

Problems and Prospects of Tribal Education in Alipurduar District W.B

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Abstract

The 20th district of west Bengal is Alipurduar. It is the home of various types of tribal community. Totos, the primitive tribe with least no of people in the world live in Alipurduar. It is the resident of other indigenous groups including Rava, Bhumji, Kherua, Oraon, Santali, Bodo, Mech and Meny. As Alipurduar is a new district, a specific study of tribal education of this district has not been possible earlier. In this article I am going to analyze the current scenario of tribal education of Alipurduar district , West Bengal by highlighting the literacy rates, the challenges they face in the way of educating themselves and how to find out the remedial measures.

Key Words: Tribal education, problems, prospects

Introduction

"Before the rise of the nation-state, between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries the world was mostly tribal Tribals were united by language, religion, blood and belief. They feared other tribes and often warred against them" - Robert Reich

Tribe refers to primitive human community. The term 'scheduled tribes' first appeared in the constitution of India article 366(25) defined scheduled tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under article 342 to be schedule tribes for the purpose of this constitution. It is very important to say that the ST category is not inclusive of a no of very similarly placed communities who were not given the post-independence constitutional designation. India is a home of huge variety of indigenous people. The schedule tribes are counted among the most backward group (socially, culturally and economically) in India. My study deals about the educational improvement and

problems of the tribes of Alipurduar in West Bengal.

Alipurduar has been bifurcated from Jalpaiguri district on June 25, 2014. So at the time of 2011 census it was a part (subdivision) of Jalpaiguri district. Alipurduar has six community block- Madarihat-Birpara, Alipurduar I, Alipurduar II, Falakata, Kalchini and Kumargram.

Tribal population is maximum in Kalchini block.

Objectives

- 1) To find out the various prospects of tribal education.
- 2) Barriers of tribal education in Alipurduar district.
- 3) To find out the remedial measures.

Literature review

Many literatures are there which describes the condition of the Tribals in India. But as

Alipurduar is a new district, it is hard to find out any specific article related to tribal education.

I have gone through a brief review of what has already been done in this field before I started to write my article.

In the book "First citizens:-studies on Advisees, Tribals and Indigenous people of India" by Meena Radhakrishnan the author clearly describes about the existence and migration of tribes in West Bengal. In the 9th chapter of this book "Tribal labour in the tea plantation of West Bengal" she explained how Tribals came and settled down in the district of Jalpaiguri.

Goutam v (2004) in his article wrote about the high dropout rate of tribal children. He emphasized that the medium of instruction is not proper for the Tribals.

Sedwal M and Kamat, S (2008) discussed about the various issues related SCs and ST's which are taken for positive action within the constitution of India.

Sujata K (2002) describes that govt policies focuses on the education as the main avenue by which they may come to 'mainstream' society but education was not a critical demand among tribes.

The book "Education in Tribal India, A study of West Bengal" by Mittal publication deals with the educational development among the tribes of West Bengal. The studied groups live in the same ecology and getting the same educational privilege in the pursuit of their education. The book suggested about the demography, ethnography, economy and different aspects of literacy among the tribal communities.

Study identified the barriers of education and suggested some important measures for the development of the educational thinking among them.

Some other important literature are "Maternity to Paternity, a study of the Rava society "which describes about Rava culture and ethnicity; "A micro study on the dependency in Forest resources in West Bengal, Implications to lively hood and poverty of 'social' tribe" by Moumita Chattopadhyaya and Pravat Kumar Kuri.

Analysis and discussion

At the infancy of humanity education was at a dormant stage. But now in 21st century education is the weapon for the development of human resource. Currently scheduled tribes lag behind not only the general population but also the sc population of the country.

Tribal education in India:

According to census 2011 there are 705 individual tribal groups spread over different states and union territories of the country. They have their own culture, language, and ethnicity. More than 270 languages are known which are spoken by different tribal community. ST constitutes 8.61% of the total population in India. Most of them (around 93%) live in villages or in rural areas and earn through agricultural practices. Some of the schedule tribe groups are still endangered.

In 1961 there were only 8.54% ST people were literate. But now it is increased to 58.96% in 2011. The case of females are more sensitive. 49.40% female are literate in

comparison with the male whose literacy rate is 68.50%

Table 1

2011	68.50	49.40	58.96	25.18
2001	59.20	34.80	47.10	59.12
1991	40.65	18.19	29.60	81.04%
1981	24.52	8.05	16.35	43.55%
1971	17.63	4.85	11.39	33.37%
1961	13.83	3.16	8.54	-

Male Female Total Decadal Growth Rate %

Literacy rate and decadal growth from 1961 to 2011 in India

The graph show and improvement in literacy rate but the decadal growth rate was maximum in 1981-1991 due to some steps were taken like NPE1986 to improve the educational structure of the country.

