Kalari in Kerala and abroad.

Conclusion

India is not only a multi-cultural, highest second populous and largest democratic country in the world but also a peculiar country in the world. About 8.6% of her total population belong to the Scheduled Tribes (STs). There is very high concentration of the ST population in some states and very low population of the STs in some other states of India. In the history of India, it has been observed that the indigenous tribal people have not only been socially and economically marginalized and backward but also been politically subjugated and dominated by other sections of society. Educationally, they have also been backward over the decades since independence of the country. With regard to the literacy rates, though the rate of tribal female literacy increased considerably during last seven decades, both in urban as well as rural areas, yet it is comparatively very less which raises a question of gender inequality.

The low educational status of tribal women is reflected in their lower literacy rate, lower enrolment rate and higher dropouts in the school. The literacy rate of tribals is lower than that of general as well as the SC population. The literacy rate of the rural tribal female is the lowest of all groups. Thus, there is gender bias in the literacy of tribal population as in other groups or communities, the female literacy being lower than the male literacy. Through there has been five-fold increase in the literacy of tribal females it is still much lower than the national average for the females (39.29). Similarly, though the percentage of Schedule Tribe girls in higher education has been gradually increasing over the decades, but it is very meagre. The fact remains to be investigated further is that why a large number of tribal women in rural areas have missed educational opportunities at different stages?

Despite various constitutional provisions and government policies for the development of tribal in general and tribal woman in particular, they still are lagging in many respects. Their low level of economic activities, social backwardness, dire ignorance, low level of literacy, poor health conditions urge for a systematic strategy of tribal development. They work very hard and contribute significantly towards the economic condition of their family, but they are still reeling under acute poverty mostly because no proper strategies and efforts are made.

During different plan periods in India, various programmes and schemes have been implemented for the development of the Scheduled Tribe population. Though a lot of betterment has been already done in respect of tribal development, but still, a lot more requires to be done. The tribal families need sufficient income which will enable them to cross the poverty levels. Since their economic status determines other aspects of life and living conditions, it needs to be supported through education and gainful employment. Even today, in most parts of the country, the tribal women remain steeped in superstitions and ignorance while men presiding over their destiny. In this respect, education is a vital instrument to bring about a change in the cultural norms and patterns of life of the tribal women and to change their outlook and made them economically independent. Education will enable them to take up jobs so that they can improve their situation. In this way, the social and economic status of the tribal women to a large extent depends on their educational attainment. The government has been providing a lot of support and grant for the education

of tribal students. Thus, the tribal women need to be empowered economically, politically and socially. In particular, empowerment of tribal women through education and gainful employment through upgradation of knowledge and skill is a critical component of their all-round development. Thus, education is a crucial and essential tool in bringing about a shift in tribal women's cultural norms and life patterns, as well as in changing their viewpoint and enabling them to become economically independent. It would assist people in organising themselves, analysing their positions and living conditions, and becoming more aware of their rights and obligations.

There are many critical issues and problems in the field of tribal education which need proper attention of government while making policies and programmes. Those are as follows: i) Medium of language is one of the important constraints of tribal children which prevents tribal children's access to education; ii) The location of the tribal families is generally in the interior, drenched forested and hilly areas and thus the physical barriers creates a hindrance for the children of a tribal village to attend the school in a neighbouring village; iii) The economic condition of tribal people is so poor that they do not desire to spare their children or their labour power and allow them to attend schools; iv) Attitude of the tribal parents is observed as a hindrance to their children's education since education does not yield any immediate economic return, the tribal parents prefer to engage their children including girls in remunerative employment which supplements the family income and it results in dropouts; v) Teacher related problems also affect the education of tribal children because in the remote tribal areas, the teacher absenteeism is a regular phenomenon; vi) Lack of proper monitoring and poor coordination between the Tribal Welfare Department and School Education Department also affects the quality education in tribal areas. Thus, various steps, as suggested in the text above, should be seriously implemented in order to ensure the success of tribal students particularly female students in the field of mainstream education, besides upgradation of girls' schools in remote tribal areas. Educational improvement and empowerment of tribal women is as essential criteria of their development. It helps to minimize gender inequality and guides women to find the right way to development. In order to reduce the gender gap and empower the tribal women, along with proper education, varieties of skill training programmes related to political leadership, economic self-reliance and even social transformation have to be designed and implemented systematically by the government.

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