Table 2

Year	General Population	St Population	Gap.
1971	29.45	11.30	18.15
1981	36.23	16.35	19.88
1991	52.21	29.60	22.61
2001	65.38	47.10	18.28
2011	74.00	58.96	15.04

Literacy gap between general and St from 1971 to 2011

It is clearly seen that the gap had been increasing from 1971to 1991 but later it decreased. This might be an effect of cooked mid day meal programme which started on 1995.

Table 3

Year	1991	2001	2011
Total	57.7	68.6	76.3
St	27.8	43.4	57.9
Gap	29.9	25.2	18.3

Literacy rate of total population and ST population; Gap in literacy rate

Current situation of Tribal education in Alipurduar district

The advisees or the ST's mostly migrated from Chhota Nagpur region of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh in the tea -growing district of West Bengal. They are Santali, Oraon, Munda etc. Bodo, Mech, Koch, Hazong, Totos have a different anthropology. They are from Mongolian region.

Mainly most of them came and settled as tea garden labours. Due to socio economic condition they could not come to the flow of education with other communities. Due to

language problem they could not interact with others. More than 80% of the districts population belongs to SC/ST community. (Official website of Alipurduar)

The average ST literacy rate is 57.9% whereas the overall literacy in West Bengal is 76.3%. The average literacy rate in West Bengal is also little less than that of the countries literacy rate 58.96%

As per 2011 census only 25.9% Adivasi people live in urban areas of Alipurduar while 74.1% live in rural areas. Their economical condition is worst.

Table 4

Name of the Block	Male Population	Female Population	Total Population	SC Population	ST Population	Literacy Rate
Alipurduar-1	111378	105553	216931	105017	36605	67%
Alipurduar-2	112434	105838	218272	91253	40245	75.76%
Kalchini	140502	139182	279684	36354	192960	68.92%
Falakata	149347	141106	290457	71417	59877	72.64%
Madarihat	101576	100490	202068	28813	78314	67.77%
Kumargram	102627	96988	199615	73724	63795	72.42%

Block wise population, ST, SC population and overall literacy rate in Alipurduar

Source: - official website of Alipurduar district and district census handbook Jalpaiguri 2011.

The table shows that the most Tribals are living in Calchini block, Madarihat and Kumargram is at 2nd and 3rd position.

Table 5

Name of the block	Primary	Upper primary	No. of college
Kalchini	113	-	1
Madari hat- Birpara	184	54	1
Kumargram	235	-	1

Information regarding educational institutes in the most Tribal populated blocks of Alipurduar.

The no of college is only one in each block of the district. This is a huge barrier of higher education. So most of the tribal children specially girls leave education after class 10.

Problems of tribal education in Alipurduar

1)"language pervades social life. It is the principal vehicle for the transmission of cultural knowledge and primary mean by which we gain access to the contents of others mind."

So language barrier is the main problem. Medium of instruction should be the mother tongue at least at the primary level. The current multilingual policy in India is insufficient for the acquisition of early grade reading by Tribal girls (Sachadeva Suman 2015).

2) Some primitive tribal group cannot compete even with other ST's .There are no option for special tribes in Indian constitution.

3) Poor economical condition is a huge problem of these communities .Tribals is possesses small and uneconomical landholdings due to less crop production. Only a very few of them participate in occupational activities.

4) Early marriage of tribal girls causes a big drop out rate among tribal girls.

5) Poor transport system is also a big problem. Most of the tribe reside at the most interior parts of the district where the transport system is worst. So students have to travel everyday more than 80kms.

Prospects of tribal education in west Bengal and Alipurduar district

1) MDM scheme: W.B govt. introduced cooked mid day meal first in 1100primary schools. It could reduce the dropout rate of tribal students.

2) Social safeguards: RTE 2009 has provided strength and speed to nation's commitment to quality elementary education for all children in the country .According to RTE "The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age 6 to 14. More and more emphasis has been given on enrollment and attendance."

3) DPOs, DIETs, BRCs and CRCs are supporting the schools to achieve the goals of quality education for all children.

4) As a new district literacy programme has been continued in Alipurduar. Many schemes have been taken but till now the literacy rate is not satisfactory.

Programme like Kanyashree Prakalpa, Sikshyashree Prakalpa, Sabuj Sathee Prakalpa (free cycle distribution), recently announced Rupashree Prakalpa somehow show a little improvement.

5) State Govt has decided to set a university in Alipurduar. So students of the district will be immensely benefited from setting up the university here.

Suggestion and conclusion

After a brief review of tribal education and literacy rate of last 5 decades it can be concluded that the main problems in the tribal development are financial condition, language barrier and the position of their locality.

So first of all initiatives should be taken to provide them available transport to bring them to schools. Sufficient no of trained teacher and quality education should be provided.

If possible their mother tongue may be taught at least in primary level.

It is tough but if teachers know their language he can make the student understand.

Without proper financial support, sufficient employment a race cannot show an upward

mobility. So schemes should be taken differently for them and if possible some of the primitive tribe can be categorized as "special tribes"

So we have to keep in mind that the past is not in our hand but we can change the future of our nation positively.

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